

## Mech 4241

### Chapter 4241 Initial Destruction

As the Gauge Dynasty hastily prepared to meet the invaders in battle, Task Force Fury continued to make a huge mess of the star system.

Dozens of trade ships got ruined. The Warp Ravagers did not distinguish between ships hailing from the Friday Colonies and those belonging to foreign groups and trading companies.

No matter where they hailed from and who they were working for, each and any of them conducted business with the Fridaymen, which meant they were fair game in the eyes of the Hexers!

The scale of destruction that the Hexers had wrought so far was already painful enough to set back the development of the colony by a year or more.

Not only did a lot of trade vessels carrying invaluable materials and industrial equipment fall at the hands of the Warp Ravagers, the Gaugers also lost a lot of outlying infrastructure throughout the star system!

Mining bases, ore processing facilities and most importantly the large gas processing plant at Pima Prime IX-C turned into molten and shattered ruins after enduring sustained bombardments from aggressive Hexer detachments.

Due to Governor Mabrius Gauge's quick decision to give up all pretense of defending these assets, the Hexers met with virtually no opposition aside from coming across the occasional space mines and automated defense turrets.

Both sides knew that the real battle would not start until they met at the orbit of Pima Prime V.

As the distance between the invading fleet and the principal trading hub in the port system continued to diminish, the prospect of a collision became more and more certain.

"There are only twelve hours left until we begin the assault on Pima Prime V-A." General Verle's projection reported to Ves. "We will face much heavier opposition once we commence this critical attack. Although we do not expect to fail in our attempt to break open the moon complex and destroy all of the shipbuilding facilities that the Gauge Dynasty has built up at great cost, the Sundered Phalanx's ranged units will probably pelt us with long-ranged attacks. We can't afford to take a break under those circumstances. Considering how little time we have to complete this operation, we must immediately proceed with the main assault on the Kosic Ring."

Ves grimaced as he paced around in his private office. His upgraded Unending Regalia hardly gave him any sense of security when he thought about coming face to face with well over a hundred-thousand enemy mechs including a score of high-ranking mechs.

The scale of this battle was unimaginable. While he had decided to take part in this operation in order to give his Larkinsons valuable experience in fighting under these circumstances, a part of him still questioned the wisdom of taking part in an enormous grudge match.

The hatred between the Fridaymen and the Hexers ran so deep that getting involved would most certainly increase his infamy among the former.

However, as long as the Golden Skull Alliance helped the Hexers vanquish the opposition, the reputation and prestige that he and his allies would obtain from this action was of incalculable value!

While a lot of people in the Red Ocean had difficulty appreciating the effort required to defeat alien forces, it was a lot more obvious how much strength it took to successfully assault a well-defended core colony that had been built up with the support of one of the leading powers of a second-rate state!

Then there were the other possible rewards he could obtain from succeeding in this venture. Just thinking about the huge amount of loot that was still stuck on a planet that was almost just as developed as Davute already started to make his mouth water.

Thinking about all of these reasons allowed Ves regained his determination to proceed with this risky offensive.

"I recognize that there will be a hard fight ahead of us, but Task Force Fury will be doing most of the heavy lifting this time, right?"

"That is correct, sir." General Verle briefly smiled. "According to our current plans, the mech divisions of the Hex Army shall act as the anvil, while we shall function as the hammer. This means that the Hexer mech units will move forward first and attract as much firepower from the Sundered Phalanx as they can. This will grant us the initiative to move and attack the Sundered Phalanx on our terms."

In other words, the Hex Army essentially agreed to act as the closest thing to cannon fodder for this upcoming confrontation. Ves couldn't imagine the losses that Task Force Fury would suffer as a result.

The Golden Skull Alliance on the other hand could huddle its expeditionary fleet safely in the rear and dispatch its mech forces under favorable circumstances while enjoying the cover of the brave Hexer mech units.

"How luxurious. It's nice not to be the main target of the opposition for once."

General Verle adopted a disapproving gesture. "Don't take our role lightly. The reason why the Hexers agreed to give us space is because they have handed over the responsibility for cutting through the sharpest knives of the Sundered Phalanx to us. We must defeat the strongest Fridayman assets, and that fight alone will cost us plenty of mechs and lives. Furthermore, we must also

confront their stronger and more potent expert mechs. It is already a given that we will suffer losses among our own expert mechs."

That was a heavy realization and one that did not sit entirely well with Ves. No matter how much he had strengthened his expert mechs and no matter what advantages they possessed against the opposition, a battle of this scope always produced casualties.

Ves didn't actually mind too much if the Sundered Phalanx wrecked his expert mechs. They could always be rebuilt or replaced with enough time.

It was a lot harder to replace expert pilots, particularly if they had grown a considerable amount!

While Ves had invested a lot of funding into strengthening the cockpits of all of his expert mechs, who knew how well they would be able to withstand withering fire from the Sundered Phalanx.

"We need to be ready to rescue our expert pilots whenever possible." Ves instructed General Verle. "Each pilot is an indispensable asset. Make sure to station plenty of regular troops in their vicinity if possible and task them with rescuing our expert pilots if they have become vulnerable all of a sudden."

'That will cost us, sir."

"I would rather lose the lives of a hundred ordinary mech pilots than lose a single ready-made expert pilot."

"...Understood. I will pass on the necessary orders."

Though General Verle did not like this instruction, he understood what Ves was getting at. The Larkinson Clan had built up a considerable reserve of ordinary mech pilots and could always hire thousands more from Davute's expanding job market.

In other words, each of the ordinary pilots in the service of the Larkinson Army were expendable assets.

"I mean it, Verle. Don't take any half-measures. I will allow our expert pilots to be defeated in battle, but under no circumstances should they be killed entirely. Their ejected cockpits must be preserved at all costs until we can bring them back to our fleet. If we lose too many expert pilots, then it is highly doubtful whether we can proceed with the Trailblazer Expedition. I did not spend so many years on preparing for this massive venture only to cancel my plans before I ever got started."

After making it abundantly clear that Ves wanted his expert pilots to be preserved as much as possible, the discussion soon turned into another direction.

"How have the rest of the Friday Colonies reacted to this invasion?" Ves asked.

"Most of the forces stationed in the other colonies have stayed put for the most part." General Verle replied. "Surprisingly enough, the forces hailing from the Carnegie Group, the Vermeer Group, the Vanguard Group and the Puffer Clan have not even put up a pretense of moving to reinforce Pima Prime. They have stalled long enough that even if they depart now, they will arrive well after the dust has settled."

"It looks like the animosity between the Gauge Dynasty and the weaker coalition partners has deteriorated more than we anticipated." Ves smirked.

"Well, it is good to hear that Tristan's secret backers are at least upholding their end of the deal."

"You are still forgetting another coalition partner, sir. Unlike the aforementioned groups, the Konsu Clan is the only ally of the Gauge Dynasty that has dispatched reinforcements to Pima Prime. They are already on their

way and should arrive at the edge of the star system soon enough. Combined with the reinforcements sent by the other Gauger colonies, we estimate that around 30,000 to 40,000 mechs more enemies will enter this star system soon enough."

"That's all?"

"That is only the first wave, sir. The more time passes by, the more reinforcements arrive from more parts of the Friday Colonies. Depending on how much damage we sustain and how much munitions we will deplete in the upcoming assault, the fresh troops that have arrived from elsewhere can pose a considerable threat against us. At the very least, they may be able to delay and frustrate our attempts at escaping from this star system, thereby buying time for a proper counterattack."

Ves frowned. "Damn Konsus. Can't they mind their own business?"

"The Konsus have always been close to the Gaugers according to the intelligence I've read. It is not a surprise that their interests are so intertwined with that of their allies that they have readily chosen to dispatch a couple of mech divisions to Pima Prime."

It was not difficult for Ves to understand the motives behind this move.

"Perhaps the Konsus aren't so eager to confront us in battle, but they don't have to go this far. Even if their troops end up doing nothing, the Konsus will still be able to prove their sincerity to the Gaugers. Of course, if we sustain so much damage from the ensuing fighting that we have become easy pickings, the Oni Guard won't be able to resist the urge to pick up a bargain."

All of this meant that the intruding forces needed to hurry up and finish their business as quickly as possible!

The discussion ended shortly afterwards. Ves left General Verle to prepare the Larkinson Army for the imminent battle and checked up on the other parts of the clan.

Surprisingly, not everyone in the clan felt comfortable with what they were doing. Ships like the Spirit of Bentheim, the Discentibus, the Vivacious Wal and the Dragon's Den had no business wandering into an active battlefield!

Even if the Larkinson Clan had bolstered all of their defenses and added extra bunkers to their hulls, their ability to resist withering fire still fell far behind dedicated fleet carriers such as the Wild Torch and the Gorgoneion.

"We have buttoned down our ships as best as we can." Chief Minister Abigail Evern reported to Ves. "The formation that we will assume will also prioritize their protection. No matter what frontal angle the Sundered Phalanx tries to shoot at us, our defensive vessels and combat carriers will always be in the way to absorb enemy fire first. The consequence of this decision is that we will suffer increased losses to our combat carriers."

Ves sighed. This was a difficult tradeoff to make. "I understand. Try your best to spread out the damage as much as possible. I don't mind if our non-combat vessels absorb a bit of damage. They are all covered by ship-grade shield generators and their hulls should have been reinforced as well. It's not a big deal if parts of their outer compartments get breached either. Just make sure that the Fridaymen will not be able to inflict so much damage that our capital ships will become crippled or destroyed in their entirety."

"The Larkinson Navy will do what it can, but what you are suggesting is no different from playing with fire. Depending on how much the Fridaymen hate us, we may become the target of a desperate revenge action."

"Then coordinate with the Hex Army. They have a lot of starships as well. I hope we will be able to enjoy their cover as well if we need the support."

## Chapter 4242 Settling Family

As the range between the invaders and Pima Prime grew closer, various people made their final resolutions before they were ready to sortie into battle.

Venerable Brutus Wodin's expression turned gentle and affectionate as he bent down to pat the heads of his two lovely children.

Both of them wore protective hazard suits that were especially sized for small children.

"Daddy! I don't want you to go!" Wexel Wodin-Larkinson rubbed his eyes and cried. "Why can't you stay with us? Why can't mommy stay as well?"

Brutus bled his heart out when he heard and sensed the fear emanating from his son.

"I cannot accompany you because I am a soldier and a protector. In times like these, I must do my duty and fight so that you will remain safe. I am doing this for both of you, my children. When you grow older, you will understand."

"Mama." Terina Wodin-Larkinson ran up to her mother's suited legs and clung as tight as she could. "I don't want you to go either."

Legion Commander Sendra Larkinson's firm heart melted for a moment as her motherly instincts overpowered her Swordmaiden tendencies.

The woman bent down and lifted her baby daughter in her arms. The little designer baby soon settled down as she enjoyed the warm embrace of her mother.

Sendra kissed Terina's head numerous times.

"Your mama has a duty as well, my cute princess. My fellow Swordmaidens and Larkinsons need me on the battlefield. Don't worry, though. You will still be among family. As long as you hop into this shuttle, you will be brought over to the Spirit of Bentheim where your auntie Gloriana and your cousins will



keep you all company. They are all family so they will take good care of you. If anything happens to us... then Gloriana will be your new mother."

"I don't want another mama! I want you! You must stay!"

Both Brutus and Sendra exchanged helpless looks with each other. One of the benefits of raising designer babies was that they became smart really quickly.

They also learned how to use the toilet and other basic necessities much earlier than normal.

The downside was that their accelerated mental development allowed them to understand all kinds of complicated adult stuff like death and loss far in advance.

Venerable Brutus and Commander Sendra weren't the only parents who had to conduct a difficult talk with their children before they boarded their respective mechs.

Other couples such as Director Ranya Wodin and Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson also had to tell their children that it was necessary for mommy or daddy to fight on the frontlines of a massive battle.

This was the downside to promoting family and childbirth throughout the Larkinson Clan.

A lot of young couples had tied the knot during the 5-year break at Davute. Many of them also did not take much time to have children.

Now, thousands of young boys and girls burst out into tears as they had to wave their mother and fathers off to battle.

Elsewhere in the fleet, Venerable Joshua Larkinson shared a soft and intimate kiss with Ketis.

Once the expert pilot was done with expressing his affection for his wife, he smiled and bent down to kiss the head of the young baby that was cradled in her mother's arms.

"I love you so much, Mayra."

His second offspring giggled and happily reached out to pat her father's cheeks.

Joshua looked down and patted his son on the head and shoulder. "You stay with your mother, okay? You're the man of the family while I am gone. Just do your best to keep little Mayra company. You're a Larkinson. You're not too young to start doing your duty."

The little black-haired kid looked cute as he attempted a salute. "I won't let anything happen to mommy and my little sis!"

Ketis chuckled in mirth. "Calm down, Kirian. Your mother can take care of herself in a fight. I will demolish anyone who even thinks of touching your hair."

Her concerns were as clear as day, though. She briefly glanced back at her floating Bloodsinger and felt more helpless than ever.

"This is not your battle, honey." Venerable Joshua softly said even as his determination to fight and win grew stronger. "Let me take care of it all. I have your Heartsword by my Everchanger's side. That is all of the support that I need from you. I'm also not deploying into battle with the base form of my expert mech. After such a long time, I finally have the honor of deploying into battle with my first mountain wargear."

Ketis perked up all of a sudden. "I never imagined I would feel so grateful that Ves has spent so much time and attention on designing those oversized equipment loadouts. Which one will you make use of first?"

"Definitely the City Breaker." The expert pilot answered. "The initial battle will start at extreme range. This is a good opportunity for me and every other ranged mech to bombard any target we can hit at extreme range. Hopefully, we'll be able to overwhelm a titan shield and knock out at least one of the defensive space stations orbiting around Pima Prime V before the next phase of the battle commences."

The early phase of the battle was not decisive for the attackers. The Sundered Phalanx possessed a distinctive advantage in ranged combat due to its emphasis on fighting against living mechs outside of the range of any hostile glows if possible.

Combined with all of the defensive installations of the Kosic Ring, it was highly likely that Task Force Fury as well as the Golden Skull Alliance would be suffering greater losses than the enemy.

It was crucially important for the attackers to get as close as possible so that all of their melee mechs would finally be able to exchange blows with their enemy counterparts!

"What then?" Ketis asked.

"I'll probably change to the Titan-5 loadout next." Joshua answered. "The patriarch has always been eager to see how it performs in a real battle against a real opponent. The meat suit is also well-equipped to fight against large numbers of weaker opponents, though I'm sure that whoever is responsible for it will complain about all of the biomass that I will use up during the fighting."

"That's no big deal. Biomass can always be regrown. Will you switch to another loadout after that?"

"It depends, Ketis. The battle will probably be in its hottest phase at this stage. All of this mounted wargear is great against large forces, but they're not

flexible and agile enough for me to duel against the enemy's melee expert mechs. The Sundered Phalanx will most definitely recognize the threat my Everchanger poses to them if I am allowed to do what I want. Commander Casella Ingvar even told me that I will probably be so high-profile on the battlefield that the Fridaymen will dispatch a powerhouse of their own to stop me from wrecking their rank-and-file units."

"Joshua!"

"Don't worry, honey. I got this." Joshua confidently stated as he quickly embraced his wife once again. "This is all part of a plan. I'm never alone. If the Sundered Phalanx truly dares to send one of its high-tier expert mechs to me, I will have backup by my side to contain or destroy the threat."

As Joshua tried to reassure Ketis that he was not going in half-cocked, his son Kirian called for attention again.

"Will you beat a lot of bad guys, daddy?"

The father of the family smiled indulgently at his kid. "Daddy will most certainly do whatever is necessary to keep us all alive. I will defeat as many enemies as I must, but personally I hope that most of them will see sense and retreat. I don't want to spill more blood than is necessary."

Ketis scoffed a bit. "I don't see your wish coming true."

"I can still hope."

Elsewhere, two siblings stood before their respective expert mechs.

Of the two suited expert pilots, one of them looked at the newly-arrived mech designer in incomprehension.

"I appreciate the offer, but I don't need another weapon." Venerable Imon Ingvar politely said. "Besides, what can a little pistol do? I'm not opposed to

carrying an extra gun, but it has to be powerful enough to be worth the trouble."

"Don't be fooled by its size. It's much more powerful than it looks." Gloriana told him. "It carries a brand new crystal type that should pack a lot of punch against certain kinds of opposition. Who knows. It might even be useful against the Tensars that you are meant to face. Against opponents as strong as the Arma Tensar and the Fila Tensar, it is best to have more options available. Don't you want to protect your sister from harm? As a rare command-oriented expert pilot, I can guarantee you that the Sundered Phalanx will treat her as a priority target."

"...I will take the gun."

"Good. It will be mounted onto your mech in a minute. Make sure to read the manual."

Gloriana passed on a number of tips and instructions before she left the two Ingvars alone.

"You heard what Gloriana said. The enemy will be aiming at you." Imon said in obvious concern.

Commander Casella did not look impressed, though.

"I'm hardly alone, brother. I will be surrounded by a lot of Living Sentinels and other Larkinson mechs. Before an enemy is able to reach me, they will have to get through all of our other units."

"The Sundered Phalanx have plenty of elite strike units and powerful expert mechs as well."

"I'm a priority target no matter what enemy we face. As long as the enemy discovers that I'm a force multiplier, I will be fighting with a target behind my back."

As the Ingvars siblings came to terms with this, Ves became preoccupied with settling his own children.

He initially planned to stow them in his grand stateroom, but given their important roles in the future, he came up with an even better idea.

Why not keep them by his side and allow them to witness at least a part of the fighting process?

Hardly any kid could boast of sitting in the front seats of a massive offensive action!

The bridge of the Spirit of Bentheim became a lot noisier as the Patriarch invited his three kids to where he would be performing his duties for the foreseeable time.

"Fight! Fight! Fight!" Andraste excitedly yelled.

Aurelia frowned and shook her sister's body. "Sister, be quiet! You're embarrassing yourself!"

"Hey! You're not the boss of me, big sis. I can yell whatever I want!"

As the two girls started to argue against each other again, Marvaine sat quietly on top of Ves' armored lap.

Marvaine looked extremely fascinated as he traced his covered fingers over the tough, metallic exterior of the Unending Regalia.

"So cool. Can you give me my own armor as well, papa?"

"Hahaha!" Ves laughed as he approved of Marvaine's curiosity. "Maybe one day you will. Preferably, I would like you to build your own suit. There is nothing better than designing and making your own armored suit with your own hands."

"Huh? Make my own suit?"

"Yes. You have the talent for this. You're my son, Marvaine. As long as you want to learn my craft, I will always be available to teach you the tricks of my trade. Let alone an armored suit like my Unending Regalia, I can easily teach you to design cool and awesome mechs like the Transcendent Punisher and the Stingripper. What is your favorite expert mech?"

"Ummmm... the Everchanger!" Marvaine enthusiastically replied!

"You have good taste! That happens to be my favorite expert mech as well!" Ves proudly smiled. "What if I tell you that you will be able to design your own expert mech like the Everchanger one day? Not an exact copy of the Everchanger, of course, but as long as you become good enough, you will easily be able to design a mech that is just full of life!"

"I want it! Teach me, papa!"

"I would love to teach you how to design mechs! For now, just sit back and watch the battle unfold. We mech designers live for this. Make sure you pay extra attention to our expert mechs. They're my best works."

"Okay, papa~"

### **Chapter 4243 Every Second Counts**

Pima Prime V-A came under assault!

Normally, nothing much happened at the first moon that orbited the most important planet in the star system.

Unlike Pima Prime V-B that operated as a stopover point and a logistical hub, the first moon was supposed to function as a defensive bulwark.

The Gauge Dynasty drafted grand plans that sought to turn Pima Prime V-A into the main headquarters of the Sundered Phalanx in the entire Friday Colonies!

By turning large parts of its surface as well as its underground terrain into military facilities, the moon was meant to become so formidable that its mere existence would deter many attackers from launching an attack on Pima Prime!

However, the amount of funding required to transform the moon to this extent was astronomical. The amount of resources and industrial capacity needed to build up all of those military-grade defenses and constructs simply weren't present.

The Gauge Dynasty was already preoccupied with absorbing the large chunks of territory it had conquered from the former Hexadric Hegemony. The Gaugers also had to rebuild their military and reinforcements in their home state in order to deter other parties from taking advantage of their weakened conditions.

Considering that the Gaugers had already stationed 14 veteran mech divisions and one powerful ace pilot in the port system, none of the Fridaymen thought that there would be any rush to bolster Pima Prime's defenses any further.

This was why the grand construction process centered around Pima Prime V-A was not scheduled to be finished until 30 years later!

It appeared that the Gauge Dynasty had gravely underestimated the threat level of the Red Ocean.

Though the Magair Middle Zone did indeed suffer a lot less alien incursions in the past few years, the amount of human-to-human conflicts increased dramatically!

Now, the Gaugers suffered from their grave miscalculation as their powerful military base on Pima Prime V-A came under heavy bombardment!



The invasion fleet which was still barreling towards the main planet had opened fire as soon as they reached extreme range.

The ironically-named Crosshair Base fell into the targeting sights of tens of thousands of heavy artillery mechs, cannoner mechs and even rifleman mechs!

With so much firepower bearing down onto the stationary fortress, its formidable titan shield immediately endured an enormous battering!

In comparison, the defensive turrets sheltering underneath the powerful energy shield made a courageous but lackluster attempt to exact a price from the attackers.

The massive fleet easily dealt with the attacks. Many different carrier vessels absorbed the incoming attacks with the help of their ship-grade shield generators before retreating behind the hulls of other ships when their shield capacities began to reach their limits.

This way, the fleet effectively suffered no material damage!

The long-ranged fire from the artillery mechs stationed all the way at the Kotic Ring were able to inflict more damage due to their greater volume of fire.

However, the enormous range made it too impractical to fire physical weapons, so the Sundered Phalanx mech units and the stationary turrets of the Kotic Ring mostly limited their output to laser beam attacks.

By leveraging the advantages of the fastest and most precise attack method in their arsenal, the defenders were able to concentrate their attacks on specific starships and put a lot of pressure on them, overwhelming their shield generators and inflicting serious damage to their hulls before they could take shelter behind other friendly ships!

Even so, many long-ranged attacks missed more often than not due to a combination of heavy ECM and other clever measures.

General Alisky Victrix didn't even bat an eye as she observed the stricken ships on the large battle map projection in the middle of the command center.

One of them received such a great blast that the combat carrier lost power and drifted out of formation!

"Have her mechs deployed already?"

"Everything aside from her bunker mechs, ma'am."

"Pull them out as well. Carve them out of their bunkers if you will have to. We need their firepower for the engagement to come."

Though Task Force Fury was already beginning to suffer its first real casualties, the thick and powerful titan shield surrounding Crosshair Base was destabilizing by the minute!

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Crosshair Base was just the first phase of a larger fortification project.

In addition to that, tens of thousands of mechs should have been stationed in and around the defensive works.

If Pima Prime V-A had become the defensive bulwark envisioned by the Gauge Dynasty, then not even a massive mech army numbering over a million mechs would have been able to overpower it with ease!

As it was, all of the money and resources spent on building up the initial base pretty much went down the drain.

The expensive strategic titan shield generator that was buried deep underneath the moon surface began to whine and overheat, much to the consternation of the few patriotic engineers that had volunteered to man their stations to the bitter end!

"We can't hold it much longer! We've pulled out every trick in the box that we can come up with, but we've squeezed the last bit of potential out of this damn titan shield generator. There's nothing left to give! If the dynamic rings don't blow apart from the stress, then the internal structure will begin to melt from the excessive heat build-up! It would be a miracle if it lasts 5 more minutes!"

"Then we will do our best to last 5 minutes! The more time we buy for the rest of our boys, the more we tire out the Hexers in advance. Every second counts!"

Despite the best efforts of the sacrificial engineers, the enormous titan shield generator finally shut down and became inoperable just 2 minutes later!

"Nooo!"

Even though the shield generator didn't blow up and merely radiated a lot of heat in the enormous chamber, the engineers all knelt in despair as their primary defensive measure finally failed.

"It's over!"

Task Force Fury immediately noticed the changes. The Hexer ranged mechs quickly tightened their aim and specifically targeted the exposed turrets and other critical defensive modules.

Crosshair Base quickly lost all of its teeth as its fortifications simply weren't up to the task of resisting the incoming attacks without the cover of a titan shield.

Once it no longer posed a significant threat against the invading forces, General Alisky Victrix diverted a couple of demolition-oriented mech companies to finish the job and more importantly wreck the 24 underground shipyards that previously produced a lot of combat carriers and other important starships for the Gauge Dynasty.

All of the hulls under construction soon broke apart after suffering sustained bombardment. The intruding Hexer mechs then proceeded to blast all of the construction equipment and other production machines without mercy!

Though the Fridaymen could technically come back and salvage the remains to rebuild a lot of machinery, there was a lot of high-quality precision equipment that could not be easily made in the frontier.

The Gauge Dynasty either had to make them back in their home star sector and ship them over to the Red Ocean at a huge cost and delay, or exchange valuable MTA credits to obtain ready-made goods.

Neither of these options were cost-effective!

Despite the heavy losses suffered at Pima Prime V-A, Governor Mabrius Gauge and the rest of his leadership council did not flinch at the downfall of Crosshair Base and the moonside shipyards.

The real prizes of the port system was concentrated on the surface and just below the ground of Pima Prime V.

The System Governor had a duty to defend the critical industries and infrastructure of the developing planet!

"This is where they stop." He declared as he put on his most resplendent uniform and personally supervised the defense effort from the Palace of New Beginnings. "We have beaten the Hexers once. We can beat them again. We have taken the measure of their firepower during their assault on an unimportant moon base. However many guns they brought to this fight, we have more! With the Kotic Ring backing us all up, we can shred their mechs apart long before they close the distance!"

This was the greatest reliance of the Sundered Phalanx. Task Force Fury may look overwhelming, but a substantial amount of Hexer mechs were primarily melee mechs that excelled at close-ranged battles!

Unfortunately, the ferocity and hatred that the Hexers channeled towards the Fridaymen did not translate well in ranged combat.

Calm, precision and rationality often served mech pilots better when they needed to fight against opponents at a distance.

Once Pima Prime V-A got demolished, the attack fleet proceeded onwards while splitting off a section of its ships.

Numerous vessels landed on the surface of the moon that was located on its 'dark side' which faced away from the planet it orbited.

These ships consisted of logistical vessels, cargo vessels reserved for carrying a lot of plunder and combat carriers that were loaded with landbound mechs and other specialized solutions for the anticipated planetary assault.

The Golden Skull Alliance also left behind a substantial portion of its fleet.

Ships such as the Discentibus, the Diligent Ovenbird, the Dragon's Den, the Vivacious Wal and many smaller support vessels used the moon as a shield to protect them against bombardment from the main defensive units of the Sundered Phalanx.

The Hexers and Golden Skullers also left behind a reserve consisting of thousands alert spaceborn mech units. These units were assigned to guard the rear until they were needed at the frontlines.

Now that the attack fleet had temporarily stashed away its more burdensome elements, the rest of the starships and mechs continued to barrel forward in order to close the distance as quickly as possible.

Even though both Task Force Fury and the Larkinson Clan possessed ships and mechs that possessed warp travel capabilities, none of them dared speed up at this time.

The expensive assets would just get isolated and picked off with ease if they jumped ahead!

Instead, the predominantly Hexer line advanced at a steady, uniform pace. As many of the leading ships endured hundreds if not thousands of laser beam strikes, the vessels frequently turned and rotated their hulls in order to spread the damage across multiple directional energy shields and hull sections.

"Hahaha! So what if they have a lot of guns? They're all shooting from the front! Our ships just have to roll over and the Fridaymen have to start all over again!"

A single combat carrier could easily endure up to a hundred times as many attacks if the ship was able to disperse all of the incoming attacks over her entire surface area!

The Sundered Phalanx mech pilots tried to counteract this by concentrating their fire and timing their attacks to inflict huge bursts of damage in the smallest possible time interval.

The experienced and well-trained Fridaymen mech pilots were all proficient in this. Their professional coordination along with abundant support from the rear allowed them to maximize their firepower as best as possible.

The 'real' fight hadn't even begun and already Task Force Fury was losing combat carriers left and right at an increasingly faster pace than before!

Even then, General Alisky Victrix did not show any reaction. The Mother's Wrath along with many other ships continued to move past the disabled and derelict carriers in grim determination.

"If they are shooting our carriers, they're not shooting down our mechs." The female leader remarked with a smirk. "Let them fire at our ships. We will win as long as we retain enough combat capable mechs at the end!"

Compared to the Hexers who were losing a substantial amount of hardware from long-ranged bombardment, the Sundered Phalanx was in a much better position.

Many of its mechs were hiding behind the defensive platforms or within the protective envelopes of the military space stations that comprised the Kotic Ring.

Each space station was protected by a titan shield that was not much weaker than the one that protected Crosshair Base, which meant that they mitigated an enormous amount of damage!

This meant that aside from the occasional accident, the main mech divisions of the Sundered Phalanx had suffered no substantial losses up to this point!

"These Fridaymen are turtling behind their defenses!"

"Then let us tear down their walls! No defense lasts forever!"

#### **Chapter 4244 Transcendent Punisher Mark LI**

Though the shooting had begun over an hour ago, the intensity of the battle was not too great.

Not a lot of mechs were capable of dealing effective damage at longer ranges, and it was not that difficult to manage the incoming damage.

Ranged expert mechs such as the Amaranto hadn't even been put into play as of yet. Their firepower needed to be reserved against the greater threats of the Friday Coalition.

For now, the fight was predominantly fought by the lesser units of the two sides. The individual losses did not even register to the officers anymore as all of them understood that it was a numbers game.

Whoever ran out of mechs and lost all combat effectiveness first would lose this crucial engagement!

It took a lot of time to get to that point. The Fridaymen and the Hexers were well-versed with long campaigns that stretched across weeks or months of constant fighting.

The exchange of fire slowly intensified as more and more weapons became effective at different ranges.

Mechs such as the Larkinson Clan's Transcendent Punisher Mark II and Eternal Redemption Mark II started to bring their formidable gauss cannons to bear.

Ves paid a lot of attention to the latest edition of the Transcendent Punisher. The Ylvainain mech pilots did not activate the signature ability of their iconic mech model. They did not need to do so when they were mostly aiming their firepower at the stationary defensive fortifications of the Kotic Ring.

At his side, Shannon Maris tried her best to prevent his kids from running around the bridge of the Spirit of Bentheim and distracting the crew from performing their vital duties.

"Pew pew pew!" Andraste excitedly lifted a mech figurine of the Transcendent Punisher Mark II and pretended that its heavy cannons were firing beams and projectiles at the Sundered Phalanx. "Boom! You're dead!"

It actually took quite a bit of strength for Andraste to lift her toy. Since it was based on a heavy mech, it was larger and heavier than the other mech figurines that Ves had made for his daughter!

The energetic girl continued to play with her mech figurine until a larger pair of hands plucked the toy from her grasp!

"Now now, what did we tell you about shouting and yelling in the workplace, young lady?"



The red-headed girl jumped and tried to take back her toy, but her nanny kept it well out of her reach!

"Give it back!"

"I won't give it back until you calm down and learn your lesson. You need a reminder on how to behave. This is a serious situation, young lady!"

Further back, the oldest of the three children had become a lot more somber about what was happening.

"Meow."

"Miaow."

Aurelia tried her best to look composed and in control while she remained seated on her child-sized chair. She gazed at the central projections with some concern.

Lucky and Clixie had draped themselves over the armrests of the small chair and offered up their backs for pets and hugs.

"How many people will get hurt, you think?" The eldest girl asked as she scratched Clixie's chin.

"Miaow miaow..."

"My uncles and aunties have talked much about the battles our clan has fought. I never knew they could be so scary. Is this what everyone used to feel?"

"Miaow miaow miaow."

"I will make sure our clan will never feel this way then." Aurelia quietly vowed.

Ves on the other hand continued to 'educate' his youngest son about mech design.

Though any other child shouldn't have been able to understand anything about mechs let alone figure out  $2 + 2$ , Ves did not underestimate the intellect of his latest child.

In any case, even if Marvaine barely understood anything about mechs, it was fun to talk about them anyway.

Many children developed a fascination towards mechs and Ves wanted to make sure his son was not an exception.

"What does Mark II stand for, papa?" Marvaine asked as he continued to sit on Ves' armored lap. "Does it mean the mech is named after Mark?"

Ves chuckled. "No, my son. Mark can be a name, but it can also have a different meaning. When it comes to mechs and other technological products, Mark usually stands for the version of a particular model. Sometimes people use No., Version or Variant, but it all comes down to the same meaning. Whatever product has a higher mark is the newer version of the same machine."

"So this is not your Transcendent Punisher mech?"

"Yup. Our clan used to field an older version, but its firepower was too weak and its defenses weren't sturdy enough to keep up with the battles in the Red Ocean."

"What did you change, papa?"

"Many things." Ves replied as he called up a projection that showed the simplified design schematics of the first and second versions of the Transcendent Punishers. "Look at these two designs. What stands out to you first?"

"The outside looks the same but the inside looks different!"

"That's right! What an astute observation! The exterior looks the same because this is the look of a Transcendent Punisher. It is supposed to look big, heavy, imposing but also righteous and sacred. That is why it has a bright coating. It makes its pilots feel good. I already like how it looked in the original version, and didn't change anything about the exterior in the second version."

Marvaine paid more attention to the differences in the internal design of the two versions of the same model. The changes that the Larkinson Clan had made were drastic. It was not a mistake to say that Ves and his design team had practically reinvented the Transcendent Punisher model!

"The guns are all different." The boy pointed out. "Their shapes are different."

"That's right. I've replaced the old set of guns with completely different models that are better in many ways. Take the main source of energy damage output for example. The first version of the mech that I designed many years ago only came with a pair of relatively ordinary positron beam cannons. There's nothing wrong with them, but our clan can do much better these days. I've designed a brand-new luminar crystal cannon model that is based on my more recent advancements in luminar crystal technology."

Marvaine looked confused as he compared the two designs. "Huh? Why is this cannon stronger when it looks simpler?"

Ves chuckled again. "Who told you that more complicated mechs are stronger?"

"Mama."

"Well, mama is wrong. My new luminar crystal cannons are based on alien technology, who just happens to be better at developing energy weapons than humans. By borrowing the technological principles of the luminar race, I've developed these powerful cannons that are currently pounding the defenses of the Fridaymen with great power! Look at this graph, for example. This

shows the estimated damage output of different ranged mechs. Our Transcendent Punisher Mark II's are easily out-damaging the models of the Hex Army. Our allies have a lot more heavy artillery mechs than us, but the quality and production cost of our Ylvainan machines are much higher!"

Ves did not skimp on much when he led the upgrade project for the Transcendent Punisher line.

Ranged combat was the name of the game in the new frontier. A mech force had no capital to roam the Red Ocean and fight against aliens without bigger and more powerful guns!

"Do you know how much stronger my exclusive luminar crystal cannons have become compared to the old pair of positron cannons?"

"How much?"

"60 percent!"

Marvaine's eyes grew wide. "Ohhhh."

"Do you remember what I taught about percentages?"

"You divide something by a hundred and multiply by the number."

"That's correct! So what does it mean if a weapon is 60 percent stronger?"

"It takes much less time to kill an enemy!"

"That is also correct!" Ves grinned. "This is exactly why I invested so much money and effort into equipping the Transcendent Punisher Mark II with my latest model of luminar crystal cannons. Not only has its versatility increased enormously by granting it the option of firing multiple different beam types, but it is also far more efficient and far more powerful due to all of the new tech. By eliminating enemies faster, our opposition will have less mechs left to destroy our own stuff, allowing us to destroy their remaining mechs with greater ease.

This will produce a snowball effect that will eventually result in massive victories."

"Are we winning now, papa?"

Ves' expression turned a bit awkward. "Not... exactly. The current battle is still in its early stages. While our new artillery mechs are undoubtedly the strongest, we haven't brought enough of them to make a bigger difference in this artillery duel."

If Task Force Fury replaced all of its Hexer-developed artillery mechs with Transcendent Punishers, then Ves undoubtedly believed that they would be able to achieve a bigger advantage at this stage of the battle!

Unfortunately, the Hex Army could not afford to invest so much money in the development and production of its artillery mechs. Though it pared back the amount of mech models it actively used, there were still hundreds of different mechs that each needed to be produced in different quantities in order to protect the Hex Federation.

Even though Ves looked down on the more economical artillery mech models employed by the Hexers, he could not ignore the sheer amount of firepower they wielded at the moment!

"What about these other guns, papa? Why don't they look so different?"

"Ah, those are gauss cannons. I told you once before how they worked. Do you still remember what I said?"

Marvaine briefly paused and recalled the words from his prodigious memory. "You wrap a lot of coils around a barrel and run electric current through it to generate a force that can push a metal slug really fast!"

"Exactly! That's my little genius! Good boy!"

"Hihihi!"

The 100,000 MTA credits that he had paid Witshaw & Seneca to develop Marvaine's genes were not in vain!

Ves didn't have the slightest clue what kind of weird alien or artificial genes they blended into Marvaine's DNA, but the results so far made him extremely satisfied.

It was a blessing to raise a born genius!

"Look closely at the coils in the diagrams." The dutiful father pointed out.

"They look a little different, don't they?"

His son nodded. "The coils of the newer mech are thinner, smaller and shorter than the older gun. Doesn't it mean that it is weaker?"

"That is only the case when everything else is equal, Marvaine. If the materials and overall design of the gauss weapon system has remained constant, then making these coils smaller should have indeed lowered the weapon's performance. Now what did I do to make this smaller gauss cannon more powerful?"

"You... made it more expensive?"

"Yup! Don't underestimate these relatively fragile-looking coils. They're made of materials that are much tougher and can conduct electricity much more effectively without deforming or melting after a time. By applying this approach throughout the entire weapon system, I have made it a lot more powerful but also a lot more efficient. It fires smaller projectiles, but because they fly out of the barrel a lot faster than before, its damage output is 40 percent greater than before!"

To be honest, Ves could have maintained the original size of the gauss cannons of the Transcendent Punisher Mark II, but he felt it made the heavy artillery mech too unwieldy and less fault-tolerant.

Since the guns were already powerful enough after incorporating high-quality materials and more advanced design elements, Ves had focused on making it more practical and enduring in longer engagements.

As a result, even if the Transcendent Punisher fought for numerous hours at a time, it would still be able to fire gauss rounds on a continuous basis as long as it was supplied with enough energy cells and ammunition racks, both of which could easily be replenished inside bunkers!

### **Chapter 4245 Little Genius**

Ves became increasingly more impressed how a tiny kid like Marvaine was already able to comprehend basic scientific theories.

If not for the fact that Marvaine was way too young and did not receive much lessons yet, he probably would have been able to start attending high school classes in advance!

Though Ves looked forward to seeing his little genius son grow into an excellent mech designer, he also began to get a headache at the thought of whether there was any point in sending him to school in the first place.

Marvaine learned so damn quickly that it was difficult to imagine that any of his classmates could catch up to his demonic pace!

Ves supposed that he and his wife could teach their child everything that he needed to know to get started, but that would deprive Marvaine of a lot of valuable experiences that he could only gain from institutions.

Perhaps he should look into sending him to an elite mech design university. Given humanity's proclivity in developing artificial geniuses, there should definitely be specialized institutions that were geared towards teaching these extremely scary children.

Ves could think about that later, though. For now, he wanted to keep Marvaine by his side and indoctrinate his son with all of his original theories and ideals!

"Aside from the two main guns, the Mark I and Mark II versions of the Transcendent Punisher differ in many other ways. Look at the armor system for example. It has received an all-round enhancement. We have especially reinforced its frontal and upper armor. Do you know why?"

"Because most attacks come from the front." Marvaine answered.

"That's correct, but that doesn't explain why we thickened its upper armor as well. Can you figure out the reason behind this design choice?"

"Uhhmm..."

Ves smiled. "The Transcendent Punisher is a landbound mech model, son. While it is primarily designed to function as a bunker mech, it is also capable of moving around and fighting on land. We even intend to land numerous mech companies of Transcendent Punisher Mark II's on the surface of Pima Prime V if we are able to win this battle. Do you understand now why it needs stronger upper armor?"

Marvaine's eyes quickly shone in understanding. "It's so that they can shoot down starships from the skies!"

Ves shook his head. "That's not exactly right. While it is technically possible for the Transcendent Punisher Mark II to strike at starships in orbit, in truth it is not practical enough. Many energy beams will lose a lot of energy when passing through many kilometers of air. Physical projectiles such as gauss rounds will not only have to fight against the local planet's gravity, but also endure a lot of air friction. By the time the gauss rounds get high enough, an alert starship would have long been able to move out of the way."

"I don't understand, papa."

"You don't need to understand right now. I will show you the modeling once you grow old enough to understand the math."



As Ves continued to explain many other nuances about the Transcendent Punisher Mark II to a child that should have been more interested in playing with toy mechs like his sister Andraste, the battle continued to grow hotter and hotter.

After the ranged mechs started to fire physical projectiles, the amount of damage that both sides endured became a lot greater!

Many Hexers ships continued to fall out of the battleline after suffering critical or crippling damage.

While the Sundered Phalanx would have preferred to reduce the amount of enemy mechs that were able to enter into battle, the Hexers guarded them too well. It was almost impossible to snipe them all down at such a long distance and when the majority were huddling carefully behind the massive hulls of their own motherships.

Even so, the rate of combat carriers that the Hexers were losing was starting to become distressing!

Perhaps it was still possible to perform emergency repairs on them to restore basic functionality, but each one that got knocked out meant that the Hexers wouldn't be able to return to friendly space with as many mechs as before!

However, General Alisky Victrix did not pay attention to this cost. She had been charged by the council of matriarchs to achieve victory in the Pima Prime System at all costs. It was worth sacrificing so many ships if it meant that the Fridaymen lost a large chunk of their shipbuilding, mech production and other important industrial capabilities!

In any case, as long as the Hex Federation retained all of its own shipyards, the Hexers would definitely be able to rebuild all of the sacrificed combat carriers over time!

"It is not as if we need as much mech capacity once we are done in this star system." The harsh general sneered.

Casualties were inevitable. In her opinion, any sacrifice was acceptable as long as her enemies suffered greater losses!

Whatever people thought of her strategy, it was having the desired effect. The Hexers lost relatively few ranged mechs at this stage.

Most of the Hexers mechs that got knocked out of the battle so far mostly consisted of bunker mechs.

They either got demolished after a succession of enemy attacks drilled through their layers of protection, or simply couldn't aim their weapons in the right direction anymore as the ships they were stationed on went on a ballistic course after becoming inoperable.

However, the Hexers managed to preserve most of their ranged combat power, much of which finally started to have an effect.

"Yes! We finally cracked one of their big shells!"

"Destroy the space station!"

One of the military space stations finally lost its titan shield after enduring a torrent of long-ranged attacks.

Though it took a lot more volleys to destroy the physical structure of the thick and sturdy space station, its fall represented the first gap in the Kotic Ring!

As other space stations and smaller defensive platforms continued to endure greater pressure, the first expert mechs finally began to make an appearance.

The most prominent expert mech that opened fire at this time was the Amaranto.

Ves' eyes lit up as he could finally witness the results of his upgrade work on his proudest ranged expert mechs.

Inside the cockpit of the Amaranto, Venerable Davia Stark grimaced a bit as she studied the long-ranged sensor readings supplied by the Blinding Banshee and other powerful starships.

Though the Amaranto Version 2.0 featured a massive upgrade to her sensor and targeting systems, in situations like these there was no need to rely on the small and limited modules of a mech.

The sensor and targeting data collected and processed by massive starships backed with extremely powerful processor banks were much more accurate and reliable than anything an individual mech could obtain!

As the expert rifleman mech huddled behind a protected firing position on the hull of the Gorgoneion, Venerable Stark eventually locked on to a distant expert mech that was moving rather exuberantly.

Unlike most of other Fridayman expert mechs that were laying low or hiding their presences entirely, one of them behaved differently than normal.

It was a hero expert mech.

Davia did not need to access the info supplied by the command net to figure out the identity of the mech and pilot.

"Venerable Dirkson Tavoren of the 345th Curmerands, piloting a mid-tier expert hero mech called the Azure Vanquisher."

There were plenty of public records about Venerable Tavoren and the Hexers collected even more information about his career trajectory.

The Curmerands was an old mech division and one that enjoyed a proud and storied history.

Venerable Dirksen Tavoren also performed well during the Komodo War, having fought toe-to-toe against his aggressive Hexer counterparts and rarely falling into a disadvantage!

What was notable about Venerable Tavoren was that he stood out for his ability to rally and encourage his fellow mech pilots.

He frequently led mechs into battle, bailed out friendlies that were about to get taken out by the enemy and shouted constant encouragements over the communication channels.

What the Azure Vanquisher was doing at the moment was undoubtedly a part of Venerable Tavoren's effort to keep up morale.

Venerable Stark did not underestimate this clownish act!

Hardly any Fridayman mech pilot would feel good at confronting a massive invasion force.

The undaunted advance of Task Force Fury already brought a lot of bad memories of the boody battles of the past.

In order to ensure that the defending troops fought with confidence and not with fear, Venerable Tavoren did his best to do his part and inspire the mech pilots around him to resist the invaders!

"We have beaten them once! We can beat them again! What are you afraid of?! As long as we hold the line, the Hexers will break in front of our defensive lines! These witches are all the same even after so many years have gone by. Their mechs look different, but as long as their heads are still filled with thoughts about mistreating boys, they won't know they have overreached until all of their mechs have broken apart!"

The obnoxious azure expert mech kept flying across the length of the Kosis Ring in order to inspire the troops along the way, not bothering too much about keeping its frame behind hard cover.

To be fair, there was almost no way an enemy could land a precise shot on such a small and relatively agile target at this range.

Even if a mech just happened to strike the Azure Vanquisher with skill or luck, Venerable Tavoren wasn't completely complacent.

He had made sure to surround his expert hero mech with a resonance shield, which could resist nearly any initial strike.

If Ves asked Commander Casella Ingvar, Venerable Brutus Wodin or Venerable Isobel Kotin to assassinate this target under these circumstances, it was extremely unlikely for any of them to be able to complete their mission.

They didn't excel at long-ranged precision! Their luminar crystal rifles also weren't powerful enough to overcome the Azure Vanquisher's defenses before the enemy expert mech was able to hide behind the nearest space station, starship hull or other solid object in the vicinity.

Venerable Davia Stark did not have full confidence either, but out of every other expert pilot and expert mech, the guest pilot and the Amaranto had the highest chance of success!

Her mind and will grew more active as she resonated with her Instrument of Vengeance.

Ves had personally redesigned the initial rifle of the Amaranto from the ground up. Though he wasn't able to increase its precision that much, he was easily capable of replacing older parts with more advanced parts that incorporated superior tech and materials!

The Amaranto's maximum damage output had increased by 40 percent as a result, which was extremely impressive given the enormous diminishing returns at this level!

The Amaranto already integrated a gem that boosted its firepower by 20 percent under all circumstances, so the damage output of the Larkinson Clan's premiere long-ranged precision solution had undergone a qualitative evolution!

Now, Venerable Stark was betting that a full-powered shot from her upgraded mech rifle was enough to destroy the Azure Vanquisher in a single hit.

While her rifle steadily accumulated power, she remained still and focused on predicting Venerable Tavoren's erratic movement pattern.

At a certain point, Venerable Stark instinctively pulled the trigger, causing her expert mech to unleash such a thick and powerful resonance-empowered light beam attack that the surrounding space seemed to darken at its passage!

A lot of people from both sides quickly spotted the powerful attack and immediately sought to determine the results of this intimidating strike.

"No! The Azure Vanquisher! It's... broken!"

Though few people witnessed the strike when it happened, the extremely powerful light beam attack had soared incredibly quickly across space and managed to strike the Fridayman expert mech right in the center!

The Azure Vanquisher's resonance shield resisted the initial blow, but because Venerable Tavoren did not maintain it at full power in order to preserve his willpower reserves, the surprise attack overwhelmed this defensive measure in an instant!

Fortunately for the expert hero mech, the resonance shield still managed to negate a lot of power from the attack, causing the remaining incoming energy to strike the Azure Vanquisher's chest at reduced power.

It just so happened that even the weakened attack was not easy to cope with for the expert hero mech!

The extremely potent long-ranged strike not only burned through the frontal armor of the enemy machine, but also seared through multiple important components and also threatened to breach the cockpit!

While all of this took place, Venerable Tavoren's instincts only gave him a brief warning before his expert mech already suffered damage!

He barely had any time to make a response!

A lesser mech pilot would have frozen. Venerable Tavoren made the right choice in an instant.

He transmitted the ejection command as fast as his thoughts could form. The Azure Vanquisher had already shot out its cockpit from its rear with powerful force before the Amaranto's light beam attack could finish the job!

Though the Curmerands had not lost its expert pilot this time, the defenders had lost a crucial mid-range expert mech before the champions from both sides had yet to start their struggle in earnest.

It was a major setback for the Sundered Phalanx!

"What is this?! How can a single attack be so powerful?! Did their ace mech break the rules?!"

A lot more eyes focused on the Amaranto. Venerable Stark may have done her side a lot of good by removing an important enemy asset in advance, but she paid for it by attracting a lot of vigilance from the Fridaymen!

## Chapter 4246 Star Of Liberation

For a moment, shock reigned throughout the battlefield.

The intensity of the fighting hadn't abated, and many ranged mech pilots continued to focus on pouring down fire at their respective targets.

However, the mech pilots who were idle enough to maintain an overview of the battle as well as the officers who commanded the troops all became astonished as they observed the results of the most powerful and accurate energy beam to have opened fire up to this point.

Even before the empowered light beam attack struck the Azure Vanquisher, those who happened to catch a glance of this attack could instantly distinguish it from the many other laser and positron beams that filled up the space between the two sides!

The diameter of the beam was simply too massive, and the energy readings produced by various sensors spiked so much that a lot of analytical systems couldn't make sense of the data anymore!

Even so, any human that managed to observe the bright white beam surrounded by an angry red corona could instinctively feel an enormous sense of indignant power and righteous fury from the attack.

Venerable Davia Stark's willpower directly pressed on the minds and spirits of each of these observers!

By resonating with her Instrument of Vengeance, she had imbued its high-powered shot with her will and determination to kill!

It was this desire to destroy and kill her chosen target that Venerable Dirkson Tavoren had to resist!

If he was a little more alert and more focused on resisting his opponents, then perhaps his force of will would have been able to strengthen his Azure Vanquisher's ability to resist the incoming attack.



Unfortunately, Venerable Tavoren had been too preoccupied with raising the morale of the troops of the Sundered Phalanx. As impressive as expert pilots could be, their concentration was still limited.

The Fridayman expert pilot had become accustomed to viewing Hexers as rabid but beaten dogs after beating so many of them during the Komodo War.

It was a pity that his biases led him astray. The Hexer mech pilots that survived until this day had all learned and evolved from that past conflict.

They were just as ferocious as before, but they had grown smarter and figured out more ways to beat the Fridaymen.

However, it wasn't the Hexers that pierced through the Azure Vanquisher's defenses and forced the desperate expert pilot to activate the eject command before he suffered the same fate as his battle partner.

It was the Larkinson Clan that destroyed him in the end!

"The intelligence briefings... were wrong!" Venerable Tavoren complained with a pained expression. "They told me that the Larkinson Clan's expert mechs had all received updates, but they never told me that the expert marksman mech gained this much power!"

The Fridaymen already possessed a certain understanding of the performance of the Larkinson Clan's expert mechs. The Battle of Reckoning and the Battle of Fordilla Zentra both provided plenty of data to figure out a lot of properties of the notable expert mechs designed by Ves and his fellow designers.

The mech designers and other analysts in the employ of the Gauge Dynasty even studied what little intelligence they could collect from the Larkinson Army over the years and roughly estimated the performance improvements of every expert mech.

Venerable Tavoren and every other expert mech taking part in this fight had received plenty of briefings on the expert mechs that they would probably have to face.

Yet despite being generous about all of the improvements the Larkinsons had applied to their older expert mechs, the Amaranto and its Instrument of Vengeance demonstrated a level of power that exceeded the upper boundaries of all of the estimates!

At this time, his ejected cockpit took shelter behind a nearby squad of space knights, not that it brought the defeated expert pilot much comfort.

An attack that was powerful enough to pierce through the Azure Vanquisher's resonance shield with surprising effectiveness and drill through its chest armor could also pierce through a bunch of ordinary space knights with ease!

"This is not the firepower that a normal expert mech should possess!"

His mind and will could still remember the magnitude of the attack that the Amaranto had launched in his direction.

As the defeated expert pilot continued to revisit the moment when his expert mech got struck from afar, he eventually figured out the real reason why his expert mech got knocked down in a single blow.

"It's not just the mech that has become a lot stronger. That Larkinson expert pilot is also much more skilled than she has any right to be. How many powerful opponents did she fight in order to become so proficient at sniping? Her entire action sequence was flawless!"

No matter what, Venerable Dirksen Tavoren was still a competent expert pilot. If any other expert pilot sought to fell his Azure Vanquisher in a single blow, then his powerful intuition should have clued him in on the threat.

This didn't happen!

His instincts only screamed an alarm at him when the Amaranto had already begun to discharge the powerful energies it accumulated in its luminar crystal rifle.

That was way too late to make a proper response!

As a hero mech specialist, Venerable Tavoren was familiar with this skill, though he did not master it himself due to his different training priorities.

To be able to target an enemy from long range and strike with precision was difficult but not too troublesome to learn.

To be able to do all that while giving the enemy target no forewarning at all was a lot more difficult to pull off! Not only did the expert pilot need to perform multiple different techniques, but also become extremely good at holding back the intent to kill while at the same time plotting to assassinate a target in a single shot.

Just the demand to maintain two contradictory intentions at the same time was enough to split the minds of lesser marksman mech pilots!

There were many other details that contributed to the instant defeat of the Azure Vanquisher.

For example, the expert hero mech might not excel at defense, but it should have been much more difficult for another mid-range expert mech to penetrate its resonance shield in a single pass.

The strange energy beam type was the main reason why the Azure Vanquisher's most important defensive measure had failed so easily! Whatever damage it inflicted onto a target seemed to form a natural counter to true resonance!

"How many crazy advantages does the enemy ranged mech possess?!"

If only a single of the aforementioned factors applied to Venerable Davia Stark and the Amaranto, then the combination would only be slightly more concerning than normal.

However, the combination of all of these factors produced a package that was greater than the sum of its parts!

The Fridayman expert pilot's eyes shook with apprehension.

Though powerful soldiers and warriors like himself did not experience any fear, he was still capable of feeling concern for his fellow comrades.

Alarm surged through his mind when he imagined his other colleagues succumbing to the lethal beams of this insidious long-ranged mech.

He hastily transmitted his findings to his colleagues over their exclusive communication channel.

"Watch out for the Amaranto's shot! The enemy expert pilot can strike without warning and punch through your resonance shield in an instant! You have to suppress the Amaranto at all costs!"

"We are already on it." Someone spoke. "Our analysts have already figured out that it takes a lot of time and preparation for the enemy expert pilot to prepare such a powerful and precise attack. The enemy won't be able to take us by surprise if we keep her and her expert mech busy enough."

The response from the Sundered Phalanx came quickly when the Amaranto locked onto a different target.

As soon as the expert rifleman mech exposed a tiny part of itself, two fast and power resonance-empowered energy beams launched from within the titan shield of an orbital space station and struck the armored enclosure on the Gorgoneion!

What was remarkable about these mighty energy beams was that they had been fired at virtually the same time from the same muzzle at the same angle!

Venerable Stark already recognized the massive threat to her expert mech, but just because she wanted her Amaranto to dodge away did not mean that her machine could accomplish this in an instant.

A massive amount of heat and light exploded from the hull section as the laser beam unleashed destruction over the entire area!

The power of that laser beam was not lower than the previous shot fired by the Amaranto!

It turned out that the champions of the Sundered Phalanx were no longer willing to sit back.

The first Fridayman expert mech to fire against the attackers also happened to be an expert rifleman mech, and one that excelled in long-ranged precision attacks no less!

The biggest difference between it and the Amaranto was that the former was controlled by a genuine high-tier expert pilot!

Venerable Kasia Rezkina of the 5642nd Blackend Reaper Mech Division was one of the more famous and successful war heroes of the Komodo War. Her skill along with her powerful resonance strength had allowed her to pick off one vulnerable Hexer expert mech after another.

Years later, her skills had not regressed in the slightest. Her ability to take Venerable Stark by surprise was a testament of her long-ranged assassination capabilities!

What was different from before was that the Sundered Phalanx assigned a brand-new expert mech to her when she arrived in the Red Ocean.

The Star of Liberation shared many common design elements with the Amaranto. As an expert mech that excelled at long-ranged attacks, its armor and flight capabilities were not that impressive.

The true star of the show was the custom high-end Slipdream rifle at its disposal.

Master Johnny Bates led the development of the Star of Liberation. It was already a given that he would design a standard laser-positron energy rifle that was completely tailored to Venerable Rezkin and her expert mech.

It only took one pull of the trigger to put the Amaranto into a lot of distress!

What was even scarier about the Star of Liberation was that its Slipdream rifle needed much less time to discharge another powerful double-beam attack!

In addition, since Venerable Rezkin was much more powerful than Venerable Stark in terms of resonance strength, she was able to amplify the damage output of her Star of Liberation to a much higher degree!

As Venerable Rezkin tracked the Amaranto like a hawk, the latter was no longer able to pull off any further cheap shots.

Whenever the Amaranto maneuvered behind the hull of the Gorgoneion and attempted to open fire at another important target, the Star of Liberation never failed to preempt Venerable Stark's actions by firing first!

Several powerful energy explosions struck the Gorgoneion, though this time the Star of Liberation's attacks first had to chew through her directional energy shields.

Normally, the powerful energy shield generators that the Larkinson Clan had recently installed aboard her capital ships should have been able to resist an entire bombardment, but the Star of Liberation was too unreasonable!

The double laser-positron beam attacks were empowered by so much true resonance that they seemed to overpower the ship-grade energy shields through sheer willpower!

The Gorgoneion's engineering crews panicked as the energy shield generators they took care of already showed signs of reaching their limits.

They weren't supposed to reach this state so soon!

"I am not going to make this easy on you, Stark." Venerable Kasia Rezkin grinned inside the cockpit of her considerably more luxurious mech. "I will not only deprive you of any further chances to snipe my comrades-in-arms, but I will also take shots at your own side's expert mech. I can do everything that you can do, but better!"

This was not an empty boast. The many Hexer expert mechs that had fallen at her hands was the greatest proof of her competence!

### **Chapter 4247 Wildfire**

The opening shots of the Amaranto and the Star of Liberation triggered other expert mechs into action.

Those that were solely equipped with melee weapons still had to sit tight, but those with ranged weapons had no excuse anymore.

The ranged expert mechs of the Hex Army and the Golden Skull Alliance began to fire at different targets and achieved immediate results!

For example, the recently completed Carnare fielded by the Cross Clan already exhibited a faint shadow of the Mars.

The Carnare was the personal machine of Venerable Emland Cross, one of the mech pilots that had been lucky enough to break through during the climax of the Purgatory Campaign.

Even though Venerable Emland was just a low-tier expert pilot, the treatment he received from the Cross Clan was extravagant!

It couldn't be helped. The Cross Clan suffered from a shortage of expert pilots and had a lot of money to spare.

Benedict Cortez, who was still a Senior Mech Designer at the time, expressly set out to emulate the firepower of the Mars but in a much more manageable package.

Though the renowned Larkinson mech designers did not take part in its development, the Carnare still turned into a powerful work.

The expert mech possessed two standout features.

First, Benedict integrated a weaker and more modest version of the original Magma Vein System into its design. This allowed the expert mech to channel and wield a lot more energy in a much more efficient manner.

Second, the Carnare came equipped with a transphasic dual-type energy rifle!

As Venerable Emland Cross targeted a space station that fell under the protection of a titan shield, he resonated with his expert mech and pulled the trigger without hesitation.

Despite the fact that the space station in question still boasted a healthy titan shield, the Carnare's resonance-empowered positron beam only partially collided against the powerful energy barrier.

More than a quarter of the deadly particles of the original beam seemed to behave as if the thick titan shield did not exist and passed right through without any issue!

This took some of the crew manning the stations of the orbital fortress by surprise. Before they could do anything else, the weakened but still-potent energy beam struck an armored turret.



The same behavior happened again! While a significant proportion of the positron beam damaged the outer layers of the turret, a part of the stream of positrons continued to pass right through solid alloys before they eventually unleashed their potent destructive potential onto the critical internals of the defensive fixture.

The powerful turret that had put a decent amount of pressure on the starships of the Hex Army lost all of its functions even though its frontal armor was not entirely breached!

"Watch out! That expert mech has a transphasic weapon, and not a weak one at that!"

The Cross Clan invested over 350 grams of phasewater to provide transphasic capabilities to the Carnare, and this was a pretty luxurious treatment for a machine assigned to a low-tier expert pilot!

If not for the fact that the Cross Clan still had more phasewater than they knew what to do with it, the Crossers would have never been so willing to allocate so much of this strategic substance to a single machine!

The Carnare's transphasic energy rifle that Benedict had developed in cooperation with Melmen Advanced Systems possessed enough phasewater to allow its potent beams to move past the titan shields deployed by the defenders and several meters of thick alloys depending on their defensive properties.

Many conventional defensive measures lost a lot of their power when struck by potent transphasic attacks.

While armor and energy shields still played a major role in mitigating the damage potential of attacks like the ones launched by the Carnare, it became clear that the mere existence of this new attack method had the potential to change human warfare forever!

"The only defenses that can completely block transphasic attacks are true resonance and transphasic defense systems! Everything else is just waiting for death!"

This was a bit of an exaggeration. The orbital fortresses that made up the strongest parts of the Kotic Ring would not go down just because it was targeted by a few mechs armed with transphasic weapon systems.

Their massive titan shield generators were buried deep within the interior of the enormous constructs. A huge amount of walls and other obstacles stood in the way between these critical defensive systems and attacks launched from afar.

The Carnare's effectiveness on this massive battlefield was therefore limited at this stage. The most that Venerable Emland Cross could do was knock out the turrets and occasionally the mechs that were hiding behind the cover of intact titan shields.

Other ranged expert mechs exhibited greater effectiveness.

"So much hardware. So much to burn. It's been a long time since I have entered a target-rich environment."

Venerable Isobel Kotin had been waiting for this moment a long time. Ever since she broke through during the Purgatory Campaign and received her own expert mech a year later, she had been looking forward to making a huge impact in the next major battle involving the Larkinson Clan.

It was a pity that the Larkinsons spent 5 long years in Davute!

Aside from sending out modest batches of mech units to fulfill mercenary missions, the Larkinson Clan did not encounter any hostilities.

Venerable Isobel therefore became a lot happier when the clan initially announced its participation in Operation Saturday Market.

Though her personal resentment towards the Fridaymen was not that strong to be honest, she valued this confrontation because it could serve as an excellent opportunity for her to explore her power and search the limits of her current strength!

"I've never been able to fulfill my duty to the fullest since I received you, Promethea. You can cheer up now, because these Fridaymen have been generous enough to give us plenty of targets to burn."

Though the Promethea was not a masterwork mech and still had a lot to grow until it became a third order living mech, it had already reached a state of development that made it as responsive as a pet.

The expert mech liked what Venerable Isobel was conveying. The Promethea became so excited at the thought of fulfilling the role it was made for that it began to resonate stronger with its expert pilot.

A flame-like purple corona surrounded the black-and-purple mech. Both Venerable Isobel and the Promethea wanted to make their first proper debut in battle as memorable as possible, and the best way to do that was to disrupt the enemy as much as possible!

Isobel scanned the battlefield and selected her first target.

The Promethea's custom Ignitron luminar crystal assault rifle did not possess the greatest accuracy compared to the Amaranto's Instrument of Vengeance, but it should not be a challenge for it to strike a relatively stationary target from a distance.

As she and her expert mech locked on to a defensive platform that was a bit larger than a corvette and boasted three powerful and accurate laser turrets, the Ignitron in the arms of the Promethea fired a relatively thin and modest positron beam at the target.

The positron beam dealt a decent amount of damage on impact, but even if it was empowered by true resonance, the strike hardly managed to breach the cheap but abundant structural armor.

This was the normal result of attacking one of the thousands of defensive platforms that orbited Pima Prime V. Each of them were relatively cheap and low-quality but much tougher than mechs because they traded mobility for a lot of mass!

Even if expert mechs such as the Amaranto and the Carnare were able to knock them out with attacks that were strong enough, it was not worth it for their expert pilots to waste their willpower on destroying these ordinary targets.

If not for the fact that all of the ranged mech units of Task Force Fury were preoccupied with breaking open orbital fortresses first, these defensive platforms would have long been torn apart in quick succession.

Now, Venerable Isobel was making a head-start on their destruction by targeting them first.

The strangest part about her approach was that she did not target the defensive platform any further after striking it once. The construct was still completely operational aside from suffering a bit of damage to its structure!

Isobel just took a brief look at the damaged section before she became satisfied with what she and the Promethea managed to accomplish.

"It begins." Isobel smirked and turned the Ignitron towards an adjacent defensive platform.

The expert ranged mech fired another understated resonance-empowered positron beam. Isobel did not even deliberately aim her weapon at one of the turrets or any weak points of the defensive platform.

Even if her attack ended up striking solid armor plating, Isobel still moved on to attacking another target!

She continually sped up her attacks. It only took a few seconds at most to shift her aim to another target and accumulate enough energy and resonance to fire another attack at a defensive platform!

Initially, the Fridaymen didn't pay much attention to the Promethea.

Compared to the much more threatening Amaranto that was capable of firing immensely powerful and destructive energy beams, the attacks launched by the Larkinson Clan's latest expert rifleman mech did not even manage to cripple its targets!

It was more than 30 seconds before numerous Fridaymen began to feel that something was wrong.

The crew manning the defensive platforms and the officers who supervised them from remote began to receive increasingly alarming notifications.

First, the heat levels of the defensive platforms started to rise at a drastic rate.

Next, numerous systems and components closest to the impact site started to malfunction.

Finally, the crew members discovered to their horror that the defensive platforms struck by the Promethea had actually started to burn!

"This is impossible! Hardly anything here is flammable! We only got struck by a single positron beam attack that only blasted a chunk of the outer armor. Our sensors did not detect that our station had been doused with any propellant."

There was no logical explanation why the defensive platforms slowly began to get engulfed in flames.

It was only after ruling out every other possibility that the Fridaymen finally reached the right conclusion.

"It's the Larkinson Clan's new expert mech! The Promethea is the chief culprit!"

As far as Larkinson expert mechs went, the Promethea was one of the simpler ones. It was not loaded with many features and did not possess a complicated design.

There were three major differences that set it apart from other ranged mechs.

First, it was equipped with flamethrowers that possessed a lot of destructive potential at close range.

Second, the Ignitron integrated a resonating alloy called ARB-34. This artificial alloy happened to be highly compatible with Venerable Isobel Kotin.

Its main function was to amplify Isobel's flame domain and imbue each energy attack with burning properties!

This meant that when an energy beam struck a target, a fire would start that could slowly burn through solid matter that should ordinarily not be flammable in a given environment.

Thus, the third and principal reason why the defensive platforms burned was because Venerable Isobel willed them to become engulfed in flames!

Perhaps Venerable Isobel would have a hard time setting flames on an expert mech due to the interference of an enemy expert pilot's force of will, but defensive platforms enjoyed no such luxury!

"I haven't come close to reaching my limit." Venerable Isobel taunted as she continued to resonate with her expert mech and its special luminar crystal rifle.

p Resonating with ARB-34 did not strain her a lot, which meant that she could not only launch a lot of resonance-empowered attacks without tiring herself out, but also maintain a lot of different flames at the same time!

Before anyone knew it, over 40 defensive platforms had already caught fire!

The ones that the Promethea struck first had already been rendered useless as the flames had burned too many critical modules such as the power reactor or the turrets!

The enemies that observed how the Promethea continued to burn through the defensive platform as if she was igniting a wildfire along the Kosis Ring began to experience a lot more fear towards this 'simple' expert rifleman mech!

"Stop the Promethea! It can single-handedly gut the Kosis Ring if it continues to spread its flames!"

#### **Chapter 4248 Blackened Reapers & Witch Shatters**

As soon as the Fridaymen properly recognized the threat posed by the Promethea, numerous expert ranged mechs began to fire at its position along the hull of the Wild Torch!

The fleet carrier that the Wild Fighter Association had once awarded to the Larkinson Clan began to suffer a lot of strain and damage as a torrent of powerful attacks bombarded her directional shields and damaged her exterior fixtures!

The Promethea even suffered a close shave as the Star of Liberation briefly turned its attention away from suppressing the Amaranto and fired a casual but destructive shot in the other Larkinson expert mech's direction!

The experienced Venerable Rezkin quickly saw through Venerable Isobel's power. "Your fire trick is surprisingly useful, but how much concentration does it take to burn what isn't supposed to be burned?"

The more suppression directed towards the Promethea, the harder it became for Venerable Isobel to maintain the fires she had sparked on all of the defensive platforms struck by the Ignitron!

The purple flames that seemed to be unstoppable earlier had become a lot feebler now that Venerable Isobel needed to direct a lot more attention towards evasion.

While the Star of Liberation couldn't direct much attention away from the Amaranto, other Sundered Phalanx expert mechs took over the duty of suppressing the Promethea whenever possible.

The biggest threats that Venerable Isobel faced after the Star of Liberation were the Tensars!

As one of the recent mid-tier expert mechs designed by Master Toqueman Huron and Master Johnny Bates, the twin expert rifleman mechs synchronized their actions to a flawless degree and always struck at their targets from different angles at the exact same time!

With the help of their Slipdream rifles, the Arma Tensar and Fila Tensar easily inflicted a lot of energy damage with every discharge!

If only one of the mechs attacked at a time, then Venerable Isobel was still confident she could block the attacks with the resonance shields of her Promethea.

However, she had seen how the simultaneous strikes of the Tensar frequently inflicted damage that equaled or in some cases surpassed the normal attacks of the Star of Liberation!

"Those identical expert rifleman mechs truly have the capital to challenge high-tier expert mechs!"



Considering that the Promethea was just a mid-tier expert mech and one that did not even excel at defense, there was no way that Venerable Isobel dared to make any aggressive moves when she was locked down by both Venerable Anastasia Choi and Venerable Geraldino Fameuse.

"We're keeping our eyes on you, Promothea! We're not going to allow you to burn down the Kosaic Ring any further!"

The Promethea was a poor matchup against the Tensars. One of the biggest weaknesses of luminar crystal weapons was that Ves had yet to figure out how to integrate phasewater into them without causing catastrophic disasters.

Due to this, the Promethea could only overcome defenses such as titan shields and resonance shields the hard way.

There was no way the expert mech could overcome either of them in its current state!

The Carnare was at least able to partially bypass titan shields with its transphasic dual-type rifle.

As for trying to take down the Tensars once they became exposed, Venerable Isobel did not even attempt to accomplish this on her own.

Not only did they perfectly cover for each other's weaknesses, their resonance strengths were significantly more powerful than her own, allowing them to easily snuff out the flames she set before they even had a chance to burn!

Despite all of the suppression directed towards the Promethea, Venerable Isobel did not feel too bad about her current state.

"Being able to hold down both Tensars is a huge profit!"

If the Tensars tried their best to hinder the Promethea from setting more fires, then these potent expert mechs weren't directing much of their firepower towards other targets!

The only downside was that the Wild Torch came under increasing fire from not only the Tensars but many other Fridayman mechs as well.

"Our ship is taking way too much damage! We can't endure so much firepower!"

Before the Larkinson Clan moved any other ships in the way, the Hexers already moved their combat carriers in the way.

"Keep attracting the attention of the enemy's champions." General Alisky Victrix communicated to the Larkinson Clan's expert pilots. "The more they are threatened by you, the more they will leave our regular mech forces alone. We shall assist you in any way possible."

The Hexers did not expose their own combat carriers to danger merely because they valued the Larkinson Clan and felt the need to be charitable all of a sudden.

This was all part of a greater strategy that aimed to direct as much attention of the enemy elites to the Golden Skull Alliance as possible.

The Hexers hadn't brought that much mid and high-tier expert mechs to the fight, so they couldn't fight against the most powerful enemy champions on an equal basis.

Therefore, the amount of heat that the Amaranto and the Promethea generated through their actions was highly beneficial to the overall attack plan!

The trajectory of the battle played out exactly how the planners envisioned.

Even though the Gaugers figured out the enemy's strategy, they had no choice but to direct their more powerful ranged expert mechs to suppress the Amaranto and the Promethea.

The Sundered Phalanx had already tried and failed to achieve effective suppression.

Weaker expert mechs did not pose a sufficient threat to the two thorny Larkinson expert mechs. Their power levels were not sufficient and their firepower couldn't threaten the defenses of their targets.

As important mechs, the Larkinson Clan invested a lot in bolstering their defenses!

Ves had especially directed a lot of attention towards this issue when he upgraded the design of the Amaranto.

Previously, the Amaranto functioned as a glass cannon. Its firepower was fearsome but its defenses were abysmal.

Though Ves did not wish to make his first proper expert rifleman mech stray from its original design concept of pursuing extreme firepower, he still found plenty of ways to strengthen the armor and the resonating shield of the Amaranto.

Money solved many problems, and investing a huge amount of money in a high-quality lightweight armor system massively increased the survivability of the Amaranto.

The instance in the past where the Amaranto was unable to snipe enemy expert mechs because of its fragile shell was in the past!

The Amaranto Version 2.0 was not afraid of accruing a couple of dents!

As more and more space stations started to lose their titan shields due to getting focused upon by tens of thousands of Hexer ranged mechs, the Sundered Phalanx mech units started to suffer real damage.

Bunker mechs, cannoner mechs, rifleman mechs and other mechs fell by the hundreds, and the rate was only increasing over time as the distance between the two sides continued to shrink.

Though the expert mechs from both sides performed the flashiest, the role of ordinary expert mechs was not negligible.

Many famed Sundered Phalanx mech divisions showed their excellence during this phase of the battle.

For example, the 5642nd Blackened Reapers where Venerable Kasia Rezkin hailed from was a renowned long-range mech division that excelled in long-ranged precision warfare.

The mech division fielded powerful cannoner mechs that launched relatively slow but ultra-heavy gauss rounds that were best at breaking open starships!

The Blackened Reapers also employed numerous rifleman mechs that were so precise that they could even knock out individual exterior parts from the hull of a moving starship as long as they became exposed!

Then there was the artillery-oriented 5640th Witch Shatterers, which the Black Reapers viewed as a sister mech division.

As their name suggested, the Witch Shatterers had been founded with the idea of crushing the Hexers on the battlefield.

Their artillery mechs tended to be equipped with heavy gauss cannons, heavy ballistic cannons and missile launchers.

While the Witch Shatterers did not excel at long-ranged precision bombardment like the Blackened Reapers, they did not need to be good at this aspect!

Their main purpose in battle was to put a huge amount of pressure onto the larger and less maneuverable assets of their opponents.

Each mech pilot possessed an abundant amount of experience in bombarding starships in space and shelling enemy strongholds and positions on land.

At this stage of the battle, the thousands of artillery mechs of the Witch Shatterers put an enormous amount of pressure on the starships of the Hex Army's special task force for this operation!

"Those Witch Shatterers are too foul! Many of them are holing up safely within the confines of the titan shields of their fortified space stations while we are losing our combat carriers at an alarming pace!"

General Alisky Victrix and the other Hexer officers recognized the enormous threat posed by the Witch Shatterers, but they could do little but bear with the situation.

As long as the forces under their command managed to get close enough to the enemy battle lines, then many of those heavy artillery mechs would turn into sitting ducks to the aggressive Hexer melee mechs.

The attacking units just needed to cross the remaining distance!

Fortunately, the Hexers brought their own artillery regiments and divisions. Though the Hex Army's mech doctrine did not put as much of an emphasis on ranged combat as the Fridaymen, that did not mean that the Hexers were bad in this aspect!

The Hexers had already known what they faced in advance due to the intelligence leaks and the information retrieved by the spies planted in Pima Prime.

Though the Hexer artillery mech models weren't as powerful as the Transcendent Punisher Mark II, the tens of thousands that the Hexers had brought to this battle was exacting a huge price on the titan shields that protected the orbital space stations.

The Hexers even tuned their artillery mechs to deal the most optimal amount of damage against the Gauge Dynasty's titan shields!

One of the most valuable secrets that the Fridaymen behind Tristan had leaked was the alleged properties of the titan shield models employed by the Gauge Dynasty in Pima Prime.

Not every shield generator was the same. Some excelled in resisting energy attacks while others were more efficient in blocking physical attacks.

The titan shield models utilized by the Gaugers were primarily attuned to resist massive burst attacks launched by warship-grade weapons. The idea was that friendly mechs could still put up a good fight against enemy mechs, but if alien warships dropped by one day, the Kosic Ring was meant to blunt their massive firepower as much as possible!

While these titan shield generators also worked pretty well against smaller caliber weapons, they seemed to perform less efficiently against sustained or continuous attacks.

The Hexer artillery mechs armed with energy weapons took advantage of this minor shortcoming by firing beams that lasted several more seconds at a time!

The mechs accumulated heat a lot faster because of this, but the ranged mechs compensated for this by lowering the power settings in order to make this firing mode more bearable.

As a result, a clear difference had formed between the ranged mechs from both sides.

While the Fridaymen ranged mechs focused primarily on inflicting concentrated burst damage so that they could punch through the weak points of their targets, the Hexer ranged mechs primarily sought to overload the powerful titan shields by inflicting sustained area damage!

In any case, the bubble generated by titan shields was so enormous that it was impossible for any of the Hexer mech pilots to miss their shots!

"Our space stations are collapsing one by one! Our mechs are slowly becoming more exposed!"

"Don't mind this. We can rebuild our orbital fortress after we have survived this battle. I will gladly sacrifice the entire Kotic Ring as long as we are able to beat off the Hexers in the end! Stand fast and keep focusing on reducing their mechs as much as possible!"

As the invading forces proceeded to make progress, more and more mechs became involved in the fight.

The time for the first melee mech units to clash against each other was drawing closer!

#### **Chapter 4249 Progressing Too Fast**

As the fight began to get hotter and hotter, the amount of casualties suffered by both sides increased at a faster rate.

Surprisingly, the amount of lives lost by both sides were fairly tame.

Many of the combat carriers of the Hex Army and the Golden Skull Alliance were already being run by skeleton crews. If the starships suffered so much damage that they no longer became operable, then a small number of crew members could still evacuate with ease.

Even the artillery mechs stationed inside the bunkers still had a way out. As long as they managed to flee in space, they could rely on standalone floater modules or other auxiliary flight equipment to continue their participation in battle.

Of course, these exposed artillery mechs attracted a lot of enemy fire as well. Their large size along with their awful flight characteristics in space meant that

it became easy for mech units such as the Blackened Reapers to demolish their frames!

As a result, hundreds of cockpits ejected out into space with each passing second. While the enemy would love to shoot them down as well, any firepower spent on killing a bunch of mech pilots that did not pose any threat by themselves meant that far more threatening enemies would be able to continue to do their jobs!

As a result, the ejected cockpits, escape pods and evacuation vehicles launched by both sides were mostly left alone. The Fridaymen and Hexers had fought against each other during the Komodo War so many times that they had already developed an unspoken understanding about this matter.

It was not too late to round up the surviving enemies after winning the main battle!

"How are we doing so far, general?" Ves asked as his expression grew a lot more serious as the fight had reached a much hotter state. "We're losing a fair amount of valuable combat carriers As this artillery duel proceeds. Soon enough, we won't have enough ships left to proceed with our Trailblazer Expedition!"

Ves had already ordered his guards to send his children back to their mother. Though he would have loved to keep Marvaine and the others around to teach them the reality of warfare, it was too tiresome for him to supervise three energetic toddlers.

The little devils distracted him so much that he felt it was best to foist them onto Gloriana!

Now that the bridge of the Spirit of Bentheim had become a lot calmer, Ves could finally focus on what was important.



"The problem is not as severe as it looks, Ves." The projection of General Verle replied as he continued to monitor the unfolding battle. "We have made sure to instruct the crews of our combat carriers to fall out of the battle line before they have lost total maneuverability. The ships are still operational to a degree, and whatever holes have formed in their hulls can quickly be patched up during emergency repairs. As long as they are still FTL-capable, we can restore them at our leisure."

"That won't help us if we lose this battle." Ves grimaced. "We will have to abandon a lot of hulls if we have to flee this star system. In fact, even if we win, we still have to leave behind a lot of derelict starships and mechs."

There simply wasn't enough time and capacity to salvage the enormous debris that would undoubtedly litter the orbit of Pima Prime V!

The huge amount of broken matter would serve as a consolation prize for the Gaugers regardless if they won or lost the battle.

Of course, as long as the Hexers demolished most if not all of Pima Prime's industries and infrastructure, then the Gauge Dynasty would not be able to do anything useful with the salvage for a long time. This was the ultimate goal that the Hex Federation set out to accomplish!

General Verle soon supplied Ves with an update. "The Sundered Phalanx have increasingly redirected their fire against the mechs on our side. It has become a lot more viable to shoot at our mechs and the mechs of the Hex Army at this range. The Gaugers know that destroying the opposing starships is not conducive to securing a victory."

"Damn."

"The damage we are taking is still manageable, sir. While our Transcendent Punisher Mark II's are more powerful than the equivalent models utilized by the Hex Army, they are much tougher and better protected. Rather than

expending a lot of effort to destroy our relatively limited number of bunker mechs, the Fridaymen mech units are mostly focusing their firepower on the more abundant Hexer bunker mechs."

Ves looked at the large projected map and studied the lines and arrows that represented where different mech units directed their fire towards.

Since the Golden Skull Alliance's starships were partially taking shelter behind an enormous screen of Hexer vessels, it was already fairly difficult to target his Transcendent Punishers.

This gave Ves a bit of relief. The Hexers were upholding their end of agreement. After all, the Hex Federation possessed a lot of shipbuilding capacity and could replace their lost combat carriers a lot easier than the Golden Skull Alliance!

"When will we start the next phase of our deployment?" Ves asked.

"It won't be long now, sir. We will wait for General Alisky Victrix to dispatch the mechs under her command first before we follow suit. Our mid-range mechs and our melee mechs are fully prepared to fly out in the open and meet the enemy on the open battlefield. Our pilots have all trained for this. The difference this has made is not that obvious at this stage of the battle, but once our melee mech units collide against that of the enemy, it is highly likely that we will be able to gain an immediate advantage."

Ves silently agreed with this assessment. The actual performance of the Sundered Phalanx mech units did not veer too far outside of his expectations. The intelligence they gathered on the enemy was accurate so far and it truly did not seem that the mechs fielded by the Gaugers were unreasonably powerful.

However, there were still a lot of variables that could throw a wrench in all of their plans!

"How about the ace mechs?" He asked.

"We have not managed to detect any sign of the Neo Amadeus so far. Until the Gauge Dynasty releases it onto the battlefield, we are not in a hurry to present our Mars either."

Ves frowned in thought. "The Mars should be powerful enough to knock out several intact orbital space fortifications in quick succession. No matter how fast the Neo Amadeus can respond, Patriarch Reginald can easily inflict a lot of mass destruction on the Sundered Phalanx and the Kosic Ring in a short amount of time."

"Trust me, we are constantly thinking about this move as well. The reason why we haven't allowed the Mars to let loose is because we do not have a total guarantee that our ace mech is able to defeat the enemy ace mech in battle. Every detail counts. If the Mars expends a significant amount of combat resources against weaker targets, then that might eventually cause Saint Reginald to lose his long-awaited duel. We cannot afford to let this possibility come to pass."

Right now, the Hex Army and the Golden Skull Alliance were enduring a lot of pain, but not to the point of demanding a change in plans.

General Alisky Victrix and General Verle still believed that they were on track to win this battle without the intervention of ace mechs!

"We have also been withholding a surprise." General Verle mentioned. "So far, all of the ranged mechs armed with luminar crystal weapons have limited their damage output to laser beam and positron beam attacks. While they do a good amount of damage to material targets, their efficiency against energy shields and titan shields are not that great. We will soon change that by ordering all of them to switch to disruptor beams."

The armored form of Ves sat up a little straighter in his seat. "Won't that attract a lot more heat towards our mechs?"

General Verle slowly nodded. "We will, but it is not exactly a big secret that we possess this capability. The only reason why we have yet to employ our disruptor beams is because we did not want to attract more fire towards our starships. Now that the Sundered Phalanx are increasingly directing their fire towards opposing mechs, we are not as concerned anymore. The shock value will also be greatest."

The Sundered Phalanx put a lot of faith in the Kosic Ring. If the value of the orbital defensive works plummeted in a short amount of time, the Fridayman mech units would have to make a lot of hasty decisions.

This would be the moment when Task Force Fury and the Golden Skull Alliance would launch their main offensive!

Ves grew hotter as he anticipated this crucial moment. He continued to observe the main plot but also directed his attention to the current states of all of his key mechs and mech pilots.

When the crucial moment arrived, General Verle finally issued the key command!

"Begin firing disruptor beams! Focus your fire on the remaining titan shields! Once they are down, leave it up to the Hexer mechs to finish the job!"

Thousands of ranged mechs hailing from the Larkinson Clan and the Glory Seekers did as instructed.

It only took a brief delay for their weapons to switch to another attack phase pattern crystal. Once the ones responsible for converting electrical energy into powerful disruptor beams had been set, the beams the ranged mechs unleashed onto their targets immediately stood out from the ubiquitous laser and positron beams flying across space!

"Our titan shield has lost 6 percent integrity all of a sudden!" A frightened Fridayman engineer warned.

"What?! Confirm that!"

"It's true! Wait, we've lost 3 percent integrity just now! The enemy's energy attacks are taking an enormous toll on our titan shield! We won't last more than 2 minutes at this rate!"

"Damn, we already received a briefing about the effectiveness of the Larkinson Clan's unique disruptor beam technology, but the higher-ups never told us that they would hit this hard!"

Technology constantly progressed. The efficiency and effectiveness of disruptor beams was no longer at the same level anymore.

Seeing how much his mech legions depended on luminar crystal technology, Ves had invested a lot of effort into improving and optimizing every attack phase crystal.

By applying a part of the high-level knowledge that he had obtained from the MTA, Ves had been able to update the designs of every attack phase crystal, making a number of them considerably more effective than before.

The Friday Coalition did not fully account for the effect of these improvements!

The Larkinson Clan had made considerably more progress in upgrading its tech than most analysts could foresee!

The previous exchange of fire had already broken open a fair number of orbital fortresses, but the remaining strongholds of the Kosic Ring still offered a fair amount of defensive advantages to the Sundered Phalanx.

The sudden switch to disruptor beams made the remaining fortifications a lot more vulnerable. The titan shields formed such an integral part of their

defenses that losing this layer of protection at an accelerated pace rendered the Kotic Ring irrelevant a lot sooner than the Fridaymen wished!

At the same time the ranged mechs started to fire disruptor beams, many melee mech units finally ceased to hide behind their starships and surged forward at great speed!

The mechs of the Hex Army moved first. Roughly half of Task Force Fury's mech units played no role in this battle so far, which frustrated their mech pilots to no end. Now that they received permission to let loose, the predominantly female mech pilots whooped and cheered as they charged forth without any fear!

"Slaughter the Fridaymen!" A Hexer mech officer roared as her Valkyrie Redeemer Mark II raised its spear in encouragement! "Death to the enemy!"

"DEATH TO THE ENEMY!"

The heavier and more solid Hexer mechs advanced straight ahead while the lighter and more maneuverable mechs swung around the flanks in order to look for opportunities at oblique angles.

The massive wave of Hexer mechs surging ahead of their motherships presented an intimidating sight!

"The real battle is about to start!"

### **Chapter 4250 Master Xeona Reizen**

As the Hex Army and subsequently the Golden Skull Alliance finally put their melee mech units into play, the Sundered Phalanx did not remain still.

The Gaugers sent forth their own melee mech units in order to stop the enemy from charging too close to whatever was left of the Kotic Ring.

Though a lot of orbital space stations had already lost their titan shields and most of their turrets, the enormous metal constructs were still intact mostly.

It was not profitable for the attacking to continue to break down these huge fortifications. It took way too many concentrated volleys to blast the sturdy space stations to pieces.

Hence, even if the space stations had lost almost all functionality, their physical mass still provided the Sundered Phalanx with a considerable amount of hard cover where friendly ranged mechs could shelter behind.

Just like how the Hex Army and the Golden Skull Alliance's ranged mech units continued to utilize nearby starships as cover, the Sundered Phalanx ranged mechs still depended a lot on these remaining hulks to fight while minimizing their exposure to enemy fire.

All of that would instantly become invalid if the melee mechs dispatched by the Hexers and the Golden Skullers managed to get into point-blank range!

Therefore, the Sundered Phalanx deployed their melee mechs out in force despite the fact that they would be exposing themselves to a lot of ranged attacks as a result!

Certain people such as Ves sighed in relief when they saw that the enemy had redirected their fire away from starships.

The only mechs that continued to concentrate their firepower on the combat vessels of the invading forces were the heavy artillery mechs of the Witch Shatterers and other siege-oriented mech units.

Though Ves would have preferred it if the Eye of Ylvaine focused their heavy firepower on the Witch Shatterers, he understood that it was better for his Transcendent Punisher Mark II's to shoot down the incoming waves of enemy mech units.

"This is going to be a lot more interesting."

"Meow." Lucky echoed.

The gem cat floated next to where Ves was seated and remained fairly alert.

"Do you think our mech units will be able to overpower their Fridayman counterparts in the upcoming clashes?"

"Meow meow!"

"Hahahaha! You're right! The Gaugers shouldn't be prepared for everything that we have in store for them. I am especially looking forward to the performance of the Battle Criers and the Swordmaidens in this engagement. The Avatars of Myth and the Flagrant Vandals shouldn't be too bad either."

A lot of years had passed since the Larkinson Clan fought its last major battle. Every mech legion underwent a qualitative and quantitative evolution.

Unlike years before, the Design Department had made sure that every Larkinson mech legion came equipped with a synergistic collection of exclusive mech models.

Along with the mech doctrines and exclusive strategies and tactics that the servicemen designed around these signature mech models, the Larkinson mech units gained much more power from synergy, coordination and teamwork than before!

As Ves studied the battle map, he noticed that the flanking units of the Hex Army and the Golden Skull Alliance were about to collide against their opposition first despite the fact that they had to swing around.

The flanking units traditionally consisted of faster and more maneuverable mechs, so Ves wasn't surprised to see that the Flagrant Vandals become the first Larkinson mech legion that was about to collide against their direct opposition!

"Taking control of the flanks will provide us with a lot of initiative."



While it was important for his forces to be able to achieve a breakthrough in the center, if the elite Sundered Phalanx mech divisions were tougher than expected, then it was crucial to take control of the flanks!

If the Flagrant Vandals and their Hexer equivalents were able to overpower their immediate opposition, then it was hard to imagine the Gaugers being able to regain the upper hand in those circumstances.

"Once our flanking units are free to do what they want, they can spread an untold amount of chaos!"

They could either dive towards the remains of the Kotic Ring to destroy a lot of vulnerable ranged mechs, or circle around and strike the Sundered Phalanx mech formations from the sides or the rear!

Ves turned his attention to the right flank in particular.

He noticed that Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson had opted to accompany the hundreds of Flagrant Vandal mechs approaching from this side.

The number of Larkinson mechs looked awfully limited compared to the tens of thousands of Hexer mechs that moved ahead of the Flagrant Vandals.

However, Ves expected a lot from them. The number of mechs dispatched by the Fridaymen was a little less because the defending forces didn't quite have as many light mechs.

This meant that as long as the Hexer light units could lock at least an equal number of Fridayman light units in place, the small but elite Flagrant Vandal mech units could make use of their many advantages to quickly achieve local superiority!

This could form a tipping point where the Hexers and the Flagrant Vandals could continue to multiply their numerical advantage at an accelerated rate.

Soon enough, the leading units from both sides began to attack each other!

The mechs armed with light ranged weapons opened fire on each other.

Though their hit rates were so low that hardly any mech experienced any difficulties, this was just the opening move for both sides.

It wasn't until the light skirmishers and other melee light mechs started to meet each other in the middle that the fight immediately reached another intensity!

Tens of thousands of light mechs on both the left flank and the right flank locked horns with each other.

It was extremely difficult for light mech units to maintain large and rigid formations under these circumstances, so they mostly didn't bother to make the attempt.

The different units mostly broke up into smaller squads and fire teams in order to maximize their mobility while at the same time maintaining at least some measure of coordination.

Legion Commander Abis Firelight commanded the Flagrant Vandals from the rear.

Though he was still capable of piloting mech and leading his troops into battle, he was no Casella Ingvar.

As the Larkinson Clan grew in size and scope, the responsibilities of a legion commander became a lot more burdensome.

Since the Flagrant Vandals predominantly favored skirmishes and independent action, Commander Firelight concluded that it was not that important for him to lead his troops at the front anymore.

Despite not entering the cockpit anymore, Commander Firelight still maintained the respect from his men. He had spent a lot of time on shoring up

his leadership and administrative skills in order to make sure that the Flagrant Vandals reached the best possible state to participate in battles like these.

Now was the critical moment where Commander Firelight and many others would see whether their efforts yielded enough results.

The commander leaned forward and studied the projections that displayed the incoming enemy mech troops.

The Hexers showed enough ability to hold back their immediate counterparts for the moment, so Commander Firelight was not in a hurry to send his Flagrant Vandals forward.

Soon enough, he spotted a second wave of incoming light mechs. The commander's eyes narrowed as the command net revealed that many of the incoming machines hailed from the 6161th Nidin Vergers.

The Nidin Vergers was one of the six modern Sundered Phalanx mech divisions that the Golden Skull Alliance were supposed to target.

As the mechs that came from this new but powerful mech division attempted to swing around to flank the flankers, the light mechs dispatched by the Cross Clan and the Glory Seekers already moved forward to block the elites from messing up the Hex Army units.

Commander Firelight raised his armored hand and drew a few maneuvering orders with his finger.

"Work together with the Crossers and Glory Seekers to block the Nidin Vergers and stop their advance. Show what your training and your mechs are worth and roll over the Sundered Phalanx light mechs as soon as possible!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Take what is ours!"

According to the intelligence gathered on the mobility-oriented mech division, the Nidin Vergers fielded a plethora of light mechs among its different mech regiments.

The most iconic among them that defined the Nidin Vergers was a light marauder mech model called the Remo Targ.

Designed predominantly by Master Xeona Reizen of the Gauge Dynasty, the Remo Targ was a quick, agile and versatile light mech that could fight from fairly close range to point-blank range.

It was quite similar to the Valkyrie Redeemer model in that regard, but the Remo Targ model was lighter and possessed much less shock value.

Despite these shortcomings, the Remo Targ was not only a lot faster and more maneuverable than the Valkyrie Redeemer, but also infamously hard to hit in combat.

The reason for that was because of Master Xeona Reizen's design philosophy. She had dedicated her life to developing boosters and flight systems that excelled at performing an atypical form of evasion that involved brief, discreet and instantaneous evasive maneuvers.

Any mechs equipped with her mobility systems typically exhibited stuttery movements that made it seem as if reality itself was lagging!

Though Master Reizen's signature 'stutter boosters' and 'stutter flight systems' were notorious for being costlier and more expensive than more conventional alternatives, the results they achieved in battle made them worth the investment!

Indeed, as the Crosser and Glory Seeker light mechs began to tangle against the Remo Targs, the latter's stuttery and jerky movements caused a lot of attacks to miss!

"Hah! Our stutter movements always throw our enemies off-guard." A Nidin Verger mech pilot boasted.

"These paramilitary groups are fools if they think they can stand a chance against professional military forces such as ours. We have fought countless more battles than these pampered private sector goons!"

However, the Nidin Vergers celebrated too soon.

As the Remo Targs and the other Nidin Verger mechs capable of performing stutter movements continued to dogfight against their opposition, they soon discovered that their foes quickly started to get accustomed to the jerky evasion moves.

Despite the fact that the Remo Targs focused more on evasion than on launching attacks, they found that the enemy mechs were able to track them and land their attacks on their fragile frames with rapidly increasing proficiency!

"What?! How come they have become so good at hitting our mechs?!"

"They must have trained to fight against us in simulations."

"That's impossible! Our Remo Targs are equipped with the latest generation stutter flight system. Our enemies shouldn't have learned about the evasion specs of our new mechs."

"Isn't the answer obvious? They figured our mechs out anyway!"

As the Remo Targs found themselves unable to shake off incoming attacks as well as they expected, the mech pilots pretty much confirmed that their opponents trained intensively to beat them in this battle!

What exacerbated the problem for the Nidin Vergers was that they were only partially familiar with the mech models fielded by their current opponents.

The mechs of the Glory Seekers were easy enough to figure out as many of them were regular staples of the Hex Army.

The mechs fielded by the Cross Clan were relatively unknowns. The Crossers had used them sparingly in battle over the years. Aside from deploying them on mercenary missions, they hardly had any opportunity to fight against enemies, hence the Sundered Phalanx knew too little about these fast but fairly robust light mechs.

However, even as the Nidin Vergers tried to cope against their opposition as best as possible by adopting radically different evasion patterns, the Flagrant Vandals assigned to the right flank finally made their entry into battle!

"The Larkinson Clan is finally moving in on us. Watch out for their annoying glows!"

The Fridaymen and the Larkinsons were old enemies.

Though the Sundered Phalanx had not fought against the Larkinson Clan in many years, the former never forgot the defeat it suffered at the hands of the Larkinsons who seemed to have a lot of tricks up their sleeves.

"Stay sharp! Don't take their mechs lightly and make sure to firm up your minds. This is going to be a wild ride, men!"