

## Mech 4301

### Chapter 4301 Throwing Away The Manual

Ves wanted to bash his skull with his fist!

How could Patriarch Reginald Cross disregard the advice from one of the designers of his mech so easily?

The Mars was not just any living mech. It was the most powerful living mech that Ves had ever helped to design.

Perhaps other living mechs such as the Quint, the Shield of Samar and the Everchanger might be a lot more further ahead in the growth of their spiritual foundations, but the Mars had been born with a silver spoon in its mouth for one key reason.

The Mars was paired with an ace pilot! The spiritual feedback it was able to harvest from Patriarch Reginald Cross was unimaginably greater in both quality and quantity!

This should have turned the third order living mech into a powerhouse in record time. After all, the spiritual feedback from a pilot as powerful as Patriarch Reginald should have ensured that the Mars would quickly level up to a height where it could provide material help in battle.

Yet instead of letting this come to pass, Patriarch Reginald had been suppressing and dominating the independent tendencies of his mech all this time!

According to his own thoughts and ideals, there was no room for a battle partner in his mind. The Mars must subject to his rule and operate completely according to his own intentions.

Ves initially hoped that Patriarch Reginald would eventually recognize the benefits of cooperating with the Mars as an equal, but that had never happened.

Even now when Patriarch Reginald was locked in battle against a tough and powerful opponent, the stubborn warrior still refused to grant more autonomy and trust towards his own ace mech!

"This fool didn't read the manual of his own mech." Ves groaned in frustration. "No, that's not the right description. He may have skimmed through all of the documentation that I have written, but promptly threw it all away and merrily went on to pilot the Mars like any other ordinary mech!"

If there was one thing mech designers hated the most, it was mech pilots failing to utilize mechs in the correct way!

Mech designers spent a huge amount of time and effort to design mechs from start to finish with specific ideas in mind. A high amount of thought and planning went into every design project to ensure that the end result provided its users with greater strength and more possibilities.

Throughout his career, few if any of his customers and clients ever misunderstood his living mechs.

Every mech pilot was human, so they were all susceptible to the unique and obvious traits of living mechs.

As Ves progressed his design philosophy and slowly improved his work over time, it had become harder and harder for mech pilots to resist the temptations offered by glows and mechs that developed stronger characters over time!

The only clear exception was Patriarch Reginald!

As Ves thought about how he could convince the stubborn ace pilot to embrace a different vision on how the Mars should be piloted, his wife shook her head.

"I told you that it wouldn't work." Gloriana said. "There is a mismatch between the Mars that you have envisioned and the Mars that Reginald wants to pilot. This is your mistake as a mech designer. You have stuck too closely to your own ideas and failed to account for Reginald's insistence on maintaining absolute control over his new machine."

Ves glanced at her projection. "Okay, I may have made a mistake, but that does not deny the strength of my design solutions. Other pilots such as Venerable Joshua, Venerable Orfan and Venerable Dise have been able to amplify their performance to a significant degree by working together with their living mechs and design spirits. As long as Patriarch Reginald is able to cooperate at least half as well with the partners by his side as the aforementioned pilots, his Mars should have been able to teach the Neo Amadeus a lesson!"

"I won't deny that is a possibility, Ves, but you are projecting too much of yourself into Reginald's shoes." His wife crossed her arms. "We have our own ideas on how the mechs we have designed through our efforts should be used, but once we hand them over to their new owners, what happens to them is out of our hands. It is up to Reginald to decide how he wishes to shape his relationship with the Mars. He is well within his rights to ignore your advice and recommendations."

"That's stupid!"

"I do not think so." Gloriana surprisingly said. "Ace pilots aren't simple, Ves. Mechs can be utilized in more ways that their designers have envisioned. In my opinion, the way he makes use of the Mars is more in line with my own interpretation of living mechs. Reginald does not want his ace mech to have any ideas on its own. He instead wants to turn the Mars into his second skin or a form-fitting suit of armor that is able to keep up with his growth and amplify his own methods."

When Ves looked back at the projection that centered around the Mars, he began to see what his wife was talking about.

Several expert mechs that Gloriana designed in the past such as the Star Dancer Mark II and the Blade Chaser Mark II adopted this style of living mech.

Their egos and personalities had become a lot more muted. While this deprived their expert pilots the opportunity to form an equal partnership with their living mechs, the expert mechs molded a lot better to their intentions!

Personally, Ves looked down on this shallower and simpler design approach. Gloriana's second skin interpretation imposed a lower performance ceiling on her works. He was afraid that the Mars had mutated into a similar kind of living mech due to the deliberate actions of its ace pilot!

He let out a depressed sigh. "What is done is done. I have given Patriarch Reginald all of the reminders that he needs. If he still insists on misusing the Mars by dominating it as opposed to cooperating with it, then I hope it still works out for him somehow. It would be extremely bad if he ends up losing because he's too selfish to switch to another approach if his current one isn't working."

The duel between the Mars and the Neo Amadeus had reached its most intense phase at this time!

The ace hybrid mech no longer spammed its ranged attacks as if it was trying to overwhelm its target by relying on quantity.

Instead, Patriarch Reginald had chosen to charge and resonate with the weapon systems of his ace mech in order to unleash concentrated power attacks that were powerful enough to run through capital ships!

"I am the embodiment of war!" The Cross Patriarch roared as his Mars launched yet another attack!

The ARCEUS System fired a converging salvo of positron beams that pierced through the Saint Kingdom around the Neo Amadeus and struck the ace swordsman mech right in the chest!

This time, the energy beams not only did a good job at overcoming Saint Jeremiah's domain field, but also neutralizing much of the transphasic defenses of the Neo Amadeus.

The Mars actually succeeded in burning a shallow hole on the exterior of its opponent!

However, the Neo Amadeus did not passively let itself get hit. The reason why it did not attempt to block the incoming salvo with its weapons was because it had already prepared a power move of its own!

As the Neo Amadeus lifted up its weapons with all twelve arms, its domain field began morph until it looked as if thousands of phantom copies of the swords and daggers had materialized from thin air!

This was a more advanced application of domain fields that set ace pilots apart from weaker mech pilots.

Saints possessed a great amount of control over their own Saint Kingdom, and it was well within Jeremiah Gauge's ability to mold his domain field into a sea of blades!

"Thousand-Armed Strikes!"

The Fridayman ace pilot's voice seemed to echo throughout the battlefield despite the fact that sound didn't even propagate over vacuum!

Many mech pilots from both sides briefly slowed their actions as they stared at the power that Saint Jeremiah Gauge unleashed!

The Neo Amadeus advanced towards the Mars and began to stab all of the weapons held by its right arms towards the Mars!

Though the Mars managed to block the most threatening anti-resonance sword with its transphasic age, the ace hybrid mech could do little to stop the remaining 5 daggers from going through!

What was worse was that Jeremiah had simultaneously stimulated the phantom weapons generated by his Saint Kingdom!

Through the Fridayman ace pilot's incredibly effort, the Neo Amadeus succeeded in striking the Mars with a thousand blades at once!

"Ahh!"

The Abasis Armor endured unprecedented strain and almost suffered a breach due to the overwhelming amount of hits it endured in a split second!

Though each individual phantom blade did not inflict a lot of damage upon impact, the sheer quantity of daggers along with the fact that they struck in an incredibly tiny interval meant that Patriarch Reginald could not blindly rely on the defensive strength of the Abasis Armor anymore.

Everything had limits, even a high-quality transphasic armor system that incorporated a whopping 11 kilograms of phasewater!

The Neo Amadeus wasn't done, though. Just as it had successfully struck with all of the weapons held by its right arms, it subsequently began to launch an identical attack with the weapons held by its left arms!

A thousand blades that Saint Jeremiah had condensed out of his own will and resonance quickly followed suit!

This time, Patriarch Reginald no longer concentrated on attacking but instead prepared to defend his Mars against his opponent's actions.

The Mars first lifted up its transphasic shotgun and fired and incredibly powerful burst of

## Chapter 4302 Bending The Knee

The next few minutes proceeded in an unfavorable manner for Patriarch Reginald Cross.

Ever since Saint Jeremiah Gauge whipped out his 'thousand blade domain' or whatever, the Neo Amadeus gained the striking power needed to overcome the incredible defensive power of the Abasis Armor.

Saint Jeremiah did not randomly attack the Mars with its Thousand-Armed Strikes either.

He specifically set out to destroy or at least knock out the integrated energy weapons that made up the ARCEUS System!

As the primary and most powerful weapon system of the Mars, the ARCEUS System pressed heavily on Jeremiah's mind.

The Mars was able to fire all nine of its energy weapons so frequently and with so much power that they definitely had the potential to wear down the Neo Amadeus over time!

It was even worse when the ARCEUS System concentrated all of its firepower and unleashed focused attacks that could overwhelm the transphasic defenses of the Neo Amadeus.

One of the best ways to handle an enemy hybrid mech was to knock out its individual weapon hardpoints one after another.

As long as the Neo Amadeus used its enormous quantity of blades to pull out every individual tooth of the Mars, the ace hybrid mech would eventually be left with no means to inflict damage.

A mech without a weapon could not be considered a mech anymore. Saint Jeremiah could easily clean up what was left with no chance of getting defeated.

"Your Mars is an excellent mech, but it is a shame its pilot is so weak! You can't even stop my Saint Kingdom from invading yours!"

As the Neo Amadeus struck the Mars with multiple real weapons as well as a flood of phantom daggers, the overstrained Abasis Armor quickly exposed another gap that the Neo Amadeus instantly exploited!

A small explosion erupted from the surface of the Mars as one of its powerful and expensive integrated weapon modules failed to resist the phantom daggers!

Fortunately, the one that got destroyed happened to be one of the smaller and more vulnerable energy weapon modules of the ARCEUS System. Its overall firepower was not that great, but its loss still weakened the alpha strike capability of the Mars.

"You dog!" Patriarch Reginald raged with fury! "The Mars is too good to be damaged by your awful mech! You will pay for what you have done!"

"I do not listen to incompetents."

The Neo Amadeus did not stop with its powerful massed attacks. The ace swordsman mech struck again with a thousand blades as Jeremiah tried his best to exploit the destabilized state of the Abasis Armor.

Soon enough, the Mars lost its other small energy weapon module mounted on the other side of its chest!

Patriarch Reginald grew even more incensed at this loss, but he also gained more urgency in resolving his current crisis.

After trying out several ineffectual solutions, he eventually settled on intercepting as many phantom daggers as possible.



As always, his Mars never failed to block the incoming sword attacks with its transphasic axe, thereby preventing the Neo Amadeus from exerting the full strength of its extraordinary main weapons.

Even so, the real and false daggers that targeted the other integrated energy weapon modules possessed more than enough power to overwhelm the Abasis Armor and succeed in their goal!

Patriarch Reginald's mind and will went into overdrive as he relied on the damaged ARCEUS System, the shoulder-mounted transphasic gauss cannons and the transphasic shotgun to eliminate hundreds of phantom daggers before they struck the Mars.

Yet no matter how many phantom daggers disappeared, new ones emerged seconds later as Saint Jeremiah's powerful Saint Kingdom seemed to have an endless supply of replacements!

Reginald recognized that his current method wasn't the correct way to mitigate the offensive threat of Jeremiah's transformed domain field.

The patriarch of the Cross Clan accumulated more grievances as his Mars continued to suffer real damage.

As his fury built up, he recognized that the best way to block or mitigate the damage of his opponent's Saint Kingdom was to adopt the same approach!

Reginald needed to find a way to make better use of his strength and transform his Saint Kingdom into a form that could counter Jeremiah's willpower manifestations!

His mind briefly thought back on the words spoken by Ves.

Did he really need to beg for a bailout by requesting the help of his living mech and those so-called design spirits?

He could feel their willingness to aid him in resisting Saint Jeremiah and the Neo Amadeus.

The Mars, which Reginald always pressed down and stuffed in a dark corner, eagerly offered to lend its strength in order to prove that it could be of immense use in battle.

It was as if the Mars had turned into a filthy beggar that eagerly wanted to get hired by a noble master!

Reginald scowled in response to the simpering pleas of his living mech. He liked the Mars better when it still had a lot of fight in its spirit.

The two design spirits of the Mars also wanted to offer their services.

The Phase King possessed a great affinity with the Mars. The designers of the ace hybrid mech had pumped so much phasewater into its frame that it offered a huge amount of room for the alien design spirit to exert his incredibly diverse spatial abilities.

Though the Mars was not organic like the Titan-5 Project, the ace mech could turn into another incarnation of the Phase King as long as Patriarch Reginald sincerely respected and requested the cooperation of the design spirit.

It was a pity that Reginald strongly rejected this form of cooperation!

"A victory with you at the helm is not a victory that I can be proud of!" The ace pilot stubbornly shook his head.

If Reginald wanted to win this battle, he had to obtain full credit for it. This was his bottom line!

As for the other design spirit...

The ace pilot briefly moved his arm and grasped the heirloom that was hanging on his neck.

The Cross of Rebirth that Ves had made for the Cross Clan pulsed with eagerness and bloodlust as it conveyed the earnest wishes of the members of the Cross Clan.

The soldiers of the Cross Clan never lost their faith in Patriarch Reginald. Amplified by the thoughts and emotions of the Cross Warlord, Reginald had the illusion that he could briefly summon his father from the death.

Reginald could already imagine it. How fantastic would it be for father and son to reunite with each other and combine their strengths to pilot the Mars to a greater degree than before?

The temptation was great. Patriarch Reginald always regretted the fact that Lord Hemmington Cross died too quickly after getting ambushed by the former allies of the Cross Clan.

There had been no time for Reginald to exchange any words with the father that he had looked up to for most of his life.

The hand that gripped the Cross of Rebirth shook more and more even as the Mars continued to resist the powerful offensive of the Neo Amadeus.

Even though the Mars never ceased its attempts to clear away as many phantoms daggers as possible, it became harder and harder to do so with each weapon system that got knocked out by the massed blade attacks.

The Neo Amadeus had launched a concentrated attack on the head of the Mars that not only damaged its vertical crest and interrupted its projected plume, but also knocked out one of the two tiny energy weapon modules mounted on the sides!

Shortly after that, the Neo Amadeus scrapped one of the shoulder-mounted gauss cannons.

Half a minute later, the thousand blades almost succeeded in disabling the transphasic shotgun. As it was, it had received so much external damage that Reginald wasn't sure if it would hold together much longer.

If the Mars was equipped with a physical shield, then it would have been able to preserve its vulnerable weapon systems longer.

Unfortunately, its absence not only meant that the Mars was losing its teeth at a worrisome rate, but also reduced the ace hybrid mech's ability to intercept more blades!

The speed in which the Neo Amadeus was knocking out important weapons and other functional modules had increased.

Though Jeremiah's Saint Kingdom started to become a little shakier due to how much the Fridayman ace pilot had exerted his strength in quick succession, the man fought with the fate of Pima Prime and millions of colonists on his back.

There was no way that Jeremiah wanted to weaken his offensive and give his opponent any room to breathe!

"Damn." Reginald cursed and gritted his teeth. "Am I truly too weak to win my first true challenge as an ace pilot?"

He came closer than ever to asking for help from anyone that possessed the power to intercede on his behalf. No matter whether the help came from a mech, a ghost or a demon, Reginald could not allow himself to get defeated and subject his clan to a second ruination!

Yet whenever he was on the verge of opening himself up to possible allies, his pride and conviction refused to bend in the face of reality!

After several crucial seconds of procrastination, Reginald finally made an important choice.

"If I don't want to bend in the face of reality, then I will force it to kneel myself!"

He let go of the Cross of Rebirth and decisively put a line between any further thoughts of asking for help.

Instead, he called upon all of his willpower and resonated with his Mars in a different way than before!

His ace mech was special. It was not only a masterwork, but also alive. These qualities imparted the Mars with special properties and hidden secrets that significantly boosted its potential.

Now, Patriarch Reginald bonded with his Mars in a way that was unprecedented.

He did not choose to pull the original personality of the Mars out of its dark corner. He had no wish to cooperate with a weak partner that couldn't even stand up to his own will.

What Reginald did instead was to press his will to dominate and own the Mars onto its spiritual foundation!

The Mars seemed to utter a silent scream as Reginald wiped out the personality of his ace mech by force!

What was left after this extreme procedure was a blank slate that Reginald quickly infused with his own willpower.

A strange process took place that no one could explain. Though Reginald had no idea whether this could work at all, desperation urged him to make a gamble and proceed with this improvised plan in hopes of yielding a useful result.

Outside of the cockpit, the Mars underwent significant changes. Its entire aura and character changed in an almost visible manner. It lost a lot of indescribable traits, but gained a lot of new ones as well.

The transformation happened faster than anyone could make sense of it. Soon enough, the Mars had gained a more aggressive and domineering that truly fit its namesake!

Saint Jeremiah wasn't impressed by what his opponent was doing, though. He had already achieved good progress in defanging the Mars and was just about to strike at the enemy machine's most powerful and important energy weapon module mounted on its chest!

Yet just as the Neo Amadeus was about to stab the ace hybrid mech with a thousand blades, the Saint Kingdom surrounding the latter abruptly expanded and erupted like a volcano!

The force of this inexplicable explosion of power was so great that the Neo Amadeus and its domain field actually got pushed away!

As Saint Jeremiah quickly stabilized his ace swordsman mech, he became surprised at how his opponent had changed.

Previously, the Saint Kingdom surrounding the Mars simply resembled a formless red energy field.

Now, the domain field had completely changed. Just like Jeremiah, Reginald learned how to transform his powerful Saint Kingdom into a more useful form.

The shape that Reginald's Saint Kingdom had assumed was drastically different from that of his opponent.

It had turned into a giant silhouette of a larger mech that wrapped around the Mars as if the ace mech had summoned its namesake!

Though the details of this giant red silhouette was a little vague, those who knew Patriarch Reginald well could see his image in this extraordinary energy manifestation!

### **Chapter 4303 The First Murder**

Patriarch Reginald Cross murdered his own ace mech!

Few people realized what had happened. The masses all became impressed by the visual spectacle generated by the Cross Patriarch.

Though it was true that Reginald attained a breakthrough of a sort by finding out a better way to harness his Saint Kingdom, only a handful of individuals understood how much had been sacrificed to enable the ace pilot to improve his ability to channel his strength through his ace mech!

"No!" Ves screamed, causing Lucky and many other officers on the bridge of his flagship to become confused.

"He killed it. He actually killed it. How could he do that?! The Mars is innocent!"

It was one thing to kill a living mech when it was as murderous and uncontrollable as the Titan-5 Project. No one wanted to see another Uranus unleash devastation on everyone and everything.

This was different, though!

Patriarch Reginald undoubtedly possessed the strength to keep his Mars under complete control. There was no way for his ace mech to rebel against its own master.

Though Ves did not like the fact that Reginald demeaned the personality of his own living mech and treated it like a slave, this was a better alternative than killing it outright!

This was the first time that Ves witnessed a deliberate act of murder against a living mech.

He was no stranger to seeing living mechs dying and losing their spiritual foundations. Mechs were war weapons that were designed to be used under dangerous circumstances. Casualties were inevitable.

When mechs fell apart in reality, they often died in spirit as well. This was the nature of life and reality so Ves did not feel bothered by this process.

However, what Patriarch Reginald had just done crossed a line that Ves could have never imagined that one of his customers or clients would ever do. The reason why he never accounted for this possibility was because it contradicted the core principles and ideals of his design philosophy.

In his heart, he always assumed that making mechs alive and imparting them with distinct personalities enriched the user experience.

His products always became better for it because they gained brand-new possibilities that enhanced their combat effectiveness.

Sure, the pilots had to build up a deep and intimate bond with their living mechs in order to realize most of those benefits, but that was always better than nothing!

It was this assumption and more that always made Ves blind to the idea that there were mech pilots that actually preferred if their mechs weren't alive.

In contrast to Ves' utter shock and dismay, his wife exhibited the opposite reaction.

Her eyes glowed brighter as her grin betrayed her total delight and jubilation.

Gloriana had become ecstatic when she saw that Patriarch Reginald had taken a different turn with his Mars!



Her projection directed a smug look towards him. "I told you, Ves. Not every mech pilot wants to buy into your dream of how they should treat their own mechs. There are many different personalities out there, and a large proportion of them simply aren't interested in sharing power. They have no desire for their mechs to turn into their family, their spouse, their pet or their bosom buddy. All they ask from the mech industry is a machine that obeys their exact instructions and nothing more. If you had put more effort into understanding Patriarch Reginald's personality and asking him what he truly sought in his combat machine, then you wouldn't be looking like a fish out of water at this time."

At this time, the transformed Mars finally showed what it was capable of now that it had adopted its latest form!

The Mars seemed to echo and resonate with Patriarch Reginald in a radically different manner than before.

Previously, Reginald piloted the Mars as if he was a tiny human who was trying his best to operate a massive construct that was many times larger, heavier and more complex than his own body.

With the transformation of his Saint Kingdom and the takeover of his ace mech's spiritual foundation, Reginald essentially assumed direct control over its duties and powers!

In other words, Reginald was like a boss of a company who fired an incompetent employee so that he could do the job himself!

Though the man was forced to handle a lot more responsibilities as a result, as an ace pilot his data processing and decision-making capabilities had reached an incredibly amazing height!

Perhaps an expert pilot might have struggled under all of the load, but someone as superhuman as Patriarch Reginald easily adapted to all of the functions and options that a third order living mech used to be able to perform.

Now that Reginald had achieved an unprecedented degree of control over both the tangible and intangible properties of his Mars, he felt more powerful than ever!

There was no need for him to bargain with other personalities.

There was no need for him to borrow power from other alien entities.

There was no need for him to abide by the rules imposed by others.

Patriarch Reginald sought absolute sovereignty over his mech. Now that he got what he wanted, it was time for him to vindicate his choices and show off what he could do with a Mars that completely conformed to his will!

"I AM A GOD OF WAR!" Reginald boomed as his glowing red Mars unleashed a burning salvo of positron beams with its surviving energy weapon modules!

Even though his opponent had trashed almost half of the ARCEUS System, what was left was more than enough to inflict a heavy blow upon the Neo Amadeus!

The reason for that was because Reginald not only made his true resonance stronger after his latest epiphany, but also learned how to shape and harness it to a finer and more purposeful degree!

The energy beams all glowed in red as if Reginald's fury and confidence actually caused them to burn!

When these super-charged beams entered Saint Jeremiah's domain field, they largely held up and remained strong as the Fridayman ace pilot was no longer able to overpower his adversary as easily as before!

When the positron beams finally struck the Neo Amadeus without error, a powerful mini-volcano of different energies erupted on the torso of the ace mech.

The powerful salvo succeeded in overcoming the ace swordsman mech's spatial defenses and burned through the uppermost armor layer!

"You!" Jeremiah grew alarmed as he noticed that his opponent had somehow grown considerably stronger than before. "This shouldn't be possible! Your resonance strength hasn't caught up to mine."

The Gauger ace pilot couldn't explain why his willpower was unable to suppress his opponent as effectively as before, but weirder things had happened in high-level combat.

Jeremiah quickly shoved aside all of the questions in his mind and focused on what he could do in response to the latest changes.

"Since you still have a lot of bite left in you, I will finish the job that I have started!"

No matter what indescribable breakthrough or transformation that Patriarch Reginald had undergone, it was useless as long as the Mars lost all of its weapons!

A hybrid mech without any intact weapon systems was as harmless as an industrial mech as far as Saint Jeremiah was concerned!

With that thought in mind, the Neo Amadeus began to leverage its domain yet again and stabbed forward with its anti-resonance sword and a thousand daggers formed out of will and resonance.

"Thousand-Armed Strikes!"

An attack of this magnitude could tear open a huge hole in the hull of a capital ship, but when the weapons drew close to the glowing red Mars, most of them faltered!

The phantom daggers all burned and fell apart into harmless motes of energy as soon as they came into contact with humanoid-shaped Saint Kingdom surrounding the Mars.

The reason why this happened was because the Mars had compacted and compressed its domain field, making it much harder for Saint Jeremiah's willpower to trespass on his opponent's territory.

If Jeremiah wasn't able to press his willpower deeper into Reginald's Saint Kingdom, then the phantom daggers immediately lost the support of their creator.

Reginald could easily crush them with his domineering domain!

In the end, the only attacks that Jeremiah was able to push through enemy territory were the physical ones.

The anti-resonance sword fared the best. It was held by one of the physical arms of the Neo Amadeus and did not weaken at all due to the weapon's unique ability to ignore and negate any form of resonance and willpower expression!

Even so, the Mars easily utilized its transphasic axe to block this dangerous weapon.

As for the remaining 5 physical daggers held by the energy arms of the Neo Amadeus, the power behind the attacks had weakened as the translucent limbs visibly weakened as they pushed into Reginald's Saint Kingdom.

In the end, the Mars didn't even suffer a single scratch!

"Weak." Reginald smirked as he became completely unimpressed by his opponent's efforts. "If this is all you can do, then you should skip all of this effort and offer your surrender."

It was surprising how quickly the dynamic between the two ace mech changed after Reginald changed the way he fought!

Jeremiah did not let the words of his opponent affect his rhythm. After striking with one set of arms, his Neo Amadeus struck with its other arms.

Sadly, the outcome of this second massed strike was just as ineffective as before. The phantom daggers failed to penetrate Reginald's compressed domain field while the physical blades either got blocked or simply failed to penetrate the Abasis Armor.

Though the armor system of the Mars had incurred a bit of damage at this point, it was built with a high amount of redundancy in mind, so its ability to restore its spatial reinforcement was almost just as strong as before!

Now that it no longer received as much abuse as before, the automatic repair and restoration systems of the Abasis Armor had run their course and stabilized its condition.

Average attacks launched by the Neo Amadeus were no longer capable of breaching the reinforced armor plating anymore!

Saint Jeremiah quickly realized this as well and no longer tried to overpower his opponent's defenses by relying on massed blade attacks.

The ace pilot dismissed the thousand phantom daggers from his Saint Kingdom.

The Neo Amadeus also sheathed all of its physical daggers and dispelled its translucent arms.

The ace swordsman mech was no longer a dodeca-armed mech. Jeremiah had turned it back into a regular bi-armed mech!

After a second, the Neo Amadeus slowly pressed its transphasic sword back into a shield.

The ace mech then began to grip its anti-resonance sword with two of its arms in a sideways grip.

The aura and the demeanor of the Neo Amadeus changed as a result. It had retracted its hasty and aggressive qualities and became a lot more restrained and focused as a result.

Patriarch Reginald grew more serious as he sensed a greater threat from the Neo Amadeus.

Most mechs lost strength when they no longer harnessed as many weapons as before. This was always the case for hybrid mechs.

Swordsman mechs were different. They only needed one good sword in order to overcome strong opponents.

Right now, Reginald gained the impression that Jeremiah abandoned all of his fancy tricks and returned to his original form.

The best confirmation of that was when Jeremiah's Saint Kingdom transformed to match his new mood!

The domain field around the Neo Amadeus not only became sharper, but harmonized with the anti-resonance sword in a way that matched the weapon's properties!

The Neo Amadeus lifted its weapon as Jeremiah became a lot more serious about this duel.

"I should have shown you more respect, Reginald. I apologize for my earlier incompetence. My earlier attack method was too new and rough to defeat you

and your Mars. I will be fighting with all of my might from now on. Let my sword cut a path through your domain!"

The ace swordsman mech abruptly dashed forward and leveraged its attributed domain field to cut through Reginald's humanoid-shaped domain field as if it was made out of butter!

### **Chapter 4304 Mysterious Process**

Though the anti-resonance sword looked the least impressive out of all of the three main weapons of the Neo Amadeus, its properties were extremely effective against the current form of the Mars!

Now that Reginald had strengthened his Saint Kingdom, it took a lot more effort for most weapons to invade his territory.

The anti-resonance sword happened to be able to ignore this measure entirely!

Patriarch Reginald already felt it as soon as Jeremiah's changed domain field pressed close.

Strangely enough, the latter had acquired some of the properties of the anti-resonance sword as well, allowing the Neo Amadeus to press into the territory of the Mars with greater ease!

"Ah!"

Due to how closely Patriarch Reginald invested in his Saint Kingdom, the damage it suffered at the hand of his opponent's domain field also reflected back on his own mind and will.

The Mars at least managed to block the anti-resonance sword with its thick and sturdy axe, but Saint Jeremiah was anything but done with his attack routine!

Jeremiah Gauge spent most of his life as an expert pilot. He trained, developed and honed his swordsmanship over many decades, focusing the most on deepening his skill and control over his weapons.

Now that he had gotten rid of the distraction of wielding many different weapons, Jeremiah was able to invest his complete focus into his swordsmanship!

The result of this was that the Neo Amadeus turned into a terror with a sword.

The ace swordsman mech started to fight in the most classic manner of its mech type and sought to overcome the Mars by relying on excellent skill, refined techniques and strong intent!

Despite Patriarch Reginald's more powerful control over the Mars, he found himself unable to keep up with his opponent's movements.

Though the Mars was still able to block around half of the incoming sword attacks, the Neo Amadeus attacked so quickly and with so much brilliance that its naked blade began to strike the surface of the Abasis Armor with great force!

Fortunately, the anti-resonance sword did not possess any transphasic properties of its own. This granted it no bonuses in its attempt to overcome the strong spatial reinforcement of the Abasis Armor.

"This damned patterned armor plating is constantly getting in my way!" Jeremiah uttered a complaint.

If the Mars didn't possess such an unreasonably expensive and powerful armor system, it would have suffered damage already!

Even so, Patriarch Reginald was anything but comfortable at the moment. Each solid cut from the anti-resonance sword took a lot of energy to resist.



The Abasis Armor might be strong, but that was only the case when it was active and powered by true resonance.

Reginald could not allow his opponent to consume him in this manner!

"The actual surface of the Mars seemed to glow brighter. It was as if its heart beat faster and its body got infused with more blood.

In actuality, Reginald connected and resonated more deeply with both the Magma Vein System and the Endex System. His immense willpower amplified their performance to a greater degree, allowing them to supply more energy to the power-hungry systems of the Mars!

The Mars began to move again. Its Pulsvar V-1 transphasic flight system received a greater injection of energy than before, allowing the ace hybrid mech to move faster without compromising the performance of its other capabilities.

The Neo Amadeus no longer had an easier target to strike!

Saint Jeremiah had little choice but to make his ace swordsman mech keep up, investing more energy and true resonance into its transphasic flight system so that the Neo Amadeus could continue to get in range to assault the Mars with its sword!

The Neo Amadeus was not able to strike the Mars as much as before, but it still managed to land enough attacks to strain the Abasis Armor.

However, the Mars hit back even harder during this dance.

Unlike the Neo Amadeus, the Mars didn't have to get close in order to deal effective damage. Its damaged transphasic shotgun, its surviving transphasic gauss cannon and the intact parts of the ARCEUS System and struck the Neo Amadeus in synchronized attacks.

Patriarch Reginald specifically targeted one of the physical arms of the Neo Amadeus whenever possible. Just like Saint Jeremiah, he wanted to degrade his adversary's ability to deal damage.

Though the Mars made slow progress in damaging the Neo Amadeus, the concentrated attacks were starting to take effect, even if the ace swordsman mech was able to weaken the incoming attacks considerably by leveraging the anti-resonance properties of its domain field!

The Neo Amadeus began to show more signs of battle damage as a result. One of its shoulders bore the brunt of enemy fire as powerful positron beams and various physical slugs pounded it on a regular basis.

Patriarch Reginald wasn't satisfied with his current progress, however. Now that he assumed greater control over his ace mech, he felt that it still possessed a lot of untapped potential!

Since all of this was completely new to him, he did not have the time to explore all of the hidden possibilities of his Mars. He mostly tried to keep it simple by constantly deepening his imprint onto his ace mech.

The more he pumped his power into his ace mech, the more he gained the illusion that he was merging with it. The line between mech and human began to blur as Reginald increasingly began to think and act as if he was a mech rather than its pilot!

While this sounded like a dangerous development, Reginald was fully able to retain his identity by relying on his extraordinary willpower.

Patriarch Reginald quickly learned a lot of crucial lessons as he continued his attempts to merge with his ace mech.

Only a powerful will could match a powerful body!

The Mars was more powerful than any mech in the Golden Skull Alliance, but Reginald was also its most powerful pilot!

He refused to give in to his mech! His overwhelming pride and need to control his own war machine continued to affect the Mars in deep and profound ways.

Slowly but surely, the spiritual foundation that had once spawned an independent personality was now reshaped into an entirely different form due to Reginald's efforts.

The closer the spiritual foundation completed its wonderful and mysterious transformation, the more the Mars closed its distance to its ace pilot.

Unfortunately, the transformation stalled as it reached some sort of invisible limit. The spiritual foundation of the Mars lacked the depth and background to match the powerful strength of its ace pilot!

Reginald did not mind this too much. He had already done everything he could to reshape the Mars according to his own image.

As the ace pilot resonated with the new Mars, Reginald gained a vastly different experience from before.

The Mars had already become a lot more comfortable to him after he wiped out its weak personality and opened up room for himself.

Now that its spiritual foundation had completed its mysterious and unprecedented transformation, something seemed to click between Patriarch Reginald and the Mars.

It was as if Reginald plugged a cord into a socket, thereby connecting two complementary systems together!

"Huuu!"

Reginald took a deep breath as his force of will not only forged a permanent connection to the Mars, but also took total ownership of its spiritual foundation!

"What?!"

Back on the bridge of the Spirit of Bentheim, Ves had become completely shocked to the point of lifting his armored body off his feet!

Though other people were unable to observe the profound changes taking place within the Mars, Ves was different.

Through his connection to his masterwork mech and his powerful spiritual senses, he could sense that Patriarch Reginald had somehow initiated a process that was highly familiar to Ves.

Reginald had spontaneously turned the spiritual foundation of the Mars into his spiritual incarnation!

Ves never imagined that a mech pilot could pull off such a such!

From the moment the Mars became another part of Patriarch Reginald, the two were able to deepen their cooperation to another level!

After all, the Mars could no longer be described as an independent, self-contained entity.

It had become the second body of Patriarch Reginald!

The consequences of this radical merger was profound. The Saint Kingdom around the Mars not only grew stronger and more condensed, but the mech itself also gained a bit more charm that reminded a lot of people of Reginald himself.

This wasn't all. The changes that took place on a spiritual level also affected the Mars on a physical level!

As the Mars increasingly embodied its powerful ace pilot, the latter was able to strengthen the performance of his machine in deeper and much more drastic ways.

It was as if the Mars was putting up a lot less resistance against Reginald's attempts to upgrade its performance.

The Mars was changing before everyone's eyes. Few people were able to detect that it was changing at all, but those with enough familiarity or expertise could clearly see that the Mars was undergoing a physical transformation!

Its armor became harder and more resilient.

Its weapon systems became stronger and more threatening.

Its flight system became more powerful and more efficient.

It was as if the Mars had merged with a supergem produced by Lucky.

The difference was that Patriarch Reginald initiated this powerful process directly through his full force of will rather than through any medium!

One of the most distinct aspects about this extraordinary physical transformation was that its direction was strongly influenced by Patriarch Reginald's domain and spiritual attributes.

His domineering attitude, his need to exert his power and his obsessive pursuit of glory all shaped the Mars in a way that aligned with those traits!

As the fit between ace pilot and ace mech reached a new and wonderful state, the Mars exploded with power!

The Neo Amadeus which previously managed to cut through the domain field of its target with ease now found itself unable to do so as easily as before!

The true resonance generated by Reginald and his mech incarnation had become so qualitatively better that it was actually able to resist the power of the anti-resonance sword!

Saint Jeremiah lost his rhythm as he was unable to keep up with the constant changes of the Mars.

His opponent continually defied his expectations and constantly underwent different breakthroughs.

Such an enemy was incredibly horrible to fight against! Not even a battle-hardened veteran ace pilot like Jeremiah Gauge was able to maintain his composure after witnessing so many miracles in quick success.

When the transformed Mars fired the working weapon modules of its ARCEUS System at the Neo Amadeus yet again, this time the latter's armor plating suffered greater damage than before!

The absolute power behind the attacks had increased by a significant margin! It was as if the Mars was utilizing a version of the ARCEUS System that was 20 or 30 years ahead of its time!

Not only that, Reginald's ability to empower his ace mech's with true resonance had also improved.

This meant that the anti-resonance domain that Jeremiah had formed by resonating with the current weapon of the Neo Amadeus had lost much of its effectiveness.

As the Mars launched repeated attacks against the Neo Amadeus, the ace swordsman mech's transphasic armor experienced significantly greater strain than before.

It would only be a matter of time before the transformed Mars was able to breach its target's armor if this pattern persisted!

While the Mars turned the tide against its adversity, Ves and Gloriana had both become increasingly more certain at the phenomenon that just took place.

Ves behaved as if his entire mind had just gotten stuck on an error and crashed.

He almost couldn't believe what Reginald managed to pull off after killing the spiritual foundation of the Mars.

"If I'm not mistaken... then Reginald has just completed the first phase of the Mech Body Merger Process."

Gloriana happily nodded as her grin couldn't grow any wider.

Her entire body glowed as Patriarch Reginald and the Mars validated her assumptions and her design philosophy in the strongest way possible!

"Patriarch Reginald... has taken the first step to becoming a god pilot in advance!"

### **Chapter 4305 The Road Of No Return**

When Ves participated in the design project that eventually yielded the Mars, he already held expectations that it could trigger the Cross Patriarch's second apotheosis.

Once Reginald advanced to ace pilot, it was logical for Benedict Cortez to upgrade the Mars into an ace mech.

Ves did not expect any further drastic changes after that. Reginald had already broken through at this point and exhausted his formidable accumulation.

If the leader of the Cross Clan wanted to become a stronger warrior, then he had little choice but to slowly grow his resonance strength while deepening his mastery with the Mars.

Ves also didn't expect the Mars to leap forward in terms of performance either. The Cross Clan had invested a sizable proportion of its total wealth and assets into its development. The Crossers managed to obtain the cooperation of the top second-class development companies based in Davute and elsewhere.

Since the Mars already incorporated a lot of cutting-edge technology, it was impossible for the Cross Clan to upgrade the ace mech with significantly parts without spending ten times or even a hundred times more money!

As such, Ves simply assumed that Reginald and the Mars would undergo a slow and gradual growth process. The chances that either of them would leap ahead and gained a massive amount of strength were supposed to be minimal!

This was why Ves found it difficult to accept the dramatic changes that took place in a short amount of time.

As the Mars began to beat up the Neo Amadeus by firing concentrated attacks with its ranged weapon systems while using its superpowered flight system to stay out of the reach of its adversary's sword, Ves had no choice but to accept that the improbable had occurred!

Who knew that committing the first act of murder against a living mech could put Patriarch Reginald on this path?

"This shouldn't even happen." Ves sounded as if he couldn't accept the current reality. "There is no way that Reginald and the Mars should have gotten close to completing the first phase of the Mech Body Merger Process. This usually happens to senior ace pilots whose resonance strength has developed for a long time and has become a lot more powerful than when they have just broken through."



Ves never thought about Reginald initiating the Mech Body Merger Process at this stage because it almost always happened at the later stages of an ace pilot's progression!

In the past, Ves wasn't even qualified to know about this transcendent process. It wasn't until he became a tier 6 galactic citizen that he gained greater access to the MTA's internal library and got in touch with this high-level secret.

It turned out that when ace pilots believed that they had become powerful enough to advance to god pilot, they needed to start the long and dangerous transition to merge with their mechs.

The mech community did not understand anything about this transition in the past. Many ace pilots lost their lives as they made one mistake after another as they attempted to merge themselves with their mechs.

It was only after several hundreds years of trial and error that the MTA finally formulated a systematic roadmap for ace pilots to advance to god pilots.

The amount of casualties had dropped, but not by much, which showed how ace pilots literally had to bet with their lives in order to ascend to godhood!

The Mech Body Merger Process was split up into four phases.

The first phase was referred to as operation union. The ace pilot utilized his incredibly powerful force of will to baptize an ace mech that he had chosen to become his god mech over a long period of time.

As long as the ace pilot was powerful enough and channeled his willpower in the right way, he would eventually be able to form an indescribable connection to his ace mech that essentially turned it into his second body!

The mech industry was generally able to figure out whether an ace pilot completed this phase by testing whether the powerful individual still required a neural interface to pilot his ace mech.

If Ves and Gloriana's suspicions were correct, then Patriarch Reginald didn't even need a neural interface to control the movements and actions of the Mars!

The second phase of the Mech Body Merger Process was called domain field union. This was a process where the ace pilot was able to merge his Saint Kingdom with his bonded ace mech.

The third phase was called corporeal union. This was a highly metaphysical step where the ace pilot merged his fleshy body with his ace mech, allowing them to become one and the same.

The fourth and final phase was the most abstruse and difficult one of all. Ves had learned very little about this step, but from what he learned and what he could infer, total union described the near-impossible process where the ace pilot completely abandoned his last remaining ties to his mortality and completely merged his extraordinary willpower with his mech. This would make both of these elements one and the same, thereby causing the resulting combination to ascend into godhood!

Beginning the Mech Body Merger Process was an incredibly big deal. It wasn't supposed to happen when an ace pilot had recently broken through and only just started to make serious use of his first ace mech.

This was why Ves had incredibly mixed feelings about Patriarch Reginald's decisive act to convert the spiritual foundation of the Mars into his spiritual incarnation.

"Doesn't he know that completing the first phase of the Mech Body Merger Process has put him on the path of no return?!" Ves wondered. "There is no

way for Reginald to change his mind anymore. From the moment he established a permanent bond with the Mars, they are bound in life as well as death."

Gloriana didn't look as concerned, though. "I do not think the MTA has neglected to inform Reginald of the consequences of this action. He knows. His powerful intuition should have warned him as well. Reginald has made his choice, Ves. Instead of spending decades to develop as an ace pilot and waiting for a mech designer to supply him with an ace mech that is designed to evolve into a god mech from the ground up, he has chosen to bet his future on the Mars without a second thought. I am honored that he appreciates my work so much to entrust his very life and career to our product. You should be as well, Ves. He would have never taken this step in advance if you hadn't provoked him into killing his own living mech."

Ves was about to go crazy!

"THIS WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN! Besides, Patriarch Reginald should hardly be in the right state and mind to make such a life-changing choice. What is most egregious about the current situation is that this impulsive idiot literally can't afford to lose his ace mech anymore. By completing the first phase of the Mech Body Merger Process, the destruction of the Mars will directly feed back to its pilot. Ejecting the cockpit from the mech in combat has become pointless!"

It was not without reason why the Mech Body Merger Process was deemed the road of no return.

Previously, the Mars was an incredibly strong but ultimately expendable product. Reginald might become enormously pissed or depressed if his ace mech ever got scrapped due to participating in a losing battle, but eventually the pilot would be able to pick himself up and resume his career by piloting a brand-new ace mech designed for his use.

Patriarch Reginald pretty much kissed this option goodbye today. By turning the Mars into his incarnation, he tied his life into the machine in a way that bound their fates together.

This had many implications.

If the Mars ever got destroyed, Patriarch Reginald's mind and willpower would suffer such heavy damage that he would either become mentally crippled or become completely braindead!

If Patriarch Reginald wasn't able to pilot the Mars for an extended amount of time, both of them would slowly develop serious problems.

Fortunately, not all of the changes were negative.

If the Mars received a major upgrade and performed a lot better than before, then Patriarch Reginald's resonance strength would quickly rise in proportion.

Ultimately, in order for an ace pilot to successfully transition into a god pilot, he and his bonded ace mech must constantly strengthen themselves while also continuing to merge with each other!

Ves didn't have access to enough information to obtain more than the basic descriptions of this process, but every source he had access to constantly emphasized that most ace pilots were likely to fall before they completed all four phases!

This was why Ves was angry at Patriarch Reginald.

It was already bad enough that the ace pilot killed the innocent personality of his living mech. Though this violated the principles that Ves believed in, it was not as if it was an unforgivable mistake.

Ves had killed his fair share of people throughout his life, whether directly or indirectly.

What Ves truly found problematic was that Patriarch Reginald endangered the Golden Skull Alliance and by extension the Larkinson Clan by turning himself into a much less reliable combat asset!

By turning the Mars from an expendable to an irreplaceable machine, the consequences of losing a battle had become a lot more serious!

His wife didn't seem to pay attention to these dangers. All she cared about was that Patriarch Reginald had turned his Mars into the closest embodiment of her ambition to this date!

"Look at how much powerful the Mars has become!" Gloriana gushed as her eyes turned into stars. "I always knew that mechs could turn into the perfect vessels of their pilots as long as they were designed in the right way. It turned out that my second skin approach can truly make an ace pilot begin the lengthy process to advance to god pilot in advance! The risks may be great, but if Reginald and his Mars can continue to grow alongside each other for so many years, the fit between the two will gradually become so great that their chances of completing all four phases of the Mech Body Merger Process is bound to be higher than usual!"

Ves looked at his wife's projection in surprise. Though he wanted to refute her radical argument, her logic was quite sound this time!

Despite only possessing a shallow understanding of the Mech Body Merger Process, Ves still comprehended its overall purpose.

If ace pilots wanted to attain their third and most dangerous major breakthrough, they needed to form extremely deep bonds with their ace mechs.

Ves guessed that it was a lot harder for senior ace pilots to develop a strong emotional bond with a brand-new ace mech when they had already spent many decades piloting older and weaker ace mechs.

If these ace pilots were unable to develop a sincere affection towards their latest ace mechs, it didn't matter how powerful or how much high technology they gained access to. It was all pointless if the pilots couldn't solve the gap between themselves and their newest machines.

At least Patriarch Reginald shouldn't have to worry too much about this problem. The Mars was the source of his latest breakthrough and his affection towards it couldn't get any stronger!

"Remember what mech design is all about, Ves?" Gloriana asked.

"Mechs are designed to accommodate their pilots, not the other way around." Ves replied.

"Exactly. I won't tell you that your attempts to turn living mechs into equal partners to their pilots is wrong, but it is far from the only valid approach. At least in the case of a powerful pilot like Reginald, my vision and my work is able to provide him with the greatest possible help. Just look at the Mars right now. Can you see how its mysterious strengthening process is still ongoing even if it has slowed down? Its quality is slowly improving, which means my god body solution has finally taken effect! So many people throughout the Red Ocean are observing my work at the moment. With the latest changes, their admiration and worship towards the Mars are definitely feeding the ace mech's gradual transformation into a god in the form of a mech!"

In other words, this was the best day of Gloriana's life! Her spirituality became incredibly stimulated and her design seed stirred with excitement.

Her path towards advancing to Senior Mech Designer couldn't have been more obvious! The massive amount of insights and realizations that she had harvested from this battle provided her with so many clues that she was confident that she could take the next step within the following decade!

## THE MECH TOUCH

## Chapter 4306 Threatened By Wife

The duel between Patriarch Reginald Cross and Saint Jeremiah Gauge had attracted an immense amount of viewers who tuned in on the many broadcasts over the galactic net.

Though fights that involved ace mechs were not uncommon due to the immense size of human civilization, they weren't exactly ubiquitous either.

Each ace pilot and ace mech represented a new and unique combination of pilot and mech. Watching them perform their amazing feats against other comparable halfgods was much more interesting than viewing ordinary mech arena matches!

"Have you heard about the ace mech duel that is going on in a port system called Pima Prime? You need to watch it right away!"

"I don't know who these guys are or what they are fighting for, but I hope they don't stop too quickly."

"How can these stupid neanderthals think about fighting and killing each other when they should actually be directing their firepower against the aliens? It's a complete travesty for ace pilots to risk their lives due to pointless fights over ancient grudges!"

A lot of people developed a lot of different opinions about the ongoing duel, but regardless of what they thought, the word of mouth they produced continued to pull in more and more friends and family to the spectacle.

Billions if not trillions of people throughout the Red Ocean as well as the Milky Way Galaxy became engrossed in the intense and dramatic battle between the two powerful ace pilots and ace mechs!

This was a crazy amount of people! Not only did this bring a lot of fame and recognition to the parties involved in the overall battle, but also earned the ace pilots and the ace mechs a lot of fans!

For example, many Fridaymen rooted for Saint Jeremiah Gauge. Though the Gauge Dynasty wasn't exactly popular among the other coalition partners, the vast majority of ordinary citizens didn't have a strong understanding of the underlying tensions within the Friday Coalition.

They just wanted their state to prove its might and defeat the evil Hexers who sought to destroy their livelihoods!

The Hexers automatically put their hopes on Patriarch Reginald Cross. Despite the fact that he was the epitome of the sort of 'boy' that every Hexer feared, as long as this violent and battle-hungry fought on the side of the Hex Federation, everything was okay!

As for those that did not have a direct stake in the Battle of Pima Prime, their support split evenly between the two combatants.

Swordsmen and swordsman mech enthusiasts, even those hailing from the Heavensword Association, overwhelmingly wanted the Neo Amadeus to showcase the superiority of swordsmanship and expand its popularity.

Those that sympathized with the 'innocent' party that got brutally attacked by foreign invaders wanted Saint Jeremiah Gauge to mete out justice by punishing the wicked!

Patriarch Reginald and the Mars appealed to different audiences.

Those that favored ranged mechs and hybrid mechs thought that the Mars was a dream mech!

Even though first-class multipurpose mechs tended to be a lot more advanced and powerful in many ways, second-class mech pilots had no chance of piloting them in their lifetimes. In contrast, an ace mech comparable to the Mars was still attainable to them as long as they were talented and managed to make successive breakthroughs.



There were also those who just liked mechs that possessed a huge amount of firepower and wasn't afraid to use it. The domineering posture of the Mars along with its abundant attacks brought out the primal side within people!

No matter which combatant these people supported, as long as they held more than a passing interest in this battle, the thoughts and emotions they directed towards the ace pilots and ace mechs did not entirely go to waste.

Ves or maybe Blinky possessed the greatest sensitivity towards these fluctuations. In fact, ever since the Mech Designer System followed the Spiritual Ascension Upgrade Track, he already noticed that his senses became a little bit more aware of the movement of faith, belief and other related phenomena.

Though he hadn't consciously paid attention to this variable since he had mostly directed his thoughts towards Patriarch Reginald's outrageous act of murder against his ace mech, now that Gloriana pointed it out, Ves indeed noticed that both combatants were harvesting a growing wave of spiritual feedback!

"What... is going on?" Ves became puzzled.

He had never explicitly obtained any source that high-ranking mech pilots needed to rely on faith and belief to advance. From his own understanding, willpower was highly exclusionary towards any other influences, and could not be blended with other forms of power.

That was also the reason why high-ranking mech pilots posed such a great threat against other spiritual entities. Their willpower and true resonance were too strong and naturally countered other spiritual phenomena!

When Ves studied the Neo Amadeus, he found that the growing movement of faith did not affect it in the slightest, which aligned with his theories.

It was as if high-ranking mech pilots were weirdos among transcendents. Though they shared some resemblances to other spiritually powerful individuals, they took a huge detour and followed their path!

According to his theoretical framework, Patriarch Reginald Cross should be in the same position. The man was obviously self-centered to the extreme, or else he wouldn't have killed off the personality of his own living mech!

"Let's see what is going on with him and his ace mech."

When Ves carefully observed the Mars, he noticed an immediate difference from the Neo Amadeus.

The spiritual feedback that was pouring in from every corner of the old galaxy and the new frontier were not being repelled!

This was strange because Patriarch Reginald didn't appear to absorb these incoming energies directly. In fact, his strengthened Saint Kingdom actively seemed to repel these unwanted influences.

The reason why some of it got through anyway was because the Mars acted like a black hole that actively sucked in the spiritual feedback!

It was no wonder why Gloriana became incredibly ecstatic about what she had been able to witness today.

The god body method that she had painstakingly applied to the entire frame of the Mars had never displayed any impressive results since the mech initially came into existence.

The requirements to apply this method to the Mars were harsh. Each and every single component had to be stamped with a physical 'divine marker' that was based off Ves' totems.

Essentially, Gloriana came up with a scheme to turn every physical mech part into a totem. The goal of doing all of this was to ultimately imbue the Mars with

some of the powers of a deity, the most important of which was to be able to absorb spiritual feedback that it could use to upgrade its quality!

Though Gloriana's idea sounded incredibly whacky to say the least, the fact that the Mars was not only absorbing a lot of spiritual feedback, but actively converted all of this income into real improvements of its parts and systems offered conclusive proof that her ambitious idea actually worked!

"The Mars is actively climbing up Senfovon's Ladder of Craftsmanship!" Ves gasped!

The distance between the second rung and third rung of the craftsmanship ladder was unimaginably great, so Ves did not expect to see any immediate results.

Besides, Ves did not think that it was that simple to turn a mech into an exceedingly rare and exemplary grand work. There had to be more profound requirements that couldn't be met by piling up a lot of incremental improvements.

Even so, Gloriana's successful implementation was a massive leap to her work and design philosophy!

As the Mars gradually strengthened itself, its performance became less and less detached from its original technical processes and specifications.

Ace mechs already performed a lot better than their base parameters due to the amplification of true resonance, but this was starting to get ridiculous!

The Mars was actually undergoing a double improvement.

Patriarch Reginald's strengthened bond with his ace mech had baptized the machine with his powerful force of will, thereby improving the machine in ways that reminded Ves a lot of Lucky's gems.

Ves even speculated that the willpower baptism might actually be overriding the effects of the Rage of Ayef gem that he had attached to the Mars!

When this willpower baptism was combined with the activated god body method, the Mars changed in ways that made a lot of mech designers and other people with vision take a deeper look at this ace mech!

"This... did Gloriana open up an entirely new way of empowering ace pilots?" Ves wondered.

He used to think that Gloriana's insistence on treating living mechs as proto-gods or deities in the making was utter nonsense and claptrap.

However, the design solutions she came up with actually allowed her to realize her insane vision!

Ves felt sickened by the progress that his wife had made.

He did not object to Gloriana achieving success in her work. She was his wife, and the stronger she became, the more benefits she provided to him and his organization.

He just didn't want her to succeed in turning mechs into god-like entities. It felt wrong for mechs to turn into objects of worship. The implications were too massive for him to think about at the moment.

A strong sense of urgency welled up in his mind. When he glanced at Gloriana's projection and saw that his wife had become more energetic than any other moment in her life, Ves felt as if he was getting more and more behind.

Gloriana was on track of advancing to Senior first.

Not only that, she would probably advance based on a premise that was antithetical to his own design philosophy.

According to her, an ideal living mech was not necessarily a machine that possessed an independent personality, but one that offered an empty shell that the mech pilot could completely mold and adapt to his own needs!

The Mars was the strongest representative of this so-called second skin approach. The greater its success, the more validation it provided to his wife!

Patriarch Reginald's actions had essentially cut off most of Ves' ownership of the Mars!

Ves felt more of a loser because of this. His wife had made a strong stride towards becoming a Senior while he was still mucking about with many different miscellaneous design solutions.

Though he had developed a lot of useful innovations over the years, many of them were rather scattered and did not really form a cohesive system of improvement.

Ves wanted to change this inadequacy more than ever.

"I've been too complacent over the years."

He had been too scatter-brained and did not work hard enough to develop a design solution that comprehensively pushed his design philosophy to a higher level.

A fire lit up inside his heart. The threat of Gloriana's impending breakthrough drove him to change his plans and allocate a lot more attention to speeding up his own advancement to Senior.

"I just need one good idea to make the crucial step!"

Though Ves did not have any concrete suggestions on what that idea should be, he already determined an overall direction for himself.

"I need to prove that my principles and ideals aren't invalid. If the Mars provides legitimacy to Gloriana's premise that the strongest mechs are those

that are completely attuned towards their mech pilots, then I need to design a mech that clearly proves that the power of synergy and cooperation is just as strong!"

Ves needed to rethink the relationship between living mechs and their mech pilots and invent a meaningful way for it to produce greater results on the battlefield!

He glanced towards the projections showing off what was taking place across the entire battlefield.

If Ves wanted to find a clue on how he should progress his design philosophy, he wouldn't be able to find it by watching the duel between the two ace mechs.

He would have much better luck if he observed the performance of his other living mechs. The reason for that was because they represented his ideals much more faithfully!

### **Chapter 4307 Stealing From A Thief**

While Ves was experiencing a crisis sparked by the possibility that his wife might overtake him, the duel between the two ace mechs had become more cruel and intense than before!

The principal reason why the two ace mechs attacked each other with greater force and urgency was because of the profound transformations initiated by Patriarch Reginald.

The more time went by, the more Reginald became more familiar with what he could do with his bonded ace mech.

His control over the Mars improved because his instinctual and unconscious understanding of every single part or system continued to grow.

Of course, his new and unprecedentedly deep bond with the Mars did not grant him the theoretical understanding of how his mech actually worked from a technical perspective.

Even if he became as smart as knowledgeable as Master Benedict Cortez, Reginald still wouldn't be able to explain everything anymore.

This was because the current version of the Mars had evolved far beyond its technical design due to its latest transformations!

Just like how ace pilots transcended beyond their mortal roots as their willpower grew stronger and more transcendent, a similar phenomenon had taken place with the Mars now that Reginald had turned it into another part of himself.

The most immediate consequence of all of these profound changes was that the Mars began to overpower the Neo Amadeus!

Each time the latter tried to overcome the defenses of the Mars, its anti-resonance sword inevitably got blocked by a transphasic axe.

This was a surprising result because the skills of the two ace pilots were substantially different.

Saint Jeremiah Gauge was a pure swordsman who trained and polished his swordsmanship over many decades!

Patriarch Reginald was a typical hybrid mech pilot that did not specialize in single weapon systems but preferred to dabble in a variety of them at the expense of depth.

Compared to actual ace pilots that specialized in melee combat, Reginald's skills with his axe fell far behind!

As a weapon that was built for hacking through powerful armor plating, the transphasic axe was not as fast and nimble as the opposing sword.

The main reason why the Mars was able to block and parry the incoming sword strikes was because the base performance of the ace mech had improved by a noticeable margin!

So what if Patriarch Reginald wasn't as skilled as Saint Jeremiah? As long as the Mars was able to move faster and exert greater force with its limbs, Reginald did not need to employ any fancy techniques to neutralize his opponent's attacks!

Once the Neo Amadeus was unable to inflict damage with its powerful but singular sword attack attacks, the Mars had free reign to pound the Fridayman ace mechs with its ranged armaments!

The upgraded and strengthened ranged weapon modules consistently attacked the shoulders of the Neo Amadeus.

Though the volume of fire of the Mars had dropped due to battle damage it had sustained, the surviving weapon systems all struck with greater power, which more than compensated for the missing guns!

The transphasic armor system of the Neo Amadeus endured a lot of abuse and already became compromised at the shoulder areas.

When the Mars blocked the latest incoming sword strike, its ARCEUS System shot out several powerful resonance-empowered beams that forced the Neo Amadeus to hastily turn around in order to avoid punching through its most damaged armor plating!

Reginald already anticipated that his opponent would make this move. From the moment the Neo Amadeus turned sideways, the Mars fired two powerful kinetic attacks at the ace swordsman mech's transphasic flight system!

A powerful backup shield generator came online but quickly became overwhelmed as the slugs fired by the shoulder-mounted gauss cannon and the shotgun struck with incredible power!



As long as the Mars was able to fire at the opposing ace mech's flight system a few more times, there was a great chance of compromising the ability of the Neo Amadeus to move around!

Saint Jeremiah felt much more threatened by the Mars than before. His powerful and highly refined swordsmanship had become impotent in the face of the continuous improvements of his opponent!

The man truly didn't know how Patriarch Reginald and his admittedly impressive ace mech gained so many massive power-ups, but it was clear that he needed to make a drastic change in order put up a good fight!

Jeremiah became more determined. He no longer attempted to outfight the Mars by relying on exquisite skill as well as the mobilization of his Saint Kingdom.

Instead, his Neo Amadeus maintained its distance for a bit of time so that he could resonate with his anti-resonance sword in a deeper and more profound way than before.

The sword, which rejected all forms of resonance aside from that generated by Saint Jeremiah, began to shake and vibrate as if a terrible amount of power was building up inside the weapon.

Certain people such as Reginald, Ves and Ketis faintly sensed signs of life from the anti-resonance sword!

Though Ves no longer tracked the ace mech duel as closely as before, he quickly directed much of his attention back to this fight when he sensed that the anti-resonance sword actually possessed a faint human consciousness!

"What the hell?! How can the Neo Amadeus wield a living sword?!"

As he studied the weapon intensely, he soon figured out that the weapon was not 'alive' in the same way as his products were alive.

Instead, it felt as if the sword had been bonded to the mind of a powerful human through a technological process.

Ves thought up several ways the Fridaymen could accomplish such a feat.

"Did the developers of the Neo Amadeus implant a human brain inside the body of the anti-resonance sword?"

Though this sounded like a ridiculous notion, it was the only explanation that made sense to Ves!

"Why would they implement such a crazy solution?"

Ves thought about the parallels between the anti-resonance sword and his work and quickly came up with a frightening possibility.

"Are the Gaugers trying to imitate my work?"

He already had a strong hunch that this was the case!

The Fridaymen had fought against so many living mechs during and after the Komodo War that they definitely recognized the value of living mechs!

It shouldn't be much of a surprise that the Fridayman made serious efforts to imitate or reverse engineer living mechs.

As Ves began to pick up more nuances about the sword, he soon picked up a few more clues that led him to make two more conclusions.

First, the human brain that the Fridaymen integrated with the anti-resonance sword resembled that of an expert pilot. Ves suspected that the researchers of the Gauge Dynasty had taken the brain of a dying but willing Fridayman expert pilot and integrated it into the mech sword.

This explained why this 'living sword' harmonized so well with Saint Jeremiah!

Second, the chief developer responsible for creating this macabre living weapon was probably Master Toqueman Huron.

"Is he angry at me for stealing his ideas?" Ves wondered.

Whatever the case, it appeared that Master Huron had found a new way to utilize his expertise and design philosophy!

Whatever he did with the anti-resonance sword allowed Saint Jeremiah to resonate with it so much that it looked as if the weapon was being fully unlocked!

"Avoid that sword!"

Patriarch Reginald didn't need any reminders. He instinctively sensed a great threat from the weapon and did not hesitate to shift his targeting from the shoulders of the Neo Amadeus to the sword that it held in its hands!

Unfortunately, the materials the anti-resonance sword were made of were extremely hard and powerful. Even if the concentrated energy and physical attacks were beginning to chip away at the blade, these measures could not prevent Saint Jeremiah from completing his move!

"BEHOLD THE POWER BORN OF SACRIFICE!"

Before the Mars could fire another salvo, the Neo Amadeus actually tossed its anti-resonance sword!

The weapon soared forward like a doomsday missile that promised total destruction. It radiated so much power that its properties appeared to be little different from a weapon of mass destruction!

The Mars only had enough time to lift its transphasic axe and block the tip of the incoming sword before it could get any closer!

From the moment the anti-resonance sword got blocked, it erupted and let loose a blindingly powerful white blast that completely overtook the Mars and its humanoid-shaped domain field!

In fact, the latter had suffered the most from this costly attack!

Somehow, Saint Jeremiah not only supercharged his anti-resonance sword, but also triggered it to blow and release all of its power at once!

The Mars suffered greatly as it rapidly backed off from the energies and forces unleashed by the remarkable explosion.

The overpowering attack put the Mars in a much more awful shape than before.

Its domain field had suffered so much trauma that its integrity had been compromised.

If the domain field previously resembled a healthy and powerful state, now it looked like a state that had just been ravaged by war!

The condition of the Mars was a little better, but not that much.

Many portions of its red patterned surface armor looked damaged and deformed as the incredible force of the explosion had exceeded the limitations of the damaged Abasis Armor!

The nature of the anti-resonance sword's explosion also meant that any attempts of Patriarch Reginald to reinforce the armor of the Mars with his willpower was futile.

The main reasons why the Abasis Armor did not buckle too much was because of its transphasic reinforcement and its inherently tough material composition.

What was actually devastating to the Mars was that its handheld equipment had suffered the brunt of the damage from the sacrificial explosion!

"My axe! My shotgun!"

Patriarch Reginald ached when he inspected the condition of those two weapons.

Only half of the expensive transphasic axe blade was left intact. This was already an admirable state considering that it had been closest to the exploding sword.

The transphasic shotgun had already received a few hits before, but the force of the latest explosion had not only deformed a portion of its exterior, but also damaged numerous internal components.

The Mars couldn't fire its shotgun anymore!

The sacrificial attack of the Neo Amadeus might have caused the ace mech to lose one of its most powerful weapons, but Saint Jeremiah was more than happy with his gains.

The loss of the anti-resonance sword was not that great of a price now that the Saint Kingdom of the Mars was no longer as strong as before.

The Neo Amadeus quickly pulled out its transphasic sword. Saint Jeremiah was intent on breaking the transphasic reinforcement of the ailing Abasis armor entirely, and this particular sword was the most suited to complete this job!

The ace swordsman mech wasn't the only machine that switched to another weapon.

The Mars tossed its damaged axe and shotgun in the direction of the mechs of the Cross Clan. Reginald trusted his men to retrieve the discarded gear.

The ace hybrid mech then pulled out a long and fairly thick blade from its back.

Patriarch Reginald was ready to finish the job with the Whale-Cutting Saber.

Ketis originally designed the heavy saber to cut through the flesh and bones of phase whales and other massive opponents.

It should be more than enough to slice through the armor of the Neo Amadeus, especially after it too benefited from Reginald's willpower baptism! Strangely enough, the Whale-Cutting Saber didn't undergo as many changes as the rest of the ace mech.

Reginald initially wanted to imprint the weapon with his force of will to the greatest extent possible, but he quickly changed his mind.

The power that Ketis had especially imparted to the saber upon its creation was not weak. It was important for the saber to retain as much sharpness as before.

Though Reginald's affinity with the Whale-Cutting Saber was not as great as with his transphasic axe, this was hardly a problem in his opinion!

Reginald became more eager to test whether his new weapon was sharper than that of his opponent.

"If I can't cut you with my axe, I will cut you with my saber!"

The two ace mechs soon attacked each other with their new bladed weapons!

### **Chapter 4308 Desperation Moves**

The Mars and the Neo Amadeus had dropped significantly from their prime at this phase of their increasingly more impressive mech duel.

The two ace mechs not only inflicted considerable damage to each other's frames, but also expended a lot of energy in the process.

The Mars had pumped a lot of power to its ARCEUS System in order to maintain its high output, but its energy reserves were still healthy with the indispensable help of the Magma Vein System and the Endex System.

These special design solutions had actually undergone a major improvement after getting affected by Patriarch Reginald's willpower baptism.

The Magma Vein System squeezed additional efficiency out of the Mars while the Endex System generated considerably more energy out of a mysterious source, making it so that Patriarch Reginald did not need to tighten his belt anytime soon!

The Neo Amadeus did not possess such exaggerated energy management and energy generating systems, but as an ace swordsman mech it did not drain its energy reserves as quickly as its adversary.

Even so, if the two ace mechs continued to fight each other at the current level of intensity, their energy reserves would most certainly enter into dangerous territory after 10 minutes.

Patriarch Reginald preferred to slow down the pace of the fighting and drag out the duel in order to make the most out of the advantages of the Mars.

Saint Jeremiah possessed the opposite idea!

His urgency became greater as the duel dragged on because his ace mech did not excel in battles of attrition.

Not only that, Jeremiah was also growing more and more exhausted himself. He had exerted his force of will many times in order to amplify his big moves and deal meaningful damage against the Mars.

He had no choice but to do so because it was the only way for him to overcome the powerful protection of the Abasis Armor.

Though Jeremiah was happy that the armor system of the Mars had suffered so much damage that it was no longer as insanely tough as before, the excellent quality of the Abasis Armor meant that it still took a lot of effort to damage it further.

This meant that Jeremiah could not slack off in terms of empowering his ace mech with true resonance!

After recognizing that he was operating on a definite time limit, Saint Jeremiah did everything possible to land as many strikes on the Mars as possible.

Though the heavy saber in the Mars was a bit unwieldy, the ace hybrid mech was more than strong enough to handle it in a fluid manner.

Combined with its considerable length, it was not that difficult for Patriarch Reginald to use it as a blocking tool!

Reginald maintained the same strategy as before. His Mars did not even attempt to launch any attacks despite the fact that the Whale-Cutting Saber was probably sharp and powerful enough to cut through the exterior of the Neo Amadeus.

He just wanted to rely on the surviving ranged weapons of the Mars to continue to grind down the shoulders and other vulnerable sections of the Neo Amadeus!

The ace swordsman mech had to work harder in order to avoid getting blocked. It began to channel more power into its transphasic flight system so that it could maneuver around the Mars and attack it from angles that made it more awkward to defend against.

The Neo Amadeus expended its energy reserves at an even faster rate than before, but Saint Jeremiah managed to strike the Mars at a considerably higher rate.

The faster energy drain increased his urgency and caused him to recall all of his swordsmanship skills and push them to a greater height than before!

"I have trained my swordsmanship and piloted swordsman mechs for over a century." Jeremiah stated. "I did not dedicate my life to becoming stronger just so that I will fall against a messy hybrid mech like your Mars! My sword is strong and my cause is just! I will not allow you and your Hexer allies to ruin the lives of my people!"



All of the pressure piling up on Saint Jeremiah finally triggered a small breakthrough!

Though his improvement was not as dramatic as that of Patriarch Reginald, his swordsmanship became noticeably more exquisite and his control over his Neo Amadeus had gained a lot of ground!

The more the situation became unfavorable to Jeremiah, the more he dug into his potential and mustered up greater strength!

This was not an uncommon phenomenon in ace mech duels. Every single pilot that advanced to this point was either extremely talented or incredibly good at learning in actual combat.

Saint Jeremiah obviously fell into the latter category. There were no incompetents among ace pilots, and the scion of the Gauge Dynasty enjoyed some of the best treatment that the Friday Coalition was able to provide.

This wasn't all. As Jeremiah resonated with his transphasic sword on a deeper level, he developed a closer bond with the living consciousness residing deep within its construction.

The controversial technology applied to the mech sword might not be entirely ethical, but Jeremiah did not spend any thought on that as he tried his best to sync with this odd weapon.

When Jeremiah was able to develop a deeper bond with the transphasic sword, he was able to channel more of its properties through his Saint Kingdom.

The domain field around the Neo Amadeus began to form into a spatial storm that not only inhibited warp travel, but also weakened the transphasic reinforcement of the Abasis Armor!

Then the Neo Amadeus managed to strike the ace hybrid mech again, its transphasic sword managed to penetrate the armor much more easily this time!

"Bastard!" Reginald cursed at his opponent.

This wouldn't have happened so easily if Reginald's Saint Kingdom was still in good condition, but the earlier explosion had ruined that. It would take a long time for him to repair his domain field and resist Jeremiah's intrusion into his territory.

The fight became a lot more dangerous to both mechs. The Mars began to suffer multiple cuts through its armor as the active effects of the Abasis Armor basically lost strength.

The 11 kilograms of phasewater integrated in the armor system had become irrelevant!

The most serious blow inflicted by the Neo Amadeus was when its sword managed to cut through the surviving shoulder-mounted gauss cannon, thereby stopping its output for the remainder of the battle!

However, the Mars did not suffer a one-sided beating. Though it was failing increasingly more at blocking the tricky attacks launched by the Neo Amadeus, the ace hybrid mech slowly managed to pile up a lot of damage with the help of its ARCEUS System.

The shakier but still fairly powerful resonance-empowered positron beams had finally burned through enough armor plating to compromise the left shoulder of the Neo Amadeus!

"Ah!"

When the Neo Amadeus next circled around and lunged forward, the ace swordsman mech abruptly lost its rhythm when its left arm abruptly became crippled!

Though the limb was still attached to the mech, the Mars managed to destroy enough internal mechanisms to reduce its strength by half and decrease its responsiveness by a third!

If that didn't sound bad enough, the subsequent ranged attacks launched by the Mars continually damaged the vulnerable shoulder section and reduced the performance of the arm as well as other nearby parts even further!

The Neo Amadeus had no choice but to wield its transphasic sword with one arm.

Though the ace swordsman mech had originally been designed with one-handed grips in mind, the Neo Amadeus was no longer able to attack as strongly as before.

If Saint Jeremiah wasn't careful enough, then the Mars might actually be able to knock the transphasic sword from the hand of the Neo Amadeus!

With the reduction in power, the Neo Amadeus slowly fell behind in the duel.

Jeremiah was tempted to activate one or more phantom arms in order to strengthen the grip on the transphasic armor or wield additional weapons, but mind and willpower were already in a bad shape.

Not only would he be able to fight as effectively as before, he would also hasten his demise!

Seeing that the Mars had directed its ARCEUS System to put the right shoulder of the Neo Amadeus under pressure, Jeremiah understood he needed to make another drastic move.

He resonated with his transphasic sword in the same manner he did with his former anti-resonance sword.

The transphasic sword did not repel his true resonance as much, and his improved bond with the weapon had also paved the way for this consequential option.

It took considerably less time for the Neo Amadeus to supercharge its transphasic sword!

"THE POWER OF SACRIFICE SHALL VANQUISH THE WICKED!"

The ace swordsman mech quickly tossed its self-destructing weapon as soon as it was ready!

Patriarch Reginald reacted differently to this move now that he had already witnessed his opponent pulling it off before.

It did not take a genius to guess that the Neo Amadeus was able to blow up all three of its swords.

"I'm not falling for this trick twice!"

The Mars made three separate moves to respond towards this threat.

First, it backed off and built up as much distance between itself and the Neo Amadeus from the moment the latter began to charge its mech sword.

Second, it decisively tossed its Whale-Cutting Saber in the trajectory of the explosive projectile!

Third, the Mars quickly minimized its exposure to the impending blast by turning its frame so that its feet were oriented towards the threat!

Soon enough, a violent spatial explosion engulfed the space in front of the Mars as the Whale-Cutting Saber precisely managed to strike its tip against the tip of the transphasic sword!

This powerful move was enough to trigger the explosion in advance!

Though the Mars was still close enough to get affected by the spatial eruption unleashed by the transphasic sword, the mech did not suffer as much damage as Saint Jeremiah hoped!

"Brilliant response!"

"What an amazing way to defend against this move!"

Many observers were incredibly impressed at Patriarch Reginald's actions. He not only formulated the right plan, but also showcased excellent skill and reaction time when he made his moves.

In the end, the Mars only suffered moderate external and internal damage to its legs. Only a small proportion of its upper body suffered internal damage, which did not affect its performance by a significant margin.

The only problem now was that the Mars had lost its grip on its only remaining handheld weapon.

Surprisingly enough, the Whale-Cutting Saber did not suffer that much damage despite being in point-blank range of the explosion. One of the purposes behind its development was to fight against phase whales, so it possessed greater resistance against spatial attacks than normal.

Even so, a third of its lengthy blade had snapped off while the remainder of the weapon was no longer in great shape either!

As the damaged Whale-Cutting Saber spun away from the site of the explosion, the Mars had already moved in its direction in order to regain its weapon.

"Oh no you don't!"

Saint Jeremiah was not about to allow this to happen! The Neo Amadeus had already unsheathed its final sword and activated it so that it began to project a hot and powerful plasma blade!

Though the weapon was a considerable energy hog, its ability to burn and melt through armor was undeniable!

Now that the Abasis Armor of the Mars had fallen into an even poorer shape, the plasma sword was an excellent way to finish off the damaged ace hybrid mech!

The Neo Amadeus moved to intercept the Mars. Though the Fridayman mech wasn't fast enough to pick up the Whale-Cutting Saber first, it would still be in a position to cut the Mars on its vulnerable rear with its hot and glowing weapon!

Jeremiah even resonated with his plasma sword so that his Saint Kingdom became hot enough to melt enemy mechs as if they had entered an oven!

"MY FLAMES SHALL CLEANSE YOUR SINS!"

Both ace pilots recognized that this was their final dance. The moves they would make at this juncture would likely decide the outcome of their explosive duel!

### **Chapter 4309 The Last Exchange**

The duel between the Mars and the Neo Amadeus had definitely reached its final phase!

After the ace mechs spent several rounds of bashing each other with their rich and powerful armaments, neither machines were in good shape anymore.

The Mars looked like it had managed to survive a suicide attack. Its once-glorious patterned red armor was cracked and broken in many places, particularly at the lower half of its body.

Neither of its two semi-modular shoulder-mounted gauss cannons were intact. Only cut and broken pieces of barely-recognizable parts were left from the devices that could have once turned combat carriers into derelicts in a couple of salvos.

It had already gotten rid of its transphasic axe and transphasic shotgun after they were damaged in order to lessen its encumbrance.

The ARCEUS System that largely defined the offensive output of the Mars had lost almost half of its output, though at least its intact weapon modules were still in decent condition.

It had also temporarily let go of its sole remaining handheld weapon after using it to intercept the exploding transphasic sword thrown by the Neo Amadeus.

Though the Mars could theoretically finish the fight by relying on its damaged ARCEUS System alone, the ace hybrid mech would have no good way of fending off its adversary's powerful plasma sword without a solid weapon in its grasp!

This was why Patriarch Reginald Cross did not hesitate to drive his Mars to retrieve the damaged but still serviceable Whale-Cutting Saber at all cost!

The transphasic flight system of the Mars did not operate as effectively as before. The spatial shockwaves generated by the exploding transphasic sword had rippled through the frame of the powerful mech and disrupted a lot of phasewater-based functions.

For example, the Abasis Armor no longer offered any transphasic reinforcement that made the Mars so hardy against powerful attacks.

Though the Mars and its ragged Saint Kingdom were still strong enough to ignore the attacks from expert mechs and other lesser machines, the Neo Amadeus still posed a huge threat!

At this time, Saint Jeremiah Gauge was pulling out all of the power he and his ace mech had left.

The earlier fighting heavily consumed the resources he had at its disposal. Not only had he depleted his willpower faster than his opponent, but his ace mech was rapidly consuming whatever energy reserves it had left just by activating its plasma sword!

Fortunately, his ace mech was still in a relatively good condition aside from losing functionality in one of its arms. This gave Jeremiah the confidence that he possessed enough of a buffer to withstand any final outbursts from the Mars while he ended the duel in his victory!

The weight of history drove his willpower to greater heights!

As a scion of the most powerful coalition partner of his state, Saint Jeremiah clearly understood that his actions determined the future of the Friday Colonies and the Gauge Dynasty's ambitions in the Red Ocean.

The lives and livelihoods of millions of colonists huddling on the surface of Pima Prime V were literally praying for his victory.

As a powerful Saint who had already evolved far beyond his mortal roots, Jeremiah was vaguely able to sense the fears, hopes and dreams of these innocent people.

The ace pilot was not able to absorb their desperate energy and use it to power himself up or anything.

However, the awareness that so many of the people under his wing were at risk of facing death or ruination strengthened his conviction!

His willpower burned even brighter and his Saint Kingdom became even hotter!



As soon as the Neo Amadeus came close enough to the Mars, the latter was already starting to strain from the heat projected by Jeremiah's domain field.

The Mars had already accumulated a lot of heat that its dimensional heatsinks were struggling to drain away!

If not for the excellent reinforcement of its internal components and subcomponents, Patriarch Reginald would have felt a lot more concerned about the state of his mech for the moment.

Fortunately, he understood the state of his ace much better than before. Master Benedict Cortez had paid a lot of attention to the heat tolerance of the Mars as it was a machine that was bound to generate a lot of heat over the course of a battle.

The Mars could withstand its adversary's hot domain field for the time being!

Just as the ace hybrid mech clutched the spinning heavy saber by the hilt, the Neo Amadeus finally arrived and slashed its hot plasma sword onto the vulnerable rear of the Mars!

It was as if a miniature sun in the shape of a rod was about to smash onto a target!

Saint Jeremiah invested the majority of his remaining willpower and other resources into this strike!

Driven by desperation and the need to save his fellow Gaugers, he did not hesitate to muster up as much strength as possible so that he could finish off the Mars in a single blow!

The power of this strike was so great that it was bound to damage the flight system of Reginald's ace mech!

On top of that, with the damaged state of the Cross Clan's ace mech and the malfunctioning of its Abasis Armor, a strike of this magnitude would most

definitely be able to deal severe and possibly fatal damage to numerous critical internal parts and systems!

Even if this powerful sword strike did not disable the Mars outright, its condition would definitely deteriorate to the point where the Sundered Phalanx's ranged mech units could finish the job that Jeremiah started.

"YOUR END IS AT HAND!" Jeremiah roared as his opponent was completely at his mercy! "YOUR MECH SHALL BE THE URN TO YOUR ASHES!"

As the plasma sword swung close enough for its amplified heat to begin to scorch the rear of the Mars, a bright blue energy shield suddenly came online.

This energy shield only partially covered the Mars, but this barrier was enough to block the swing of the plasma sword and prevent it from striking the ace hybrid mech!

The Neo Amadeus had put as much thermal and kinetic energy behind this strike as possible, but somehow the often-neglected compact but ultra-powerful energy shield generator managed to hold on long enough to save the Mars!

A fiery explosion engulfed the impact site as the plasma sword and some of its energies rebounded from the energy shield!

The energy shield eventually succumbed from the power of the Neo Amadeus' committed attack, but other than exposing the rear of the Mars to a brief heat wave, the ace hybrid mech managed to escape the worst outcome!

Patriarch Reginald never expected that his duel against Saint Jeremiah would come down to the use of the compact but ultra-powerful shield generator.

He had always considered it to be a redundant safety blanket as the Mars already enjoyed the protection of his Saint Kingdom and the Abasis Armor.

Yet now that both of these resonance-based defensive measures had lost their strength, Reginald found that the energy shield generator that was purely driven by electrical energy had become his life saver!

The superior energy generation and energy management capabilities of the Mars played a key role in giving the Cross Patriarch this lifeline.

He had directed his ace mech to overload the shield generator but stuffing it with as much juice as possible.

Though the shield generator almost immediately malfunctioned due to the excessive power it channeled for a fraction of a second, Reginald already got his use out of this crucial component!

At this time, the two ace mechs were still hovering fairly close to each other.

While they were both traversing forward at this time, the failed attack of the Neo Amadeus was not only recoiling, but also put it into an awkward and exposed position behind its target.

The Mars on the other hand had not only retrieved its damaged weapon, but was also in a position to counterattack!

"I WILL DESTROY YOU!" Patriarch Reginald exclaimed as his willpower and ace mech exerted themselves to the fullest extent possible!

The flight systems and intact boosters of the Mars rapidly caused the ace mech to turn around and build up its angular momentum.

The Mars held its Whale-Cutting Saber in a two-handed grip and was poised to slash at the ace swordsman mech behind its back with a devastating disemboweling sweep!

As the sharp edge of the heavy saber glowed with true resonance, Saint Jeremiah Gauge acutely sensed the crisis to his mech, his life and his cause.

He had never felt so close to death as now! Though his condition and the condition of his ace mech was extremely bad at this moment, at this moment of life and death a hidden source of strength erupted from deep within his mind.

This desperate burst of energy not only reinvigorated his fading force of will, but also allowed him to impart a bit of extra strength into his ace mech!

If he had a choice, then Jeremiah would have triggered his plasma sword to explode, which would most definitely doom the Mars at the cost of crippling of the Neo Amadeus!

However, it not only took a lot of willpower and true resonance to overload the plasma sword, but also several crucial seconds of time which he didn't have!

As such, Jeremiah's only goal at the moment was to block the incoming saber sweep by any means possible.

The Neo Amadeus' sole remaining functional physical arm seemed to gain enough strength to rapidly swing the plasma sword in a position to block the incoming attack!

Not only that, but Jeremiah also overloaded his willpower and activated at least six phantom arms that rapidly unsheathed his ace mech's daggers and crossed them in front to add extra insurance.

Just as the Mars was about to collide its Whale-Cutting Saber against the plasma sword as well as the additional daggers, its integrated energy weapon modules opened fire first!

The torso of the Mars had swung around just enough for at least some of the intact weapons of the ARCEUS System to strike the Neo Amadeus!

Reginald had prepared for this occasion. He had charged up the weapon modules moments earlier in anticipation for just this moment!

"THE GAME IS OVER, JERRY!"

At this extremely close distance, there was no way for the Neo Amadeus to respond or activate any emergency defensive measures to defend against this incoming salvo.

Not only that, but Reginald had precisely aimed all of the powerful beams including the one generated by his ace mech's largest and most powerful chest-mounted integrated weapon module.

The Mars did not strike the only remaining intact shoulder of the Neo Amadeus.

The Mars did not strike the chest of the Neo Amadeus which was still relatively undamaged.

Instead, the Mars had opted to concentrate all of its beams onto the fingers of the Neo Amadeus that happened to hold its plasma sword!

If Jeremiah and the Neo Amadeus had not exhausted themselves so much, they would have been able to withstand this blow .

Unfortunately, their current state left them with no measures to defend against the concentrated energy attacks!

The fingers did not disappear outright from the strike, but the damaged fingers lost enough strength and functionality that the Neo Amadeus no longer maintained a strong grip onto its plasma sword!

The blade of the Whale-Cutting Saber struck the blade of the plasma sword immediately afterwards.

The force of the former was so great that the latter sprung out the hand of the Neo Amadeus without offering too much resistance!

After that, the powerful Whale-Cutting Saber continued to swing further until it met a succession of six daggers.

Unfortunately, the feeble strength of the phantom daggers were unable to stop the Whale-Cutting Saber at all. No matter how many arms the Neo Amadeus had conjured up, it was useless as long as Saint Jeremiah had bottomed out his willpower!

The high-quality daggers all flung into space as if they got struck by a giant baseball bat.

"CUT!"

With no more obstacles left to block the passage of the heavy saber, the Mars decisively cut the lower torso of the Neo Amadeus with a horizontal slash!

"NO!" Jeremiah uttered as he tried to squeeze whatever strength that he and his ace mech had left.

Unfortunately for the celebrated Gauger ace pilot, he truly had nothing left!

A blinding light seemed to run across the Neo Amadeus as the Mars completed its final strike!

For a moment, time seemed to stagnate as both ace mechs momentarily faced each other during their last exchange of blows.

Then, small explosions erupted from the abdomen area of the Neo Amadeus as the Whale-Cutting Saber succeeded in dealing severe and almost crippling damage onto its frame!

"THE CROSS CLAN SHALL PREVAIL!"

### **Chapter 4310 Murderous Intentions**

An immense amount of people watched the final moments of the ace mech duel.

Many of them knew what was at stake. If one or the other ace mech remained operational at the end of the fight, then they could instantly dominate the rest

of the ongoing battle taking place below with just a fraction of their remaining power!

It was not unusual to see a pair of closely matched ace mechs to end their duels in a draw.

If a lot of interests were at stake and if the survival of the ace mech was deemed essential to a state or organization, then there may be times where the ace pilot voluntarily withdrew from the battle before the worst had happened.

This did not happen today.

Patriarch Reginald Cross had stepped onto the battlefield with the determination to stake everything on this fight.

There was only victory or death in his mind.

His loss would likely doom the Cross Clan and Operation Saturday Market as long as the Neo Amadeus was left standing at the end.

Running away was useless. The Golden Skull Alliance and Task Force Fury had traveled deep into the interior of the Friday Colonies.

The only way the invading forces could deter other parties from dispatching their troops to intercept the fleeing Golden Skullers and Hexers was to ensure it retained the protection of an operational ace mech.

Even if the different coalition partners had stationed their own ace pilots and ace mechs in their key colonies, the benefits did not outweigh the costs. Too much could go wrong to a colony that had lost its most important guardian.

This was why Patriarch Reginald put his all into this mech duel that he had played a large part in enabling!

After risking so much and putting his entire life and future on the line by engaging the Neo Amadeus in a risky duel, he had finally gotten the better of his opponent!

The Mars had struck a decisive blow on the Neo Amadeus!

Though the heavy saber did not cut that deep into the internals of the ace swordsman mech, it nonetheless managed to damage or reduce the performance of a lot of important components!

As the Mars completed its powerful cutting swing, the Neo Amadeus did not sit still, however.

"I'm not out of the fight yet!" Saint Jeremiah claimed as the prospect of a loss caused him to strain his strength and the power of his ace mech even further.

Though their conditions were at their lowest points yet, Jeremiah's proximity to the boundary between life and death activated even greater potential than before!

His resonance strength explosively grew as Jeremiah relied almost completely on his willpower to strengthen and support the functioning of his damaged and failing ace swordsman mech!

Technology had limits, but life possessed no boundaries!

Jeremiah's overwhelming urge to live and protect his people forced him to put up at least one final act of resistance!

The Neo Amadeus somehow managed to conjure up two more phantom arms with the help of this inexplicable outburst!

The limbs quickly unsheathed two more daggers and attempted to stab them forward in a final attempt to cripple the Mars!

"DESTINY STANDS ON THE SIDE OF THE GAUGE DYNASTY!"



However, just as the phantom limbs were about to complete this action, the Mars immediately offered a response.

Patriarch Reginald forced two of the integrated energy weapon modules of the ARCEUS System to fire at the phantom limbs.

Though the weapons weren't supposed to fire so quickly after unleashing a fairly powerful burst, Reginald decisively exceeded their safety limitations and forced them to squeeze out a weaker but still fairly powerful laser beams.

Reginald attached enough true resonance to the pair of beams that they instantly managed to destabilize and dispel the opposing mech's phantom arms!

Two more daggers flung lifelessly into the void as the Neo Amadeus lost its last chance of launching a counterattack.

Jeremiah's final hope of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat had come to nothing!

This time, the ace pilot truly had nothing left to give. His mind and will had run ground to the point where the Neo Amadeus no longer projected any form of domain field.

The ace mech itself also lost so much power due to its intensive exertions and successive battle damage that it could not even muster enough strength to kick at the Mars.

Saint Jeremiah quickly ran through all of his remaining options and found that he could not escape the prospect of defeat.

The only choice he had left was to decide how he wanted to greet this loss.

"It's over." He sighed in his heart that had grown heavy due to falling short of everyone's expectations.

Saint Jeremiah understood that there was no point in staying any further.

He clearly recognized his value as an ace pilot of the Gauge Dynasty. He was a strategic asset to his people and could still offer them protection once again as long as he managed to survive this battle and recover from his loss.

He decisively activated the eject command, which quickly caused the back of his Neo Amadeus to blast open and allow its cockpit to launch into the distance!

This action did not escape Patriarch Reginald at all. He already predicted that Jeremiah would eject as soon as he sensed a profound change in his opponent's aura.

A part of him was willing to let Saint Jeremiah Gauge be. The two of them had fought a glorious and honorable mech duel where both of them relied upon nothing but the strength they had at their disposal to decide the victor.

Though Reginald thought that his opponent was a bit too annoying and sanctimonious when he opened his mouth, Saint Jeremiah was nevertheless exactly the kind of ace pilot that the Cross Patriarch wanted to challenge.

Reginald harvested an unimaginable amount of gains from this mech duel. He accrued a lot of high-level battle experience and stimulated the growth of his resonance strength by putting his life on the line.

He had also attained an unprecedentedly great amount of control over the Mars after truly taking possession of his ace mech.

The fact that he spontaneously completed the first phase of the Mech Body Merger Process was an unexpected bonus as far as he was concerned!

All of these gains and more put Patriarch Reginald in a rather generous mood. To him, it did not particularly matter whether his opponent managed to live or die after this fight.

His Cross Clan was not in danger of getting wiped out by the Neo Amadeus anymore, and that was enough for Reginald. There wasn't much reason for him to possess a lot of killing intent towards his worthy adversary.

Yet moments before the Neo Amadeus ejected its cockpit, he received identical pleas from two different people at once.

"Show no mercy towards your enemy." Master Benedict Cortez urged him.  
"Avenge the Crossers that have perished at the hands of the Gaugers. Kill their Saint and show the entire new frontier that our clan should never be provoked! Oh, and make sure you don't burn his entire body into ashes. I need you to bring back his skull intact!"

Ves was a lot more desperate to see Saint Jeremiah fall.

"Kill kill kill! Don't let Jeremiah get away alive! He will always have a chance to take revenge against us as long as he is alive. The Gauge Dynasty already gained a new ace pilot, so if Jeremiah successfully manages to escape, we will constantly have to watch our backs!"

Ves absolutely did not want Patriarch Reginald to miss this golden opportunity!

Once Jeremiah got away far enough, it was no longer 'proper' to kill an ace pilot according to the rules and guidelines of the Mech Trade Association.

This meant that even if the Golden Skullers or the Hexers managed to capture Saint Jeremiah, there was no valid reason to kill this powerful asset!

The rules governing the treatment of captive ace pilots were so convoluted and unfavorable that Ves didn't want to bother with all of those complications.

It was better to finish the job while there was still a tiny window of opportunity!

Though there were definitely consequences to killing an ace pilot, Ves had many reasons for him to support this course of action.

Aside from wanting to harvest the spirituality of Saint Jeremiah Gauge, Ves also looked forward to earning another potent reward.

What nobody knew aside from himself was that he had secretly activated the Mech Designer System and entered its idyllic mountaintop environment a day before the crucial battle.

Given all of the fighting that would presumably take place in front of the Kosaic Ring, Ves thought that the impending battle would grant him an easy opportunity to complete a few System Missions.

It turned out that the Mission Hall had cycled its offers since his last visit to the System Space. Though most of the missions turned out to be random requests that weren't easy to fulfill, one of the more lucrative ones just happened to be incredibly relevant to current circumstances!

[Saintfall]

Mission: Saintfall

Difficulty: A-Rank

Prerequisites: Must have participated in the design of the challenger mech.

Description

Few mech designers are able to earn credit for the demise of an ace pilot in a mech battle. Accomplishing this feat indirectly proves the strength of the mech designer that has contributed to the design of winning mech.

Have at least one of the mechs that you have worked on defeat an enemy ace mech and kill its ace pilot in a valid battle.

Reward: 1,000 Ascension Points.

Time limit: 2 standard years.

Penalty for failure: Lower your Spirituality by 4.

Normally, Ves wouldn't have dreamt of accepting this mission. Defeating an ace mech on the battlefield was already a heavy demand. Killing the ace pilot was even harder due to the limited amount of scenarios where this could be done.

None of the ace mechs in the Red Ocean were weak and luring them out was impossible unless the Golden Skull Alliance was willing to do battle against a large and powerful mech force.

Even if the Battle of Pima Prime just happened to draw out Saint Jeremiah Gauge, it was far from certain whether Patriarch Reginald would fulfill the requirements of the System Mission.

Ves already lost one opportunity to complete the Saintfall Mission early when Saint Rebecca Andus managed to retreat from the battlefield under heavy escort.

This time he was determined not to miss this chance a second time!

"Venerable Stark, get ready! Eye of Ylvaine, get ready! Battle Criers, get ready!"

If Patriarch Reginald wasn't willing to finish the job, then Ves wanted to make sure that his own clan would be in a position to complete his System Mission one way or another.

He would get into deep trouble if his Mission was still running once the current battle came to an end.

As the various available Larkinson mechs began to lock onto the Neo Amadeus and anything that it might possibly eject, the Mars had already started to take action.

Though Patriarch Reginald did not really listen to Ves, he was still willing to do a favor for Master Benedict Cortez.

Besides, the man indeed made a couple of good arguments. A lot less people would be willing to mess with the Cross Clan now that it had completely recovered from its past disgraces and claimed the life of a Saint!

Therefore, before the cockpit of the Neo Amadeus was able to get completely loose, the Mars had already swung around and impaled the center of the cockpit with the broken Whale-Cutting Saber!

Though the cockpit of the Neo Amadeus was reinforced with alloys that were just as tough as the exterior of the very same ace mech, all of this was futile as Patriarch Reginald empowered his weapon with enough of his powerful true resonance to punch through inadequate armor!

Blood spilled from within the cockpit as the body of one of the heroes of the Gauge Dynasty was crushed to pieces by the oversized blade!