

Mech 4261

Chapter 4261 Modularized Mechs

Not every mech force could support the logistical burden of maintaining a large amount of modularized mechs.

In theory, it all sounded pretty good. By developing a modular mech such as the Bright Warrior Mark II that could equip all kinds of optional modules and equipment, the mech pilots could reach their full potential by piloting the configurations that precisely matched their unique skills and inclinations.

A school of military theorists even proclaimed that personalization at the company, squad or individual level was the future of mech warfare!

After all, why should every mech pilot be stuffed into a standard mech that had never been designed for that person in the first place?

While it was way too extravagant for mech designers such as Gloriana to design bespoke mechs for thousands of rank-and-file mech pilots, the development of a modular mech provided an excellent compromise solution!

The mech designers only needed to develop the base mechs and a large number of varied equipment.

In fact, the design work of the latter didn't even have to be handled by the original designers of the modular mech models. A bunch of Journeymen or Apprentices could easily design a large amount of adequate equipment as long as they stuck to their specialties!

This way, a mech force would have all of the building blocks in place. The people in charge just needed to piece them together into different mech configurations that best drew out the strengths of the mech pilots while also adapting to the circumstances of the battlefield.

There were groups who managed to make it work, but the majority of the implementations ended up in failure.

All of those thinkers and theorists paid too much attention to the shiny aspects of this implementation but neglected to account for all of the processes in the background that needed to be done right.

The biggest problem was that a highly modular mech force was not cheap!

The further away from standardization, the more complicated it became to manage all of the different parts and materials!

It was a lot easier to impose uniform standards and train mech units to a consistent level of performance.

Training mech pilots to fight with one consistent mech model also made it easier to correct any flaws. Mech units could also take advantage of the entire group to find more clever ways to exploit the strengths of the same mech.

Another limitation was that the right manpower and facilities needed to be in place to implement an effective modularized force. Without access to enough competent mech designers, it would be a dream to make enough varied modules and equipment available!

While there were plenty of ready-made modular mech ecosystems on the market, these enormous package deals tended to be significantly more expensive than ordinary mech offerings.

After all, mech designers and mech companies did not work for free. They needed enough remuneration to support all of the hours spent on designing an ECM module or additional mech swords.

Then there was the storage or production capacity needed to make all of these goods available.

While this problem was much less significant at fixed locations, it still did not change the fact that a modular mech force tended to field less mechs but took up more space than a conventional mech force.

The stupidest way to maintain a modular mech force was to produce or purchase far more modular equipment than mechs could carry and keep all of the extras in reserve in case they were needed.

The more clever way to handle this was to stockpile a large amount of raw materials and produce any modules needed for an upcoming deployment or campaign. It would be even better if the mech force or the organization behind it could also take back unwanted modules and recycle them into their base materials.

Again, all of this sounded nice in theory, but how many outfits had the money or the skilled labor to operate a factory ship?

It was much cheaper and more effective to stick to a limited selection of carefully chosen mech models than to bother with all of these elaborate exercises! The performance differences simply weren't worth the trouble of giving every mech pilot the option to personalize the configurations of their machines to a fine degree.

Smaller mech forces didn't have the budget, manpower and resources to adopt a modularized mech ecosystem.

Larger mech forces were able to field a good variety of specialized mech models that performed significantly better than their modularized equivalents.

As such, just like biomechs, the campaign to make modularization the definite standard in the mech community turned into an abject failure after reality showed that it was much less practical than its proponents believed!

Only a few outlier states and organizations bothered with modularized mech ecosystems these days. The demands to make them viable and useful enough were simply too harsh.

"It's kind of funny how our clan is one of the few groups that can pull this off."
Ves smiled.

He initially conceived the Bright Warrior as a semi-modular mech platform because he wanted to find the most optimal balance between practicality and fit.

He achieved this goal with the design of the original Bright Warrior, but the Larkinson Clan of today was nearly unrecognizable compared to when his clan only numbered a few hundred to a few thousand members!

Ves hadn't even realized that his clan slowly ticked all of the boxes that were necessary to implement a modular mech ecosystem.

It wasn't until he came up with this idea after his talk with Goldie that this concept that everyone disapproved of suddenly became viable for the Larkinson Clan!

First, the Larkinson Clan was not short on money. It could afford to splurge on more expensive and luxurious approaches to organizing its mech forces.

Second, the Larkinson Navy not only included a fair amount of cargo vessels and logistical vessels, but also featured a fully-fledged factory ship that had recently completed a massive upgrade.

Third, as a clan centered around mech design, it possessed much more design capacity than almost every other pioneering organization!

Fourth, its mech pilots and the way it organized its mech legions made it possible to field modularized mechs without making every mech unit disorganized. Not every outfit could cope with the chaos generated by mixing too many different mech configurations together.

Fifth, there was genuine added value to providing greater customization at the squad or individual level. Unlike mech forces that mostly fought against known human opponents, the Larkinson Clan could fight against a phase whale on one day and fend off a voribug swarm the next day!

The diversity between the indigenous alien races was great. While they had all adopted a number of common standards and technologies such as warp drives due to interacting with each other across a huge span of time, they still clung onto their own tech and methods of warfare.

Given these circumstances, it made less sense for the Larkinson Clan to maintain a static mech roster that was unable to adapt to vastly different threats. The introduction of the modularized and upgraded edition of the Bright Warrior added a lot more flexibility and fault tolerance to the Larkinson Army!

Ever since the Design Department introduced the drastic revision of the Bright Warrior to the Larkinson Army, several mech legions embraced it on a wide scale.

The most notable ones to adopt this quintessential Larkinson mech model more than the Avatars of Myth!

It was not as if the Avatars were short of new and powerful specialized models. Unlike a few years ago, its mech pilots had plenty of choice these days.

However, so many veteran Avatars had piloted the older versions of the Bright Warrior line so many times that they had adapted to its traits and quirks.

What also played a role for these sentimental mech pilots was that the Larkinson Clan offered the possibility to upgrade their existing Bright Warrior IB's to the latest design.

The Avatar mech pilots partnered up with their mechs for several years and had grown up alongside each other. The older Bright Warriors themselves had also bloomed a lot. Their personalities had become much more intelligent, responsive and distinctive from each other.

"I can't abandon my mech. We're brothers. Switching to a brand-new mech is like divorcing a wife in order to marry a new girlfriend. It is not honorable. Now

that an option to upgrade our Bright Warriors exists, it is even less acceptable to abandon my partner!"

Ves hadn't fully anticipated how much affection, familiarity and sentiment his mech pilots developed towards their long-standing living mechs.

It was fairly customary in other organizations for mech pilots to be reassigned to different mechs over time.

After all, mechs were merely objects and tools to everyone. Even if certain pilots developed an abnormally deep bond with a specific machine, few leaders ever bothered to upgrade it to keep up with the pace of technological development.

It was much easier to replace old and outdated mechs with new and modern products!

Though Ves appreciated the mech pilots who had become loyal to their living mechs, he recognized that this might not always be a good thing for his clan.

The Bright Warrior was the most flexible mech in the Larkinson Army's mech roster, but it was certainly not the strongest.

What if no one wanted to adopt a shiny new mech because every mech pilot wanted to remain monogamous? Such a circumstance was detrimental to the health of the Larkinson Army!

"I need to find a better solution to this problem." Ves recognized.

The problem right now wasn't too big because the Larkinson Clan hadn't existed long enough for pilots to develop their 'marriages' over multiple decades.

There were still plenty of clansmen who didn't feel too pained if they had to start a new relationship with a new and different mech.

The proportion of pilots who would be willing to do so would certainly drop in the future. This would significantly hinder the adoption of new mech models within the Larkinson Army in the future!

"The only way to get mech pilots to adopt our new products is to hire new recruits from our mech academies or the job market. That is obviously not a sufficient solution."

Ves felt more pressure to solve the problem with preserving the partnerships of mechs and mech pilots in the long term.

He could not simultaneously promote affection and commitment between mechs and mech pilots, but at the same time force his clansmen to switch from one living mech to another as if they were swapping out clothes.

A part of him felt that it was becoming increasingly more crucial for him to solve this difficult dilemma!

For now, Ves had more immediate concerns to worry about.

The introduction of the new modularized Bright Warriors may have been met with great enthusiasm among the fans of this mech line, but the Larkinson Army had never tested them out in a major battle.

The confrontation against the Sundered Phalanx in Pima Prime was the best way to test this concept in practice!

Already, the mech squads and mech companies composed of different configurations of the Bright Warrior Mark II's were finally putting their unique ideas and long-standing training to good use against challenging opponents!

When the Sundered Phalanx mech pilots first encountered these eclectic Bright Warriors up close, they briefly thought that the Larkinsons were messier than expected.

It was only until the unique Bright Warrior units started to showcase their self-developed tactics that the Fridayman mech pilots learned how difficult it was to fight against this opponent!

There was a squad of Bright Warriors armed with grenade launchers that acted as troubleshooters.

Instead of fighting in place, the Bright Warriors patrolled along their own lines and instantly saturated an opposing formation with a deluge of explosions as soon as a friendly unit threatened to collapse!

There was another squad of Bright Warriors in space knight configuration that not only carried solid shields, but also equipped shoulder-mounted laser turrets.

These space knights essentially acted as semi-mobile turrets. They occupied a position on the battlefield and bombarded any nearby opponents with laser beams that could not be stopped!

The varied battle tactics that these Bright Warrior Mark II's unleashed upon their foes quickly produced a lot of frustration among the Fridayman mech pilots.

"These golden mechs are disgusting!"

Chapter 4262 The Bubble Man

Commander Melkor Larkinson's Gold Beacon hung back as the Avatars of Myth moved out in force.

As the original elites of the Larkinson Clan, the Avatars of Myth took on the heavy responsibility of meeting the most powerful enemy mech units at the center of the battlefield!

Fortunately, the Design Department had not neglected the needs of the Avatars. Over the past five years, Melkor slowly felt more at ease as his mech

legion gradually obtained a small collection of powerful exclusive mech models that strengthened the identity of the Avatars.

The Bright Warrior mech line had always formed an integral part of the Avatars of Myth and Melkor did not have the heart to diminish its importance to his mech legion.

"How are our Bright Warrior mech units doing so far, Colonel?"

The projection of Colonel Cardano Belsir-Larkinson displayed a brief smile.

"They are fighting against the Fridaymen in high spirits. Our Bright Warrior units turn out to perform particularly well against our chosen targets. Many of our mechs are most at home when they take the initiative, and it just so happens that the mech units of the 5688th Pima Defenders serve as convenient punching bags."

Commander Melkor directed his attention towards the mech division that his mech legion had targeted.

As the name suggested, the Pima Defenders comprised of a new mech division that was explicitly founded to defend Pima Prime.

The new unit was supposed to serve as the first of several home guard divisions that was permanently headquartered at the Kosic Ring.

There were several points that made it notable.

First, the Pima Defenders primarily fielded well-armored medium and heavy mech models. None of their machines stood out in terms of mobility and maneuverability. Many of them focused on melee combat in order to maximize the specialization of this mech division.

Second, the Pima Defenders received the highest budget among all of the mech divisions that were permanently stationed in Pima Prime.

The Gauge Dynasty allocated at least four times as much money to the Pima Defenders than the Nidin Vergers!

Part of that could be explained by the vast disparity of weight classes of their mechs, but the difference was so big that it was obvious that the higher-ups favored the Pima Defenders more.

The third point explained everything. A lot of highborn scions of the Gauge Dynasty just happened to comprise the majority of the officers of the Pima Defenders.

There were a lot of upper-class families in the large and powerful territory of the Gauge Dynasty back in the old galaxy that wanted to obtain a piece of the pie of the Friday Colonies.

It wasn't enough for them to occupy and develop new settlements. They were far-sighted enough to know that they needed representation in the military in order to make certain that their expensive colonial investments received the protection that they deserved!

This was how the Pima Defenders came into existence. It was set up to become a nice, safe home guard mech division that guarded the richest, most powerful and most well-defended star system in the Friday Colonies.

Theoretically, the chance of enemies coming to attack Pima Prime should be the lowest!

If this was the case, then the soldiers assigned to the home guard mech divisions would be able to enjoy most of the prestige of being a part of the Sundered Phalanx while minimizing their exposure to actual combat as much as possible!

It was too bad these highborn sons and daughters never imagined that the Hex Army and the Golden Skull Alliance would be crazy enough to launch a direct assault on their port system!

As soldiers who had pledged an oath to their service and the Gauge Dynasty, there was no way they could shirk the responsibility of leading the Pima Defenders in battle against the invaders.

This meant that all of these pretend soldiers who thought they would only fight against simulated enemies and the occasional lost alien starship for the rest of their careers suddenly had to act like real soldiers!

Fortunately for the Pima Defenders, their highborn officers weren't incompetent. Each of them were designer babies who possessed superior learning ability and combat acumen from birth.

The results they achieved in the mech academies or military academies were substantially better than those who originated from the lower echelons of the Friday Coalition.

No matter what, the Sundered Phalanx was still a highly professional organization that had always enforced its own rules.

The situation of the Pima Defenders mech division might be a bit special, but its hierarchy and structure were all sound. Its staff was considerably larger than usual to ensure that everything was managed properly.

The Pima Defenders also enjoyed other compensating factors. It fielded sturdy, expensive military mechs that weren't easy to destroy. Many of them just happened to be piloted by veteran elites that earned plenty of merits during the Komodo War.

As such, the Pima Defenders should still pose a formidable threat towards its opponents!

Despite all of these factors, Melkor wasn't afraid of the Pima Defenders at all. One of the lessons he learned from General Verle was how important it was for people's hearts to be united.

The analysts of the Larkinson Army had predicted that despite commanding the most powerful melee mech division of the local garrison, the officers were not that eager to stand out and take risks.

The subsequent actions and deployment of the Pima Defenders aligned with the predictions.

Though the center battle line of the Sundered Phalanx did not advance that quickly because of being restrained by their slowest elements, the Pima Defenders truly hadn't shown any initiative to break the mech formations of their opponents.

The contrast between the Pima Defenders and the other elite Sundered Phalanx mech units became quite clear!

The latter were quite familiar with the Hex Army. They knew that passive defense when the Hexers possessed an advantage would only lead to an inevitable defeat.

The best way to reverse a losing trend was to break the game, and that was exactly what the more daring and courageous Fridayman mech officers attempted to accomplish!

"These Pima Defenders truly aren't in a hurry to move." Commander Melkor cynically remarked as his Gold Beacon fired its custom luminar crystal rifle at an enemy heavy space knight.

Even though his mech rifle possessed a lot more power than the weapons equipped by ordinary Larkinson mechs, the Gold Beacon's shot did not even impact the heavy shield of the enemy mech.

Instead, a powerful energy shield fully resisted the energy beam!

Melkor almost grew sick at the sight. The defensive power of the enemy mech was a bit high!

As the legion commander swept his gaze across the lines of the Pima Defenders, he noticed that many other enemy mechs exhibited the same phenomenon.

No matter whether they were space knights, spearman mechs, swordsman mechs or striker mechs, their energy shields never failed to resist incoming attacks!

Though Commander Melkor had already grown familiar with these mechs due to practicing against them in the MSTS, to see the Pima Defenders exploit their disgusting defenses in reality made him feel sick!

Aside from a few early successes when the Pima Defenders hadn't gotten their act together yet, hardly any of their mechs got destroyed during this time!

The reason for that was because the vast majority of mech models fielded by the Pima Defenders were equipped with HiCap shields!

The chief mech designer responsible for providing the Pima Defenders with so many resilient mechs was Master Zenie Bonakane, otherwise known as 'the Bubble Man'.

His amusing moniker referred to his main specialization, which was developing his own brand of high-capacity energy shields.

By raising and maximizing the damage-absorbing capacities of energy shields to an incredible height, Master Bonakane opened up new possibilities for defensive mech warfare.

One of the most basic ways to take advantage of mechs equipped with the Bubble Man's HiCap shield was to send out a wall of heavy space knights out front and allow them to resist incoming damage with their HiCap shields.

Once their HiCap shields started to become unstable, the initial group of defensive mechs would rotate out while another group of fresh defensive machines would take their place!

This way, the winded mechs that retreated to the rear could calmly wait to restore the condition of their HiCap shields back to full capacity before rotating back to the front again!

It sounded simple, but it could truly work as long as their opponents weren't able to overload their HiCap shields at once!

Neither Commander Melkor who piloted the Gold Beacon nor Colonel Cardano who presided over the command center back on the Gorgoneion found it easy to break this scheme.

"It is not a coincidence that the Gauger military leadership has chosen to deploy the Pima Defenders in the exact center of their lines, sir." Colonel Cardano noted. "While the Pima Defender mechs might not be doing much to defeat their opponents, they can still play an essential role as an anchor and an immovable obstacle to other friendly mech units. They serve as the closest thing to a defensive fortification on the frontlines."

Melkor wearily nodded. "As long as they keep rotating their shielded mechs back and forth, they can last as long as their energy reserves last, which inevitably takes a long time since they are all big boys with lots of room for energy cells."

The most egregious mech of this kind was the Modal Firmament.

Chiefly developed by the Master Bonakane, the Modal Firmament was a pretty straightforward heavy space knight.

Compared to other heavy space knight models, the Modal Firmament was actually lighter and less massive. This was because the Modal Firmament sacrificed armor and internal structural strength to make room for a more

powerful HiCap shield generator as well as a larger array of energy cells to support its functioning.

To put it in a different way, the Modal Firmament put much more emphasis on its HiCap shield and significantly less priority on its armor system for its defensive needs!

As the mech model that adopted this strategy to the extreme, the Modal Firmament was tailor made for the defensive rotation strategy!

"The Modal Firmament is a big problem, commander." Colonel Cardano noted. "As long as their energy shields last, there is no easy way to overcome their defenses. Perhaps the only way to disrupt their rhythm and rotation arrangements is to outflank them, but there isn't much room for that since they are surrounded by other friendly mech units in every direction. We can only attack them frontally."

Commander Melkor already anticipated this. "Are we able to obtain artillery support?"

"No, sir. The Eye of Ylvaine already has its own mission. It is rather wasteful to expend their firepower on the Pima Defenders because the Modal Firmaments will just tank the damage and rotate out when they are nearing their limits."

"What about battle formations? The Swordmaidens and the Penitent Sisters still have them in reserve."

,m "General Verle is saving them up for later. It is not wise to employ them at the start because all of the mechs involved in them will lose their battle effectiveness after they are done. Besides, the Gauge Dynasty isn't stupid. They have personally suffered from our battle formations in the past. You can already see that their mech units are further spaced apart than normal."

"So it is up to us, then, right?"

"It is not impossible for us to obtain support from other units, but that will take away help that is sorely needed elsewhere. It is best if we are able to handle the Pima Defenders ourselves."

"Understood."

The Larkinson Army drafted many different battle plans, of which many of them were variations of the same approach.

It would have been at least two times easier to break the Pima Defenders if they obtained ranged support!

However, the offensive power of the Pima Defenders was so unimpressive that the higher ups deemed it fine if the Avatars of Myth achieved little results for a time.

This did not fall in line with Melkor's intentions. The Avatars of Myth needed to show its strength as the premier assault legion of the Larkinson Army.

"If we can't overcome a relatively tame opponent like the Pima Defenders, how can we possibly keep our heads high?"

The Pima Defenders must fall in order to meet expectations that everyone placed on the Avatars!

Chapter 4263 Breaching Plan

While the initial attacks against the shielded mechs of the Pima Defenders yielded results, this was just the prelude to a greater assault.

The Larkinson mech pilot had already become familiar with the enemy mech models. They had tested the defenses of mechs such as the Modal Firmament many times with the help of the MSTs.

Surprisingly enough, the performance of the Modal Firmament based on leaked intelligence and educated guesses did not diverge that much from the

actual performance of the defensive space knights fielded by the Pima Defenders!

The relatively slow and lumbering mechs did not possess the capability to execute any elaborate tactics, so their pilots could do relatively little to amplify the performance of their machines.

This meant that the Avatars only needed to take the technical capabilities of the Modal Firmament into account!

"Overcoming the Modal Firmaments at front is the first step to defeating the Pima Defenders." Commander Melkor stated. "We also have to beat the Favored Sons and the Space Piercers."

If the Modal Firmaments occupied the first row of a formation, then the latter two mech models occupied the second and third rows.

The Favored Son was a heavy halberdier mech model that wielded a relatively short but heavy halberd.

Though there wasn't anything special about the weapon itself, it was made of quality materials and its blade possessed enough mass to make any serious strike hurt!

It took a lot of skill and anticipation to pilot a slow and powerful mech like the Favored Son in battle. Only the most skilled or talented melee mech pilots of the Sundered Phalanx received an opportunity to pilot this powerful offensive melee mech!

The Space Piercer ordinarily occupied the third row of a formation. The defining feature of this heavy spearman mech was its weapon, which consisted of an extendable spear that could increase its length to an extreme degree!

The mech was mainly designed to stab enemies from afar, so its stabbing force was extremely powerful!

The reason why this model was called the Space Piercer was because their spears were transphasic!

To be more precise, the tips of their spears integrated a tiny drop of phasewater!

By concentrating the effect of that phasewater drop at the front-most part of the spear, the weapon's ability to breach through armor improved by at least 50 percent!

Of course, only an extravagant and well-connected mech division like the Pima Defenders could afford to produce so many Space Piercers.

All in all, the synergy between the mech models produced an incredibly stable and solid defensive formation.

The most important part was that while their offensive capabilities varied considerably, their defensive features were remarkably consistent!

Each of these signature models carried their own specific version of the HiCap shield generator!

They all sacrificed a considerable amount of armor in order to strengthen their HiCap shields as much as possible!

This meant that if an enemy launched a forceful assault and somehow managed to overcome the Modal Firmament at great cost, then the Favored Sons and the Space Piercers could easily take over and serve as the defensive bulwark.

They didn't need to carry any heavy shields because their HiCap energy shields were already enough for them to block a lot of attacks!

If the Avatars couldn't break through all of their defenses in quick succession, then the Pima Defenders would force everyone into a war of attrition where they inevitably held a huge advantage!

This was certainly one of the toughest walls that the Sundered Phalanx could muster in the field, but it just so happened that the Avatars had made targeted preparations to overcome this formation!

Commander Melkor studied the enemy battle line carefully once again before deciding to target the middle of their wall.

"Let's proceed with the standard breakthrough plan." He decided. "The most viable way for us to defeat the Pima Defenders is to breach their formation in the middle and continue to cut through ranks until our shock troops reach the rear. This way, we can not only attack the Pima Defender mechs with depleted shields, but also split their formation in half and attack it from multiple directions. The more chaotic and messed up the situation, the more the Pima Defenders will show faults!"

The Avatars of Myth weren't suited for drawn-out frontal engagements. That was the strength of the Living Sentinels.

What the Avatars did excel at was smashing open defensive lines with overwhelming force!

After a brief wait, all of the elements were in position.

"Inferno Company, you're up first! Light the center of their battle line up and drown them in heat!"

"Aye aye, commander!"

An entire mech company of Shield Warriors moved up first.

The rank-and-file members of the Larkinson Clan already called the space knight configuration of the Bright Warrior model by this convenient name, completely ignoring the official one that Ves had invented.

In order to make everything more convenient, Ves had taken over the colloquial names of all four configurations.

These Shield Warriors were a bit special though. All forty of them had swapped out their swords and shields in order to make way for a flamethrower loadout!

The Inferno Company mechs did not move quickly, and got hit by plenty of ranged attacks on approach.

However, the Shield Warriors easily endured the abuse with the help of their shield generators.

While their damage absorbing capacities and other parameters were not as good as the HiCap versions developed by the Bubble Man, they still provided the Shield Warriors with enough protection to get close and fire out 40 jets of hot propellant at the center of the Pima Defender formation!

Initially, Pima Defender mech pilots did not exhibit much concern towards the odd Bright Warriors that had turned themselves into striker mechs for some reason.

However, the Fridayman mech pilots quickly noticed that the flames not only spread incredibly deep into the formation, but that the burning propellant also began to get attracted by the HiCap energy shields as if metal got attracted to magnets!

"What is going on?! I can't see anymore!"

"I'm blinded! Too many of my sensors are overloaded by heat and light!"

"Why do these flames keep sticking to my energy shield?!"

The Inferno Company poured so much flames through a relatively small part of the Pima Defenders formation, not hesitating to concentrate their streams to achieve the greatest effect at the designated breakthrough point!

Not only that, but the Inferno Company mechs also emptied their propellant tanks as quickly as possible in order to saturate the affected Pima Defender mechs with as much heat damage as possible!

Commander Melkor and many other Avatars grinned when they saw that the HiCap energy shields had no way of wicking away the propellant that had been especially formulated to stick to it. The heat damage they dealt was so much that the Pima Defender mechs should definitely be suffering at the moment!

"It's a pity that the propellants won't last long."

The formula utilized for the flamethrower focused more on dealing as much damage in a short amount of time as possible. While the flames burned so hot that they blinded a lot of sensors, the propellant was destined to get used up in a short instant.

It was worth it, though!

Already the formation was becoming more disarrayed!

The mechs no longer covered each other as perfectly as before. Not even the best training could make these Fridayman mech pilots maintain their composure.

Although the flames did not burn the mechs or the pilots inside directly, it was extremely scary for humans to end up in a situation that literally resembled hell!

The Avatars needed to strike while the iron was hot.

"Akimbo Company, open fire!" Melkor ordered!

This time, another Avatar mech company arrived in front of the burning mechs.

The Inferno Company hadn't left after they expended their flamethrowers. They merely put away their weapon and picked up the heavy shields that they had brought over beforehand but entrusted to other friendly mechs while they started up the plan.

Now, the Shield Warriors took up their original occupation again and held out their shields in front of the mechs of the Akimbo Company!

This protection was sorely needed because the ranged mechs among the Sundered Phalanx already noticed the unusual movement at this part of the battlefield.

Different ranged mechs from various Sundered Phalanx mech divisions attempted to stop whatever the Avatars were trying to pull off and relieve the burning Pima Defender mechs, but the defenses of the Shield Warriors were too great to overcome in a short amount of time!

With the protection offered by the Inferno Company, the Rifle Warriors of the Akimbo Company comfortably set up their weapons and opened fire!

What was special about the Akimbo Company was that they actually carried two full-sized luminar crystal rifles at the same time!

Theoretically, any humanoid mech could wield two energy rifles in battle. They weren't particularly heavy and mechs possessed enough arm and limb strength to aim with them one-handed.

It was too troublesome in practice. Using two rifles at once made it a lot more difficult to maintain good and consistent precision and accuracy over longer ranges.

Not only that, the mech's heat and energy management systems would endure an enormous amount of strain.

It was much more effective and efficient to equip mechs with a single larger energy weapon than two smaller ones under these circumstances.

This was different, though!

The Rifle Warriors wielded their two rifles with confidence because their targets were right in front of them. The distance was so small that it was impossible for their pilots to miss the huge energy-shielded heavy mechs!

Each rifle held in a single arm immediately began to fire disruptor beams at regular intervals!

Although only forty ranged mechs opened fire at a time, it looked as if eighty mechs were attacking the burning Pima Defender mechs at the moment!

"Hahaha! This is fun!"

The Rifle Warriors were able to sustain such an exaggerated rate of fire by mounting modular heatsinks and energy packs to the exterior of their frames!

Though the additional hardware turned them into larger and more lumbering targets, it was all worth it as long as their luminar crystal rifles kept firing as fast as possible!

"Don't let up the pressure! Those HiCap shields don't react to disruptor beams that well so keep firing!"

Since the Akimbo Company received orders to concentrate their fire on just a handful of individual Modal Firmaments, the degree of shield drain that the enemy mechs experienced was different!

Some Modal Firmament mechs were already reaching rock-bottom while many other heavy space knights could still keep going to an extent!

Under a calmer and more organized circumstance, the individual mech squads or mech companies could sort this out and rotate the mechs that had entered the danger zone as seamlessly as possible.

The current situation affecting this narrow slice of Pima Defender mechs was anything but normal!

The raging flames still cut off a lot of mechs from the chain of command and the untested highborn mech officers simply didn't know how to resolve this crisis in a short amount of time!

With so much disorganization and lack of communication, the mech pilots of Modal Firmaments that were losing their HiCap energy shields at a rapid rate due to enduring so many disruptor beam attacks faced a difficult choice!

They could either pull back their beleaguered mechs to the rear as they had trained so many times, or they could choose to obey their current instructions and stand their ground.

In the end, the mech pilots of the heavy space knights all chose to allow their HiCap shields to break and continue to withstand the incoming firepower with their physical shields and armor.

Even though the Modal Firmaments didn't stand out in terms of armor, they were still heavy mechs, so they could still take a lot of hits.

Unfortunately, the Avatars already prepared the next step of their plan!

Chapter 4264 Mech Captain Arbid Hovan-Gauge

Mech Captain Arbid Hovan-Gauge was having the worst day of his life.

The week had already been going downhill as soon as the massive Hexer invasion fleet arrived in the star system.

"This isn't supposed to happen!" He complained as his Favored Son mech became surrounded by hot and sticky flames.

Though the powerful HiCap energy shield generated by his heavy halberdier mech easily resisted the thermal damage generated by the hot temperatures of burning propellant, the huge release of energies not only made the surrounding space a confusing mess, but also blinded his Favored Son's sensor and communication systems!

"Pull back! Pull back! Requesting fire support! Requesting expert mech support! We need help!"

No matter how many orders or requests he issued, none of his messages were able to get out! As long as the flames kept surrounding his entire mech without any gaps, it was too difficult for the Favored Son to successfully transmit any signals through all of the interference.

It was as futile as trying to transmit a signal through a burning star!

Without being able to communicate with any of his subordinates or superiors, he felt more vulnerable and alone than ever.

He had never faced such a challenging moment in his life.

As his name suggested, Arbid was born into a collateral branch of the Gauge Dynasty.

While that meant that he was destined to never climb too far in the hierarchy of his dynasty, it was not bad to administer a wealthy city or govern over a planet in the future.

However, the Gauge Dynasty held high standards for these positions and earning lots of merit was indispensable.

As a potentate, Arbid possessed a much easier path to earning merits than anyone else, and that was by accumulating them through military service!

There were two kinds of scions who went on to become mech pilots.

There were those who became enthralled by the mythos and the duty of becoming a soldier.

The strong who possessed superior training and education opportunities such as themselves automatically assumed the responsibility of setting an example and leading the Gauge Dynasty's troops in battle!

There were also those who believed that they were destined to be the movers and shakers of the Gauge Dynasty.

Becoming a battlefield grunt was beneath their birth and station in life. Even the descendants of side branches such as Arbid Hovan-Gauge received opportunities that grassroots citizens could only dream about.

Fighting and dying should be left to the masses. Why should the life of an average soldier be worth more than the life of a highly educated scion like Arbid? Their capabilities were completely different!

"Becoming a mech pilot was supposed to be a career building exercise. How did I end up in a survival game?!" The highborn mech officer complained.

As a relatively young scion of the Gauge Dynasty, Arbid just happened to have the fortune of being too young to be sent to the frontlines at the start of the Komodo War.

What was even luckier was that he also happened to be old enough to participate in the last months of the greatest conflict the Friday Coalition had ever fought since its inception!

By participating in a couple of easy campaigns that amounted to nothing more than bullying the increasingly crumbling mech troops of the disintegrating Hexadric Hegemony, Arbid easily earned the coveted status of a war veteran by the time the war had come to an end!

While this was already good enough for him to retire with honors after he ended his tour of service, the problem was that he was far from the only member of the dynasty who earned the same accolades.

Many other cousins also earned this distinction!

As such, in order for Arbid to increase his chances of receiving a lucrative posting once he returned to civilian life, he needed to brush up his record and strengthen his military accomplishments.

He at least needed to double the amount of medals on his chest!

Though there were plenty of pacification assignments available in the newly conquered territories of the former Hexadric Hegemony, it would take at least two decades for Arbid to get anywhere.

Compared to muddling around in the Friday Coalition's backyard, Arbid decided to accept a more exciting offer and head to the Red Ocean.

Compared to the situation back at home, the Friday Colonies was completely different in terms of promotion opportunities!

The Gauge Dynasty saw a lot of promise in its colonies, especially once it became clear that phasewater became increasingly more practical and essential to the continued development of mechs.

All of the colonies in the Magair Middle Zone and all of the towns and cities on major planets such as Pima Prime V needed to be led and supervised by capable and trustworthy leaders.

Who better than to lead an important industrial settlement than a former war hero who also moved to the Red Ocean and integrated in the local community in advance?

One of his uncles had personally promised that Arbid would be able to become the mayor of a middle-sized town if he served in the Pima Defenders mech division for five years.

If Arbid was willing to serve for ten years, then getting appointed as the mayor of a small city was not impossible!

"This was supposed to be my golden ticket to life. Why did the Hexers decide to attack Pima Prime of all places?! Can't they pick on an easier target like New Rammes?"

Seeing how the battle unfolded so far, the golden ticket that Arbid envisioned increasingly morphed into a black slip of death!

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Many people around him described Pima Prime as the crown jewel of the Gauge Dynasty in the Red Ocean. Such jewels deserved the highest degree of protection, and the strength of the local garrison gave Arbid a lot of confidence that he would be able to pass through his frontier service in almost total peace.

"I should have never accepted the offer to move to the Red Ocean!" The mech officer complained as his Favored Son's HiCap energy shield was enduring constant stress.

There was little he could do under the current circumstances. Without being able to communicate and without knowing what was going on outside his mech, he did not dare to move his machine.

He just hoped that his comrades who weren't affected by the sticky flames would come and cover for him during this sensitive period.

It was a pity that the Pima Defenders hadn't really responded up to this point. The planned maneuvers of the Avatars of Myth happened way too quickly for the passive Fridayman officers to adjust.

Let alone issuing orders to rescue their beleaguered comrades, they didn't even dare to stray close to the intensive disruptor beam storm that was shredding the HiCap energy shields of the Pima Defender mechs like a grinder!

Soon enough, a collision occurred that caused the HiCap shield of Arbid's Favored Son to ripple in a violent manner.

"Hey, watch out, Pilot Carpenter! What did I tell you about shoving against other mechs?!"

Though his Favored Son still couldn't see anything, Arbid still remembered which mech pilot was in control of the Modal Firmament at the front.

Normally, there should have been plenty of space between the first row and the second row of their formation to prevent accidental collisions. Battles in space tended to take place across much greater distances so it was rare for mechs to be packed together.

Had Carpenter panicked due to the flames engulfing his heavy space knight and sought to rotate to the rear while still remaining in a blinded state?

That was stupid choice! The training of the Pima Defenders constantly emphasized that mech pilots should never casually move from their place without authorization!

Strangely enough, the pressure of Carpenter's Modal Firmament quickly disappeared. Had the pilot regained his senses and returned his heavy space knight to its proper place?

It was frustrating for Arbid to remain in the dark while his Favored Son continued to be surrounded by an excess of light.

The irony of the situation was not lost on the mech captain!

A short time later, the situation for Arbid worsened.

Disruptor beams began to splash against the strained HiCap shield from the front!

"What?! Why am I getting hit? What are you doing, Carpenter! Why aren't you blocking these shots for me? It's your job to shield my mech from danger!"

His increasingly more distressed demands fell into the ears of nobody.

Though the incredibly active propellant was already starting to show signs of running out, that did not help Arbid in the slightest now that the heavy space knight that was supposed to withstand enemy attacks had mysteriously disappeared!

Arbid grew angrier by the second. He immediately concluded that Pilot Carpenter had lost his cool and flown out of formation.

There was no other explanation why a heavy space knight disappeared so quickly! Such a formidable defensive machine should have lasted a lot longer even if its HiCap shield got drained prematurely.

The physical tower shield as well as the thick frontal armor of such a mech were not made of paper!

After the barrage of disruptor beams finally exhausted the HiCap shield of his Favored Son, the flames mostly faded away as the magnetic attraction no longer existed.

Before Arbid could do anything meaningful, his Favored Son suddenly got struck by several hooks that had captured all four limbs as well as the torso of his machine!

"What?!"

The sensors of his heavy mech just cleared up enough to see that eight golden Larkinson mechs had approached and used special grappling poles to skillfully hold tight onto his Favored Son!

"Let go, you filth!"

His heavy mech vigorously tried to break the hold and shake itself loose, but it was too late at this point.

The thick and strong grappling tools had maintained such a firm grip over Arbid's mech that it had become incapable of overpowering the forces that kept it constrained!

Even though a heavy melee mech like the Favored Son was able to exert a huge amount of physical strength, it was hard to move its limbs when it had to fight against the combined strength of eight different Bright Warrior Mark II's!

There was no chance for the Favored Son to swing its formidable halberd at all. If Arbid was able to see the grappling tools coming, then the heavy mech would have been able to block or break these tools before they could take hold.

Unfortunately, the Larkinsons moved too quickly!

As the specially-equipped Catcher Squads grabbed hold of their prey, they utilized all of their power to pull their prizes away from the enemy battle line!

Though the Larkinson mechs endured a lot of shots due to their high-profile actions, they received plenty of cover from other friendly mechs.

As such, the Catcher Squads not only managed to retrieve and isolate a bunch of Pima Defender mechs, but also keep them place for the Redaxes to approach with their characteristic red-bladed weapons.

One of them already flew towards the trapped and vulnerable Favored Son mech.

"What... what are you going to do with that, Larkinson?"

The Redaxe's intention was obvious. It lifted up its massive two-handed axe and was about to circle around to the rear so that it could deliver a powerful, armor-breaching blow to the Favored Son's exposed rear!

Captain Arbid Hoven-Gauge no longer had any faith that his comrades would come to rescue his heavy mech from its predicament. He activated the eject command in an instant, which caused his cockpit to explode out of the back of his heavy halberdier mech!

At this point, he no longer cared how shameful it looked to eject from his mech without even landing a single attack on an opponent.

His life was more important than his duty!

When the sensors of his ejected cockpit detected that he was far from the only one to have made this choice, his depression faded a bit.

"My superiors won't blame me for making this decision. I held out as long as I could." Arbid consoled himself as his cockpit peacefully flew back towards the rear.

In any case, the fall of Pima Prime had nothing to do with him. Even if the invading forces won this battle and razed the entire port system to the ground, Arbid could count on his dynasty to arrange a place on an evacuation ship.

Though Arbid did not dare to say this out loud, perhaps it was a blessing for him to bail out of this battle at an early stage!

He knew enough about battles from the Komodo War to know that the probability of mech pilots meeting their end became much higher at the end!

Seeing that his life was no longer at risk, Arbid completely put away his thoughts on the battle and started to think on how to preserve his career opportunities.

"Pima Prime will be a goner after this, and life in the Friday Colonies will be a lot more difficult for everyone after today."

Should he apply for a transfer back to the old galaxy?

Chapter 4265 Disarrayed

Commander Melkor watched on with satisfaction as the start of the plan proceeded smoothly.

Even though the current wave of attacks only affected a small proportion of Pima Defenders, being able to disrupt and tear a hole in their formation, however small, produced a lot of ripple effects!

For one, the enemy mech pilots were no longer in their comfort zone.

The pilots of the machines targeted by the Inferno Company, the Akimbo Company and the Catcher Squads had it worse than other Fridaymen.

They became so lost, isolated and confused that the vast majority of them could not resist from beginning to end.

Many of them ejected as soon as the Redaxes showed up and lifted their iconic weapons!

Though the Redaxe was a rather simple design compared to many of the other models adopted by the Larkinson Army, it definitely had a place in the mech roster of the Avatars of Myth.

Their heavy, sharp axes along with their prodigious physical might were ideal for breaking physical shields and armor!

One of the Redaxes fully showcased its ability to tear through the unshielded heavy mechs of the Pima Defenders by breaching half of the rear armor plating of a Modal Firmament!

Without the protection of the famed HiCap energy shield, the Modal Firmament's rear could not hold up against the Redaxes.

Normally, heavy space knights were supposed to be more resilient than that, but the Bubble Man had deliberately thinned the armor of the Modal Firmament in order to equip a larger and heavier HiCap shield generator.

The Avatars eagerly took advantage of this inherent design weakness!

The powerful medium axeman mech only needed to chop one more time to breach the rear armor of the enemy machine entirely!

The powerful strike not only chopped open a hole through the armor, but also destroyed and disabled several important components, causing the trapped defensive mech to lose a bit of power.

After that, it took only one final strike to tear through the internals and breach the cockpit, thereby killing the Fridayman mech pilot inside!

Although this was just a tiny incident in a much larger sequence of events, the decisive killing of the mech pilot of the Modal Firmament mech sent a chill through some of the spines of the Pima Defender mech pilots.

The rank-and-file members of the mech division did not lose heart at the display. The vast majority of them were war veterans who served with distinction during the Komodo War.

Back then, it seemed like they lost friends after every deployment! Even the pilots themselves weren't certain whether they could make it back alive!

The younger and more tender mech officers were different. At least Captain Arbid Hovan-Gauge had been old enough to take part in real actions in the past.

There were plenty of other mech officers who hadn't even graduated from the mech academies by the time the war had ended!

Though each of them received impeccable training, they were still rookies when it came to actual battle.

Their reaction to the sight of deaths among their own mech division was much greater than their subordinates!

Though these highborn mech officers did not do anything that deviated from their roles, their heart and courage had diminished.

One of the main selling points for serving in the Pima Defenders was that it fielded the toughest mechs in the colonies!

Master Zenie Bonakane's work was not for show! His HiCap shield generators were considerably more expensive than the usual offerings on the market, but their ability to resist incoming attacks were legendary!

As long as the Pima Defenders remained stable and steady enough to conduct its rotation tactic, the mech division should have been able to weather almost any storm!

Yet now that the Avatars had not only broken a small but significant hole in the formation, but also proved their ability to kill the mech pilots of the highly resilient mechs of the Pima Defenders, the myth had been broken!

This dealt a severe blow to the confidence and belief of the Pima Defender mech pilots. Their fighting spirit wasn't as strong as before and plenty of highborn officers started to think about their escape plans in advance!

"Heh, these pampered sons and daughters don't know anything about hardship." Commander Melkorr contemptuously remarked.

Though he couldn't sense the expressions or reactions of the enemy mech pilots and mech officers, he believed in his analysis and plans.

The Larkinson Clan paid a lot more attention to tempering its mech pilots and mech officers in actual combat.

Having good skills or performing well in the MSTS was not enough as far as many clansmen were concerned.

The only way to definitely prove that a comrade could be relied upon was to evaluate his or her performance in an actual crisis situation!

Ordinarily, the Sundered Phalanx should have been cognizant of this as well. It would have been better if the military branch could spread out all of its less experienced mech officers across all of its mech units stationed in the Friday Colonies, but even the military was not immune to outside pressure.

Too many resume builders wanted to become a part of the Pima Defenders. Whether it was because of its resilient mechs, its permanent station in a prosperous and well-developed port system, the ease of commanding heavy mechs or the networking opportunities gained by joining a large and expanding circle of well-knit scions, too many dubious figures had joined this special mech division!

Now, despite not losing a lot of mechs as of yet, Commander Melkor practically knew for certain that the officers of the Pima Defenders were not in a good state of mind anymore.

"We've created a weak point in their formation, sir." Colonel Cardano reported to Melkor. "According to our analysis of their reactions or lack thereof, the Pima Defenders have yet to formulate an effective response. We should proceed with launching a general assault on their lines!"

Commander Melkor nodded. "Then give the orders. Focus on exploiting the hole in the center as much as possible!"

The Avatars of Myth finally moved in force!

The switch happened so suddenly that the Pima Defenders were caught off-guard.

So far, the Avatars showed clear reluctance in trying to attack the Pima Defenders head-on. This was not a surprise as the latter would clearly gain an advantage if anyone tried to attack them from the front.

Now, over a thousand Avatar mechs attacked the very center of the Pima Defenders which had been hard just a moment earlier!

All kinds of Bright Warriors showed up as a result.

There were Lancer Warriors that charged towards the Modal Firmaments and inflicted so much impact damage with their blunt lances that the heavy space knights either lost a lot of energy shield capacity or suffered brand-new holes in their tower shields.

There were Knight Warriors that boldly flew forward and resisted the incidental attacks from the Favored Sons and Space Piercers as best as possible.

These Knight Warriors did not deploy in their default configurations but carried additional modules in order to prolong the time they could resist the punishing attacks from the polearms wielded by the enemy heavy mechs.

For one, the Knight Warriors carried extra thick shields that were made out of extra dense alloys!

Transphasic spear tips or not, the penetration capacity of the main weapons of the Space Piercers could not punch through so much thick and dense material at once!

While some of the extended spears of the Space Piercers still managed to punch through the ultra-thick shields with great effort, this was where the Avatars launched their real counterattack.

The Knight Warrior would angle their shields as much as possible in order to prevent the Space Piercer from pulling out the spear through the hole it had just made!

During this brief interval of time where the spear remained stuck, a nearby Sword Warrior or Redaxe would come and chop the long and exposed shaft at the front of the Knight Warrior's tower shield!

Even though the spear shafts of the Space Piercer were made of extremely tough alloys in order to ensure it wouldn't break when utilized in combat, none of them could resist repeated heavy chopping attacks for long!

Cutting off the most valuable transphasic spear tips from the rest of the weapon turned out to be as easy as chopping a tree branch.

Once the Space Piercers lost their signature weapons, their threat level instantly plummeted to the bottom.

Even if they still had access to a backup spear or a backup sword, their slow attack speed meant that it was far more difficult for them to land a hit.

Even if the heavy spearman mechs managed to strike a Larkinson mech, without transphasic weapons it was unlikely for them to pierce through multiple armor layers in an instant.

The only mechs that gave the Avatars a serious challenge was the Favored Son model.

While these mechs performed best when they fought in an organized line and formation, they could also hold their own in duels and chaotic battlefields.

All of the mech pilots assigned to these heavy halberdier mechs were the elites among elites!

The various Bright Warriors immediately experienced difficulties when fighting against the Favored Sons.

First, they needed to get through the HiCap energy shields that protected these halberd-wielding monstrosities.

The Avatar melee mechs simply weren't able to accomplish this in a short amount of time.

They all needed the help of Rifle Warriors armed with luminar crystal rifles in order to efficiently drain their energy shields.

Once these HiCap shields were down, the Avatar melee mechs needed to outfight or outduel the Favored Sons head-on. While the assistance of ranged mechs could take them down a lot faster, all of the Rifle Warriors were already preoccupied with overcoming the HiCap shields of many other Pima Defender mechs!

"These mech pilots are too good!"

"Damn, half of our squad has been forced to retreat from those Favored Sons!"

"We can't defeat these halberdier mechs from the front. We need to break open their formation further and attack them from the flanks in order to overwhelm these difficult enemies."

"Just hold the Favored Son mechs in place and don't let them rotate or reinforce their comrades. The Modal Firmaments and the Space Piercers are a lot easier for us to defeat."

The Avatars of Myth experienced real challenges and difficulties when fighting the Pima Defenders in frontal combat, but they already expected that this would be a tough fight.

More and more Bright Warriors and other Avatar mechs frequently incurred so much damage that they either got destroyed or were forced to retreat from the battle line.

In contrast, the strong defenses of most Pima Defender mechs meant that their rate of attrition was significantly lower!

If not for the fact that the Avatars made targeted preparations to counter the various means of the Pima Defenders, the Larkinson soldiers would have suffered considerably more losses!

Commander Melkor noticed a clear difference in progress between the Avatar units fighting at the center as opposed to those who were confronting the Pima Defender mechs at the periphery.

The Avatar mechs fighting against the freshest and least disarrayed enemy units clearly did not gain any advantages.

Melkor did not hold out much hope for them from the beginning. It was enough for the Avatars at the periphery along with the units dispatched by the Glory Seekers, the Cross Clan as well as the Hex Army to pin down as many Pima Defender mechs as possible.

The more enemy mechs got stuck in place, the easier it was to expand and widen the breach at the center!

The Avatars responsible for expanding this breach happened to be the best of their mech legion.

Numerous elite squads and mech companies bravely surged forward and did their utmost to overwhelm the tough Pima Defender mechs as much as possible.

In this kind of hard confrontation, the individual combat skills of the mech pilots were less important than the raw performance of the mechs involved in this fight.

The power of the Bright Warrior Mark II's and other Avatar mechs increasingly stood out against their opponents!

Chapter 4266 Proving Mechs

The struggle at the center of the battlefield was one of the more important contention points of this massive battle.

Winning the flanks didn't necessarily mean anything if the enemies at the center managed to break through in the middle!

While the Pima Defenders clearly did not possess any inclination to lead any charges, that did not mean its offensive power was lacking.

The formidable defenses of its heavy mechs granted them enormous pushing power. They could slowly lead a counterattack just by advancing the battle lines at a slow and steady pace.

This was why General Verle handed over the responsibility of breaking the backs of this amazingly resilient mech division to the Avatars of Myth.

So far, Ves was mildly satisfied with the performance of his mechs. It was beautiful to see that the ideas he realized with great effort finally bore fruit in their first real test on the battlefield.

"The modularization of the Bright Warrior Mark II is not a mistake." Ves concluded. "The mech pilots are clearly having a good time and their fighting spirit has reached a new peak."

As a mech designer, it was important to pay attention to customer satisfaction. Ves kept track of various indicators to analyze whether the Bright Warrior Mark II's allowed the mech pilots to maximize or inhibit their combat potential.

He had seen no cases of the latter so far. The Avatars were thorough in this regard and never assigned their mech pilots to the wrong mechs.

"Their mech pilots are also performing particularly well."

Whether they were veterans or recent recruits, every Avatar mech pilot not only possessed impeccable skill, but also exhibited a particularly deep mastery of their machines!

The MSTS developed by Ves and the deep exchange technology developed by Hempkamp certainly played a significant role, but it was the Avatars themselves that also put in extra effort.

Through the invocation technique originally developed by the Avatars themselves in a botched attempt to create their own battle formation, their mech pilots all 'invoked' different design spirits, thereby allowing them to get affected by different moods that could all play a useful role on the battlefield!

"For the clan!"

By default, the Avatars liked to invoke the Golden Cat. Not only did she have access to the collective piloting skills of the entire Larkinson Clan, her aura also united the clansmen.

Other design spirits were also helpful under different circumstances. For example, pilots of the Sword Warriors tended to invoke Zeigra for aggression while the pilots of the Knight Warriors mostly begged for support from Qilanxo.

"It's a pity that all of the glows at their disposal can't change the fact that they can't make those HiCap energy shields deplete faster." Ves sighed.

As Ves saw more and more Bright Warrior Mark II's getting stalled by the intractable defenses of the Pima Defender mechs, it was clear that the new standard mech model of the Larkinson Army still showcased the same deficiencies as before.

Even with all of the modularization options, the fact of the matter was that it was almost impossible for the Bright Warrior Mark II to outperform other specialized mech models in their areas of specialties.

For example, all of the Sword Warriors that carried all kinds of heavy swords, heavy sabers and other weapons suitable for fighting against heavy mechs could not exceed the Redaxe when it came to armor-breaking capabilities!

The Avatars compensated for this as best as possible by employing creative loadouts that served to confuse, disorient and divide the Pima Defender mechs, but when it came to hard power, the Bright Warriors clearly showed deficiencies.

"Well, this is still within my expectation."

The only real shortcoming of the Avatar of Myth in this battle was that it lacked a powerful way to break powerful energy shields up close.

Ranged support became more and more necessary to grind down the tough HiCap energy shields that protected the majority of the mech models employed by the Pima Defenders.

"It would have been great if I could come up with the melee equivalent of a luminar crystal rifle." Ves idly thought.

The idea sounded silly. Luminar crystal weapons were meant to generate powerful energy beams that could be launched at distant targets.

They were never supposed to be swung around like clubs!

Still, after thinking about it further, it was not that unrealistic to create a luminar crystal that would withstand the rigors of melee combat.

Ves would probably have to invest a lot of expensive materials to make such a hard crystal, but he could easily envision a future where he might be able to design a melee mech that wielded a luminar crystal sword or a luminar crystal hammer one day!

He could already imagine it now. It would have been perfect if a melee mech came up and swung a luminar crystal weapon that was charged with disruptor energy against a hardy heavy space knight like the Modal Firmament!

"I should explore this idea further after I have time."

Ves felt more and more vindicated for participating in this battle. He not only noticed many shortcomings of his existing work, but also gained a lot of inspiration for potential new mech design projects.

He missed this experience. It had been far too long since he had last sent his troops into battle against a formidable opponent. The paltry battle records

brought back by Larkinsons who completed mercenary missions simply couldn't compare to the true challenges that their mech in a real battle!

After noting all of the possible areas of improvement of the Bright Warrior Mark II, Ves shifted his analytical gaze to the other mechs of the Avatars.

The Redaxe was one of the main players in the battle at the center. The powerful axeman mechs designed by Tifi, Sara and Ves a few years ago not only exhibited a lot of power, but also a lot of aggression!

Spurred on by Zeigra's aggressive aura, the Redaxes not only inflicted heavy damage to the HiCap energy shields of their opponents, but never failed to split apart the tough and resilient armor of the enemy heavy mechs once they lost their primary form of defense!

Ves was particularly satisfied with the Redaxe's ability to inflict heavy kinetic damage to armored targets.

While there were lancer mechs that could inflict even greater damage with a single attack run, all of those machines required a lot of room to work with. This became increasingly harder on a busy battlefield.

The advantage of the Redaxes was that they could hack with great force due to the prodigious arm strength they possessed. Tifi Coslone had done a good job with imbuing these medium mechs with such great strength that they could pose a serious threat against heavy mechs!

"We need to increase the proportion of Redaxes in our fleet." Ves determined. "They are just too useful in breaking through difficult obstacles."

Their mild success in widening the gap in the center of the enemy formation was a testament to their offensive might!

It was a pity that it was not an optimal mech to fight against defensive mechs that relied heavily on energy shields.

"Fortunately, I still have another mech model that is a bit more effective at wearing down the shields of the Pima Defenders."

Ves and the other designers of the Larkinson Clan came up with plenty of mech models over the years.

Some of them had gone on to become the staple mechs of different mech legions due to their obvious strength and utility.

Iconic mech lines such as the Bright Warrior, the Ferocious Piranha, the Valkyrie Redeemer and the Transcendent Punisher had become the defining classics of the Larkinson Army.

However, for every idea that had proven to be good, there were many other ones that had not been tested as much.

These mechs usually came into existence after Ves or another mech designer fell into an experimental mood.

Each of them were characterized with new technologies, creative implementations or unusual configurations.

As long as their value and effectiveness on the battlefield could not be determined, the Larkinsons did not dare to commit to them too much. It was not too late to produce additional copies and field them in large numbers once they proved their concepts.

The Lucid Rage was one such mech design.

Although the Avatars had only adopted them on a relatively small scale, their performance became just as noteworthy as that of the Redaxe.

"Interesting." Ves remarked as he leaned closer.

The premise of the Lucid Rage was simple. It was a melee mech that sought to transform the well-known combination between Zeigra and Lufa into a positive influence.

"I don't know what I was thinking at the time."

Originally, he came up with the design project as an attempt to develop a more focused dueling mech that could hone the skills and exercise the mental resilience of the mech pilot in combat.

Although Ves had made sure that none of the suppressive glows of his mechs should take effect on his own troops, he did not want his mech pilots to get caught off-guard if they ever came under the effect of the glow of a Valkyrie Redeemer or a Ferocious Piranha!

As such, he specifically wanted to develop a mech that could serve as both a training tool and a machine where skilled mech pilots could learn to fight more effectively when subjected to great mental pressure.

In order to form the suitable combination of glows, Ves had spent many days on experimenting with different ratios of design spirit occupation.

He constantly strengthened or weakened the influence of Zeigra and Lufa over the Lucid Rage in order to come up with the most optimal balance.

It was a bit of an accident that he had inadvertently hit a sweet spot where Zeigra and Lufa's glows just happened to preserve their advantages while covering for each other's weaknesses!

Zeigra's influence usually encouraged aggression and ferocity among mech pilots, but the problem was that those affected by this fever usually became prone to tunnel visioning.

Lufa's glow and in particular its Aspect of Rationality variant was great at making people more sober and objective, allowing them to make much more optimal decisions. The problem with that was that their fighting spirit also became snuffed!

The brilliance of the Lucid Rage was that it was able to create a near-impossibility where its glow could make a mech pilot aggressive and ferocious in combat but also rational enough to make intelligent decisions!

This was a miracle according to many mech pilots. The Lucid Rage seemed to bring out the best of many of them no matter what kind of tendencies they possessed.

More emotional and aggressive mech pilots tended to become a lot more focused and less easy to fool after getting affected by the Lucid Rage's glow!

More cold-blooded and timid mech pilots gained a good dose of aggression, but not enough for them to lose their minds and go on attack without a plan.

In any case, the end result completely surpassed the original scope of trying to design an arena mech that could allow mech athletes to draw out their full potential in a mech duel!

"What is really surprising is how effectively they can drain the HiCap energy shields of the enemy with their plasma tonfas."

Tonfas were complex weapons that possessed a lot of different ways to outfight an opposing enemy mech.

Initially, the tonfas that Ves designed for the Lucid Rage did not seem that impressive.

As an offensive mech, he truly could not imagine the Lucid Rage impressing anyone if it was limited to swinging around two weirdly-shaped batons.

In order to enhance their lethality in actual combat, Ves felt obliged to add a bit of extra oomph to them by turning their tips into plasma torches.

The tech was based on the same principles behind industrial plasma cutters. The only major difference was that the plasma torches implemented in the Lucid Rage were larger, more robust and much more damaging!

"They also happen to be more effective against energy shields."

Chapter 4267 The Champion Program

"When I requested a new melee mech that could exercise the mentality of my Avatars and provide enough stimulation for them to polish their combat skills, I did not expect you to deliver... this." Commander Melkor said as he observed the pair of prototype mechs dueling each other with great skill.

The Larkinson Clan owned an expansive private testing ground on Davute VII. Built in a remote area and set up with plenty of security measures, the Design Department regularly tested its latest inventions in this well-equipped complex.

Right now, Ves had chosen to put the latest iteration of an unusual design project to the test by setting up a duel between the prototype and a Second Sword.

The Swordmaidens were known as the best duelists in the Larkinson Army. Even the most average mech pilot of this mech legion was a veritable elite by the standards of every other group!

Enough time had passed since the lowest point of the Swordmaidens to complete the training of its freshest recruits.

By combining high-pressure practice sessions, exobeast hunts, constant indoctrination and the formation of a close sisterhood, every new mech pilot that joined the ranks of this unique mech legion became a powerhouse as soon as they entered a cockpit.

Not many mech pilots from the other branches of the Larkinson Army possessed the confidence to win a mech duel against a new Swordmaiden!

Rookies usually didn't stand a chance because the Swordmaidens not only polished their swordsmanship to an extreme degree, but also possessed the combat acumen of blooded warriors right out of the gate.

Veterans stood a much better chance of beating a Swordmaiden at her own game, but there was little honor or glory to be gained from beating a young woman.

This was why Ves found it challenging to find a volunteer to test pilot the new melee mech that he intended to add to the lineup of the Avatars of Myth.

It wasn't until he coincidentally recognized one of the new recruits of the Avatars that he found the right person.

Under the skillful manipulation of a young but highly talented mech pilot, the prototype Lucid Rage seemed to have grown wings, both literally and figuratively!

As flight-capable mechs, the Lucid Rage and the Second Sword did not keep their feet planted on the ground but regularly leapt into the air in an attempt to gain an advantage over their opponent!

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Tonfas and swords regularly collided against each other with great force. Neither mech pilots held back against each other.

Despite the considerable risk of accidents, both mech pilots possessed a lot of faith in their skills and the solid construction of their respective mechs.

No matter how dangerous the live duel unfolded, both pilots were confident that they could stop in time and prevent any calamities from occurring!

So far, the intensive duel not only showcased the threat of the Second Sword and the strength of the Swordmaiden mech pilot, but also the versatility of the Lucid Rage and the dynamic fighting style of the volunteer test pilot!

"I feel as if this test is not just about testing your latest toy anymore." Commander Melkor remarked to cousin as he continued to study the prototype's performance inside the observation tower. "It's quite unusual for

you to pay so much attention to a rookie that has joined the ranks of my mech legion. Thousands have joined our armed forces in recent years. Even if most of them end up in the Davute Branch, there are still many new faces in our Avatars."

Ves smiled. "This one is different, as you very well know. She is not only one of the few trueblood Larkinsons that still came from the era prior to the founding of our clan, but her talent is also the highest among her peers. I heard she graduated at the top of her class at the Discentibus Mech Academy."

Formerly known as the Larkinson Mech Academy, the DMA had quickly solidified its place as the main and most desirable mech academy of the Larkinson Clan.

Based on the academy ship that the Larkinsons had poured a lot of money into upgrading, the DMA might not win out in terms of possessing the best and most luxurious facilities, but its instructors were all among the best!

The Larkinson Army attached great importance to the teaching of the next generation of its mech pilots, so it regularly dispatched veteran mech pilots to the classrooms in order to pass on their valuable skills and diverse experiences to the youngsters that would eventually take their place.

This way, not only would the mech cadets get to learn from 'real' soldiers, but also be able to gain a much better expectation of what kind of lives they would lead when they entered active service.

Meanwhile, the temporary mech instructors would also be able to retreat from frontline service and assume lighter duties for a time. Passing on their valuable knowledge and helping the next generation get ready for the battles to come provided a lot of spiritual fulfillment to these older dogs.

Though the pedagogic abilities of these mech pilots were not always consistent, the well-behaved cadets always showed great respect towards their instructors. Everyone was a Larkinson, so few if any incidents occurred.

The young woman that was currently piloting the prototype of the Lucid Rage was one of the best products of that environment!

Despite the fact that she was fresh out of the academy and despite the fact that she never handled tonfas until just a few days ago, she not only learned how to pull off all of the diverse moves of this weapon, but also employ them with great skill and timing in a real mech duel!

"Her learning and adaptation ability is insane." Ves remarked as if he had completely overlooked that this testing session was centered around inspecting the performance of the Lucid Rage design. "You truly lucked out when she decided to sign up with your Avatars."

A smug expression appeared on Commander Melkor's face. "Our clan has many mech legions, but our Avatars have always stuck closest to the core values and customs of our heritage. That is not to say that the other mech legions are bad. Each of them have their own advantages. It is just that groups such as the Eye of Ylvaine, the Swordmaidens and the Penitent Sisters were originally foreign and only integrated into our clan later on. They're still weird in many ways if you think about it, and they have always stuck to their own ways of fighting."

The Larkinson Clan had become a bigger tent as time passed by. The proportion of truebloods had diminished so much that no one even bothered to pay much attention to one's origin anymore.

Every Larkinson came from a different part of human space, and all of them possessed different stories.

Whoever they were in the past and whatever they had done in their old lives hardly mattered anymore.

From the moment any of them pledged an oath and formed a bond with the Golden Cat, they had started a new life under a new identity.

The test pilot of the Lucid Rage was a bit different in that regard. She had been born a Larkinson from the start and grew up at the Larkinson Compound in her earliest years.

Having grown up to maturity during the early years of the clan gave her a unique perspective of what it meant to be a Larkinson.

When it was time to decide how she wished to serve the Larkinson Clan, she opted to go for the Avatars instead of the more exotic choices.

"Her performance at the moment vastly exceeds that of an average Avatar mech pilot." Ves remarked. "Will you groom her into a champion?"

"She already entered our Champion Program from the moment she signed a contract. Giving her the freedom and autonomy to operate independently and choose her own mech was one of the preconditions of joining my Avatars."

"I see."

The Champion Program was one of the more recent initiatives that Commander Melkor came up with to accommodate the increasingly more diverse mech pilots of his mech legion.

Normal elites usually had no problem with serving in a hierarchical structure, but there were certain individuals who would only get held back if they had to operate as part of a greater team.

Expert candidates typically fell into this category. Their skills and other combat parameters had already reached a level that was beyond the reach of normal

humans. To continue to serve as a cog in a machine was a waste of their potential!

Though Melkor originally set up the Champion Program as a way to accommodate expert candidates, he soon expanded its eligibility to any prodigies and top performers within his mech legion.

The Avatars were not lacking in heroes who earned a lot of respect and recognition within the Larkinson Army.

As long as they were the real deal and understood the risks involved with assuming total responsibility over themselves, Melkor approved their applications to the latest champions of the Avatars of Myth.

Out of all of the members of the Champion Program so far, the young lady that had only become a full mech pilot for a couple of months had definitely broken the record of becoming the youngest recognized mech champion of the Larkinson Clan!

"Miss Lanie Larkinson has a lot of potential, more than I ever knew she had back when she was still a cute kid back at the old family's compound on Rittersberg." Commander Melkor said with a touch of nostalgia in his tone. "A lot of Avatars objected to her immediate entry into the Champion Program, but she quickly convinced everyone the next day when she beat many of her fellow champions in simulated duels."

"Sounds like she is eager to improve."

"You should have looked at their faces, Ves. Each of them were older and much more experienced than Lanie, but few of them were able to keep up with her in a fight. What was surprising was that she won plenty of duels with both ranged and melee mechs. She's like the second coming of Venerable Joshua."

Those words were much closer to the truth than Melkor knew. As Ves observed the ongoing duel from the observation tower, he could feel and sense the strength of Lanie's spirituality.

Though it hadn't activated yet, Lanie's growth in this regard was absolutely impressive for a mech pilot of her age!

Though there were no guarantees that she could become an expert candidate, her chances were probably the highest among all of the Avatars. She possessed the talent, the diligence, the attitude and the desire to become the latest of a growing group of heroes in the Larkinson Clan.

Of course, she still needed a bit of tempering and additional life experiences in order to figure out her place and find her true conviction. No amount of spiritual development could help her in this regard.

"She's going to have an eventful career ahead of her." Ves stated. "Soon, our clan will end our extended vacation in Davute and go back to exploring the new frontier like the good old days. I expect much from her. The Lucid Rage also seems to be a good compliment to her development. Tonfas might not be common, but they truly seem to give her a better understanding on how to win a fight in melee combat."

The twin glows of Zeigra and Lufa both exerted a powerful influence on Lanie. Though her mental resilience was definitely more developed than usual due to her prior training and due to piloting living mechs for many years, she still took the initiative to embrace and balance out the glows from the design spirits of the Lucid Rage.

Only by embracing the combination of the Lucid Rage would its pilot be able to maximize its strengths!

Chapter 4268 Lucid Rage

As the testing session progressed, the prototype Lucid Rage became increasingly more proficient at blocking, trapping and redirecting the weapon of the opposing Second Sword.

Lanie even made the tonfas spin and utilized different grips to control the enemy mech's greatsword to such a degree that it turned into a burden to the Swordmaiden mech pilot!

As long as the Lucid Rage managed to neutralize the threat posed by the enemy weapon, it ruthlessly pressed the tip of a tonfa against the exterior of the Second Sword, causing the armor layers to melt from the heat and energy released by the integrated plasma torch!

Commander Melkor certainly looked impressed, but that didn't mean he was blind. "The combat potential of your Lucid Rage is pretty impressive, but... I'm afraid that most mech pilots won't be able to utilize it nearly as well as Lanie. The skill ceiling of this new design is ridiculously high, but its skill floor should also be rather high. Outside of prodigies like our impressive cousin, it will take years of training to reach this degree of proficiency. I can't imagine many Avatars looking forward to investing that much in learning how to master a brand-new weapon."

"We don't need to go big on it right away." Ves replied. "Start out with a batch of 40 or 80 Lucid Rage mechs and let's see how your Avatars fare with them. I believe there will still be plenty of mech pilots who are interested in taking advantage of its unusual weapons and glow."

"That shouldn't be a problem." Commander Melkor nodded. "If your Lucid Rage can truly elevate the combat skills and fighting consciousness of our melee mech pilots to another level, then I won't be opposed to adopting your new mech on a wider scale. However, I'm primarily interested in adding another offensive mech to my mech roster. I'm not asking for a training mech."

Clang!

It was at this time that the duel had finally come to an end.

After Lanie Larkinson had thoroughly studied the fighting style of her opponent and integrated her use of the tonfas, her Lucid Rage burst out with great concentration and ferocity!

In a rapid series of precise but daring moves, the tonfa-wielding mech not only captured the weapon of the Second Sword mech, but also wrenched it out of the grip of the swordsman mech by leveraging its momentum.

Commander Melkor's eyes grew wide. As a mech pilot, he understood better than Ves how difficult it was to disarm a Second Sword piloted by a Swordmaiden!

"I think this display abundantly proves how useful it can be in a serious duel or battle." Ves smirked. "You can rest assured that all of the performance parameters of the Lucid Rage meet the standard of a fully-fledged combat mech. It is strong enough to wield its tonfas with great force, it is tough enough to endure a few heavy blows, it is mobile enough to outmaneuver other medium mechs and it has enough endurance to last a typical battle provided it doesn't abuse its plasma torch function too much."

Throughout this duel, the Second Sword hardly managed to land a single blow on the Lucid Rage.

The more than satisfactory specs of the Lucid Rage played an important role in this, but without Lanie's indispensable skills and combat acumen, the new design wouldn't have been able to showcase its potential so beautifully!

After the live session came to an end, Ves finished wrapping up the data and went down to the hangar bay to inspect the mechs and their pilots.

"I'll beat you next time, Avatar." The defeated Swordmaiden pilot growled.

"You're welcome to try anytime, Swordmaiden." Lanie confidently smirked.

The young brown-haired kid from many years ago had bloomed into a strong and athletic mech pilot.

Years of learning and training at the Discentibus Mech Academy had forged her into a mech champion who possessed the highest talent among all of the recruits that had joined the Larkinson Army in recent years!

The conditions of the mechs piloted by the two women matched the conditions of their egos.

The Second Sword looked a bit beaten and seared. The tonfas wielded by the Lucid Rage could deal considerable blunt damage and had been responsible for adding a lot of dents and cracks on the surface of the swordsman mech.

Ves felt that if Lanie hadn't been so focused on winning the duel by robbing the Second Sword of its weapon, she could have defeated her opponent faster by targeting its weak points.

The more serious damage on the Second Sword all came from the circular, melted patterns on the armor.

The plasma torch technology that Ves had integrated in the weapons was quite costly to build and directly increased the design budget of the Lucid Rage by a considerable degree.

However, when Ves saw how quickly and effectively the tonfas were able to overcome the armor of the Second Sword, he felt that the expense was worth it as long as the mech pilot was good enough to avoid defeat.

Compared to the Second Sword, the Lucid Rage hardly exhibited any damage, though it was unavoidable for it to show signs of stress due to exerting a lot of physical forces. This was one of the more difficult design

problems of this brawling-oriented machine, but the mech was unlikely to break as long as the mech pilot exercised enough control.

The only serious damage it incurred was the sword marks on the surface of the tonfas.

Though Ves had made sure to make them as tough and dense as possible, it was still a bit too difficult for them to remain pristine after getting hacked by some of the sharpest swords that Ketis had designed.

He made another note in his implant to reinforce the outer layer of the tonfas even further.

Ves first turned to the Swordmaiden mech pilot.

"What is your opinion about my new Lucid Rage mech? You can speak freely, so don't be afraid to share your feelings."

"It's damn annoying to fight against this Lucid Rage." The Swordmaiden responded in a frustrated tone. "It is strange that I don't feel its glow, but I could see how it has taken effect on my sparring partner. The way she fought and the way she planned out her moves is not normal. I felt as if I was constantly being singled out by her and her mech. I accepted her challenge, though in hindsight I shouldn't have fought so carelessly. I felt as if all of my plans were being dissected before I could get anywhere. Whether it is the mech or the mech pilot that is responsible, I don't know, but I'm not eager to fight against this Lucid Rage a second time."

The Swordmaiden might be angry at her loss, but she also developed a lot of respect for Lanie and the prototype mech.

"What is it about the mech in specific that you think is good or bad?" Ves curiously asked.

As one of the first actual mech pilots to fight against the Lucid Rage in reality, the Swordmaiden's feedback was important for Ves to develop the final version of his new melee mech.

"Hmmm... a tonfa is a weapon type that I don't see every day. I didn't know how to handle them the first time, but it will definitely be different the next time. I think it works best against mechs that wield longer and heavier weapons. It is easier to take advantage of their unusual shapes to hook and pull away the opponent's weapons when there is more length to work with. A few times, the Lucid Rage even managed to push aside my greatsword and get past my reach."

Lanie smiled. "The Lucid Rage is like an upgraded brawler mech to me. Depending on how I grip the tonfas, I can control the range and set of moves I want to utilize. If I want to, I can use them as substitutes of my palms that will allow me to deal effective damage at point-blank range. I can also hold them like maces and use them to attack my opponents from a safer distance. I have really fallen in love with the versatility and possibilities of this weapon type. I would have never been able to experience their charm if you hadn't come up with this new mech, sir."

Though she trained with all kinds of melee weapons in the mech academy, they mostly consisted of swords, spears, lances, axes and hammers. This selection already comprised all of the possible weapons wielded by the mech models adopted by the Larkinson Army.

Though each of them were strong and versatile in their own way, switching to an exotic weapon reinvigorated her love for mechs and combat and gave her a wonderful challenge that could occupy her for years.

The only pity was that the Lucid Rage did not come equipped with a ranged weapon, but this was not a major issue.

Ves gathered more feedback from both mech pilots. Both of them might be young, but they had fought thousands of simulated battles in the MSTS. Their vision was much higher than other rookies for this reason.

Eventually, Ves took Lanie to a private office where he could talk to her in confidence.

"Have you experienced any feelings of discomfort over the years?" Ves asked with a touch of concern.

"Like what, sir?"

"Like... as if you don't feel comfortable in your own skin. Ever since I conducted an experimental procedure involving you and Imon Ingvar back when he was an expert candidate, I had concerns that it might have affected you to a negative degree. You should know quite well that the reason why you have become so good today is not entirely due to your own inherent talents."

Lanie grew serious when she heard that. She enjoyed being treated like a genius everywhere she went, but deep down she was well aware that she had gained an enormous head-start by inheriting a portion of Venerable Imon's skills and instincts through a process that Ves called Ancestral Possession.

Even so, that did not stop her from accepting the benefits of this successful procedure. She exposed herself to the risks of this experimental process, so it was only right for her to turn all of her new gifts into her own strength.

"I haven't suffered from any problems worth noting to you as far as I know."

Lanie eventually answered. "You don't have to be afraid that I will forget who I am or anything like that. I am certain that I am still myself. Most of what I had gained back then was combat and piloting-related skills and so on. I admit that much of it was foreign to me at the start, but after so many years of training and internalizing what I have gained, I have completely mastered every combat and piloting skill that Venerable Imon passed on that day."

Though Ves did not entirely trust her judgment, he could clearly observe her state through his spiritual senses.

Compared to many mech pilots, her spirituality was much more vigorous, healthy and developed than many other Larkinson soldiers!

Perhaps her youth was one of the key factors that allowed her to adapt and integrate all of the changes so easily. Ves had performed his experiment on making Ancestral Possession work at the right time of her life.

"That's good to hear, Lanie. I don't want to see you suffer from any accidents due to my experiment. I will keep monitoring your state as you put your skills to good use as a member of the Avatars. I hope that you can set a good example to those that might follow in your footsteps in the future."

"Are you going to perform the same procedure on other mech pilots?"

"I'm not sure. There is no urgent need at the moment since our regular training methods are already working well enough, but as long as the need arises, I might decide to revive this research project."

Ves possessed a much greater understanding of spirituality and spiritual engineering these days.

He was fully confident that he could not only turn Ancestral Possession into a practical way to quickly raise the strength of younger mech pilots, but also create a possible mechanism that allowed expert pilots to literally pass on a portion of their strength to their apprentices!

Of course, all of that was a bit too radical for Ves to explore at the moment. The risks were still great and he couldn't afford to harm any of his clansmen due to his carelessness.

Chapter 4269 Lanie's First Battle



This was Lanie Larkinson's first real battle.

As a new recruit, she spent too little time among the Avatars to go on any mercenary missions and fight against real opponents.

All of the combat experiences that she had accrued up until this point was mostly based on the many battle scenarios that she had practiced in the MSTs.

She couldn't count how many times she fought against each of the mech regiments and mech divisions of the Sundered Phalanx.

She also couldn't count how many times she died because she made a critical mistake and got punished by it. The illusion of death was so strong in the MSTs that she had quickly corrected most of her bad habits and maintained a lot more respect towards the enemy.

It was through all of these efforts that she was allowed to deploy on the battlefield and operate as she wished.

Most rookies had no choice but to join an existing mech unit and receive guidance and protection from a bunch of veterans.

She knew that this was for their own good, but Lanie had always believed that she was different.

The blood of the old family ran through her veins.

She not only inherited the skills of an expert candidate, but mastered them and transformed them to suit her own fighting style.

She graduated at the top of her class at the Discentibus Mech Academy, beating many other recruits who had managed to improve a lot with the help of training mechs like the Chiron and the War Squire.

She also received the personal care and attention of the patriarch of the Larkinson Clan.

Even though she was just a fresh mech pilot who didn't know much about complicated stuff, she had grown old enough to know that Ves was not the sort of person who hung around useless people.

For him to spend his precious time on Lanie meant that he expected much from her in the future!

As an earnest Larkinson, Lanie did not want to disappoint him. She owed too much to him and the clan.

For example, during the preparation for this battle, she had an opportunity to meet with him and ask for advice.

"You already possess a solid foundation. There is nothing much I can say that is helpful to you." Ves said as he evaluated her with a critical gaze. "There are many lessons that you can only learn in the field. Don't be too arrogant. I know you're good, but there is too much inequity on the battlefield. Who knows if a passing enemy expert mech deems you to be a threat and eliminates you right away? As a rookie, it is not your turn to stand up for our clan and attract the hatred of the enemy. We have people like Venerable Joshua and Venerable Vincent for that. It is already enough for you to remain steady and prevent yourself from becoming a liability."

The young mech champion's expression did not look like she possessed the patience to play it steady. Her youth and accomplishments made it difficult for her to restrain her eagerness.

Ves couldn't do anything about that. He hoped that she would learn to respect her opponents more once she entered into a real battle.

"If there is one piece of advice that I can give you, it is that you should pay close attention to cooperating with the living elements of your mech. It is not enough to rely on your combat skills to defeat your opponents. The best mech pilots in our Larkinson Army have learned how to cooperate with their living

mechs. Build a good relationship with your Lucid Rage and make sure to develop an understanding of its design spirits as well. The more you are in tune with them all, the more they will be able to lend their strength to you in a fight."

"I understand, sir. I already developed a similar relationship with my Sagittarius." Lanie answered. "I really miss my old training mech. I had to give it up once I graduated. I would have liked it if I was able to carry it forward into battle."

Ves shook his head. "That would be a disservice to your Sagittarius, Lanie. I designed and built it as a training mech. Its primary mission is to facilitate the training of mech cadets so that they can bloom as mech pilots with all of the lessons they have learned. Eventually, the two of you had to bid farewell to each other so that another mech cadet could benefit from the teachings of your training mech. Do you understand? Each living mech has a specific purpose, and the only way to maximize your machine is to figure that out and pilot it as it was meant to be used."

Lanie Larkinson listened carefully and took this advice to heart. She had piloted plenty of living mechs outside of his Sagittarius and vaguely understood what Ves was trying to convey.

When the battle in the Pima Prime System finally commenced, Lanie tried her best to adopt the right mood and develop an understanding with her Lucid Rage.

"Neither of us are weak, but the enemies we are about to fight are not only strong, but also numerous. I need to cooperate with you as best as possible to fight the Fridayman mechs and outfight them on a repeated basis. The more enemy mechs we take out, the less casualties our side will suffer. Let's do our best to play our part and maximize our strength!"

From the moment her Lucid Rage deployed into space, Lanie only grew more excited. She hardly felt any fear and apprehension even as her melee mech had little choice but to huddle behind a carrier vessel as the ranged mechs of both sides began to bombard each other.

When the invading fleet had advanced close enough to the Kosaic Ring to start the next phase of the battle, Lanie bravely flew alongside the Avatars of Myth as they steadily headed towards the center of the battlefield!

The ensuing action was glorious.

"Yeah! Burn them all! Break open a hole!"

Though Lanie did not participate in the planning of this breaching plan, she had practiced alongside the Avatars plenty of times when they practiced it in the MSTs.

Therefore, she knew exactly when and where her skills were needed.

"You're up, Champion Lanie! Accompany the Avatar mechs heading towards the breach! Don't worry about depleting the HiCap energy shields of the enemy heavy mechs. Other Avatars are already taking care of that. What we need from you is to defeat their mech officers. Try and go for the kill if possible. The more we make it dangerous for them, the sooner we can break down their command and control."

"Got it. I've already practiced this a lot of time. These Pima Defenders won't stand a chance."

As the Larkinson mechs crashed against the lines of the Pima Defenders, Lanie's mech approached the initial breach but did not rush in at first.

Specialized Avatar mech units had already gone ahead to expand the initial breach.

It wasn't until they created more room that her Lucid Rage could finally squeeze inside and fight against her first Fridayman opponent!

Lanie skipped right over the Modal Firmament. Their defenses were too disgustingly high and it did not take much of a challenge to defeat the heavy space knights as long as they weren't able to retreat.

Instead of wasting her time on this chore, she had set her sights on much more difficult opponents.

Among the Pima Defenders mech division, the halberd-wielding Favored Sons posed the greatest offensive threat against the Avatar mechs.

Though every Avatar mech pilot had practiced fighting against them plenty of times in the MSTS, the skills and combat literacy exhibited by the most skilled and elite Pima Defender mech pilots exceeded the expectations of many Larkinsons!

Dozens of Avatar mechs already suffered serious damage after getting hacked or stabbed by the heavy halberds in the hands of the enemy.

It wasn't until now that Lanie truly gained a sense of the cruelty and unfairness of the battlefield.

"No!"

Two Sword Warriors flanked an unshielded Favored Son mech in an attempt to pincer it from both sides, but the enemy mech pilot simply ignored one of the Larkinson mechs and launched an all-out attack on the other Avatar mech!

Not only did the Sword Warriors failed to deal serious damage to the Favored Son, but one of them even got savaged as the enemy mech's halberd almost caved in its chest!

The Lucid Rage piloted by Lanie hastily took over the place vacated by the heavily damaged Sword Warrior.

"Let me grab its attention!" Lanie transmitted to the other friendly mech before putting most of her attention on the enemy halberdier mech.

At this time, she had made sure to follow the advice and come more in sync with her mech and its design spirits.

She drew quite a lot from Lufa at this time. Her mind grew more analytical and she picked up a lot of useful details that she would have missed due to the chaos of the battlefield.

The opposing mech pilot truly mastered the halberd to an impressive degree! It was as if he had specialized in it from the beginning, which Lanie found unlikely due to how uncommon it was to encounter it in battle.

As Lanie gained a greater cognition of her opponent, her fire grew hotter as she developed a greater anticipation for this fight.

She soon increased her exposure to Zeigra, making her more pumped up and eager to defeat her foe!

"Attack me, Fridayman!"

Though the enemy mech pilot probably never fought against a mech with tonfas before, that did not stop him from stabbing his Favored Son's sharp halberd tip towards Lanie's approaching machine!

The Lucid Rage easily used its mobility advantage to evade the initial thrust.

Before the Favored Son had any time to retract its weapon, Lanie precisely took action at the right timing and vigorously commanded her mech to hook and trap the halberd by the bottom of its axe blade!

At this time, the complicated shape of the halberd had turned into a detriment!

Though the strength of the Favored Son was significantly greater than that of the Lucid Rage due to their disparity in mass, the latter was still able to keep the

halberd stuck in place long enough to make its wielder vulnerable to other attacks.

The Sword Warrior that had been targeting the Favored Son from the other side quickly swept in from the flank and was just about to thrust its sword through one of the weak points of the heavy halberdier mech before it suddenly aborted its attack run and moved away!

The Avatar mech couldn't have evaded too soon because a long spear that was tipped with phasewater had just thrust in front of the Sword Warrior!

If the Larkinson mech pilot went through with his attack on the debilitated Favored Son, his Sword Warrior would have been impaled by the penetrating spear of the Space Piercer!

"Heh, we're already familiar with your tactics." Lanie gloated.

The Pima Defender mechs were expressly designed to cover for each other. None of them ever truly fought alone. This was a lesson that every Avatar mech pilot had learned through repeated deaths in the MSTs.

The Avatar mech pilots weren't afraid of the Space Piercers in the third row thrusting their dangerous spears forward.

What they were actually afraid of was not being able to anticipate when they would strike!

It was only when the Space Piercers performed their characteristic stabbing or lunging attacks that they became vulnerable themselves!

The Sword Warrior's movements made it clear that it had only been feinting an attack on the Favored Son. Its real target was the Space Piercer!

The Larkinson swordsman mech quickly charged towards the Space Piercer and forced the beleaguered Sundered Phalanx to drop its extendable spear and pull out a shorter one that was more suitable for dogfights!

Though the Sword Warrior wasn't able to do much against the Space Piercer due to its strong HiCap energy shield, the latter's threat level had instantly dropped from the moment it lost its long, transphasic weapon!

As for the Favored Son, Lanie never intended to rely on outside help to defeat her current opponent.

She smirked. "Your weapon is mine!"

Although the Favored Son was able to maintain an excellent grip on its halberd due to the special accommodations built into the shaft, the heavy mech could not resist the overpowering force that wrenched it away.

The Lucid Rage had actually moved its lower body closer so that its legs were able to entangle the shaft of the enemy weapon!

A heavy mech might possess more powerful arms than a medium mech, but the story was different if the latter leveraged the strength of its entire frame!

The struggle between the two resembled a confrontation between a rhino and a monkey.

The rhino might be stronger, but the monkey was faster and more capable of exploiting advantages!

Soon enough, the Favored Son lost its halberd, forcing the heavy mech to pull out its backup sword.

However, it only took less than thirty seconds for the Lucid Rage to strike at the right opportunity and wrench the sword away as well!

The elite Pima Defender mech pilot felt sick to his stomach. Losing grip on a weapon was an unbearable shame to a soldier. Losing two weapons in a row was a disgrace to his name!

Chapter 4270 Fire Support

Lanie was having the time of her life.

She had heard so many stories about how fighting a battle in reality was incomparable to the simulated battles in the MSTs.

Though there were many veterans who praised the steadily improving realism of the latter, those that had experienced the real thing were still able to recognize the minor differences that made the MSTs inferior.

Even so, the new simulation training system was definitely more realistic, visceral and accurate than anything the Larkinson mech pilots practiced with before.

While Lanie indeed had to make numerous adjustments in order to better adapt to fighting in reality, the difference was not that big.

This was the greatest benefit of rookies who trained extensively with the MSTs!

The more ordinary rookies of the Larkinson Army were able to reconcile the differences after spending only a bit of time on this issue.

Lanie already adapted to fighting in reality after defeating her opponent!

The Favored Son that had lost all of its backup weapons had turned into a practice dummy in her eyes.

Despite the impressive skill and abundant combat experience of the opposing Fridayman mech pilot, the man could have never imagined that he would fight against an unreasonable prodigy like Lanie Larkinson!

The only troublesome factor was that the Favored Son possessed such a thick shell that it took a bit longer to overcome all of its defenses.

The HiCap energy shield of the weaponless halberdier mech continually shook and wobbled as Lanie's Lucid Rage persistently applied the plasma torches of its tonfas against the hardy barrier.

No matter how well the Bubble Man designed his famed HiCap shield generator, there were still limits to everything.

It took a lot of effort to resist the extreme application of heat and energy damage from the Lucid Rage's tonfas.

Naturally, the mech itself had to expend a lot of energy as well, but it was much easier to destroy than preserve.

With the assistance of friendly mechs such as the Rifle Warriors who fired disruptor beams at the Favored Son, the Lucid Rage finally overcame this difficult barrier and soon dismantled the vulnerable heavy mech through a combination of quick and ruthless strikes!

It did not take long for the mech pilot to call it quits and eject the cockpit.

"These heavy mechs are too troublesome." Lanie frowned as she already turned her attention to her next target.

The Pima Defenders were simply too disgusting to fight against. There were so many heavy mechs. No matter how much she outfight her opponents, even the worst Fridayman mech pilot was able to rely on the unreasonable defensive strength of their large machines to stall their defeat.

The Pima Defender mech pilots knew that even if they couldn't defeat the enemies in front of them, they could still fulfill their roles by lasting as long as possible.

This way, they could stall the Avatar mechs and consume the strength of their opponents as much as possible!

When Lanie quickly surveyed the immediate battlefield, she could already see that while the Avatars succeeded in overpowering the Pima Defenders mechs inside the breach, their progress got increasingly more bogged down.

Though it looked as if the Avatars weren't making as much progress anymore, it was already good enough that they had managed to maintain the breach in the center of the enemy formation.

The only problem was that it was too difficult for the Avatars to expand this fault and break open the enemy formation by themselves!

Lanie personally experienced this as her Lucid Rage continued to fly around and challenge different opponents.

At this time, her rage had cooled as she allowed her more calculating side take precedence.

Previously in the MSTS and in live practice sessions, she never really played around a lot with the glows of her mech.

She assumed that it was best to balance out the influences of both design spirits in order to make the most out of the Lucid Rage.

It was only after she received Ves' advice and fought in a battle with real stakes that she discovered that her usage of her melee mech had been too shallow.

Ves designed the Lucid Rage to improve the mech pilot's mentality in any combat situation.

The battlefield was never consistent, though.

There were times where a lot of action took place at once. Quick thinking and proactive decisions were essential to maintaining the upper hand.

There were also other times where too much haste and aggression were detrimental. Lanie has seen plenty of Avatar mech pilots putting themselves in danger because they acted with too much haste.

At this time, Lanie deliberately focused on disarming the enemy offensive mechs. This was where the Lucid Rages such as her own mech could best contribute to the battle.

Compared to other Avatar mech pilots, Lanie achieved much better results. She specifically targeted the Favored Sons and the Space Piercers and skillfully trapped and wrenched away their weapons.

An increasing number of halberds and spears became divorced from their owners and floated off into deep space through her efforts and the efforts of other friendly mech pilots!

When people like Ves saw how many spears that integrated a bit of phasewater in their tips were carelessly drifting away from the battlefield, he specifically issued a command to retrieve them as soon as possible.

"Track all of the extendable spears of the Space Piercers and prioritize their retrieval as soon as the main fight has passed. We can't let any drop of phasewater slip away from our grasp!"

Though Lanie was able to disarm more and more enemy heavy mechs, that did not mean that the enemy machines were helpless.

They could still rely on their strong energy shields to block the advance of the Avatars for a long time.

Even though the Pima Defenders had not found a way to launch a counterattack against the Avatars, their ability to stand their ground and take a beating was first-class within the Sundered Phalanx!

"We're not making enough progress! The Pima Defenders are slowly starting to reform their lines again."

"We are not putting enough pressure on their mech officers! Each of them has already retreated to the rear where we can't target them as easily as before."

"These Pima Defenders mechs are increasingly turtling up and relying on help from other mech units to push us back."

"The Fridaymen aren't the only ones who can call for backup!"

Commander Melkor issued a request to another mech legion.

Soon enough, he received a response as the Eye of Ylvaine directed the firepower of around 60 Transcendent Punishers to the enemy mechs within and around the breach!

Right now, a lot of mechs were pressed together. Both friendly and enemy mechs became so intertwined that few ranged mechs dared to fire unscrupulously in this direction.

The risks of friendly fire were too great!

The ranged mechs of the Sundered Phalanx did not dare to provide fire support to the heavy mechs that were doing their best to prevent the breach from expanding.

The same applied to the Hex Army, the Glory Seekers and the Cross Clan.

Reality was not like a game. Even within the MSTS, it was difficult for ranged mech pilots to support their comrades at the front once they got locked in combat against other melee mechs.

One of the greatest taboos on the battlefield was to harm one's own comrades!

Even if it made a lot of tactical or strategic sense to indiscriminately bombard a battle line that was mixed with mechs from both sides, the soldiers in the field would never accept such a command!

However, there was one Larkinson mech legion where this rule didn't apply.

All the way back at the main fleet of the Larkinson Clan, many heavy artillery mechs stopped their attempts to suppress their enemy counterparts in the distance.

"The time to hide our fangs and conserve our resources has passed."
Commander Taon Melin instructed the pilots of the bunker mechs that had received a new objective. "The Avatars have finally put down their insistence on trying to overcome the enemy by themselves. You already know what to do. Let Ylvaine guide your aim and do your best to grind down the energy shields of our targets. For the clan and for the Great Prophet!"

"For the clan and for the Great Prophet!"

The devout Ylvainan mech pilots, many of which had only converted to the faith a few years ago, all prayed to Prophet Ylvaine and received a response from their transcendent guide.

The third eyes of all of the heavy mechs that were safely sheltering inside the bunkers built into the hulls of different Larkinson starships all shone brightly as if they could pierce the truths that were previously obscured.

Each Ylvainan mech pilot gained a vastly improved sense of how they needed to configure their weapons and where they needed to aim.

While the gauss cannons of the Transcendent Punishers remained silent, the powerful heavy artillery mechs did not hesitate to fire powerful disruptor beams from their modern luminar crystal cannons!

Each energetic beam lanced across the battlefield from multiple angles and all converged to strike the Modal Firmaments, Favored Sons and Space Piercers that the Eye of Ylvaine had targeted!

With each machine getting struck at least a dozen times by the firepower of a heavy artillery mech, the affected Pima Defender mechs immediately experienced a lot more distress than before!

Previously, the attacks launched by the Avatar mechs steadily wore down the HiCap energy shields by a few percentages with each passing second.

This time, even the most well-off machine lost at least 30 percent of their total shield capacity due to all of the times they got hit by so many powerful disruptor beam attacks!

The firepower of a single Transcendent Punisher should not be underestimated. When 60 of them opened fire at the same handful of targets, the Pima Defender mechs simply couldn't hold out for long!

"Are these Larkinsons crazy?! How are these mech pilots so willing to trust their backs to their own artillery mechs?! Some of those energy beams just missed the mechs from their own side by just five meters!"

"Those Larkinson heavy artillery mechs can't be judged with common sense. Look at how many energy beams they fired already. Not a single time did they hit a friendly mech!"

The advantages of the Eye of Ylvaine were too great in this instance. The accurate and precise fire support from the Transcendent Punishers rapidly drained the HiCap energy shields that the Pima Defenders relied so much to hold their ground.

The unlucky Fridayman heavy mechs lost their energy shields so quickly that they didn't even have time to retreat to the rear!

"Hah, they're not so brave anymore now that they have lost their fancy energy barriers! Press them hard and don't give them any room to retreat and recover their energy shields!"

Many Avatar mechs eagerly took advantage of the situation and dove in to disable and destroy the enemy mechs!

"The breach is widening! The Pima Defenders are no longer able to hold on as much anymore!"

This was a serious turn of events that could have wide implications for the rest of the battle.

It wasn't necessary to destroy the Pima Defenders entirely. As long as the Avatars successfully pushed the enemy heavy mechs back and prevented them from serving as the central anchor of the Sundered Phalanx forces, the attacking forces could quickly gain more advantages elsewhere along the battle lines!

It was at this time that the Sundered Phalanx committed stronger assets to the fight.

"Watch out! Their champions have emerged!"

Dozens of medium and heavy mechs of different designs and colorations surged forth from the rear of the enemy formation.

Each of them challenged the Avatar mechs that did the most work and showcased their great strength!

As Lanie's Lucid Rage just forced another Space Piercer to eject its cockpit, the Avatar mech quickly retreated and crossed its tonfas to fend off a charge from a more impressive looking Favored Son!

Lanie immediately noticed the difference between her current challenger and the other ones she fought.

As her Lucid Rage fought back and attempted to deprive the special Favored Son mech of its weapon, she found herself unable to do so as the enemy was way too astute to allow her moves to succeed.

"Finally, an expert candidate!" She grinned.

Despite the fact that she was squaring off against a superior mech pilot, Lanie exhibited no fear at all. Others might not have much confidence in their ability to defeat those that were one step away from undergoing apotheosis, but she was different!

"The difference between me and you is not as great as you think!"

The enemy mech's halberd continually poked and hacked at the Lucid Rage with considerably greater speed and force.

Lanie could already observe that the tonfas of her mech gained increasingly more scratches due to the difficulty of blocking her current opponent's attacks.

Though she had tried to drive her Lucid Rage closer to the powerful enemy machine, the enemy expert candidate never gave her a chance!

"Even if I can't beat you, I will lock you down!" Lanie vowed as she concentrated her all to this dangerous duel!