

Mech 4441

Chapter 4441 Plan E

The more data the human coalition gathered about the orven battlecruiser known as the V'gahnt-Zezne, the more horrified everyone became!

Even a person who did not understand anything about science and numbers could easily understand the prowess of a battlecruiser by looking at the sheer destruction wrought by just a single salvo of her 14 gigantic plasma cannons!

For a tiny instant, Ves began to feel immediate regret about pushing the Golden Skull Alliance into hopping onboard the Gemini Family's risky joint operation.

What was he thinking by putting himself along with everyone else in the Larkinson Clan at risk of getting blasted by this formidable pirate warship?

"The Gemini Family has instructed us to switch to Plan E!"

"Understood!"

Ves had already been briefed on all of the plans, so he knew exactly what the Geminis had in mind.

"Plan E is the right decision."

"Please explain it to me, Ves." Gloriana requested.

"Plan E involves a lot of stuff, but the key component is how we approach the orven battlecruiser. The firepower of the V'gahnt-Zezne is too oppressive. Even if it looks like it will take a while for her primary armaments to recharge, a single spread of gigantic plasma bolts can easily melt hundreds if not thousands of our mechs at once, and I haven't even talked about her secondary and tertiary gun batteries yet! We can't allow the V'gahnt-Zezne to fire a single salvo towards our fleet or main mech forces, so we need to take it out of the fight as soon as possible."

Gloriana agreed with that assessment. Even she became terrified beyond belief as she saw the power of a hostile alien battleship that was close enough to threaten her life!

"Does that mean all seven ace mechs will converge on the alien battlecruiser and take it down as soon as possible?"

Ves shook his head. "No. Look at all of the other alien warships that showed up. There are way too many of them. A handful are also pretty big and powerful as well. Our expert mechs and our regular mech forces aren't equipped to tackle so many warships, so most of our ace mechs will move to destroy the most threatening ones."

"What about the orven battlecruiser?"

"The Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem will take care of her. Look. The two ace mechs have already accelerated forward while entering into warp travel. They're rapidly closing in on the V'gahnt-Zezne!"

The massive armed capital ship detected the approach of the two powerful mechs. It was hard to ignore the ace light skirmisher and the ace spearman mech seeing as they both dragged their ostentatious domain fields with them as they moved!

The V'gahnt-Zezne's plasma cannons were still in the process of recharging, and they couldn't turn fast enough to track the dizzying evasion patterns of the two offensive ace mechs.

However, the V'gahnt-Zezne still had plenty of other guns at her disposal!

Her formidable secondary kinetic cannon batteries began to fire in quick succession, causing the massive battlecruiser to launch a continuous string of heavy kinetic projectiles, each of which was capable of smashing over a dozen mechs in a row!

Yet whenever these powerful frigate-grade projectiles came close to their targets, they rapidly lost speed and power, allowing the respective ace mechs to dodge them with ease!

"Saint Kingdoms are too powerful!"

If Saint Jelmer Osenring was strong enough to mitigate the damage of numerous enormous plasma bolts, then Saint Marissa Lewandowski and Saint Kalasandra Boojay were more than capable enough of doing the same to a bunch of weaker kinetic rounds!

The problem was that the V'gahnt-Zezne had 132 secondary guns at her disposal, and their firing rate was much more impressive!

Not only that, they were also transphasic, so the ace pilots needed to exert a lot more effort into weakening the incoming shots!

The continuous streams of transphasic kinetic projectiles were exerting a lot of pressure onto the two approaching ace mechs, but they were so small that the ace pilots did not have to evade too many projectiles.

Though the V'gahnt-Zezne activated a spatial inhibitor device that attempted to throw the two ace mechs out of warp travel, Saint Lewandowski and Saint Boojay exerted their willpower to block the new effect, thereby allowing their ace mechs to keep traversing forward at many times their usual speeds!

Soon enough, the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem arrived right next to the V'gahnt-Zezne, which sparked a lot of alarm throughout the Unspokeen fleet!

The two ace mechs attempted to reach the hull of their target, but the V'gahnt-Zezne was covered by an array of rotating segmented energy shields!

Her secondary cannons were no longer able to track and fire at the ace mechs at such close range, but much of the 317 tertiary laser cannons did not

have that problem! They flooded the two ace mechs with a continuous rain of accurate laser beams!

Not only that, the orven destroyers and starfighters that were tasked with protecting the Unspoken flagships also jumped into action!

A flood of firepower quickly assailed the two ace mechs, making it increasingly less tenable for them to expose themselves to so much withering fire!

That was until Saint Marissa Lewandowski unveiled her full domain field!

Soon enough, a dense and completely opaque ethereal smoke cloud surrounded the Jedda Sandivar.

The Royal Jeem also fell within its influence, but it deliberately preserved Saint Kasandra Boojay's ability to see through the smoke cloud.

Now that the two ace mechs became a lot more difficult to target and pin down, the ace light skirmisher and the ace spearman mech proceeded to circle around the large but lumbering V'gahnt-Zezne while constantly using their powerful melee strikes to weaken the orven battlecruiser's energy shield coverage!

None of the orven combat assets could get a grip on the two tyrannical ace melee mechs!

The warships were all firing blind into the rapidly moving smoke cloud. The hidden ace mechs also used the massive hull of the V'gahnt-Zezne as cover, preventing the orven destroyers from opening fire lest they hurt their own flagship!

Though the orvens attempted to send in hundreds of starfighters at once, the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem quickly cut and stabbed them all to pieces before they could do anything useful!

"Just two ace mechs have rendered the most powerful alien pirate fleet impotent!" Ves uttered with shock.

Though he knew that this was the aim of Plan E, he never imagined that the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem would be so effective!

"The orven battlecruiser can no longer afford to launch unscrupulous attacks at our other forces!"

Due to the division of pirate forces, the Unspoken did not receive any help. The orven pirates also weren't in a mood to assist their rivals.

The orven pirates only cared about their own people and fleet, so as long as their flagship remained under threat, they could do nothing else but fight in their own little corner!

"That is one battlecruiser taken care of." Ves smiled as he saw how poorly the Unspoken coped with a pair of ace mechs.

"Don't celebrate too soon, Ves." Gloriana woke him up. "There are many other warships that have already begun to open fire on our mechs."

The V'gahnt-Zezne was hardly the only powerful warship at the disposal of the alien pirates.

Though the battlecruiser towered above all of the other ships in terms of tonnage and high-end firepower, the immediate rivals of the Unspoken were not too far behind.

The other pirate groups had their own sources of dependence that allowed them to gain at least some right to speak within the Palace of Shame!

The information panels projected in front of his seat updated every other second as many different sources constantly plugged fresh information into the combined command net.

Though not every source of information was accurate or reliable, there were thousands of analysts and specialists on duty whose job was to verify and corroborate every data entry.

All of this work enabled Ves to trust the information supplied by the command net and assume it was all reliable.

The picture it painted was not great.

The 'Rattling Egg' pirate fleet had 2 heavy cruisers at their disposal.

Though there was an enormous difference in size and power between a battlecruiser and a heavy cruiser, the Rattling Eggs obtained a lot more tactical flexibility by being able to field two vessels at the same time!

The '1854210' pirate fleet had 7 light cruisers at its disposal.

The 1854210's or whatever they were called made the relatively frugal decision to forgo larger hulls so that they could concentrate on building up a larger collection of smaller ones.

While light cruisers were much less expensive than heavy cruisers, they were not that much smaller. The differences were not that great aside from a substantial reduction in mass and armor. The reduction in firepower was not that big of a deal and their mobility gained a substantial jump.

The 'Opalescent Star' pirate fleet was much worse off as it only had 4 light cruisers at their disposal. That did not mean the Opalescent Stars could be ignored. Each of their vessels contained better tech and parts, allowing them to outperform any of their counterparts over at the 1854210's!

Finally, the 'Four Fingers' pirate fleet deployed just 2 light cruisers.

The caveat was that the Four Fingers also deployed a ship class that was a lot more familiar to the humans.

"Is that... a fleet carrier among the so-called Four Fingers?" Ves asked for confirmation.

"That appears to be the case, sir. The 'First Finger' is the flagship of the Four Fingers pirate group, and is primarily armed with a large amount of light gun batteries. She lacks any greater armaments because most of her hull capacity is dedicated to fulfilling her purpose as a carrier for approximately 3000 starfighters."

"What?! 3000 starfighters?!"

"Yes, sir. The alien small craft are smaller and more compact than our mechs for the most part. According to a single source of intelligence, the different starfighters fielded by the Four Fingers can roughly be divided into three categories. The light interceptors are the smallest and most numerous models. They are primarily good at fighting other small craft. Next up are the medium gunships, which possess heavier firepower and are mainly used to provide support. The heavy bombers are packed with powerful ordnance and are solely employed to destroy large starships or fortifications."

"Are our mechs better than their starfighters?"

"We cannot make that determination as the indigenous aliens make use of an endless variety of starfighters. We can only make a rough estimate. Since the Four Fingers raided the alien space lanes of the Zelmar Upper Zones in the past, we believe that the starfighters should at least be on par with our own mechs."

Ves relaxed a bit. "That is more manageable. How many starfighters have the alien pirates deployed up to this point?"

"We have detected approximately 88,000 small craft so far! Many of them appear to be autonomous combat drones but a third of them are manned or semi-manned craft!"

Ves widened his eyes. "Those are way more small craft than what we were led to believe from the estimates!"

It took a moment for the tactical officer to supply an answer.

"We mainly based our estimates on the number of alien carrier vessels that we know of. We accounted for the possibility that the Palace of Shame would have hangar bays that also contain small craft, but we vastly underestimated how much the pirates have been willing to invest into defending their hidden base as opposed to their mobile fleet assets. The vast majority of craft that we did not expect to appear on the battlefield are largely unmanned or semi-manned."

"What the hell does semi-manned craft even mean!?"

"Those are small craft that are piloted by an organic consciousness but without all of the redundant parts." Gloriana explained to him. "Do you recall the plasma saber of the Neo Amadeus that we recently salvaged in Pima Prime and repurposed for our own use?"

"Yeah. We call it the Scarlet Ember now. The Everchanger holds it now as the new weapon substantially increases its offensive threat. Wait..."

Chapter 4442 Alien Small Craft

"The original plasma sword is not the same as a semi-manned craft as the human head integrated into the body of the weapon did not gain any control over it. The semi-manned craft are different in that they are completely controlled by an alien head or other organic monstrosity. I believe that they should be specially cultivated for the job."

"I see."

Regardless of how the different alien species pulled it off, Ves still found the entire notion to be unnatural. It was a practice that stood against everything

the mech industry and human society stood for. These 'semi-manned craft' needed to be destroyed!

While Ves experienced an intense emotional rejection towards this type of craft, Gloriana expressed interest towards them. She realized for the first time how useful it could be to encounter radically different forms of alien technology.

"I wonder how the aliens have managed to implement manned, semi-manned and unmanned craft. Manned craft should be the most reliable but also the most difficult and expensive option. Unmanned craft are most likely regarded as disposable units as it is difficult for them to perform well under heavy jamming. Semi-manned craft are probably seen as an improved version of the latter."

Ves manipulated his interface and called up additional feeds that showed a handful of the alien combat drones and starfighters from different pirate fleets. They came in many different shapes and configurations.

For example, there was a small craft model that came in the form of a large black brick. The strange craft employed a strange method of propulsion that did not rely on thrusters to push it forward. This allowed it to maintain full armor coverage in every direction.

The only instant where it exposed its weak points was when it needed to open up the smallest holes possible so that its integrated energy weapons could open fire at its targets.

The flying brick craft were completely unmanned and could easily be stacked on top and alongside each other by the hundreds if not thousands!

Their completely geometric shapes meant that they took up a lot less hull space than any other small craft. When Ves took into account that they were

all unmanned, their owners did not even have to reserve additional space, funding and other resources to support a large number of starfighter pilots!

Ves let out a dismissive snort. "These brick craft may be an easy and efficient way to field a lot of combat drones, but they aren't fighting against the usual kind of small craft they are accustomed to. Our mechs are an entirely different beast!"

Humanity's prohibition against the use of warships did not weaken its desire for greater strength and combat effectiveness.

As soon as the Age of Mechs came to be, the human race took away much of the resources that previously went into improving warships and allocated all of it into supercharging research and development of mechs!

Human civilization was still incredibly huge even after it had managed to limp out of the dark days of the Age of Conquest.

Four centuries of uninterrupted development had allowed humanity to elevate a special variation of small craft at an astounding pace. Each subsequent mech generation introduced a constant slew of industry-wide improvements.

All of these efforts enabled humanity to turn mechs into a much more mature weapon platform that came a lot closer to rivaling warships!

Tens of thousands of strange brick drones were flooding in numerous directions, but most of them were flying straight towards the mechs of the Santana Group!

Ves couldn't help but laugh when he saw that. "Good luck with that!"

The Santana Third Fleet primarily fielded hybrid mechs and heavy artillery mechs. Each of them opened fire at the incoming swarm of black brick craft with the many different guns at their disposal!

Immediately, the alien brick craft began to showcase their greatest merit, which was their strong all-round defense.

Their relatively thick armor plating in combination with their special propulsion method allowed the bricks to absorb incoming fire from one side.

Once the armor on this side had reached the end of its rope, the bricks simply flipped around and exposed an undamaged side towards the enemy.

Doing this several times in a row allowed the bricks to resist up to 6 times as much damage than normal!

While Ves found the design concept to be interesting, the combat drone had a lot of flaws!

"The propulsion method is too slow." Ves criticized. "Who cares whether it can fly forwards, backwards, downwards, upwards or sideways at the exact same rate of acceleration when it is always lagging behind?"

This was great for the ranged mechs of the Santana Group as they all felt free to fire their weapon systems as many times as possible!

"This is a dream scenario to the Many Guns Doctrine." Ves remarked as he saw the approaching bricks falling apart by the dozens with each passing seconds. The Santanas have the greatest firepower out of all of the mech forces. The brick craft are way over their heads if they think that spinning around can stop them from getting shredded into pieces."

His wife also directed her attention to this large swarm of unmanned craft.

"The unusual looking drones aren't completely useless, Ves. They have successfully attracted much of the firepower of the Santana mechs. Look at the alien warships that are behind the drone swarm. The larger threats have yet to be engulfed by too many attacks."

"The Santanas already have a solution for them. Warships are best left to more powerful mechs."

The Santana Group's decent collection of expert ranged mechs had already begun to open fire at the smaller warships heading in its direction.

Most of the alien warships, no matter whether they looked similar to human warships or radically different, seemed to rely more on transphasic energy shields than solid armor for protection.

It made sense as it was much cheaper and more economical to rely on energy-based defenses.

This appeared to be a universal technological application to the indigenous alien races as even the weirdest and most inhuman-looking warships boasted powerful energy shields.

The strangest warship heading in the direction of the Santana mechs was a biomechanical starfish-like ship that was shaped like a flexible starfish!

Ves even had the illusion that the half-organic, half-metallic vessel was actually a living being that the aliens had transformed into a 'living warship'!

Yet despite the unique advantages conveyed by this biomechanical monstrosity, the Thunderer Mark II only needed to launch a couple of powerful volleys to strip away half of the alien vessel's powerful energy shields!

The Santana Group's powerful heavy artillery mech couldn't afford to finish the job, though. The Palace of Shame had unveiled numerous powerful heavy gun batteries that were almost just as powerful as the primary armaments of the V'gahnt-Zezne!

Each time they fired, they either stressed out the defenses of an ace mech or wiped out dozens of mechs that were unlucky enough to be in the way of a gigantic energy beam!

Fortunately, the Thunderer Mark II was well-suited to destroy these powerful base modules.

No matter how much shielding and armor the aliens had employed to protect their critical base guns, Saint Osenring's unreasonable ability to make his gauss projectiles produce exaggeratingly powerful shockwaves upon impact easily ruptured many of the components necessary to make these powerful gun batteries work!

While the Thunderer Mark II already shifted its attention to other high priority threats, the Santana Group's expert mechs proceeded to finish the jobs by firing many of their shots at the partially unshielded biomechanical warship!

Though the giant starfish vessel seemed to suffer a lot of pain to the point of firing powerful retaliatory gamma laser beams from some of the pointy limbs, the Santana Group's expert mechs easily withstood the incoming attacks by evading them or resisting them with the help of their resonance shields.

Ves could see that the Santana Group would be fine even if it took a while to whittle down all of the alien brick craft and warships.

He turned his attention back to the situation of the Larkinson Clan and its allies.

Every major pirate fleet banded together with their own cliques or factions who they trusted a little more than their other rivals.

There was still plenty of animosity between the pirate factions and it did not look as if they trusted each other to cover their backs.

As such, every major pirate alliance went their own way and attacked a different human mech force.

The ones arrayed against the Golden Skull Alliance was an armada led by the 1854210 pirate fleet.

"Great." Ves grimaced. "We get to confront the major pirate fleet that just happens to field the most light cruisers."

Light cruisers might not sound like an impressive classification, but they were still considerably larger and more threatening than frigates and destroyers!

The smaller warships were actually more suited to fight against mech forces as their hulls were covered with a lot of anti-fighter gun batteries.

However, the seven light cruisers of the 1854210 pirate fleet still posed a huge threat to the Golden Skullers.

Their larger and more powerful armaments easily shattered asteroids that human mechs used for cover and they could even damage and cripple any nearby combat carriers that had been brought forward to offer resupply and rescue services.

Then there was the chaotic swarm of starfighters and combat drones. None of them appeared to come from a single predominant source, so their models and their formations widely diverged from each other.

There were thousands of what he considered to be traditional starfighters. Their aerodynamic shapes and wings made it clear that they were designed to fight under atmospheric conditions if necessary. The fully armored cockpits did not expose any alien pilots, but Ves knew they were definitely present and in control.

Some of the starfighters apparently belonged to an elite squadron or force as they were not only as fast as light mechs, but were also controlled by highly skilled alien pilots who utilized their craft quite well!

Then there were the more disposable drones that were a lot easier to shoot down. It was pretty clear that most of them were thrown in to serve as cannon fodder and attract a lot of firepower, but the Golden Skullers had little choice but to eliminate them first.

Every mech pilot aside from the ones who were piloting the Transcendent Punishers would down a lot fewer craft if they targeted the more elite units first.

This was especially the case for the melee mechs that had temporarily set aside their usual weapons in order to wield spare rifles.

Their performance against the elite alien starfighters was exceptionally poor!

Since it was much easier for them to take down a large amount of drones at longer ranges, General Verle and the other military leaders tasked most of their ranged units to mow down the cannon fodder first.

Thousands of drones and occasionally starfighters either exploded or became crippled in space.

The mechs that were responsible for doing this also began to suffer damage. They coped much better with the situation as they were used to enduring much more severe attacks from enemy mech forces.

The 1854210's and the other alien pirate forces didn't really put much emphasis on their small craft, though.

Their true reliance was their warships!

"Heh. We have our own answer for their armed starships."

The Mars had already opened fire on one of the seven light cruisers!

The ace hybrid mech's ARCEUS System unleashed a fully charged salvo that not only struck the energy shields of the alien warship, but partially managed to phase through and strike at the thick hull plating underneath!

In the meantime, multiple light cruisers attempted to strike a return blow by bombarding the Mars and the space around it with a mixture of physical projectiles and energy beams, only for the relatively small, fast and nimble ace

mech to evade most of the attacks and block the remainder with its Saint Kingdom.

"Hahahaha! Is that the best you can do, aliens? The power of technology is nothing compared to the power of a human Saint! Let me show you why humanity will reign supreme over the Red Ocean one day!"

Chapter 4443 Mech Vs Warship

The Mars played a critical role in defeating the heavy hitters of the incoming alien armada.

The ace hybrid mech had at least partially been designed with this purpose in mind. Any expert mech and ace mech designed in the new frontier had to offer a solution against alien opponents in order to keep up with the times.

So far, the Mars relied on nothing but its ARCEUS System to continually pound an unlucky alien light cruiser with resonance-enhanced positron beams.

The 1854210 pirates probably couldn't believe that such a tiny machine could hit as hard as a warship that was many times larger and heavier!

It was already bad enough that the powerful humans managed to 'miniaturize' their most powerful combat assets to such an insane degree.

For this miniaturized combat machine to also retain all of the size and mobility advantage of small craft was the truly ridiculous part!

Only the most technologically alien races such as the puelmers were capable of producing such a miracle craft, and even then none of them bothered with such inventions due to the excessive costs associated with extreme miniaturization.

The puelmers might as well upgrade their warship homes with a powerful new weapon system or build a completely new starfaring vessel.

It seemed the mysterious humans didn't get the memo because the Mars continued to give the aliens a crash course on why ace mechs were so renowned and feared in human society!

It only took a minute for the targeted light cruiser to look miserable. The penetrating positron beams launched by the ARCEUS System eventually punched through the exterior hull and ruined dozens of compartments.

The 1854210 pirate fleet tried its best to adapt, of course.

The alien commanders may be a bit ignorant about the power of human mechs, but they were not stupid. They wouldn't have been able to command one of the most powerful pirate fleets of the Palace of Shame if they were stupid.

"The light cruisers are getting serious!"

The warships no longer directed their firepower towards other targets. The aliens fully recognized the acute threat posed by the Mars and employed every measure at their disposal to eliminate this superfly!

First, they tried to saturate the Mars with firepower. The primary and secondary gun batteries of all seven warships practically flooded the space surrounding the ace mech. Patriarch Reginald's Saint Kingdom experienced a much higher drain as the excessive attacks quickly drained a lot of energy!

Second, the alien light cruisers also began to employ other solutions.

Two of the warships launched a flurry of missiles that rapidly soared towards the Mars and exploded in a wide area around the ace mech!

The missiles turned out to produce a powerful EMP effect upon detonation, and would have been able to disable or fry the circuitry of many starfighters!

It was a pity that the Mars was so well-designed that an EMP attack of this magnitude hardly stressed out its protection against these kinds of attacks.

Another warship launched a series of torpedoes that eventually unfolded into powerful alloy nets that could envelop any elusive starfighter!

"Heh? Are you serious?"

Patriarch Reginald Cross did not take the incoming nets seriously at all. His Mars easily evaded most of the nets and overcame the remaining ones by blasting holes in them that were wide enough for his mech to easily get through.

It would have been fine even if his ace mech got caught. It had plenty of ways to shred the nets!

The aliens didn't give up, though. Their light cruisers were large enough to accommodate a lot of different attack and debilitation methods.

Since pirates primarily wanted to capture their prey intact, many of their warships were loaded with features that helped them fulfill this goal.

From launching electrifying darts that would subject a target to all of the electrical power that the warships could channel through them to launching nuclear missiles that were ordinarily reserved for larger threats such as the V'gahnt-Zezne, nothing was working!

The Mars made excellent use of its mobility and easily dodged the majority of the tricks that the aliens sent in its direction. The electrifying darts along with many other weird solutions had no chance of hitting anything in the first place!

As for measures that had the potential to hit the Mars or inflict so much area damage that the ace mech would get affected, Patriarch Reginald proactively shot them down before they could get close.

Despite their terrible might and reputation, none of the nuclear missiles managed to inflict any damage onto the Mars!

At this time, the Mars had finally managed to land so many attacks on the increasingly damaged light cruiser that the alien vessel was already losing power!

The crew of the pirate ship did their best to control the damage, but the positron beams launched by the ARCEUS System continually exhibited the damage!

"The first light cruiser of the 1854210 pirate fleet has gone down! Over a third of her hull is destroyed or heavily damaged while the remainder has lost power!"

The Mars could have continued to attack the crippled ship further, but there were other threats that needed to be taken care of. Patriarch Reginald already directed the ARCEUS System to switch to a second light cruiser.

The pirate warships were all the same in his eyes. As long as his ace mech bombarded them with energy attacks long enough, they would eventually succumb to his might!

"Too slow!"

Reginald did not have the patience to grind down so many warships from a comfortable distance. The longer this battle dragged on, the more his Saint Kingdom wore out. This would eventually force him to fall back on the Abasis Armor to mitigate subsequent attacks.

This was why Reginald directed his powerful ace mech to advance forward and close the distance to his enemies as soon as possible!

The Mars had more weapons at its disposal aside from the ARCEUS System. Reginald had chosen to equip it with shoulder-mounted missile launchers this time.

Though he usually preferred to equip his ace mech with shoulder-mounted gauss cannons, their calibers weren't sufficient against his current opponents.

He opted to go for a missile launcher because there was a much wider range of missile payloads.

So far, Reginald had yet to fire any missiles. The alien warships possessed so much interception capabilities that his missiles would go down just as easily as the nuclear ones launched by his opponents.

This was why he waited until his Mars rapidly closed the gap with the help of its Pulsvar V-1 transphasic flight system!

The shorter the distance between the Mars and the alien warships, the harder it became for the latter to open fire without concerns.

Warships were generally comfortable with exchanging fire across larger voids. The majority of them were never designed to excel in knife-fighting range.

The reason why the indigenous aliens of the Red Ocean still made use of starfighters was because the small craft were highly effective once they managed to get extremely close to their targets!

Now, the Mars had also managed to get close. The ace hybrid mech cheekily flew into the formation of the large but not very maneuverable alien vessels and prevented most of them from firing their guns for fear of causing friendly fire.

"The elite starfighters are coming to the rescue."

The aliens already anticipated the arrival of the Mars and had made sure to gather up several hundred elite starfighters to chase after the Mars.

The formidable-looking starfighters were much stronger and of much higher quality than the cannon fodder that comprised the majority of the alien small craft.

However, as soon as they came close to their target, the Mars merely lifted the arm that held its shotgun and opened fire.

Thousands of resonance-empowered pellets blasted into space and engulfed a large chunk of the incoming alien starfighters in a rain of unstoppable projectiles!

Many alien pilots screamed or simply shattered into bloody mists as their powerful and resilient starfighters instantly crumbled against the might of an ace mech!

"Fools." Ves contemptuously snorted as he saw this result. "An ace mech can easily defeat entire mech divisions worth of mechs. It is beyond stupid for the aliens to think that a few hundred starfighters can do the job."

Gloriana was a little more generous towards the enemy. "You cannot blame the aliens for their ignorance. Ace mechs are well outside the realm of possibility for most alien civilizations. They are oddities even to humans like ourselves. You were just like them when you were younger. It took a confrontation between your forces and the Olympus Mons to truly sink in how much ace mechs defied the standard conventions of reality."

She was right. Ace mechs were so counterintuitively powerful that descriptions and archival footage were not enough to establish their power.

Only direct demonstrations sufficed, and the aliens of the 1854210 pirate group were just beginning to find out what a masterwork ace mech could do when it was in its midst!

One of the greatest advantages of a hybrid mech was that it possessed so many weapon systems that it could multi-task.

Its ARCEUS System had not stopped firing at the second alien light cruiser. The defenses of the next warship on Reginald's list was faring just as poorly as the first one that had already fallen out of formation.

At the same time, the Mars regularly aimed its shotgun in different directions to blast away another swarm of incoming starfighters.

When the aliens finally adjusted their tactics and spread out their reinforcements, Reginald mostly ignored the small craft as their damage was far too low to threaten the Mars.

In the meantime, Reginald finally put the shoulder-mounted missile launchers to good use.

At a certain point, the Mars fired a full spread of resonance-empowered transphasic missiles at three other light cruisers!

Though the warships in question automatically tried to intercept the powerful missiles, the distance was far too short for this measure to take effect!

The first wave of missiles impacted against the segmented transphasic energy shields of the three vessels, causing them to overload to the point where they no longer provided any protection!

The second wave of missiles that followed almost immediately afterwards slipped through the gaps before the alien light cruisers could close it up and proceeded to strike the exteriors of those vessels!

Powerful explosions rent through the hull plating and damaged a decent amount of ship systems and compartments.

The missile attacks managed to knock out several major gun batteries, which provided the Mars and the rest of the Golden Skull Alliance with a lot of relief!

"Let me get up close and personal this time!" Reginald exclaimed.

The Mars had damaged the second light cruiser to such an extent that the alien vessel was open and vulnerable.

However, the ship was still large enough that it would take a while for the ARCEUS System to completely cripple her like last time.

Patriarch Reginald decided to cut that short and boldly sent his Mars closer!

The ace mech lifted its transphasic axe and leveraged its entire Saint Kingdom so that it began to mimic the weapon!

With a single swing, the physical axe as well as the giant reddish axe that Reginald had formed with his Saint Kingdom inflicted a catastrophic strike to the hapless light cruiser's damaged hull!

It was as if a giant cleaver had chopped into the poor alien pirate vessel. The damage was so exaggerated that the aliens simply couldn't process how a single physical strike could have such far-reaching effects.

None of them understood the nature and the properties of a Saint Kingdom. It was the ultimate offensive, defensive and supportive tool. Only other ace mechs could resist the oppressive effects of a domain field!

"Warships are screwed if they can't come up with an effective answer against ace mechs."

Were the alien pirates capable of handling this threat, or would the Mars and every other ace mech ruin all of their warships?

Chapter 4444 Horrible Warship

While the Mars was making considerable progress in assaulting the light cruisers of the 1854210 pirate group, the other ace mechs were also pulling their own weight.

The Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem took on the greatest burden during this battle. Both of them were no weaker than the Mars, and they were more than powerful enough to demolish any typical warship.

The problem was that the V'gahnt-Zezne was not an ordinary warship!

Piracy was profitable but it was also a risky activity to say the least. Those who engaged in this business turned into outlaws and could no longer engage in regular commerce without the use of middlemen.

Before the arrival of humanity, the production and procurement of high-end warships had always been a tightly controlled affair. The most advanced warships not only utilized proprietary technology that were not available on the open markets, but they could only be built by specialized shipyards that were often tightly controlled by government institutions.

Typical outlaws only had two ways of obtaining a ship. They either hijacked one and converted the vessel for their own use, or they exchanged one from an unscrupulous seller.

Outlaws could forget about constructing advanced warships themselves. The amount of personnel, infrastructure, resources, research and industry required to set up such a massive operation could only be accomplished at the level of a state or star nation.

The Palace of Shame was far too small and isolated to function as a complete industrial hub!

So far, every warship employed by every pirate group largely conformed to what the pirates of this region could reasonably obtain through their limited means.

By the standards of the indigenous galactic community, most of their warships were common products that were widely available to civilian buyers.

The alien governments that used to exist in the surrounding regions never cared for them too much as they were simply far too weak to pose any threat against their rule.

This was what made the Unspoken so much different from every other pirate group based in the Palace of Shame!

The orven pirate group might not field the greatest amount of warships, but all of the vessels were by far the most advanced among the vessels taking part in the battle today.

From their many destroyers to their singular battlecruiser, each of them were originally military-grade vessels that had only grown weaker due to their age, inadequate maintenance and their technological obsolescence.

However, even if the indigenous alien militaries had already phased out warships built to these standards a long time ago, that did not mean they were weak!

Whereas many of the other warships found themselves unable to keep themselves going after getting targeted by a powerful human ace mech, the fearsome V'gahnt-Zezne still managed to stay in one piece even after five minutes of tangling against the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem!

Saint Marissa Lewandowski of the Adelaide Mercenary Company and Saint Kalasandra Boojay had been working as hard as they could to overcome the defenses of the orven battlecruiser.

They initially assumed that even if the orven battlecruiser was able to project a stronger array of segmented energy shields, they could just concentrate their attacks and break through them in order to reach the hull of the warship.

An ace mech obtained an incredible advantage once they came close enough to a warship!

Many of the powerful armaments of a vessel could no longer target the mech directly, especially when the small but highly dangerous war machine reached one of the blind spots where many gun batteries simply couldn't target due to their physical limitations!

However, when the ace light skirmisher and the ace spearman mech cooperated with each other to overwhelm one of the segmented energy

shields, they dove forward only for them to collide against another layer of segmented energy shields!

"This is ridiculous!" Saint Lewandowski burst out as the withering fire from the battlecruiser's secondary and tertiary gun batteries forced her relatively fragile light skirmisher to vacate the hole. "How can a warship maintain two layers of energy shields?! I have never seen anything like this from a human starship!"

Her fellow female ace pilot was also taken aback at this unwelcome discovery. "We are fighting against aliens. The common sense that we have long applied against humans is no longer valid anymore. This is merely one of several deviations that we have encountered."

"What do we do, then?! It has already taken us a great amount of effort to break through one layer of energy shields. We don't have the time or energy to break through another one before the first layer covers the gap again. The window of opportunity to produce a sequential breakthrough is too small!"

"Be patient." Saint Kalasandra Boojay spoke as her Royal Jeem kept testing the defenses of the V'gahnt-Zezne while making sure to remain in Saint Lewandowski's obscuring domain field. "It will take more effort than we thought to eliminate this battlecruiser, but it is not a problem for us to occupy the alien vessel's attention for the time being. We are still fulfilling our main objective."

Saint Lewandowski growled as her Jedda Sandivar struck one of the segmented energy shields with both of its kamas!

"That's not enough! I don't have a problem if one of us can't do anything to this big warship, but it is a travesty that the two of us still can't make any progress."

As a light skirmisher specialist, Saint Lewandowski highly preferred taking action and making progress. Getting stalled and failing to produce any noticeable results was one of her worst pet peeves!

This was also one of the reasons why Saint Kalasandra Boojay had been paired with her.

As 230 year old mainstay of the Boojay Family, Saint Kalasandra possessed the age, wisdom, strength and prestige to restrain her younger and more impatient colleague.

"I have transmitted a request to Jelmer Osenring." Saint Kalasandra said after a while. "His Thunderer Mark II should have the firepower to break one of the segmented energy shields."

"Great! Let us combine our forces and break through the alien battlecruiser's turtle shell."

"Get ready. We need to plan and time our movements. The segmented energy shields rotate so quickly that we only have two or so seconds to launch all of our attacks."

The timing was so tight that ordinary mech pilots would never be able to pull off the required sequence of moves.

Ace pilots were much different! Each of them had already evolved beyond the limitations of their mortal coils. A problem like this was no big deal to the likes of these powerful Saints.

The only problem was that they could not fully predict the enemy's responses. Though Saint Lewandowski's smokey domain field managed to cover a substantial portion of the V'gahnt-Zezne's interior, it could not envelop the entire hull!

Only the closest gun batteries and crews were blinded by the Jedda Sandivar's Saint Kingdom.

The other gun batteries that were situated further away could still fire into the smoke cloud.

Though the two ace mechs could still rely on their Saint Kingdom's to mitigate the incoming attacks, they could not do so repeatedly when struck by too many powerful attacks.

The enormous plasma bolts fired by the primary gun batteries were especially exhausting to block!

Each time one of the fourteen plasma cannon batteries discharged its energies, a hot and searing bolt passed through at least a fifth of the volume of the obscuring smoke cloud!

Over time, the crew of the V'gahnt-Zezne began to wake up and began to wait until at least half of the plasma cannon batteries were ready to fire.

Whenever 7 or more city-destroying plasma bolts launched into the smoke cloud at once, the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem were forced to abort their current actions and do their best to evade or block the attacks!

This was why the two ace mechs patiently waited for the battlecruiser to launch this attack sequence. The power of her primary armaments was incredible, but the downside was that it seemingly ages for them to get ready to fire again.

Soon enough, the sensitive ace pilots instinctively sensed an acute threat heading in their directions!

"Now!"

The two ace mechs darted away an instant before a torrent of plasma bolts engulfed their previous coordinates and many of the areas around them! The

spread of searing hot plasma was so massive that neither ace mechs got away unscathed!

The Jedda Sandivar was much faster and managed to avoid most of the attacks. Saint Marissa Lewandowski only had to exert a bit of effort to weaken the edge of the remaining plasma bolt.

The Royal Jeem was not as quick to escape the danger zone, but its defenses were much more considerable. Saint Kalasandra Boojay's domain field was much stronger and could neutralize a lot more incoming attacks than any other individual ace pilot on the battlefield.

The rest of the plasma energies that managed to get through could only splash uselessly against the powerful transphasic armor of the ace spearman mech.

"It's our turn now!"

Saint Jelmer Osenring had already been paying attention to the fight that was taking place around the V'gahnt-Zezne.

His Thunderer Mark II quickly shifted its cannons away from his previous target and locked onto one of the segmented energy shields of the alien battlecruiser.

The ace heavy artillery mech opened fire as soon as it could!

Ten resonance-empowered gauss rounds streaked across the battlefield struck the segmented energy shield with full force!

This time, the Thunderer Mark II did not discharge any shield bypassing rounds. They may be enough to get through one layer of energy shields, but two of them was a bit too much, especially when they were on the stronger side as was the case with the V'gahnt-Zezne.

No, the salvo this time consisted of more mundane shield breaking rounds that were especially designed for just these kinds of occasions!

Saint Lewandowski and Saint Boojay both lit up as they saw one of the segmented energy shields of the outer layer explode in a dramatic fashion!

"There's a hole!"

The Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem both dove in while preparing their strongest attacks!

The former's Saint Kingdom still maintained a smokey field, but a portion of the smoke solidified and magnified the range of the ace mech's kamas.

"Break!"

When the Jedda Sandivar finally attacked, its empowered kamas struck with enough force to break through any other barrier, but only managed to deplete only a part of the power of the segmented energy shield of the second layer.

This was not that big of a surprise as the attack power of a single strike from an ace light mech was not that much.

This was where the Royal Jeem came in. As the ace spearman mech charged forth as if it was a lancer mech, Saint Kalasandra Boojay gathered her power and shaped her Saint Kingdom into a giant spear in front of her machine!

Before her charge attack could hit the mark, Saint Boojay opened her mouth and issued a royal proclamation!

"I decree that you shall break in front of my spear!"

The damaged segmented energy shield seemed to destabilize all of a sudden. The vulnerability only lasted for a short amount of time as it was far too difficult for an ace mech to interfere with the operation of such a strong defensive measure, but this was more than enough for the Royal Jeem to exploit this golden opportunity!

The massively empowered spear struck the energy shield in question and pierced through as if the ace mech was poking its spear through a fragile piece of glass!

Yet just as Saint Kalasandra Boojay wanted to extend the charge and push her Royal Jeem inside the protective envelope of the orven battlecruiser, her expert mech's spear suddenly collided against a third layer of segmented energy shields!

"What?!"

The Royal Jeem barely had time to pull back before a furious salvo of plasma bolts, kinetic rounds and laser beams flooded its former position with an ocean of attacks!

Chapter 4445 Defensive Strength

"How can this be?! The intelligence collected by the Gemini Family is too far off!" Saint Kalasandra Boojay scowled as she finally lost her composure.

"We're not dealing with a battlecruiser here. The V'gahnt-Zezne is closer to a battleship!"

A battleship!

It was not that much of a surprise for Saint Boojay to make this conclusion after witnessing the defensive capabilities of the successive layers of segmented energy shields up close.

It was as if the V'gahnt-Zezne was an aquatic creature that was covered by three layers of fish scales!

That wasn't all. The monstrous fish could not only regenerate every destroyed scale after a short period of time, but it could also rotate its fish scales so that it became impossible to break through the defenses by attacking the V'gahnt-Zezne from a single angle.

Though there were major differences between a human battleship and the V'gahnt-Zezne, as long as the effort required to break their defenses were at the same level, then the Unspoken flagship should actually be classified as a battleship!

There was a fundamental difference between a battlecruiser and a battleship. If it turned out that the temporary coalition had initiated a fight against the latter, then the cost of attaining a victory may be far greater than anyone initially expected!

When Saint Kalasandra Boojay shared her latest findings about the V'gahnt-Zezne to the other ace pilots and leaders of the temporary coalition, the explosive news sparked a small commotion.

It was not every day that a bunch of pioneers could stumble upon a battleship!

"Calm down, everyone!" Patriarch Kobal Gemini of the Gemini Family spoke over the command channel! "The Unspoken flagship may be more resilient than we thought, but she does not have the full spectrum of weapons and auxiliary modules of a battleship that we are used to seeing. The fact that the V'gahnt-Zezne doesn't have any effective means to repel the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem is enough to show that the V'gahnt-Zezne is far from being able to defeat all of us single-handedly."

Matriarch Sena Gemini affirmed her brother and husband's words. "The effort needed to defeat the V'gahnt-Zezne is greater than we have anticipated, but eliminating her is not a necessity for the time being. The Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem are still able to occupy the attention of not just the orven battleship, but also the rest of the Unspoken fleet."

The fact that two ace mechs could tie up the strongest individual pirate fleet was a huge contribution to the battle!

The orvens had little choice but to continue in their efforts to fight back against the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem.

This was because if the Unspoken dared to shift their attacks to other targets, the ace light skirmisher and the ace spearman mech could fully concentrate on chipping away at the defenses of the V'gahnt-Zezne.

No matter whether she was protected by three successive layers of segmented energy shields, the two ace mechs would definitely be able to find a way to get through eventually, so the orvens had little choice but to employ all of their might to keep the two threats at bay!

As a result, both sides entered into a stalemate. Most of the alien pirates were probably happy that their side managed to tie up two threatening ace mechs. The human coalition was also glad that a fairly powerful alien battleship and accompanying ships were taken off the board.

"Look at the progress we are making elsewhere. We have gained the upper hand in all of our other confrontations against the alien pirate fleets." Matriarch Sena Gemini said.

She was right.

The Santana Group with the Thunderer Mark II was making short work of all of the starfighters and warships that attempted to get closer.

The overwhelming ranged firepower of the Santana mechs was simply too much for the aliens to contend against.

While the damage of a single attack might not be the greatest, the sheer quantity of guns that the Santana Group could bring to bear against its immediate enemies was so great that many aliens began to lose heart!

Already, dozens of starfighters had begun to turn around and flee towards safety.

Though the other aliens quickly made short work of the cowards, the fact that some of them wanted to give up on this attack run was already a sign that all was not well with the enemies.

The Golden Skull Alliance was also doing great. Though there were seven light cruisers among the pirate armada that was bearing down on the Larkinsons, Glory Seekers and Crossers, the Mars alone completely dominated the 1854210 pirate fleet's warships!

Two of the seven light cruisers had already been downed. The Mars was merrily in the process of dismantling a third one while evading the attacks from the remaining alien warships in the vicinity.

The Gemini Family and the Lehrer Foundation were also doing fantastic.

The former enjoyed the protection of the Embodiment of Love and the Embodiment of Sacrifice.

The teamwork that both ace mechs exhibited in combat was far greater than the ad-hoc cooperation between the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem.

During the ongoing battle, the Gemini Saints fully demonstrated the amazing potential that love could bring forth. The ability for both of them to not only merge their Saint Kingdoms together, but borrow from each other's power was massive!

Whenever the Embodiment of Love's powerful energy rifle launched an attack, the energy beam never failed to punch through the energy shield of a fully operational alien cruiser and inflict serious material damage to the hull!

Not a single ace mech could achieve this result aside from maybe the Thunderer Mark II!

The reason why the Embodiment of Love could inflict so much damage was because Saint Kaia Gemini was never alone in her efforts.

Saint Sandro Gemini was of the same mind as her. Whenever his sister was about to launch an attack, he lent his true resonance to the Embodiment of Love.

The co-mingling of two different but highly compatible sources of true resonance produced mysterious effects.

The most important effect was that Saint Kaia and Saint Sandro were able to resonate with each other and combine their forces in a way that amplified their output!

The pirate warships that attempted to run down the Gemini Family's mech forces steadily crumbled apart as the Embodiment of Love continually crippled them one after another.

In the meantime, any effort by the aliens to concentrate their firepower and retaliate against the Gemini Family's ace rifleman mech failed to achieve any substantial results.

The Embodiment of Love was fast enough to evade the brunt of the attacks while the Embodiment of Sacrifice dutifully blocked the rest from getting through.

The reason why the Gemini Saints hadn't managed to clean up all of the pirate forces that had foolishly attempted to attack in this direction was because their help was needed to assist the other pioneering groups!

Since the Adelaide Mercenary Company and the Boojay Family had both sent out their ace pilot to contain the Unspoken pirate fleet, their mech forces lacked the immediate protection of their greatest trump cards.

Though their expert mechs and regular mechs tried their best to take down the aliens bearing down on them, it took too long to break open the defenses of the larger and more powerful cruisers.

"We need more help!" General Herman Fontaine pleaded to his allies. "If you cannot spare the firepower to get rid of at least two of the light cruisers that are threatening my forces, we can't promise you that the Jedda Sandivar will keep harassing the orven battleship."

"The same goes for us." A leader of the Boojay Family said. "Maybe the Jedda Sandivar is enough to keep the V'gahnt-Zezne. Let us recall our Royal Jeem so we can teach these filthy aliens that sending their warships in our direction is a grave mistake."

"There is no need for the two of you to threaten a break from our plan." Matriarch Sena Gemini admonished the leader of the Adelaides. "We cannot afford to let either of your ace mechs suspend their current tasks. A single ace mech cannot threaten a battleship of this caliber. It takes two of our great machines to fully lock down the Unspoken fleet."

"Then why aren't you sending out your Embodiment of Love and Embodiment of Sacrifice?! The teamwork of your Gemini Saints is far better than our two ace pilots."

"Because even the power of love cannot punch through three layers of energy shields at once!" Patriarch Kobal Gemini told them all. "Our science officers have analyzed the new data and revised their estimates of the V'gahnt-Zezne's defensive capabilities. Unless we have the patience to wear out the orven battleship's shield generators and power supply, it may take up to four ace mechs to breach her defenses."

"Four ace mechs?! That's crazy!"

"We should be lucky that defense is the only area the V'gahnt-Zezne excels at. Her ability to fight against other warships is great, but her ability to take down ace mechs that are flying closely around her hull is much worse."

Seeing how vital it was to contain the orven battleship, the Gemini Family, the Santana Group and the Golden Skull Alliance all gave the Adelaide Mercenary Company and the Boojay Family a hand.

The Embodiment of Love, the Thunderer Mark II and the Mars utilized their potent ranged firepower to launch periodic strikes at the warships that threatened the last two pioneering groups.

The situation across the battlefield soon became a lot stabler and more even. The pirates were suffering horrendous losses while the human mech forces were suffering relatively little damage in return.

The only instances where the human mech forces began to experience more difficulties was when the alien combat drones and starfighters finally came close enough.

Though the human mechs quickly proved their superiority over their counterparts, they were outnumbered by the alien small craft!

Still, the difference in performance was too great. It was only a matter of time before the aliens lost their fighter screen.

Everything went well. None of the pioneering forces experienced any major crises. It appeared that the Gemini Family's extensive planning and preparation work largely paid off as there were no signs that the aliens could overturn the current trend.

That was until the Gemini Family somehow gathered a crucial piece of intelligence that completely changed the way the human coalition approached the Battle of the Boryan Balt.

"Enemy reinforcements are on the way!" Patriarch Kobal Gemini announced. "They will be arriving much sooner than we anticipated. They may reach the Palace of Shame in as little as 17 minutes."

"What?!"

"Can you tell us more about these reinforcements?" Ves urgently asked.

"Certainly, Patriarch Larkinson. We already took into account that the pirate groups would call for help, but our estimates of the nature of the reinforcements were off. We thought that the Unspoken and the other pirate groups would be in a hurry to recall their hidden patrol ships on patrol throughout the Boryan belt. Now that we have received further information, we have found out that our opponents have requested aid from another alien power."

"Who?"

"Please take into account that we cannot confirm this piece of news, but if our intelligence is accurate, then the alien group that created the Palace of Shame in the first place may have dispatched a small but powerful relieving force to our location. We do not know what the force comprises, only that it is powerful enough to motivate all of the pirates that are risking their lives to defend their stronghold."

"The enemies we are fighting against at this moment have all come to believe that they will all be saved as long as they can hold out for a period of time." Matriarch Sena Gemini explained. "If we cannot eliminate all of these pirate warships in time, then our ace mechs and other mechs will need to split their attention, and that will substantially increase our casualties as well as lower our chances of winning this battle. We must be ready to fight against whoever is coming to help the Palace of Shame with all of our ace mechs. This means that we must not only take out all of the alien warships, but also find a way to destroy the V'gahnt-Zezne in the time we have left!"

Chapter 4446 Efficient Charges

The decisions made by the alien pirate groups made a lot more sense after the human coalition discovered that enemy reinforcements were on the way.

No one knew who originally created the Palace of Shame, but it had to be a powerful group or faction among the alien community.

Ves was thinking back on what the orven prisoners had told him when he interrogated them all. Each of them shared numerous pieces of hearsay that suggested that the Palace of Shame had always been supported by hidden backers.

He even recalled an instance where one of the alien crew members claimed to have witnessed a clandestine meeting between the Unspoken and an actual phase whale!

Though Ves had no idea if the reinforcements comprised of one or more phase whales, he had to admit that it made the most sense out of all of the possibilities!

Most of the aliens that previously occupied the territories that encompassed the Krakatoa Middle Zone and the Zelmar Upper Zone had long packed up their bags and left before the scourge of humanity could arrive.

The aliens that couldn't leave had mostly been wiped out or reduced to the point where they no longer posed a significant threat to human pioneers.

It was far too improbable that the orvens, the nunsers or the puelmers had left any powerful warships behind.

Only the phase whales remained too elusive for most humans to catch. Their mastery of phasewater and spatial technology meant that they could easily hide in pocket spaces for long periods of time.

Ves wasn't sure whether he should share this possibility to everyone. They might lose a lot of confidence if they learned that a phase whale may be inbound to their location.

Then again, he may be wrong. The phase whales weren't too numerous to begin with and it was rare to encounter any of them throughout the Red Ocean.

It may be that the reinforcements might comprise a different alien race that none of the human pioneering groups had ever encountered before.

The aliens had buried a lot of secrets in the Red Ocean over the eons. It would be a mistake for Ves to only take the known alien races and what he knew about the region into account.

This was the danger of making assumptions. They could occasionally lead people astray.

In any case, as soon as everyone learned that they were pressed for time, they increased their efforts and worked harder to defeat their opposition!

The fight had become incredibly hot now that the distances had narrowed.

Though the seven ace mechs of the human coalition were doing a great job at occupying and reducing the number of alien warships, the other mechs were all doing their best to defeat the remaining alien forces.

Many different mechs and mech units distinguished themselves today.

Commander Taon Melin and his fellow soldiers of the Eye of Ylvaine played a key role in suppressing the opposing starfighters and wearing down the defenses of the enemy warships.

"Don't waste your attacks on the cannon fodder." The expert candidate and legion commander instructed his subordinates. "The other mech legions that handle the weaker small craft. Do your best to limit the movements of the elite starfighters and prevent them from going any further forward. Also make sure to weaken the energy shields of the opposing warships. We do not need to

attack them any further once their hulls are exposed. The other mech legions can take care of the rest."

The humans involved in this battle gradually figured out that the aliens they were fighting against all liked to depend on transphasic energy shields as their main form of defense.

The transphasic segmented energy shields were highly effective at withstanding attacks that weren't transphasic in nature, especially if they were able to spin and rotate like a mono-colored disco ball.

The amount of phasewater needed to make an energy shield generator transphasic was much less than cladding an entire warship with transphasic hull plating!

The only upside to the defensive habits of the indigenous aliens was that their warships were much easier to damage once they lost their main form of protection.

The Transcendent Punishers therefore played a key role in wearing down the energy shields of the alien warships. Their volume of fire was far greater than any other standard mech in the Larkinson Army.

Although the Eye of Ylvaine was mostly known for its heavy artillery mechs, the mech legion was no longer solely confined to shooting matches.

As soon as the alien starfighters started to get close enough, the Transcendent Chargers finally had the chance to fight on their own terms!

The lancer mechs readily discarded their spare luminar crystal rifles and began to pick up their lances while building up their momentum.

Just as with their artillery counterparts, it wasn't worth it for them to target the weaker small craft.

"Aim for the heavier and slower gunships. They are stronger but much less maneuverable than the other starfighters."

The gunships employed by the alien pirate groups varied considerably in design, but the ones that were fighting against the Golden Skull Alliance tended to be two-seaters.

Two different alien pilots were needed to control the various systems of the gunship. Since one of them could fully concentrate on maneuvering and defenses while the other could concentrate on attacking and auxiliary measures, the performance of the gunships was always good!

What was more concerning was that every gunship carried its own energy shield generator, allowing them to withstand a lot of attacks before they finally became vulnerable.

It took far too many attacks from ordinary mechs to break open their energy shells. Not even the Transcendent Punishers wanted to target them because of how few gunships they could destroy in the same amount of time they could wipe out a swathe of smaller starfighters!

"Come on! We're almost there. Ylvaine has shown us the way, so ready your lances and pierce their energy shields!"

"For Ylvaine!"

"For the clan!"

The Transcendent Chargers built up a lot of momentum after a time, but not too much.

There was an art and a science to guessing how speed and momentum was required to take down an enemy in a single charge.

Many lancer mech pilots tended to build up more momentum than was necessary to fulfill their goals. This was because they wanted to have a safety

margin and still be able to destroy their targets if their estimates were slightly off. This also caused them to waste a considerable amount of time and energy.

One of the less obvious ways the Transcendent Chargers was superior to other lancer mechs was that its mech pilots always seemed to know exactly how much momentum they needed to build up over their attack run.

They knew that spending any further time on speeding up their lancer mechs would only give the gunships more time to deal more damage and attract the attention of other mechs that were less equipped to take them down.

This was why the lancer mech pilots did not bother to build up any safety margin at all and directed their Transcendent Chargers to close in on the alien gunships right away!

The alien pirates quickly noticed the threat. It was hard not to miss the intimidating formation of lancer mechs that was bearing down on the gunships at greater speeds than any other human mech!

The gunships along with other friendly alien starfighters tried their best to shoot down the charging human machines, but the thick, triangular-shaped armor layout of the Transcendent Chargers easily withstood most of the incoming attacks!

Occasionally, the alien starfighters managed to damage a Transcendent Charger to the point of destroying it, but just before the attacks could finish the job, the lancer mechs in question always dropped out of formation and circled around so that they could return to their motherships while remaining intact!

It might be a coincidence if this happened once, but after more than twenty lancer mechs turned away at just the right time to preserve their remaining integrity, many of the more hotheaded alien species became absolutely frustrated at their inability to kill their targets!

While the Eye of Ylvaine had been forced to recall a bunch of Transcendent Chargers this way, the remaining ones were more than enough to finish the job!

The crews of the alien gunships had tried their best to stop the charging mechs from getting close. When they saw that their efforts failed to produce the desired result, they tried their best to block or evade the incoming strikes.

None of the targeted gunships succeeded in getting away!

The mech pilots of every Transcendent Charger knew exactly in which direction they should charge.

On top of that, the power of foresight also told the religious mech pilots where they should point their lances.

It turned out that alien energy shield technology could not produce protection that was equally strong in every direction.

There were variations that could reinforce the protection in a single direction. There were also other variations where the degree of protection fluctuated on a random basis.

The energy shield generators equipped by the gunships were not too high in quality, and their maintenance over the years had been less than ideal.

This caused their performance to be rather spotty and less consistent than normal, though the typical alien pirate didn't notice any difference.

It was only in this specific situation that their neglect had come to haunt them! As soon as the lances of the Transcendent Chargers struck their marks, they easily popped the energy barriers!

Not only that, the lancer mechs still had plenty of forward momentum left to continue their charge and impale their weapons deep into the much more vulnerable chassis of the gunships!

Every lance that sunk into the gunships just happened to inflict the right kind of internal damage to completely disable the alien small craft!

"Brilliant!" Ves remarked as a part of him had paid attention to one of the few lancer mech models of the Larkinson Army. "The efficiency of my Transcendent Chargers is far superior to any other lancer mech model!"

It was a pity that the Eye of Ylvaine didn't have enough lancer mechs to wipe out all of the enemy gunships at once, but the Larkinsons were already happy with this result.

The enemy gunship force had lost such a large proportion of its small craft that its weight and significance had crumbled!

The remaining gunships could no longer oppress the mechs of the Larkinson Clan as much as before, but that didn't stop the Transcendent Punishers from making a wide circle so that they could pull off another attack run!

Many other Larkinson mechs were also doing their part in reducing the number of enemy starfighters.

One of the curious facts about these alien craft was that almost all of them were equipped with ranged weapons.

Laser weapons and kinetic weapons were their prevalent means of attack, though there were also starfighter models that employed positron weapons, plasma weapons, gamma laser weapons and even more exotic attack solutions!

The larger and heavier starfighters also carried bombs and missiles that possessed enough punch to destroy a mech upon direct impact!

The explosive ordnance was the biggest threat to the various human mech forces, but that did not stop the enthusiastic melee mechs from closing in on their alien adversaries!

An enormous interspecies exchange took place.

Humans began to teach their alien 'conversation partners' about the wonders of mechs.

The aliens for their part taught the humans that starfighters also possessed a lot of depth!

Aside from the Transcendent Punishers, many other Larkinson melee mechs experienced a lot of trouble in their attempts to defeat their respective opponents.

"Stop running, you cowards!"

This was because the starfighters didn't stupidly allow the melee mechs to get within hitting distance.

Instead, the fast and maneuverable alien small craft teasingly flew around the melee mechs and made sure to keep their distance from any mech.

"Gah! We need to box them in! We can't go on like this!"

Chapter 4447 Loss Of Life

The battle between the human coalition and the alien pirate forces of the Palace of Shame had reached its hottest stage!

Tens of thousands of mechs collided against an even greater number of alien small craft! Six different pioneering groups adopted significantly different styles of mechs, but no matter what, none of their mech forces were weak!

On the opposite side, strange and exotic-looking combat drones and starfighters danced around mechs as they fought against their opponents with a combination of directed energy weapons, kinetic guns and explosive ordnance.

Since the human coalition deployed their forces to surround the Palace of Shame from six directions, the pirate fleets spread out to confront the humans all at once.

Six different fights broke out that were largely isolated from each other!

The division among the alien races and their respective factions dissuaded them from lending a hand to each other, but the humans weren't as limited.

Though it was a bit too difficult for ordinary mechs to exert any influence at longer ranges, the ranged ace mechs such as the Mars and the Thunderer Mark II increasingly directed their firepower in the distance to suppress the alien warships that threatened the mech forces of the Adelaide Mercenary Company and the Boojay Family.

Slowly, an alarming piece of news filtered through.

"Reinforcements are coming!"

"What reinforcements?"

"I don't know, but whatever is coming is definitely bad news for us. We can't adopt the slow and steady approach anymore. We need to pick up the pace and wipe out as many alien craft as possible if we don't want to get outnumbered and outgunned by an even greater margin!"

While the human pioneering groups still retained a lot of selfishness, they no longer kept as much of the good stuff to themselves. Their leaders were all sober enough to know that they needed everyone's help to survive and make it through this battle without getting ruined.

As Ves and his family continued to observe the ongoing battle, the children started to become more and more afraid at what they were seeing.

When Marvaine saw that an alien frigate managed to pulverize several Knight Warriors hailing from the Avatars of Myth, it increasingly dawned upon him

that he was not just witnessing the destruction of machines that could be rebuilt.

He was also witnessing the loss of human life!

Though he was still just a couple of years old, now that his companion spirit Denny activated his latent talent towards life, Marvaine was able to perceive the reality around him from a different perspective than before.

Everything around the young boy had a touch of life. This was especially the case within the confines of the Larkinson Clan where his father's influence was the strongest!

Whenever the protections in front of him showed one of the familiar mechs of the Larkinson Clan getting destroyed without giving their mech pilots a chance to eject, Marvaine experienced a much greater sense of loss.

Tears began to well in his eyes as he vaguely sensed the brave Larkinson soldiers that were passing away with each passing second.

Though the Larkinson mech legions all managed to gain the upper hand against their direct adversaries, that did not mean that losses were minimal.

In fact, after General Verle instructed his troops to fight harder in order to wipe out their enemies faster, the Larkinson mechs started to take more risks.

Though the faster pace took a greater toll on the mech legions, the Larkinson mech pilots did not flinch in the slightest. They performed their duty without hesitation and fought as bravely as possible.

Each of them were aware that many other lives were at stake!

With the main fleet of the Larkinson Clan not too far behind, the soldiers all bore an inescapable responsibility to fight at their best and defeat as many enemies as possible.

Marvaine's newly developed sensitivity picked up on these sentiments as well, but always felt a sense of loss whenever any of these brave and noble mech pilots lost their lives in an instant.

At one point, the loss of life and the increasing amount of deaths became too much to the child. He burst into tears as his innocent mind couldn't take it any longer.

"Waaaaahhh! Mama!"

"Meow!"

"Miaow!"

"MARVAINE!"

Gloriana immediately became alarmed. She unstrapped herself from her seat in an instant and moved over to pick up her suited child so that she could lift him in her arms.

"There, there, honey. Mama is here. What is wrong, Marvaine? Has the battle become too much for you? I can bring you back to your room if you like."

It took a minute for Marvaine to regain a semblance of his composure again. Tears still leaked from his eyes as a strong sense of sadness and loss emanated from his spirit.

His suited arm pointed at one of the projections showing a particularly violent clash between human and alien forces.

"Those uncles and aunts... they are no longer alive, right?"

"That... is a bit complicated, my dear."

"I can feel it, mama! They are gone! They are all gone!"

Ves frowned when he heard that. He focused on his son and peered a little deeper. His eyes widened a bit when he finally noticed why his son exhibited such a strong reaction.

"Gloriana, bring him over to me. I know what's wrong with him. He has just inherited my talent, but the knowledge that his new abilities have given him is too much for a boy of his age."

His wife snarled at him. "I am not letting go of my son! He needs a mother's touch!"

"You are not equipped to handle this problem!"

"I'm a mother! It is my job to care for my children!"

"I'm his father! My rights and responsibilities are the same as yours!"

Marvaine began to grow confused, though he still clung to his mother for comfort.

Gloriana eventually sat down on her seat and continued to rock her youngest child as if he was a baby.

That did not stop Ves from speaking to his son, however.

"Marvaine. Can you bring out Denny for a moment? I would like to confirm my guess."

The boy had calmed down enough to respond to his request.

A blond Maine Coon kitten emerged from his head. Though fluffy and adorable companion spirit's mood was just as glum as Marvaine himself, that did not affect the pure and warm concentrations of life that had welled up in his spiritual feline body!

Meuw.

When Ves focused closer, he noticed that Denny's heart and front paws had turned into two different fonts of life.

According to what he recalled about the companion spirit seed that he had implanted into Marvaine's spirituality several years ago, the heart encompassed the creation side of life while the paws embodied the youthful and innocent side of life.

Activating one of these spiritual attributes was already a fantastic development, but for two of them to awaken at the same time was an interesting surprise!

Since Denny was technically another side of Marvaine, this early development meant that the boy effectively obtained a powerful talent and predisposition towards life!

Mrow!

Blinky appeared from Ves' head and flew straight to his spiritual 'son'. Once the purple Star Cat came close, he gently lifted Denny up and dragged him back to where Ves was seated.

Mrow mrow mrow.

Meuw meuw~

"It's okay, Denny." Ves softly whispered as Blinky continued to cuddle and provide warmth to Denny.

Every clansman was obliged to wear protective equipment. Since Ves was wearing his Unending Regalia for the duration of this battle, his entire form aside from his head was encased in metal.

One of the reasons why Gloriana insisted on keeping Marvaine was because she wore a more flexible and form-fitting hazard suit. Perhaps she was truly

right to do so as her adorable son was already feeling warm and safe in his mother's embrace.

Though Ves was happy that Marvaine was no longer in tears, he did not want to keep his son and possible heir in ignorance.

Designer babies with activated spiritualities were far smarter than other children at their ages, so Ves did not think it was too early to give Marvaine a lesson.

It was better for Ves to shape his boy's views and ideology early than let Marvaine develop any crooked ideas on his own!

"Denny?"

Meuw...?

"Can you sense this?" Ves asked as he lifted up a hand while channeling his own spiritual energy.

Meuw..!

"That's right. This is life energy. It is an amazing power that only a few people possess. Your grandmother and I both have it and now you have inherited this energy from us both. Doesn't that sound great? You have inherited our family business!"

Meuw! Meuw!

Denny's tail swished as he became excited at this news.

"Now that you have gained this power, you will need to learn how to harness it. Not everything is great about your newfound sensitivity towards life. Can you sense all of the fighting that is taking place out in space?"

The spiritual kitten nodded.

"What you are sensing is not a fantasy. It is reality. Life can be beautiful, but it is also fragile. Can you sense the aliens that our soldiers are fighting against? Can you sense their hatred towards humans such as ourselves?"

Meuw.

"The aliens are alive as well, but that does not mean they are worth keeping around. They are dangerous. They pose a threat to us and every human in the Red Ocean. In order to prevent them from doing too much damage, our forces are stepping up to eliminate them. The aliens are like weeds in a garden. If they keep growing in an uncontrolled manner, they will slowly choke out the pretty flowers and plants that should have been growing in the garden. While our mech pilots are all performing an essential purpose, not all of them will make it back alive. There is nothing we can do about it. Death is common in every battle."

Meuw meuw meuw..!

Ves gave Denny a meaningful smile. "I am doing something about it. Mech designers like myself have already done what they could to help our mech pilots win the battle while staying alive. Don't you see all of those warm and fuzzy mechs out there? I've designed each of them to give our fellow family greater advantages in battle. This is what your father and mother have always done."

Meuw...

"What I can do, you can do as well, Marvaine." Ves affectionately said to Denny as he deliberately aroused his life energy. "You've inherited my talent, my son. As long as you have grown older and made up your mind to inherit my craft, I will teach you how to design mechs like me. At first, I hope you can learn all of my most important techniques and quickly get up to speed on how to design living mechs."

Meuw?

"No. I don't want you to become exactly like me when you grow up." Ves shook his head. "Mech designers can never become good if they keep copying other people's works. They need to go out of their way and create their own inventions, and you are no exception. Once you have developed a solid foundation, I hope that you can go your own way and realize your own vision of mechs. If you don't want our clansmen to lose their lives like what is happening on the battlefield, then you must put in the work and come up with brilliant new ideas that can help the people you care about. That is what mech designers do. We work to equip our soldiers with the best possible mechs so that they can win a battle before it has even started."

Meuw...

Denny looked incredibly thoughtful as he and by extension Marvaine gained a lot of food for thought.

It didn't matter to Ves if his son couldn't completely follow his arguments. There was plenty of time in the future for Ves to reinforce the points he made!

Chapter 4448 Golden Counterattack

Though Ves became distracted by Marvaine's distress, the battle outside continued to rage without any interruption.

Mech pilots continued to die at a steady rate.

Although there were still plenty of mech pilots who were fast enough to eject their cockpits before their mechs got completely destroyed, there were instances where they couldn't react fast enough.

Many mech pilots initially became shocked when the missiles carried by some of the starfighters homed right in on their machines and struck with great might!

The missiles that most humans were accustomed to dealing with were generally powerful but not to the point of being able to fell a well-armored mech in a single strike.

The explosive ordnance utilized by the aliens were different!

"Careful! Most of the missiles and bombs carried by the alien small craft contain warheads that are laced with a small amount of phasewater. At least a part of the damage is able to pass through the armor plating of your mechs and damage their internals. What is worse is that the transphasic explosions can also pass into your cockpits and affect your bodies!"

"Where do these aliens get all of their phasewater?!"

"Have you forgotten that the indigenous aliens ruled over the Red Ocean for ages? It is no surprise that they managed to hoard enough phasewater to spend some of them on producing stronger consumables."

"Most of these missiles don't have the power to inflict significant damage on a starship, but they are more than potent enough to destroy our mechs. They were originally designed to take down shielded starfighters, but their effectiveness against mechs is even better because none of them have transphasic defenses."

This caused everyone to revise the threat level of the enemy starfighters. Though the aliens thankfully couldn't carry too many powerful transphasic missiles at once, the human mech pilots constantly had to remain on guard in case death was homing in on their machines!

That caused a lot more mech pilots to take the missiles seriously. They worked harder to intercept them before they could reach their targets.

Aside from missiles, there was an even greater threat that mech pilots had to take into account.

As the alien warships moved closer, their formidable array of gun batteries were beginning to down more and more human mechs!

In most cases, even the smallest frigates and destroyers had the potential to wipe out entire mech companies at once. Their armaments were larger to the point where the primary guns could instantly vaporize or blow apart one or several mechs upon a direct hit!

This was a threat that few mechs could defend against. Aside from trying to track the orientation of every gun battery on every warship within engagement range, it was too difficult for the mech pilots to predict whether they would lose their lives without any chance of evading the attack or ejecting their cockpits ahead of time.

"We can't allow their warships to keep mowing down our mechs like this! Their firepower is too irresistible and their gun batteries never seem to tire out. Forget about the alien starfighters. They're not that big of a threat once they have exhausted their missiles. It is their warships that we should truly be worrying about!"

Many mech forces slowly made the same conclusion and directed more mech forces to attack the warships.

While their high-ranking mechs were already busy with taking down the larger and more formidable cruisers, there were many frigates and destroyers left that also needed to be taken care of before they could deal any further damage!

Though the mech forces all moved to adjust their strategies and movements, the aliens responded by making their combat drones and starfighters stick even harder to the human mechs.

The first priority of the alien small craft had always been to screen and protect their warships against threats, especially other small craft!

Though the mechs employed by the human invaders were much different from the starfighters the aliens were accustomed to fighting against, many of them quickly learned how they should best fight against these large humanoid machines.

After several exchanges, the aliens quickly found out that their starfighters generally possessed an advantage in mobility. The nature of their designs meant that their thrusters and other mobility systems were proportionately larger and stronger. This design trait allowed them to accelerate considerably more than a mech of equivalent size or mass.

The aliens therefore moved away from starting dogfights to running more coordinated attack runs.

Similar to lancer mechs, the starfighters circled around and charged towards a specific mech unit while firing all of their forward-facing guns for a time.

Before the alien craft got too close and put them at risk of getting intercepted by melee mechs, the starfighters quickly changed course and flew away before they could get caught.

At least the mechs that were specialized in ranged combat could still shoot them down from time to time, though it was a bit harder for them to hit their targets due to the superior mobility of alien starfighters.

The melee mechs had it worse because they rarely had the opportunity to catch up to any of the elusive starfighters!

Some of the faster ones still managed to catch up to the alien craft. If they coordinated with many other mechs to circle around and box in the starfighters with great effort, they could easily gain an opportunity to chop the enemy small craft while suffering minimal losses in return.

It took too much time and effort to set up these ambushes, and the aliens piloting the starfighters possessed strong survival instincts.

Many melee mechs only spent a fraction of their deployment time swinging their weapons. The vast majority of their time was spent on flying from one coordinate to another coordinate in space!

"Forget about the starfighters!" Commander Sendra of the Swordmaidens growled to her fellow sisters. "I've just consulted with General Verle. He has given us permission to storm their smaller warships."

"Isn't that dangerous, ma'am? We'll be flying right into their gun batteries!"

"Those frigates and destroyers are already taking out enough of our mechs as it is. Our expert mechs can easily take care of them, but they don't have the time to complete their jobs as quickly as we want. It falls up to us and our other comrades to extinguish them from the battle."

"It will take too long to break through their energy shields, ma'am. The longer we are stalled outside their protective envelopes, the longer their gun batteries can tear our machines to shreds."

"We know. That is why General Verle has given us all permission to employ our battle formations."

The Swordmaiden mech pilots all grew thrilled when they heard this news.

"Truly, commander? Weren't we supposed to save it until the end or if a powerful new enemy emerged?"

Commander Sendra's expression grew tense. "Plans can change. Besides, we don't need to do our best to save our best for last anymore. Even if we get exhausted at the end, there are still many other mechs and mech pilots that can finish the job while we make a temporary retreat. The Seven Saints should be strong enough to handle the enemy reinforcements provided that they are not bogged down by too many existing opponents. Our job is to unburden the Saints and enable them to fight as freely as possible!"

Her words infused a strong sense of purpose and mission into her subordinates. The Swordmaiden mech pilots could play a key role in shifting this large and messy battle into their favor.

The Swordmaidens hadn't been the only mech legion that had been tasked with assaulting the alien warships.

The Penitent Sisters along with the Glory Seekers also sent forth as many Valkyrie mechs as they could spare!

"Let's hope these aliens haven't heard about our party trick."

The effectiveness of battle formations largely depended on whether their opponents were familiar with the Larkinson Clan.

So far, this didn't appear to be the case. Larkinsons had already observed that many aliens had been taken aback by glows.

If this was the case, then there was a high likelihood that the 1854210 pirate group along with other pirate outfits had no idea what was coming!

Many mech pilots started to grin once they thought about this possibility.

"Don't fly in such an obvious formation. Spread out and make it seem as if we are trying to launch a regular attack."

As thousands of predominantly melee mechs pulled away and proceeded to approach the alien warships from several different angles, the rest of the Golden Skull Alliance tried their best to facilitate this stratagem.

The Transcendent Punisher Mark II's of the Eye of Ylvaine had been pounding and softening up the alien pirate fleet for a while now. Their constant bombardment not only wore down the energy shields of the enemy vessels, but also produced an even more useful effect.

Whenever an alien warship lost or was on the verge of losing their energy shield coverage, they quickly flew behind another nearby friendly ship to give them the opportunity to recover their defenses.

This was why the Transcendent Punishers had largely been unable to down too many warships as of yet. The aliens were using the same tactics that the Larkinsons often liked to use when their own carriers were under threat!

While the alien pirates were doing a good job at preserving all of their warships, their maneuvering gradually caused the enemy fleet to compact over time.

The distance between the pirate vessels steadily reduced as they all tried their best to support each other.

To the approaching mech pilots, the alien armada turned into an incredibly attractive target!

"Get ready to join up with our expert pilots!"

As the mechs gradually formed up into several cohesive formations, Venerable Joshua, Venerable Dise and the Handmaidens of Deaths ceased their attempts to attack the warships.

The Everchanger, the First Sword, the Valkyrie Krista and the Valkyrie Ursa all led their respective battle formations!

The power of death increasingly loomed over this section of the battlefield.

The more sensitive aliens may have already sensed that something was wrong, but without knowing anything about the Golden Skull Alliance, they could not imagine that the specter of death that was staring at their souls was much more real than they could have ever imagined!

Though the formidable guns of the warships began to tear into the four approaching mech formations, this wasn't enough to stop the charge from taking place!

Even as hundreds of mechs began to fall out of formation, the remainder steadily maintained their places until the aliens encountered a series of phenomena that caused them to question reality.

First, a giant sword manifestation appeared over the Swordmaiden battle formation.

With Venerable Dise and her companion spirit doing her best to concentrate and leverage all of the added power granted by her fellow sisters, she unleashed all of the might at her disposal into the center of the enemy pirate flotilla!

"SWORD OF LYDIA!"

The giant greatsword thrust straight into several destroyers in a row!

Venerable Dise had deliberately angled the giant sword so that it could strike as many warships as possible, and her efforts partially paid off as the gigantic sword impaled five destroyers in an instant while inflicting heavy damage on a sixth vessel!

Though the pirates still retained a lot of warships, they had become so shocked that they were ill-equipped to defend against what happened next.

As the Valkyrie mechs of the Peninent Sisters and the Glory Seekers unleashed Helena's might, three different death energy waves flew into the pirate formation from different angles!

Many aliens screamed as they instinctively felt they were about to meet their doom, only for their bodies to collapse at their stations as their spirits had disappeared.

The alien warships had no means to defend against an attack that could not be blocked by either energy shields or material obstacles.

The death energy waves launched by the battle formations led by the Handmaidens of death raked through the middle of the alien warship formation, reaping an untold amount of lives before losing cohesion.

The death energy wave launched by the Penitent Sisters followed a more complicated trajectory as Venerable Joshua was able to exert greater control over it with the help of his special domain.

Instead of following a straight line, the latter death energy wave circled around the periphery of the alien warship formation. This allowed it to sweep through many alien warships that had managed to escape the earlier attacks launched by the Glory Seekers.

In the end, the four battle formations managed to neutralize over thirty frigates and destroyers in an instant!

Not only that, but the remaining alien pirates that had managed to escape this powerful blow were all intimidated by what just happened.

The attacks launched by the Larkinson Clan and the Glory Seekers went far beyond what should be possible!

The sight of Helena alone still haunted many alien crew members, causing them to perform noticeably worse than before.

"The aliens have been taken aback! We must press our advantage and strike while the iron is hot! Don't let the remaining ones find their footing again!"

Chapter 4449 Frustrating Enemies

The unleashing of the battle formations instantly changed the game.

The impact on the aliens was enormous. They had never experienced anything comparable to what just happened. The brief appearance of Helena

along with all of the other strangeness even caused the more superstitious ones to believe that the Golden Skull Alliance had gods on its side!

The reaction from the other pioneering groups was also noteworthy.

Unlike the alien pirates of the Palace of Shame who only appeared to collect general information about the human invaders, the Gemini Family and the other pioneers already knew what would happen in advance.

They did not react too strongly in the past when they saw the battle formations do their work in a prior battle that none of them cared about.

It was different now that they were not only close enough to sense a hint of Helena's majesty, but also saw the Larkinsons and the Glory Seekers make short work of over half of the warships in their way!

Among the temporary battle comrades of the Golden Skull Alliance, none of them understood the truth of what just happened better than their ace pilots!

Even if none of them possessed Ves' deep understanding and perception of spirituality, they had all evolved into partial energy life forms at their current stage.

Combined with their incredibly strong force of will and their unreasonably strong combat intuition, they could easily notice details and make inferences that were beyond the reach of ordinary people.

Saint Jelmer Osenring who piloted the Thunderer Mark II possessed the clearest overview of the battlefield. His expression grew grave as he understood the trump cards of the Golden Skull Alliance to a greater extent.

"They are borrowing power from another source. What they have managed to develop for themselves is far beyond the power that they should ordinarily possess."

The first question on his mind was not how the Santana Group should take precautions to defend against this kind of attack, but how the major financial group could buy this extraordinary method to empower its own mech forces!

"Everything can be bought as long as the price is right."

If the Santana Xenoarchaeology Division Fleet was able to master this method, then few other pioneering fleets of the same size would be able to compete anymore!

Similar thoughts also swirled in the minds of the other ace pilots. They did not see the Larkinsons and the Glory Seekers resorting to an inexplicable ritual to wield magical power.

They instead saw how the mech pilots in questions employed a systematic method to evoke or boost the strength of a powerful entity.

The battle formations of the Penitent Sisters and the Glory Seekers did not interest them all that much. It was a bit more convoluted because it largely depended on borrowing Helena's vast spiritual energies to power the death energy waves.

What the ace mechs were truly interested in was the first battle formation to strike the alien warships!

The Swordmaidens employed a more down-to-earth method of channeling power where many mech pilots amplified the power of an expert pilot.

This was much more to the tastes of the various pioneering groups. After all, none of them wanted to rely on a foreign power to lend them help in their time of need. It was much better to rely on known quantities that were right in their midst!

"We need to have a good talk with the Larkinson Clan." Saint Sandro Gemini said to his sister and wife. "Think of how much less we have to fear from rivals who would love nothing more than to eliminate our way of life."

Saint Kaia Gemini pressed her lips. "Let us address our immediate priorities first. There are still too many enemy warships left in the fray."

The battle did not instantly turn into a victory just because the Golden Skull Alliance pulled off a big move.

It only affected a sixth of the battlefield at best. The five other pioneering fleets still had to work their way through their own share of alien warships!

What was worse was that the mech pilots who had all contributed to the battle formation attacks had lost a large amount of mental energy.

They had become so exhausted that it was not safe or prudent for them to participate any further. They all received orders to turn their mechs around and return to their motherships so that they could enjoy a well-deserved rest.

In the meantime, the Larkinson Clan and the Glory Seekers had already tapped their reserve pools and mustered up enough replacement mech pilots to put the intact machines to good use again.

It still took a lot of time for the rotation to take place. Until then, the Golden Skull Alliance had to make do with several thousands less mechs on the battlefield than usual.

Fortunately, their alien opponents were no longer fighting as exuberantly than before. They had no way of knowing whether the humans could repeat this trick. The fear of the unknown along with the trauma of witnessing so many of their alien comrades dying without any resistance caused the survivors to fight up to half as effectively as before!

Although the more seasoned and determined leaders of the 1854210 pirate fleet tried their best to rally their troops, the speed in which the alien pirates recovered heavily depended on their racial traits as well as their training and other factors.

Since many of the aliens fighting against the Golden Skull Alliance were outlaws and deviants by nature, their ability to recover and strengthen their resolve was not that great!

However, they discovered something crucial about the warships that had all lost their crews.

Most of them were still running at reduced capacity. A few of the more automated ones were still firing their guns at any enemies that their systems could identify.

It turned out that the death energy attacks only killed off the crews, but left everything else intact!

Soon enough, the 1854210 pirate fleet along with the other pirate outfits quickly organized crew transfers where their spare officers and spacers quickly relocated to the 'emptied' warships so that they could quickly man the most essential stations again!

The Larkinsons did not fail to miss what was happening.

"Stop them from transferring their personnel! Once the crew-less warships are crewed again, they will become just as threatening as before!"

The Golden Skull Alliance quickly moved additional melee mechs forth to interfere with the crew transfers. As long as they destroyed every shuttle that entered into open space, they could keep the 25 partially inert frigates and destroyers from regaining much of their combat power!

Lanie Larkinson was among the many Avatars of Myth that received this new assignment.

Her Lucid Rage was a strong combatant against other melee mechs, but the aliens that she fought against didn't play by the same rules!

Just like many other melee mech pilots, she had long grown frustrated at chasing after the fast and elusive starfighters.

"These aliens are no fun." The young mech pilot muttered.

It was hardly a challenge for her Lucid Rage to intercept the alien shuttles and crush them and their vulnerable passengers into much by striking them with a giant tonfa.

Whenever there weren't any shuttles in her zone, the mech champion directed her Lucid Rage to a nearby alien warship so that it could hit the segmented energy shields as if it was a drummer.

Though Lanie did feel a greater purpose in fighting against the alien races that were fundamentally opposed to the advancement of the human race, she truly didn't enjoy what she was doing at the moment.

Aside from having to dodge the occasional warship gun battery strikes, there was no significant challenge to fighting against her current opponents.

At least she was able to exercise her combat skills and learn from her mistakes when she fought against the mechs of the Sundered Phalanx.

A part of her felt guilty for preferring to fight against other human forces. She knew she should take more satisfaction in participating in the noble war against the indigenous alien races that were giving the pioneers a hard time, but all she felt was frustration.

"Maybe I should start piloting a ranged mech instead." She contemplated.

She could foresee that the Larkinson Clan would be fighting against plenty of alien forces in the future.

If she started to pilot a ranged mech, then she would be able to stay useful regardless whether the Larkinson Clan was fighting against humans or aliens.

"It would be a waste for me to give up on polishing my melee skills after investing so much into them. Besides, I can make much more use out of them if I manage to break through."

Examples such as Venerable Dise and Saint Jeremiah Gauge showed that even pure melee mech specialists gained a lot of versatility once they became strong enough!

Though Lanie dreamed of reaching their level of strength one day, she did not think she would be able to get there soon enough if she fought more battles like this. Were the aliens truly unable to give her a serious challenge?

"Watch out! Hundreds of elite starfighters have returned to reinforce their fleet. Some of them are better than others, so be careful not to underestimate them. Good luck!"

Lanie observed as several formations of larger and more powerful starfighters closed in. Their pilots had all been tasked with stopping the humans from destroying the shuttles in transit.

Distant attack from the Eye of Ylvaine and other friendly mech units struck many of the elite starfighters, only for most of the alien craft to come out unscathed.

Every elite starfighter enjoyed the protection of a transphasic shield generator that was remarkably effective at blocking attacks from conventional weapons!

Not even the firepower of a Transcendent Punisher Mark II was enough to deplete the shields of such a powerful craft!

Lanie narrowed her eyes as she recognized that she and her fellow compatriots were about to face the best of what the aliens had brought.

Soon enough, the elite starfighters came close enough to strafe dozens of mechs with accurate shots!

Several concentrations of laser beams and kinetic projectiles hammered at the frames of the human mechs in quick succession!

Though there were Knight Warriors and other defensive mechs that attempted to block the attacks, their measures were only partially effective as many elite starfighters could still bring their weapons to bear against lighter and more vulnerable mechs!

"Ah!"

Many mech pilots that could not find any shelter had no choice but to eject. Lanie grimaced as she saw so many living mechs die while their pilots hoped that their cockpits would not get shot down by a starfighter or a warship gun battery!

"Block their path!"

The Avatars weren't standing still, though. They had already spread out their mechs in an attempt to catch or corner the elite starfighters, but the alien craft had already pulled upwards and turned away before they could get any closer!

"Argh! We can't catch up to these buggers!"

"Then don't! Return to your current duties and do your best to prevent the aliens from recrewing their emptied warships."

"What about the elite starfighters? We won't last if they keep launching repeated attack runs at our mechs."

"The clan already has that covered. Don't worry. Those elite starfighters won't be able to remain cocky for much longer."

Those words quickly came true before the elite starfighters turned around to strafe the Avatar mechs yet again.

Before they could eliminate another batch of mechs, several squads of mechs moved to intercept the starfighters from several directions!

Though the elite alien pilots quickly aborted their attack run and attempted to escape the closing mechs, they found to their horror that their powerful craft no longer possessed a speed advantage anymore.

It turned out that the light mechs of the Flagrant Vandals were on their tail!

"Hahaha! Not so fast anymore, right? Not all of our mechs are slowpokes!"

Chapter 4450 Superior Tech And Methods

The starfighters utilized by the different alien pirate forces had a long history of development.

Even though the Red Ocean was home to countless alien races, many of which had risen and fallen over many eras, many of the more technology-oriented ones often came to adopt at least some variation of starfighters and warships.

Just like how humanity stole much of the technological accumulation of the alien races it came into contact with, many of the indigenous civilizations of the Red Ocean had done the same with their own neighbors.

This caused the level of starfighters in the Red Ocean to always grow and advance over time.

There were periods of time where the development of starfighters bloomed due to their affordability and cost-effective performance against warships.

Though the progression of technology in the Red Ocean had eventually swung the pendulum back on the side of warships and other large craft, that

did not mean that all of the research and development poured into starfighters had become obsolete.

Humanity managed to turn mechs from a relatively weak, clumsy and impractical machine into a strong, fluid and endlessly versatile combat platform!

In the same way, the evolving galactic society of the Red Ocean had lifted the level of their starfighters to a height that surpassed humanity's own development of small craft before the Age of Mechs!

Ves began to respect starfighters more and more as the battle raged on. The different varieties of starfighters, some of which did not perform that much worse than mechs at the same cost.

However, there was a reason why most of humanity completely switched over to using mechs after the arrival of the Age of Mechs.

Despite all of the complications associated with mechs such as the need for a pilot that possessed the right genetic aptitude to interface with them, the results were more than worth the additional burdens!

As the Flagrant Vandal mechs easily matched the pace of the faster enemy starfighters, the latter could no longer take unscrupulous advantage of their greater mobility.

Even if the Ferocious Piranha Mark III's and Stingripper Mark II's were not as heavily armed and armored as their larger counterparts, they still possessed enough power to contend against most elite starfighters!

As soon as a squad of Ferocious Piranha Mark III's cleverly flanked a wing of elite starfighters from two directions, many of the alien pilots who ordinarily exhibited great skill and consciousness in battle abruptly screamed and lost control over their craft!

The alien pilots who had the right to pilot the most expensive and powerful shielded starfighters were truly strong in their own field.

They understood their craft well and they had polished their combat skills over many years.

Years of engaging in piracy and participating in scuffles against other pirate forces had increased their ability to cope with pressure.

However, none of their prior experiences could ever have prepared them to fight against the living mechs of the Larkinson Clan!

The infamous Ferocious Piranha line that had already turned into a bestseller of the LMC possessed a feature that confounded many enemies, especially when they had no idea what they were facing in advance.

The dual alternating suppressive glows of both Lufa and Zeigra graced the minds of the different alien pirates for the first time!

Several varieties of alien screams and other signals of distress filled the cockpits of the affected starfighters!

Their proud transphasic energy shields which could block nearly any kind of physical or energy attack had no means to repel the glows of living mechs in the slightest!

The twin glows of the Ferocious Piranha's encountered no blockades and subjected the unshielded minds of sentient alien pilots with the abnormal calm of Lufa before switching to the searing hot rage of Zeigra and back again!

The various wings of starfighters fell apart as the uncontrolled craft wandered off in different directions.

The lack of coordination and control made them easy pickings for the same light mechs that caused their pilots to become incapacitated in the first place.

Though the transphasic energy shields were difficult to break for the dagger-wielding Ferocious Piranhas, as long as the alien starfighter pilots remained affected by the same glows, their craft turned into sitting ducks that could hardly fight back!

Soon enough, the Ferocious Piranhas managed to strike the energy shields enough times to exhaust them. Nothing could stop the light mechs from closing in and tearing into the exposed starfighters with ease!

No matter what alloys the starfighters were made out of, their resilience was significantly worse than the energy shields they used to possess.

Over a hundred elite starfighters and their pilots perished in quick succession!

The other elite starfighters did not have it easy either. Those that had managed to avoid getting targeted by the Ferocious Piranhas began to tussle with the other signature combat mech of the Flagrant Vandals.

The Stingripper Mark II's were even faster and lighter than the Ferocious Piranhas and were armed with luminar crystal submachine guns.

Normally, these small and light energy weapons shouldn't have been strong enough to pose a major threat against the elite starfighters.

After all, their energy shields were all transphasic in nature, which meant their ability to resist attacks that weren't empowered by phasewater was several times greater!

However, the pilots of the Stingrippers had a lot of confidence in their weapons.

"Switch to disruptor beams and focus on wearing down their energy shields. Let us teach these aliens that their much-vaunted defenses are nothing in the face of our tech!"

The submachine guns wielded by the Stingrippers could only accommodate three attack phase crystals as opposed to the six that were customary to more full-sized rifles.

Still, three crystals offered the light harasser mechs with plenty of choice. The disruptor beam attack phase crystal always worked well against energy-based defenses.

Though the elite starfighters held out a lot longer due to their incorporation of indigenous phasewater technology, the constant rain of disruptor beams steadily took their toll on the transphasic energy shields.

"They've grown angry at us! Don't get hit!"

The alien pilots had grown extremely angry towards the Flagrant Vandals. The ones that still maintained their wits had turned their starfighters around and tried to run down the fragile-looking light mechs that had constantly been pelting them with strange but effective disruptor beams.

However, much of their shots that should have struck the Stingrippers instead went wide!

The Stingrippers were highly mobile and their mech pilots were highly trained and experienced. It was relatively easy for them to evade the relatively straightforward and predictable attacks of the enemy starfighters.

That wasn't all. Another nefarious influence quietly caused the alien starfighter pilots to misjudge their aim. What they didn't realize was that the Stingrippers were unconsciously messing with their perception with the help of a glow derived from Kalo!

The chameleonic spiritual product was probably one of the least well-known design spirits of the Larkinson Clan, but that did not mean he was weak.

Through his subtle and invisible interference, alien pilot after alien pilot began to question their own skills as their hit rate plummeted to an enormous degree.

There were even pilots who never managed to hit any mech with the guns of their starfighters!

No matter whether the fast and resilient starfighters were ambushed by the Ferocious Piranhas or whittled down over time by the Stingrippers, the Flagrant Vandals undoubtedly stood out in the fight against alien starfighters.

Their ability to catch up to enemy starfighters and affect their pilots with their glows was nearly unsolvable to many of the alien pilots who previously relied on their combination of advantages to torment the human mech forces.

Though there were certain alien races and individuals who were able to resist the suppressive glows of the Flagrant Vandals, they were way too few in number and soon fell in battle after getting surrounded by light mechs.

The mech pilots of the Flagrant Vandals had no scruples about ganging up on their opponents!

"Now that the most troublesome starfighters are out of the way, we can fight against their cannon fodder without as much interference as before."

Only a small proportion of the alien starfighters were equipped with expensive transphasic energy shields.

The vast majority of small craft were slower, cheaper and clearly not as well controlled.

The barrier to entry to become a starfighter pilot was relatively low. There were no annoying prerequisites like genetic aptitude. Starfighters were also much simpler craft than mechs due to the lack of operations.

Since it was relatively cheap and easy to raise a starfighter regiment, many alien pirate forces had done so but never put too much emphasis on them. Starfighters were just too fragile and many of them always ended up destroyed after a serious battle.

Though the Palace of Shame turned out to host a much greater number of starfighter hangars than the humans expected, quantity alone was not enough for the aliens to overwhelm the opposing mechs.

Numerous mech legions presented their own ways of resisting the attacks from the swarms of alien small craft.

For example, the Living Sentinels under the leadership of Commander Casella Ingvar performed exceptionally well during this heated phase!

The Rigid Walls served their purpose as space knights and resolutely blocked many of the incoming strikes with their tower shields.

The Rigid Spines sheltering behind the defensive mechs were ordinarily supposed to use their spears to poke any enemies that were attempting to break through, but their usual mode of combat was invalid against their current opponent.

That did not mean they were useless, though. The Living Sentinels had already practiced an alternate tactic where the spearman mechs set aside their characteristic polearms in favor of wielding the spare luminar crystal rifles that the Larkinson Army had on hand!

During an earlier phase of the battle, many melee mechs had temporarily switched to luminar crystal rifles in order to put pressure on the Palace of Shame.

Now that the alien forces had finally come close, those melee mechs put away the rifles and took up their trusty melee weapons again.

This was not quite possible with the Living Sentinels because the mech legion's biggest shortcoming was mobility!

As a more static and defense-oriented mech legion, the Living Sentinels did not have the mobility to restrain the enemy starfighters in any way.

This was why the Rigid Spines were instead using their borrowed rifles to fire at the enemy small craft!

The Rigid Walls had also followed suit. It was pointless for them to hold swords at this time, so they held a rifle with one of their arms and fired at the small craft with abandon.

Normally, the accuracy of the Rigid Spines and the Rigid Walls should have been terrible.

Neither of their models had been optimized for ranged combat. What was worse was that their pilots were all melee specialists who had never put a lot of time in improving their marksmanship.

However, as the Living Sentinel mechs continued to fire their luminar crystal rifles at all of the alien starfighters, they not only attained ludicrously high hit rates, but also inflicted considerably more damage to the enemy small craft per shot!

This was because Commander Casella Ingvar had commandeered all of her Living Sentinel mechs within her range.

As her true resonance spread across all of the mechs and mech pilots freely opened themselves up to her influence, she split her focus and guided each and every Commandeered unit as best she could.

After several years of training and exploration, her signature resonance ability was considerably more effective than before!

Over a thousand melee mechs that should have ordinary performed the worst in ranged combat suddenly outperformed almost every other ranged mech aside from the Transcendent Punishers of the Eye of Ylvaine!

Tens of thousands of alien small craft had already fallen before the abnormally effective rifles of the Living Sentinels!

Their unceasing efforts ensured that no starfighter was able to sneak past the defensive lines that they had set. None of the alien starfighters were allowed to threaten the expeditionary fleet!

"Attack the enemy fleet." Commander Casella Ingvar urged the other legion commanders as she endured the strain of Commandeering so many mech units. "We can't get bogged down here. We need to look beyond our own fight and link up with the other pioneering forces."

"Commander Casella is right." General Verle said over the command channel. "Over half of the enemy small craft have already fallen, so we are no longer under as much pressure as before. It is time to finish off the remaining warships!"