

Mech 4451

Chapter 4451 Expert Mech Vs Warship

The Golden Skull Alliance increasingly managed to get a grip on the alien small craft.

Though the enemy combat drones and starfighters doggedly threw themselves at the mechs in front of them with hardly any regard for self-preservation, the powerful mechs easily held the line.

Even if it was a bit difficult for many mechs to take down the faster and more mobile starfighters, there were always other mechs that would complete the job sooner or later.

Between all of the differences between human mechs and alien starfighters, the former possessed too many advantages over the latter!

However, the real clash between the human coalition and the alien pirate groups had never truly centered around their smallest and weaker combat units.

The regular mech forces of the Golden Skull Alliance lacked the firepower to effectively breach the defenses of the alien warships.

As for the aliens, their starfighters might have a decent chance of shooting down ordinary mechs, but as soon as they fought against anything stronger, they instantly faced defeat!

From the beginning of the battle, the expert mechs and ace mechs showed why they both deserved to be treated as threats that were just as powerful if not more so than warships!

The Dark Zephyr was like a shark that had just entered a pool occupied by little fishes.

The expert light skirmisher might not be any bigger than a typical mech, but its fantastic speed along with its potent melee attacks left no recourse for any small craft in its sights!

Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson grinned as he precisely controlled his fast and powerful expert mech to chop up one starfighter after another.

The elite starfighters with their transphasic energy shields were almost just as vulnerable. At most, the protective barriers forced the Dark Zephyr to waste a little more time and launch an extra attack to finish the job!

"Tusa!" General Verle barked over a communication channel. "Stop wasting your time on the enemy small craft and proceed to attack their fleet! Our mech legions can already handle the starfighters by themselves."

The light mech specialist grimaced inside his cockpit. "I'm not wasting time here. Can't you see what my presence is doing here? All of the surrounding starfighter wings have fallen into disarray! They can't do anything to me and they know it. None of the terrified alien pilots can concentrate on attacking our other units anymore."

"That may be true, but it is redundant. Our mechs can defeat the starfighters with or without your help. The same does not necessarily apply to the enemy warships."

Venerable Tusa grimaced. "Have you seen what kind of mech I am piloting? A light skirmisher is one of the worst kinds of mech to pit against a warship. The only way I can deliver a powerful blow is if I make use of my transphasic grenades, but I don't have nearly enough of them in my possession."

"You can still be useful even if it takes a while for you to breach the enemy energy shields. Just look at how much disruption you are causing by fighting in the midst of enemy starfighters. You can prevent many more casualties if you do the same to enemy warships. Their firepower is much greater, so the

more you can redirect their gun batteries in your expert mech's direction, the better."

"Fine."

Tusa did not enjoy the prospect of hammering away at the powerful segmented energy shields of the alien warships, but he acknowledged that it would be better for the other comrades if he was able to draw the attention of the larger gun batteries to his expert mech.

The Dark Zephyr ignored the starfighters around it and zipped through the enemy formations and accelerated straight towards the warships in the distance!

The expert light skirmisher even engaged warp travel in order to reach its destination faster!

Though the distant enemy warships immediately tried to intercept the human mech that was much more powerful than other machines of its size, none of the powerful gun batteries came close to landing a hit!

Venerable Tusa smirked. The Dark Zephyr's evasion ability was one of its strongest traits. Its characteristic Untouchable resonance ability seemingly produced an optical illusion that successfully diverted a lot of enemy attacks!

No matter whether they were gamma laser beams, super-heavy kinetic slugs or plasma bolts, Tusa laughed as all of the enemy attack salvos failed to get close enough to touch his expert mech's resonance shield.

"These aliens are so easy to fool! Wait, I get it now. Their gun batteries are highly automated! There is no manual aim!"

Although there were many advantages to automating the aiming systems and fire control of large and complicated warship armaments, humans were

generally reluctant to pass on too many responsibilities to AIs and software algorithms.

Even the CFA recognized the power of human ingenuity and human intuition. There may be factions within the Common Fleet Alliance that pushed for all-out automation, but there were still a lot of old school fleeters who resolutely opposed this transition.

If the Dark Zephyr was charging towards a CFA warship, then the expert mech would never be able to approach so leisurely!

Unfortunately for the indigenous aliens of the Red Ocean, they rarely encountered any urgent situations where their automated gun batteries failed to this extent, so the crews of the warships didn't know how to deal with this situation.

Once the Dark Zephyr reached the enemy fleet, the expert mech quickly went to work. It approached several nearby warships and struck their segmented energy shields with a flurry of attacks.

"Tch. They're too tough!"

The fast but relatively weak attacks of the Dark Zephyr could not breach the energy shields in a short amount of time.

Though Tusa originally wanted to overwhelm an energy shield and pass through the resulting gap, the alien warship in question quickly shifted the orientations of all of its energy shields, thereby preventing the Dark Zephyr from finishing the job!

Whenever the Dark Zephyr tried to stick around a single warship for too long in an attempt to tire out the vessel's defenses, it would come under siege by the surrounding enemy vessels.

Its Untouchable ability was no longer effective now that it was on the attack!

"Damn these guns! There are so many of them and they all pack a punch."

Tusa had little choice but to abandon his current target and attack another warship in order to prevent his expert mech's resonance shield from getting exhausted.

He was tempted to pull out a transphasic grenade so that he could break the energy shields of an enemy vessel in an instant, but he slowly thought better of it. The frigates and destroyers that he was fighting against weren't worthwhile enough for him to waste a powerful explosive.

Just as General Verle had said, the alien pirates were highly uncomfortable with leaving an enemy expert mech in the middle of their fleet.

The Dark Zephyr's close proximity to the enemy warships and flagships spooked a lot of alien leaders. Hundreds of primary guns and secondary guns tried to shoot down the expert light skirmisher.

However, because Tusa purposefully flew his expert mech in the midst of the enemy formation, many warships fell silent as their guns could not open fire without hitting their own side.

With the Dark Zephyr unnerving the crews of dozens of warships, the mechs and expert mechs that were tasked with whittling down the defenses of the alien vessels from a distance had a much easier time.

Significantly less enemy gun batteries bombarded the positions of the mechs that could not withstand so much focused firepower.

One of the beneficiaries of Venerable Tusa's actions was the Promethea.

"Thanks, Tusa." Venerable Isobel Kotin softly said as her expert rifleman mech brought its Ignitron luminar crystal rifle to bear against an enemy frigate.

The Promethea charged its weapon and fired a powerful resonance-empowered disruptor beam at its target!

While neither Isobel nor her expert mech excelled at breaking energy shields, the enemy frigate's defenses were the least powerful among all of the alien warships.

The power of a single resonance-empowered disruptor beam was enough to overwhelm one of the segmented energy shields!

The techniques she learned from the mysterious Alfari Corps Detonation Code helped a lot in achieving this result. The true resonance that she had attached to the beam attack exploded upon impact, thereby inflicting a lot of damage in an instant.

Before the frigate could adjust its defensive coverage and move the gap out of the Promethea's line of sight, Isobel forced her expert mech to quickly squeeze out a quick resonance-empowered positron beam.

Since Isobel was in a hurry, she wasn't able to charge the Ignitron's next attack as much as she wished.

The positron beam that ended up striking the frigate's hull was at least several times less powerful than the previous attack.

The positron beam only ended up splashing against the frigate's fairly heat-resistant hull.

Energy weapons were quite common in the Red Ocean. Warships needed to defend against a large variety of attacks. Many of them were even designed to resist the destructive energies of plasma weapons!

Yet when this weak positron beam struck the hull of the frigate, it did not just fizzle out after vaporizing and melting a small hull section.

It left a lingering purple flame behind that slowly began to feed from the metal alloys it was attached to. Slowly but surely, the flames continued to burn in

space despite lacking any obvious sources of propellants and oxidizing materials.

A fire like this should have long gone out, but the small amount of true resonance that Venerable Isobel had attached to the earlier attack artificially kept it alive!

The flame not only grew bigger, but began to burn more and more metal.

Even though the true resonance wasn't strong enough to expand the reach and potency of the purple flame by too much, its inextinguishable property caused it to become a persistent problem to the alien frigate!

Eventually, the crew noticed the danger and tried various measures to extinguish the flames.

Almost nothing worked!

The alien frigate only managed to get rid of this danger by ejecting the affected hull plating as well as any part of the ship that had been engulfed by the purple flames.

This unfortunately left the vessel with a gap in her experience.

Venerable Isobel Kotin had already moved on to repeating the same tactic onto other targets, but when she noticed that her initial target exposed a vulnerability, she quickly repeated the same sequence of attacks onto the ship that had just gotten rid of a disaster!

"Heh, try and see if you can get rid of this little flame!"

Her Promethea successfully landed a flaming shot in the gap of the frigate. Now that the purple flame had spread deeper into the hull of the warship, it was not so easy to get rid of it anymore!

Although it would take a long time for the purple flames to burn through the interior and destroy vital ship components such as power generators or propulsion systems, the vessel was already starting to weaken over time!

The frigate began to lose several segmented energy shields as the Promethea's flames slowly burned up a nearby energy shield generator while reducing the energy transmission to several more.

Seeing that an enemy warship was no longer as well-protected as before, Venerable Tusa's eyes lit up. His Dark Zephyr quickly turned around and quickly approached the side of the alien frigate before a pair of daggers began to tear through the metal hull!

"Hahaha! Thanks for cracking this ship open, Isobel! You have done great work!"

"Thanks."

This was just a solitary moment of cooperation between the Larkinson Clan's expert mechs.

Many more powerful machines were showing what they could do against the formidable alien vessels.

Chief among them was the C-Man, whose expert pilot was determined to prove his manliness by defeating the warships by himself!

"Pff." Vincent scoffed at Tusa's opportunistic behavior. "A true man doesn't need the help of a woman. I will use my fists to punch a hole into these ships!"

Chapter 4452 New Weapons

As a proud expert pilot, Venerable Vincent Ricklin did not want to get overshadowed by his fellow rivals and peers.

He had great confidence in his C-Man and did not think it was any worse than the likes of the Amaranto and the Everchanger.

Thinking about those two particular expert mechs made Vincent irked.

"Why do they get all of the good stuff?"

The Amaranto and the Everchanger both distinguished themselves in battle once they got going.

Venerable Davia Stark did not wait too long to put her latest weapon to good use. Against the enemies that she was facing against, the Instrument of Vengeance simply didn't have the punch to overcome the defenses of the largest alien assets.

The Instrument of Doom was tailor-made for these kinds of confrontations. The huge, heavy and unwieldy cannon was not a good weapon to use against fast and agile targets such as mechs and starfighters, but it was perfect against the enemy warships!

Curious at how effectively her new expert mech weapon performed against the alien vessels, Venerable Stark did not begin with opening fire at full power.

The Amaranto fired its new cannon at a frigate and a destroyer.

The smaller of the two warships failed to cope against the resonance-empowered laser beam, but the destroyer's segmented energy shield still managed to hold on, if only barely!

Still, even if the Amaranto managed to destroy one of the segmented energy shields, the warships always readjusted the distribution of its remaining energy shields so that it no longer presented an open gap towards the enemy.

This defensive solution had frustrated many mech pilots who saw an opportunity to attack the hull of a vulnerable warship, and Venerable Stark was no exception to this rule!

"The Instrument of Doom is definitely powerful, but its firing rate leaves a lot to be desired." She concluded.

She never thought that the slow firing rate of her oversized mech cannon would hamper her efforts to cripple the alien warships by herself.

After all, out of all of the Larkinson ranged mechs, her Amaranto was in the best position to snipe them by virtue of its unparalleled firepower!

If she didn't want to waste a large amount of time and energy on whittling down the segmented energy shields one by one, she needed to leverage greater power.

"I am done with my tests."

Now that she gained a more accurate measure of the defenses of her adversaries, Venerable Stark was ready to try out the Larkinson Patriarch's latest technological innovation.

As her Instrument of Doom charged for another high-powered shot, she consciously resonated with the weapon while at the same time trying to make contact with its design spirit.

"Phase King."

The design spirit had already been standing by. According to deal the former alien beast sovereign had struck with Ves, everytime he assisted the Larkinsons in battle, he would gain additional subjects to rule over in his private kingdom!

The greater his contribution, the more spiritual fish-whales Ves would make!

This crude and simple incentive structure successfully aroused the Phase King's desires and made him even more enthusiastic about the fight than Venerable Stark!

The powerful luminar crystal cannon began to light up as more power channeled into its beautiful body than before.

The Amaranto and its weapon glowed so much that it began to attract the attention of more and more aliens and humans.

None of them had ever witnessed such an impressive sight!

Even the ace pilots of the various pioneering groups grew alarmed for an instant. They thought that an actual phase whale had appeared on the battlefield!

"What is this?!"

"Is it an enemy or not?!"

"It's not a threat!" Patriarch Reginald Cross hastily informed his fellow peers.

"It's just another trick from the Larkinson Clan. Don't pay attention to it.

Whatever is happening is only good for us. It's not even a real phase whale."

An energy manifestation of the Phase King appeared over the Amaranto.

Although the appearance of the design spirit definitely shared a great resemblance to his progenitor species, the Phase King fortunately looked distinctly different.

The Phase King did not pay attention to all of the people he alarmed and focused solely on lending his power to the Instrument of Doom.

As the weapon with a muzzle that was shaped in his own image began to accumulate a lot of his own spiritual energy, the Instrument of Doom was finally ready to fire!

Venerable Stark briefly hesitated on whether she should fire at a frigate or a destroyer, but she eventually trusted in the power of her weapon and chose to target the latter.

"Fire!"

The fully-charged blessed weapon finally blasted a laser beam that was far more powerful and blinding than before!

The alien crew of the targeted destroyer didn't even have any time to react as the blessed transphasic energy beam not only phased through the segmented energy shield as if it was nothing, but also tore straight from one end of the warship to the other end before continuing to pass through at diminished power!

Venerable Stark along with many other people who had become attracted by the sight of the Amaranto's remarkable new luminar crystal cannon eagerly waited for the results.

Soon enough, the destroyer that had been struck by the overwhelming attack began to sputter. Over half of the alien vessel's segmented energy shields had gone offline while many other systems started to malfunction as well.

The damage wasn't as great as Venerable Stark had hoped, though. The beam hadn't produced a clean hole through the hull but instead burned and degraded much of the matter in its path. Many of the gun batteries of the damaged warships were still firing at distant mechs.

As the alien crew frantically tried to prevent their damaged vessel from sliding any further, Venerable Stark frowned in dissatisfaction.

"Our attack has overpenetrated. Too much of the firepower has passed through and hit empty space instead of dealing any actual damage."

A sense of apology radiated from the Phase King.

"It's okay. Please hold back for the next shot. The hull structure of the alien destroyer isn't as strong as I expected. I won't make the same mistake again."

Though the Amaranto did not light up as much as before, it had definitely become more threatening than before!

Each time the expert rifleman mech charged its cannon and opened fire, a bright and glowing beam phased through the energy shield of a destroyer

before proceeding to unload all of its power into the hull of the powerful vessel!

With the help of blueprints and targeting advice compiled by analysts from the rear, Venerable Stark became increasingly more aware of where the Amaranto needed to aim its massive weapon to down a warship in a single strike.

Though the alien pirates attempted to retaliate against the Amaranto, the mech was not alone in the fight.

The Shield of Samar ordinarily should have been situated in front of the powerful machine in order to block all of the incoming attacks from enemy starfighters and warships, but the Dullahan Project was nowhere close to completion.

Since the Larkinson Clan was currently short of an expert space knight, General Verle had requested to borrow one from the Cross Clan.

Venerable Linda Cross was happy to help out her fellow expert pilot, especially when she knew that the Amaranto had gained a powerful new ship-killing weapon.

The Amphis Mark II might not be as orientated towards defense as the late Shield of Samar, but it was still a genuine expert space knight!

Linda had especially chosen to deploy her expert mech with a larger, thicker and heavier tower shield as opposed to her preferred kite shield.

Together with her true resonance, the Amphis Mark II held out fairly well even when it was targeted by over a dozen warships at the same time!

"How long can you hold, Linda?" Venerable Stark asked.

"I can't last forever, but at this rate I can hold out for five or so minutes depending on how urgently the alien pirates wish to take you down."

Stark smirked. "My Amaranto is hardly the only threat they need to be worried about. The Mars is still rampaging through their light cruisers while the Everchanger has just come into range."

The Everchanger had deployed into battle in a rather simple configuration.

Though it could have entered into battle while equipped with a mounted wargear loadout, Venerable Joshua had eventually opted against it after listening to advice.

The City Breaker added a lot of firepower to the Everchanger, but its lack of mobility and relatively flawed defenses meant that it would just get pounded into scrap after getting targeted by the powerful armaments of the opposing warships.

The Titan-5 Project worked well against mechs and warships that it could touch, but the biomechanical monstrosity was considerably less effective in breaking transphasic energy shields.

Compared to these extreme options, the base form of the Everchanger was a much more reasonable option.

Normally, its lack of pronounced offensive power would have relegated it to the same role as the Dark Zephyr, but Ketis just happened to equip the expert hero mech with an adapted weapon that was great against warships.

"Be careful, Joshua." Ketis told her husband over the comm as the Everchanger was on its way. "Don't forget that the Scarlet Ember used to be a weapon used by one of our enemies. It is a temperamental sword and you may need to be more heavy-handed in your approach in order to get it to behave."

"I will keep your words in mind, Ketis, but I haven't experienced any problems with my new weapon. I will pay close attention to it just to be sure, but I think it will be fine."

The Everchanger quickly closed in on the enemy fleet with the help of its minidrive. It might not be as fast as the Dark Zephyr that had already arrived in advance, but the expert hero mech was hardly a slowpoke!

Surprisingly enough, Venerable Joshua did not encounter as many attacks as he expected. The alien warships were already busy with trying to destroy the Mars and the other expert mechs that were already doing their fair share of damage.

This left the Everchanger free to approach a starship. Considering that the frigates weren't that difficult to break open, Venerable Joshua made the same choice as Venerable Stark and targeted a larger and fiercer destroyer.

"Alright, it's time to show your worth. Burn, Scarlet Ember!"

The Everchanger activated the metal 'rod' in its hand, causing it to gain a hot and concentrated plasma blade!

As the plasma sword generated a lot of heat, the Everchanger suddenly experienced a much greater power drain than before.

Venerable Joshua knew that his expert mech wouldn't be able to last long without needing to replenish its energy cells, so he did not delay any further.

He resonated with the plasma sword while his expert mech held it with both arms.

"Break!"

A river of fire seemed to collapse onto the segmented energy shield of the enemy destroyer.

The resonance-empowered transphasic strike not only managed to break through the energy shield through brute force, but also damaged a couple of the surrounding shields!

The Everchanger quickly moved into the gap before the enemy destroyer could plug the gap.

Once it got inside, the Everchanger lifted up its active plasma sword yet again and struck straight at the starboard side of the alien destroyer!

This time, the damage was much more dramatic!

The full power of the Scarlet Ember unloaded into the hull of a massive starship. Not only did the plasma sword burn straight through the strong metal exterior, but it also transferred a huge amount of energy to the surrounding compartments!

Alien crew members cried an instant before their bodies burned or vaporized from the heat. Countless different systems went offline or disappeared entirely as the weapon that was originally designed for an ace mech showcased its extreme power at the hands of an expert mech.

By the time the Everchanger retracted the Scarlet Ember, Venerable Joshua could see that his weapon had burned a third of the way into the hull of the destroyer while melting a lot of adjacent compartments!

"This... is unreal!"

An ordinary strike from the Everchanger's old Heartsword would have left a moderate cut on the exterior of the hull.

The plain old Unending alloy mech sword would have never been able to deal damage at this scale!

Even if Joshua could slightly amplify his attack power by employing a prime ability, no amount of tricks could match the power of a reduced ace mech weapon!

Chapter 4453 Seductive Power

Once Venerable Joshua managed to get a grip on the immense destructive power of the Scarlet Ember, he took full advantage of his great might!

Whenever his burning eyes raked across the alien fleet in front of him, he no longer considered them to be serious threats that could kill a lot of mechs and mech pilots with their powerful gun batteries.

Instead, he started to regard them as prey for his hungry plasma sword!

"You're eager to kill, aren't you, Scarlet Ember?" Joshua grinned. "Well, I'm eager to wipe out these aliens as well. Let's do our best to destroy as many of these ships while our energy reserves last!"

The expert pilot was constantly aware of the immense cost of using this weapon. The Scarlet Ember was originally made to be wielded by the Neo Amadeus, and even Saint Jeremiah Gauge felt reluctant to employ it on the battlefield unless he needed its awesome power to land the killing blow.

Though Ketis' attempts to downsize its length and reduce its power setting had tamed much of the ferocity of the repurposed battle trophy, a wolf always remained a wolf no matter how much the new owners wanted to create a dog.

Right now, Venerable Joshua did not encounter the rejection that Ves and Ketis talked about.

He had made so many preparations to handle a rebellious blade that he became a little off-balanced by how little resistance he encountered.

Perhaps that was because Saint Jeremiah hadn't used it often enough to imprint it with any strong sentiments.

Perhaps removing the head of the expert pilot had 'reset' its personality.

Perhaps everyone misjudged the Scarlet Ember as its wants and desires were much simpler than everyone thought.

Whatever the case, Joshua found it remarkably easy to resonate and attune with his weapon. The only issue was that the weapon's burning need to destroy also began to affect his own judgment.

Fortunately, that was exactly what he wanted to do! As long as he was able to direct the Scarlet Ember's incredible power onto the right targets, he was confident that he would be able to maintain control over the enflamed weapon!

"Let's go! There are plenty of ships for us to chop!"

The 1854210 pirate group and its allies brought over a hundred different warships. Though many of them were small and in various states of disrepair, they were still bigger and more powerful than any mech! Even the smallest frigate could destroy a lot of mechs under the right circumstances!

The Everchanger began to grow hotter as the plasma weapon in its hands continued to channel blazing hot plasma.

The expert hero mech seemed to have turned into a hellfire demon as it jumped from the crippled and burning destroyer that had been the first to fall victim to the Scarlet Ember's might.

The flaming comet flew straight towards an adjacent destroyer whose guns were desperately trying to repel the powerful human expert mech!

"Too clumsy!"

Venerable Joshua didn't feel threatened by the alien warships at all. Their absolute firepower may be strong, but their huge hulls and divided control structure worked against them. Their complete lack of grace easily enabled small but powerful mechs to weave through their attacks and prevent many weapons from posing a threat by moving beyond their firing angles!

The alien warships increasingly worked together to cover each other, but the Everchanger was able to avoid most of it through fast and clever maneuvering.

Nothing the aliens possessed could stop the Everchanger from rampaging through their fleet!

Perhaps only a warship as powerful and advanced as the V'gahnt-Zezne could drive an expert mech as fast and potent as the Everchanger away, but the orven battleship was dealing with her own fair share of problems at the moment!

With the Mars dismantling the 1854210 pirate group's light cruisers one by one, the remaining warships that had been hurled in the direction of the Golden Skull Alliance simply did not possess the means to contain the Everchanger, let alone other powerful expert mechs!

One destroyer after another began to get struck by a large and powerful blade of plasma.

In order to get the most out of the Scarlet Ember, Venerable Joshua did not bother to strike his targets more than two times in a row.

His Everchanger only needed to attack once in order to get through the energy shields of an alien warship and attack another time to inflict crippling damage onto the hull of the very same vessel!

The damage incurred by the alien ships in question varied considerably due to their radically different layouts, material compositions and design principles.

However, getting struck by a resonance-empowered plasma sword attack never failed to sink so deep into their hulls that they inevitably became easy prey to follow-up attacks from other mechs!

"Damn, I love this weapon!"

The infatuated expert pilot believed so much in the power of his weapon that he did not bother to target the smallest warships in the enemy fleet.

Since the Scarlet Ember was strong enough to breach the defenses of alien destroyers, Joshua solely set his sights on damaging as many of them as possible!

The more hulls his Everchanger struck, the more Venerable Joshua became familiar with the characteristics of his Scarlet Ember.

The difference between a high-tech plasma sword like the Scarlet Ember and a plain old alloy blade like the Heartsword was too great.

Perhaps a dedicated swordsman mech specialist like Venerable Dise could increase the destructive power of the latter by an order of magnitude, but Venerable Joshua had never been able to develop his swordsmanship to the same degree.

A weapon that straightforwardly relied on advanced technology and lots of energy to exert a huge amount of destructive power was much more to his liking!

A small but profound shift took place in Venerable Joshua's mind. He developed a greater preference for powerful technology and became less enthused about simpler design solutions.

It would be a lot harder for him to fall back to the original Heartsword after this battle.

"Damn, my energy reserves have already dipped below the halfway point."

The Everchanger was rapidly growing hotter as it struggled to supply its plasma sword with copious amounts of energy.

Joshua noticed increasing signs of stress. His expert mech had never been designed to feed such a hungry weapon. If not for its impeccable quality and

high base performance parameters, its energy transmission system would have already started to malfunction!

Even so, Joshua didn't know how much longer he could exert so much stress on his expert mech's internals.

"How long can you last, Everchanger?"

"MY SYSTEMS WON'T BREAK IF WE CONTINUE TO FIGHT LIKE THIS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS RUN." The third order living mech boomed in response. "I ADVISE YOU TO LEAVE THE SCARLET EMBER BEHIND ONCE WE RETURN TO REPLENISH MY ENERGY RESERVES. I DO NOT THINK MY SYSTEMS CAN TAKE ANY FURTHER ABUSE AFTER THAT."

"Got it." Venerable Joshua responded.

He was directly connected to his expert mech so he already made the same conclusion.

Seeing that he could not make use of the Scarlet Ember awesome might much longer, Joshua and the Everchanger tried their best to make the most of what little time they had left with the plasma sword!

Many aliens wailed and suffered as the ships that they were serving on turned into half-ruined hulks after getting struck by an unstoppable plasma attack!

Even though the Everchanger briefly interrupted its killing spree in order to help the Penitent Sisters pull off their battle formation attacks, by the time the expert mech's energy reserves had dipped to 10 percent, over a dozen alien destroyers had fallen in its wake!

This was a fantastic killing record even if the Everchanger had to depend on the follow-up attacks from other mechs to finish off the crippled vessels.

As Venerable Joshua regretfully commanded his expert mech to power down the Scarlet Ember and return to the Spirit of Bentheim, he thought about whether he should beg Ves to provide him with another powerful weapon.

"I can get a lot more done with a powerful weapon."

Just as Joshua began to daydream about obtaining a ranged weapon that was just as powerful as the Amaranto's new Instrument of Doom, his battle partner abruptly sent a mental shock through the man-machine connection.

"Ouch! What gives, Everchanger?!"

"HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE WARNING ISSUED BY YOUR WIFE? WHAT DID SHE SAY WHEN SHE HANDED OVER THE SCARLET EMBER?"

Joshua dug through his memories and indeed remembered that she had told him to be careful about using such a powerful weapon.

"She said... that weapons like the Scarlet Embers are too strong for a pilot of my level."

"TO BE MORE SPECIFIC, SHE TRIED TO WARN YOU THAT RELYING TOO MUCH ON IT WOULD MAKE YOU GO ASTRAY. HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN RELYING AS MUCH ON GLOWS, RESONANCE ABILITIES OR PRIME ABILITIES SINCE THIS BATTLE HAS STARTED? THEY FORM THE BASIS OF YOUR FIGHTING STYLE, BUT YOU HAVE RARELY THOUGHT ABOUT THEM SINCE YOU BECAME ENAMOURED WITH YOUR LATEST TOY."

"There isn't anything wrong with using better tech." Joshua frowned. "Mechs need to keep up with the times, or else they will get overtaken by something stronger. We have all started to adopt phasewater technology as soon as it became available."

"THIS IS DIFFERENT, JOSHUA. THE TECH THAT YOU PREVIOUSLY USED MADE YOU STRONGER BUT DID NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT YOU NEEDED TO DEVELOP YOUR OWN CAPABILITIES AS AN EXPERT PILOT IN ORDER TO BE ANY GOOD. THE SCARLET EMBER IS DIFFERENT. IT PRESENTS SUCH A GREAT LEAP IN COMBAT POWER THAT YOU NO LONGER NEED TO PUSH YOUR OWN SKILLS AS A PILOT."

"That... not the case."

"THOSE ARE EMPTY WORDS, JOSHUA. ADMIT IT. LOOK BACK ON YOUR PERFORMANCE. YOU DID NOT WIELD THE PLASMA SWORD. INSTEAD, IT WIELDED YOU. THE SCARLET EMBER USED YOU TO SATISFY ITS OWN SELFISH DESIRES."

"What?! You're exaggerating, Everchanger! You're just jealous that I was thinking about abandoning the Heartsword for the Scarlet Ember. I know the latter wasn't originally made for you, but you can't deny we destroyed a lot more powerful enemies and saved the lives of many more Larkinsons with its help. We shouldn't put it back into the box!"

"WAKE UP, JOSHUA!" The Everchanger roared into the expert pilot's mind! "HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT A TRUE SOLDIER SHOULD BE? YOUR GROVELING ON BEHALF OF A FOREIGN WEAPON THAT IS TOO POWERFUL FOR YOUR OWN GOOD IS SICKENING TO ME. THE FACT THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THAT YOU ALLOWED YOURSELF TO GET USED BY AN INANIMATE SWORD IS AN UNFORGIVABLE MISTAKE."

"Everchanger..."

The cockpit of his expert mech activated a projection that showed a mirror image of his current suited form.

"LOOK AT YOURSELF AND TELL ME THAT YOU ARE STILL AS STRONG AND DETERMINED AS BEFORE. HAS YOUR DRIVE TO BECOME A BETTER GUARDIAN FOR YOUR FAMILY REMAINED INTACT?"

"I..."

"YOUR WILLPOWER HAS GROWN BRITTLE, JOSHUA. YOUR PROGRESS WILL STAGNATE AND YOUR JOURNEY TO BECOME A SAINT WILL COME TO AN END IF YOU CONTINUE TO HOLD ONTO YOUR CURRENT MINDSET. I HAVE MY OWN DIGNITY AS AN EXPERT MECH. I DO NOT WISH TO IMPOSE MY DEMANDS ON YOU, BUT I WILL NOT LEND MY POWER TO AN UNWORTHY BATTLE PARTNER."

The Everchanger conveyed such a strong sense of disappointment to Venerable Joshua that the expert pilot couldn't help but reflect on himself for the remainder of the return journey.

He slowly realized that his living mech might have a point.

It was hard for people to recognize their own shortcomings and mistakes. Their biases and preconceived notions blinded them to their own faults.

If Venerable Joshua didn't have the benefit from a close partner that also possessed an outside perspective, perhaps he would have never become aware that he had begun to fall into a trap that had caused many expert pilots to stagnate in their growth!

"I still need to think about all of this Everchanger, but... thank you for telling me this. I feel that you have given me a lot of help."

"THAT IS WHAT I AM HERE FOR, JOSHUA."

Chapter 4454 Destroying Sandcastles

While Venerable Joshua started a journey of introspection after he received a crucial wakeup call from his living mech, Venerable Vincent Ricklin faced an entirely different problem.

"These energy shields are too tough!"

His C-Man charged towards an alien destroyer and increased the size and mass of its fists by rearranging the layout of its smart metal armor system.

While Vincent tried his best to maximize the transphasic power of his TESMAS by resonating with both Bravo and his expert brawler mech, it was hard for him to exert any greater might without the assistance of a handy weapon like the Scarlet Ember.

"Taste my fists!"

Having failed to break the increasingly more notorious segmented energy shields employed by practically every alien warship, Vincent had adopted a smarter approach towards this battle.

Instead of sticking to the mindless approach of letting the C-Man pound its fists against the energy shields of an enemy ship, Vincent wisened up and remembered there were more ways to break past a powerful obstruction.

"What if... I approach this fight like a lancer mech, except without a lance?"

The C-Man could easily rely on its mass and momentum to overwhelm one of the segmented energy shields of an intact destroyer!

This was why he resisted the temptation to continue punching and drew his expert mech away so that it could build up a lot of speed.

Once Vincent felt he had waited long enough, he directed his machine to circle back to the enemy fleet and charge towards a destroyer that had not been affected up to this point.

Even as several nearby alien vessels tried to intercept the charging expert mech by directing their gun batteries to fire in its direction, Vincent simply toughed it out and put his trust in the C-Man's resonance shield.

"BREAK FOR ME!" He roared!

The C-Man collided against a segmented energy shield like a battering ram!

The guts and momentum of Vincent and his expert mech produced a powerful impact that heavily shook the energy barrier to the point where it finally failed!

While the C-Man barely had enough momentum left to push through the hole it had just made, the expert mech wasn't feeling so good anymore either.

Venerable Vincent winced as he felt how much strain and damage its TESMAS had suffered.

The powerful and experimental Transphasic Energized Smart Metal Armor System may have been designed to flexibly resist and absorb a lot of incoming attacks, but it had never been designed to cope with so much abuse!

Still, despite the complaints from his own expert mechs, Vincent was glad that he finally managed to do what other expert mechs like the Amaranto and Everchanger had done!

It may have taken him a while to get through, but at least he could touch the surface of an enemy destroyer now that he got inside!

Though the warship in question still tried to drive away the C-Man by turning as many of her gun batteries in its direction, Vincent smirked at this feeble response.

"My expert mech has already taken enough damage as it is. I'm not going to let you hurt my baby any further!"

There was an easy way for mechs to prevent themselves from getting targeted by most of the gun batteries of an enemy ship.

They just needed to get close!

There were certain positions on an enemy vessel's hull that were much more awkward for them to repel a parasite than others.

Vincent had already studied the exterior layout of the alien warship and knew exactly where his expert mech needed to go in order to escape any further attacks.

His C-Man deftly evaded many of the desperate attacks launched by the warship while its battered resonance shield blocked the ones that couldn't be avoided.

This didn't last long as the C-Man finally approached the stern of the enemy vessel.

An array of large, triangular thrusters were positioned at the rear. They burned hotter and provided more thrust in an attempt to deter the expert mech from getting any closer.

The alien ship also began to engage her maneuvering thrusters so that she could put her entire hull into a complicated spin.

It wasn't enough!

"If you think I'm afraid of getting dizzy, then think again!"

The C-Man easily landed into a cranny at the stern of the spinning vessel. The feet of the expert brawler mech automatically turned magnetic in order to maintain its footing on the surface.

Though the heat generated by the nearby thrusters made it rather uncomfortable for the C-Man to stick around for long, it was far from serious enough to drive the expert mech away!

"Let's see what you are made of!" Vincent grinned.

The C-Man began to crouch and began to tear into the hull of the enemy destroyer!

While it was fairly difficult for the expert mech to punch through meters of solid alloy, there were plenty of surface modules and other weak points that made it a lot easier to open new holes.

Vincent soon discovered that the warship's hull structure wasn't so tough after all. The only major inconvenience was that there was so much metal in the way that a mech that was armed with only its fists needed to invest a lot of time and effort to reach an important section such as what passed for an engineering bay to the alien vessel.

Thinking about how Venerable Joshua and the Everchanger instantly crippled a warship by chopping its fancy new plasma sword at the hull made him feel impotent.

He didn't think his C-Man was any worse than the Everchanger!

"Bravo! Let's work together and show how a manly mech doesn't need to rely on any powerful new toys! Let's punch our way into the depths of this ship!"

The expert pilot's determination caused him to muster up more strength and resonate with his machine to a greater degree.

The C-Man happened to share his sentiments, so it tried to reciprocate as much as possible.

On top of that, the design spirit also provided his support!

The expert brawler mech began to glow increasingly brighter as three different but united influences all joined hands for the sole purpose of preventing themselves from getting upstaged by their rivals!

An echo of true power coursed through the malleable frame of the C-Man. As Vincent directed it to launch a flurry of punches into the hull of the destroyer, each fist seemed to cause an explosion of power that spread across the structure behind the immediate impact site.

It was as if the punches of the C-Man was able to produce a lesser imitation of the Thunderer Mark II's concussive shockwave attacks!

Neither Vincent nor his two battle partners cared about pirating the methods of a fellow warrior. They were just happy that they were making more and more progress. Each success fueled their confidence which in turn allowed them to channel greater strength in their next attacks!

In the end, the C-Man had dug deep enough to finally break into an important hall where the aliens had installed their warp drive as well as a couple of their most important power generators.

Numerous tiny suited alien figures yelled in panic or took out various small arms and opened fire at the giant mech that had torn its way inside.

Vincent paid no attention to the pinpricks that bounced off the resonance shield of his C-Man and looked at all of the strange metal devices that were channeling a lot of energy.

"This looks important. I wonder what will happen if I SMASH IT WITH MY FISTS?!"

The C-Man acted like a bull in a china shop and began to punch and kick anything that looked remotely important and sophisticated!

Even though a few of the devices exploded violently when ruptured, Vincent and his battle partners only felt more glee as they successfully ruined the alien destroyer from the inside!

By the time the C-Man tore its way out with its fists, the alien destroyer was practically dead in the water!

All but a few of her segmented energy shields had disappeared and she had also lost all of her main propulsion systems.

A strong sense of accomplishment and satisfaction overtook Vincent. He, his expert mech and its design spirit had managed to do what the Everchanger had done by relying on nothing but a good mech frame and a lot of manly confidence!

"Hah! Did you see that, Joshua!? I can cripple an enemy destroyer by myself as well!"

Vincent was so happy with his accomplishment that he completely overlooked the fact that in the time it took for the C-Man to disable an enemy warship, the Everchanger managed to do the same to six comparable vessels!

The only advantage that the C-Man gained over the Everchanger was that it had expended a lot less energy in the process.

The C-Man wasn't close to reaching exhaustion while the Everchanger was burning through its energy reserves at an insane rate.

"C'mon! The fight is far from over!"

Venerable Vincent enthusiastically directed his C-Man to leap towards another nearby warship and repeat the same process yet again!

It took a little less time for his expert mech to cripple another warship. Though he still made a lot of mistakes, he tried his best to avoid them when he recognized that he had messed up his moves.

A part of him found it regretful that the warships he was fighting against were too clumsy to exercise his brawling skills, but another part of him enjoyed the process of wrecking so many large and powerful vessels!

The battlefield had turned into a playground where Vincent and his two buddies eagerly punched and kicked up one sandcastle after another.

Though Vincent's dueling ability hadn't improved in the slightest, he developed several new methods where his C-Man could inflict more damage than before.

He experimented with several different approaches.

In one instance, he instructed his C-Man to turn its fists into giant arm blades. Though the new limbs allowed the expert brawler mech to slice through hulls with greater ease, Vincent missed the meaty kinetic impact of a satisfying punch attack.

In another instance, Vincent tried to make his expert mech turn its arms into drills and see if that would help it get inside faster.

That particular experiment failed spectacularly, but at least Vincent understood the limits of his expert mech better.

As the expert pilot continued to explore better ways to destroy enemy warships, his resonance strength steadily grew without his notice.

Though his progress was much slower, his earnest efforts to work with his expert mech and improve his own combat methods had enabled him to make much more progress than Venerable Joshua in this span of time!

When Ves noticed this detail as he observed the conditions of the Larkinson expert pilots, he almost couldn't believe what he was seeing.

He found it ironic that a more flawed and single-minded expert pilot who only managed to break through with the help of the transcendence glow was outpacing the Larkinson Clan's golden boy!

Venerable Joshua should have been making a lot more progress in his growth on account of piloting one of the best masterwork expert mechs of the Larkinson Clan.

Instead, the young expert pilot not only failed to make any progress, but actually regressed to an extent!

Joshua's resonance strength had dropped compared to where he was at the start of this battle!

Ves furrowed his brows. He vowed to look into what was happening with his favorite expert pilot, but this was not the time for introspection.

Even though the Golden Skull Alliance had made great progress into wiping out the opposing small craft and warships, time was slowly running out. The reinforcements that the Gemini Family warned about had probably drawn a lot closer than before!

"Are there any signs of incoming enemies?"

"No, sir. The scouts and listening devices that we have spread in every direction have yet to detect any incoming threats."

"Keep an eye on any spatial phenomena. If any reinforcements are about to arrive, I bet they will make use of phasewater technology. They won't come in through the front door."

Chapter 4455 Triple-Shelled Turtle

The battle was going well for the human coalition.

Though the V'gahnt-Zezne was able to rely on her triple energy shield layers to stay in the fight, none of the other warships enjoyed the same degree of protection.

The human pioneering groups quickly developed better methods to breach the segmented energy shields that many alien warships traditionally relied upon to stay alive.

As the formidable ace mechs and expert mechs on the battlefield rapidly whittled down the amount of active cruisers, destroyers and frigates by leveraging their distinct advantages, the human mech forces no longer experienced as much pressure as before.

The fight became easier and easier for the mechs to fight as the amount of powerful warship armaments firing in their direction continued to drop with the passage of time.

Many mech pilots started to relax a bit as they no longer felt as if they were one step away from disaster.

Too many of them had seen mechs getting struck by giant transphasic gamma laser beams that could fry the bodies of their pilots!

There was hardly any way for mech pilots to survive when their mechs randomly got hit by a heavy cannon projectile that was half their size!

Fortunately for most of them, most of the warships had directed their firepower to the small quantity of high-ranking mechs that could single-handedly tear them apart!

The greatest concerns the regular mech forces had to deal with was the flood of starfighters that attempted to run them down.

Though the mechs initially suffered a bit more casualties than necessary due to their unfamiliarity with starfighters, that rapidly changed once they learned their lessons.

The differences in power between the two sides was too great. Out of the two different civilizations, the one belonging to humanity simply possessed better tech than the indigenous societies of the Red Ocean.

This was despite the fact that all pioneers were restricted from making use of formidable human warships that could easily destroy their alien counterparts in a naval battle!

To be fair, the aliens experienced a lot more restrictions than they thought whenever their starfighters or warships wanted to initiate warp travel.

Whether they sought to outflank the human forces or quickly make their way out of the battlefield, none of the alien vessels succeeded in warping the fabric space around them into a bubble that could allow them to travel faster!

The reason why these ships weren't able to escape was the use of warp inhibitor devices.

The Larkinson Clan had already deployed its new but extremely effective Gravity Net that spread across much of the battlefield.

The other pioneering groups didn't have anything that was as strong as this advanced and powerful product of phasewater engineering, but they still had their own ways of preventing their prey from warping away.

With no feasible way to make a quick exit, the aliens were forced to fight at their best.

Sadly, their strength simply didn't measure up, especially as their numbers fell at a rapid rate.

A part of Ves felt cheated. Weren't the aliens supposed to be stronger than this? Shouldn't their warships be capable of exerting much greater pressure on expert mechs and ace mechs?

"Don't get too cocky, Ves." General Verle's projection warned him. "Aside from the Unspoken flagship, none of the alien warships that we are fighting against are up to standard. We are fighting against the dregs of the alien civilizations that used to occupy this corner of space. The main alien warfleets that the Big Two are so concerned about have either been destroyed or fled to safer territories."

Ves slowly nodded in agreement. "I guess you're right. These rotten pirates that have decided to stick to the Palace of Shame aren't comparable to a proper military fleet. I just find it odd that the locals are rolling over so easily. I know our ace mechs and expert mechs are not weak, but... I expected more from aliens that have decided to stand their ground. Have you noticed that few if any of the alien combatants have attempted to retreat! Everyone is fighting to the death. Is this normal?"

The leader of the Larkinson Army might not be the most brilliant strategist alive, but his ability to read the ebbs and flows of the battlefield was not bad.

General Verle scowled. "Our understanding of our enemies is far from sufficient. By agreeing to take part in the Gemini Family's joint operation, we began to follow someone else's rhythm. We did not prepare as much as we could and failed to account for many factors. Why are the pirates so brave? Why are they fighting as if they are willing to die for a cause? What sort of reinforcements are they relying upon to turn the tide of the battle? We don't have any answers to these questions, and that is unsettling. I have a strong suspicion that the Gemini Family is able to supply us with at least some of the answers, but it is highly doubtful that the Geminis are willing to give us any freebies."

The specter of enemy reinforcements cast a dark shadow over the human coalition.

The Larkinsons probably weren't the only ones who were cursing the Geminis for luring them into this rabbit hole.

Perhaps the incoming reinforcements might not be as big of a deal as everyone feared, but there was also a chance that a powerful phase whale might appear on the battlefield in an instant!

The uncertainty was gnawing at both Ves and many other leaders. They simply didn't know what to expect and that was stopping them from taking any pleasure at the progress that they had made up to this point.

If the estimate of the Gemini Family was correct, it would only take a few more minutes before they would all find out what the alien pirates were relying upon to secure their grip onto the Palace of Shame.

"The final struggle against the V'gahnt-Zezne is about to commence." General Verle reminded Ves. "The ace mechs have already taken care of the opposing

light or heavy cruisers. Our expert mechs can easily finish off the few that are damaged but not completely out of the fight. What is more important is that our strongest mechs must neutralize the largest and most important enemy warship that is currently on the battlefield."

That was very much a wise decision. Already, the seven Saints were converging their attention on the alien vessel that they initially mistook for a battlecruiser before finding out that she was more comparable to a battleship.

Saint Marissa Lewandoski and Saint Kalasandra Boojay had done an excellent job in constraining the threat of the V'gahnt-Zezne.

Their ace mechs, the Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem, even found opportunities to clean up the smaller and weaker orven destroyers that escorted the alien battleship!

As such, the V'gahnt-Zezne had become utterly isolated from any assistance that could save her from getting slaughtered by a bunch of ace mechs!

Almost every ace mech converged around the V'gahnt-Zezne. While the alien battleship furiously fired its formidable arsenal of primary, secondary and tertiary gun batteries at any ace mech that her sensors were able to track, the powerful machines easily evaded or blocked the attacks as if battleships were no big deal!

The ace pilots had the capital to belittle the alien battleship. Their personal strength as well as the strength of their mechs were simply far beyond anything the Unspoken had ever confronted in battle!

If the orven race invested just as much time, technology, materials and design work into building a battleship that was completely dedicated to wiping out small but incredibly powerful small craft, then the tables would have definitely been turned!

Unfortunately, none of the indigenous alien races of the Red Ocean had ever made the adaptations that the CFA had made to its own warships.

The primary plasma cannons of the V'gahnt-Zezne were admittedly powerful beyond belief, but they turned so slowly that it was trivially easy for the ace pilots to determine where they were aiming.

The secondary kinetic cannons and the tertiary laser cannons were able to track smaller and fast-moving objects a lot better, but they lacked the punch to overpower an ace mech's characteristic Saint Kingdom!

As far as the powerful Saints were concerned, the V'gahnt-Zezne was no different from a turtle that was on the chopping block!

A turtle with three overlapping shells, but still one that did not have any hope of defeating an ace mech!

The only question the ace pilots were contemplating was how they could crack through all of the turtle shells as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The analysts of all of the pioneering groups had made a lot of calculations and simulated trillions of different battle scenarios.

After a lot of arguing, the support personnel eventually presented the ace pilots with seventeen possible attack plans.

No one knew which one they should go for. They were all viable but it was too difficult for them to judge which one worked out the best.

Patriarch Reginald Cross snorted before he discarded all of the electronic documents. "Don't think too much. We are all Saints. Our will is endless and our power is unstoppable. No amount of mathematical modeling can encompass our might!"

"I agree with Cross." Kalasandra Boojay spoke. "Each of us possesses the power to inflict heavy damage onto a segmented energy shield. The only area

we need to pay attention to is to compress our attacks in the smallest possible time interval. If there is too much of a delay, the alien battleship will spin her segmented shields and render our efforts useless."

The ace pilots only needed a few more seconds to quickly determine a basic but serviceable attack plan.

"Let me go first." Saint Jelmer Osenring spoke. "My ace mech is the furthest away and also deals the greatest amount of collateral damage."

"Go ahead. We will start once you have opened fire."

The Thunderer Mark II was the only ace mech that had not gone forward, but this was an understandable decision as a heavy artillery mech firmly belonged to the rear!

In order to prevent the V'gahnt-Zezne from bombarding the Thunderer Mark II's location, the Jedda Sandivar produced a lot of smoke and other interference that made it difficult to pin down the ace heavy artillery mech's location.

Saint Osenring had also stopped launching any further attacks and tried his best to discreetly reposition his powerful ranged machine elsewhere.

The ace pilot steadily resonated with the powerful heavy gauss cannons of the Thunderer Mark II. He had already loaded them with shield breaking rounds that were designed to inflict the greatest amount of damage on the first energy shield they struck.

While the ace pilot had expended a lot of effort into destroying a lot of enemy cruisers, he still had plenty of willpower left to fully charge his next salvo.

As the Thunderer Mark II glowed with power, its many guns boomed at once, unleashing ten resonance-empowered gauss rounds that punched through

the side of the asteroid that the ace mech was hiding behind before striking one of the segmented energy shields!

The combined force of all of the incredible kinetic impacts overwhelmed one of the 'energy scales' of the first layer!

"Our turn now!" Patriarch Reginald Cross grinned.

His Mars had already charged its ARCEUS System. The integrated energy weapon modules unleashed 9 resonance-empowered positron beams before the Thunderer Mark II's attacks had blown over.

While the Mars alone did not have the firepower to destroy one of the alien battleship's powerful energy scales, another ace mech had joined the effort at this time!

The Embodiment of Love not only borrowed the true resonance of Saint Sena Gemini, but also drew on the power of her brother and husband, Saint Kobal Gemini.

The resulting positron beam was therefore blessed with twice as much love and more than four times as much power than normal!

The ten positron beams struck at virtually the same time and quickly overloaded the energy scale on the second layer!

"The third layer has become exposed! Go quickly!"

The next batch of ace mechs had already moved into position at this time!

Unlike the ones that had taken action just before, the next machines attempted to breach the third and final layer of energy shields by charging forward!

Chapter 4456 Mutual Technological Assimilation

The V'gahnt-Zezne was a monster in any way. She was a battleship that might not be as well-maintained and up to date as the more modern orven

vessels that were in service these days, but the Unspoken had cared for her as best as they could over the centuries.

All fourteen of her gigantic plasma cannon batteries were still in good condition relative to the rest of the ship. It was clear that the orven pirates had invested much in their maintenance and maybe even upgraded some of their parts in order to make them more effective.

The secondary and tertiary armaments were much less consistent in comparison. There were hundreds of each of them, and their firepower was significantly reduced so they didn't merit as much importance from the owners of the alien battleship.

Still, even if several dozen guns had already shown signs of failing, there were still plenty more that were capable of firing in the direction of the ace mechs that were about to charge forward and hammer through the 'energy scale' of the third layer of energy shields!

So far, the seven Saints had already completed two-thirds of their plan to open up a gap that could lead their ace mechs to the hull of the orven battleship.

As long as one of them was able to get close enough to touch the hull of their main target, the V'gahnt-Zezne would probably be doomed!

Perhaps an ace mech could not match an armed capital ship in terms of unleashing absolute devastation and delivering a cataclysm to entire continents, but their absolute superiority at closer ranges was undeniable!

The orven crew members that were manning and controlling the V'gahnt-Zezne did everything possible to prevent the insanely powerful ace mechs from breaching past the potent layers of segmented transphasic energy shields.

As the main means of defense of starships for many of the warships in use in the Red Ocean, the highly sophisticated energy shield generators responsible for serving as the main line of defense of the alien battleship could endure an incredible amount of firepower!

A battleship as large and powerful as the V'gahnt-Zezne was first and foremost designed to fight a standing battle against another vessel of her kind.

Brutal slugging matches between battleships were not that common, but once they took place, no side wanted their most powerful vessels to get overwhelmed by a flood of titanic plasma bolts or asteroid-destroying positron beams.

This was why energy shield technology was one of the few areas that had received constant attention from the indigenous alien races of the Red Ocean.

No matter whether they were orvens, nunsers, puelmers or any of the lesser races, each of them built up a huge dependence on the effectiveness of the energy shields they used to protect their warships, space stations, cities and other critical assets.

Without the means to effectively defend against the massive guns of warships like the V'gahnt-Zezne, none of the alien races would be able to win as many battles or hold on to as much territory.

The Battle of the Boryan Belt had given many humans a profound lesson on how much better the aliens were at developing energy shield technology. The difference between what the natives possessed and what the humans had mastered was like the difference between night and day!

The effectiveness of the most powerful energy shield generators such as those utilized by the V'gahnt-Zezne to the smallest energy shield generators carried by the elite starfighters proved that this technology was incredibly mature!

Powerful segmented transphasic energy shields were not treated as a highly inaccessible form of high technology that could only be harnessed by the best and most resourceful alien races.

If even the smallest and most ramshackle pirate warships belonging to a minor group was able to employ a more economical version of this tech, then the indigenous alien races of the Red Ocean might not be as backwards and inferior as Ves and everyone else assumed!

Even Gloriana expressed grudging respect towards the natives of the dwarf galaxy that humanity had invaded. The contempt in her expression had faded after she had witnessed how much damage every warship was able to tank.

"The Big Two have deliberately painted the indigenous alien races as sheltered and ignorant beings that cannot withstand the might and technology of a race that has emerged from a much larger and more dangerous galaxy." Gloriana spoke as she gently rooked a sleeping Marvaine in her suited arms. "For the most part, this message is true, but it also causes us to overlook a factor that has given the natives a great advantage."

Ves understood what she was referring to. "Phasewater."

"Exactly. The Milky Way may be a lot larger and more rich in valuable materials, but the Red Ocean is endowed with so much phasewater that pretty much every alien race has turned it into the foundation of their technology trees. Their starships are able to move faster in realspace with the help of phasewater-based warp drives. Their weapon systems hit harder and penetrate deeper than anything compatible with the help of transphasic design elements. Their energy shields and armor plating are able to resist much more damage than usual for the same reason."

"In other words, the widespread availability of phasewater in the Red Ocean has distorted the technological development of every indigenous alien race."

Ves concluded. "As long as they are smart enough to harness technology, they will eventually have the bright idea of combining their existing inventions with phasewater."

"Can you blame them, Ves? Phasewater is a powerful exotic and can serve as an incredibly powerful enhancing agent that can make many things a lot better. Just look at the pirate warships that our mechs are fighting against. Although we all know that warships possess an inherent advantage against mechs due to being able to take advantage of their greater scales, attacks from powerful ranged mechs such as the Amaranto, the Minerva and the Promethea shouldn't have taken so long to destroy each vessel."

Ves nodded in agreement. "Massed firepower from other mechs such as our Transcendent Punishers also should have been able to destroy the smaller warships without much suspense, but instead they need to fire a lot of salvos to overcome the opposing energy shields before they can start inflicting serious structural damage."

His wife waved at the bridge around them. "Compare that to our own starships. I recall that our clan has recently upgraded the energy shield generators of the Spirit of Bentheim and our other capital ships, but are they as good as the ones employed by these dirty alien pirates?"

"...No." Ves painfully admitted. "Definitely not. The directional shield generators that we have recently mounted in our flagship are all fairly modern, but they don't have the ability to overlap or change the orientation of their output as well as the energy shields employed by the aliens. In addition, not all of our shield generators are transphasic. We would have to use up almost all of our reserves of phasewater in order to enhance their defenses to this level."

"That's bad, isn't it? For all of our confidence, the energy shield generators that we employ aren't even as good as the ones utilized by the dregs of an

indigenous alien civilization. Rather than wasting our hard-earned money and phasewater on human products, we might as well capture the disabled alien warships in front of us and strip them of their shield generators. As long as we can adapt them to our own vessels, we will no longer be behind in terms of shielding capabilities."

Ves shook his head. "I was already thinking about that, but it is anything but to slot in alien technology into our most important starships. I would rather develop our own version of energy shield generators after reverse engineering the local versions. In fact, I'm pretty sure that is already taking place in all of the major development companies such as Morton Tech. It probably won't take more than a couple of years before we can close the gap."

"Ah, yes. Adapting alien technology. Humankind has a knack for that."

Gloriana said in a tone that could not hide her contempt. "As humans like us come into contact with brand-new alien societies, we encounter new technologies that we can't help but covet. No matter whether it is luminar crystal technology or Red Ocean phasewater technology, we can't stand the thought of other races possessing better toys than us. If we can't make it ourselves, we would rather steal it from others. How... enlightened."

Her tone irked him. She made it sound like learning from the enemy was disgusting and dishonorable behavior.

"No one cares about rights or attribution." Ves retorted. "The struggle between humans and aliens is harsh and brutal. Victory means that our race can not only survive longer, but thrive over the corpses of the defeated. Defeat means that our race will scatter away or go extinct. We cannot afford to lose, so we have little choice but to seek our victories in any way possible. If we have to play dirty to safeguard humanity's survival, then what is the harm in stealing alien tech?"

"Spoken like a true Survivalist. You fit well in this camp."

"I don't think the need to assimilate alien technology is exclusive to the Survivalist Faction. Almost everyone is doing it. Anyone who doesn't will fall behind and become increasingly less eligible to compete for power. The Age of Stars and the Age of Conquest provides overwhelming proof why we must master as much tech as possible. Humanity would have never become the hegemon of the Milky Way if we weren't shameless about stealing and adapting a lot of alien tech."

Gloriana couldn't deny that fact, but she pointed out another disconcerting fact.

"Technological assimilation is not exclusive to the human race. If we can steal from the aliens, they should already be able to steal from us. In fact, this process is already taking place. We have all heard the stories about how the Big Two's warfleets are experiencing greater difficulties as of late. The rapid incorporation of technologies that the natives shouldn't have been able to develop on their own has taken all of humanity aback."

That was a good point! As Ves thought about it, he began to feel a bit more uneasy.

"Are you suggesting that the indigenous aliens are about to pull an 'Age of Conquest'-like resurgence against humanity?"

His wife grinned at him. "It is possible, don't you think so? As long as the natives can buy enough time to assimilate and integrate our technology into their own military assets, it is not out of the question for them to gain the upper hand and drive all of the pioneers back to where they came from. If they are truly bold, the vengeful aliens might follow us back to the old galaxy and complete their counterattack."

That was an absurd idea! Ves found it way too improbable that the indigenous alien races could take on human civilization as a whole!

"That won't happen." Ves decisively stated. "Those aliens will only get destroyed en masse if they ever step foot in our core territories. Besides, it won't come to that. As long as the Big Two get more serious and transfer more mechs and warships to the Red Ocean, the momentum will definitely be in our favor. Our advantage in numbers is too great. The MTA and CFA can always overwhelm the natives as long as they are willing to pay the price to transfer additional warfleets to the new frontier."

Both humans and aliens were constantly learning from each other while they both remained standing. The mutual exchange of technology and methods would continue to take place until one side completely vanquished over the other.

Gloriana suddenly came up with another interesting idea.

"Do you think it is possible that the native aliens will start to develop their own versions of mechs?"

Ves shook his head. "Unlikely. They will try, but they will completely botch the job. The indigenous alien races are too far behind. They should focus on improving their warships which is their main means of combat. Their starfighters already perform close enough to mechs that a few more upgrades and improvements can turn them into viable competitors."

As a mech designer, he understood incredibly well what made human mechs so good. He simply could not conceive of any scenario where the natives could not only imitate mechs, but exceed the current masters of this tech!

Chapter 4457 Breaching Operation

As Ves and Gloriana were busy with thinking about the implications of humans and aliens stealing each other's tech, the ace mechs of the human coalition were on the verge of breaking through the strongest defenses of the largest, scariest and most resilient alien warship on the battlefield!

Though it would only take a few seconds at most for the V'gahnt-Zezne to rearrange the energy scales of her first and second layer of energy shields, this was still a viable window of opportunity for the next wave of ace mechs to push through the third and final layer of energy shields!

Only a couple of ace mechs were suited to make this step.

The Thunderer Mark II was way too far away to get inside the protective envelope of the V'gahnt-Zezne.

Even if the ace heavy artillery mech was in the vicinity, its comparatively awful mobility would mean it was far too slow to take advantage of the gaps!

This was why the Saints decided to put forth the Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem next.

The Royal Jeem was an excellent choice as it could act as a lancer mech in a hurry.

The Infinite Gear on the other hand had already changed into a lancer mech loadout. Minutes earlier, the highly modular mech had shed its previous loadout and integrated the parts that had been launched by the flagship of the Lehrer Expeditionary Fleet.

Unlike lesser mechs, neither of the two ace mechs needed to spend much time on building up a charge.

Their fantastic flight systems and their incredibly powerful Saint Kingdoms were enough to accelerate both machines to a degree that would have torn apart an expert mech!

Saint Robert Montagne and Saint Kalasandra Boojay had already charged forward before the Thunderer Mark II had opened a gap in the first layer of energy shields.

By the time the Mars and the Embodiment of Love had just destroyed the second layer of energy shields, the two melee mechs simultaneously struck the third segmented energy shield with incredible power and momentum!

"BREAK FOR US!" Saint Kalasandra Boojay decreed!

The twin collisions inflicted so much damage to the segmented energy shield that it broke without any delay!

Part of the reason why the energy shield folded so easily was because it had come under the influence of two Saint Kingdoms.

Though Saint Robert Montagne's ability to weaken this energy measure was relatively average, Saint Kalasandra Boojay's ability to weaken and diminish external energy was much better!

The segmented energy shield already became a little shaky by the time a lance and a spear had struck it at the same time.

With the power of two charging medium mechs, the energy scale finally folded!

"The way is clear!"

Due to how much excess power and momentum the two ace melee mechs retained, both of them continued to push forward in the hopes of sneaking inside the V'gahnt-Zezne's triple turtle shells!

"Push through!"

Yet just as the two ace mechs were about to pass through the final barrier, another segmented energy shield suddenly appeared in front!

"What?! There's a fourth layer?!"

"Damn these orvens!"

The Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem drove their respective weapons against the segmented energy shield, but only managed to sap half of its integrity without inflicting any further damage!

It turned out that the orven battleship's energy shield technology was not as inflexible and restricted as the tech employed by other alien warships.

The more advanced and sophisticated energy shield generators installed on the V'gahnt-Zezne were not able to change their placement along a fixed distance or radius, but also had greater leeway in increasing and reducing its projected distance.

The orvens took advantage of this additional option to reposition distant segmented energy shields from the first, second or third layer and rapidly use them to form a 'bowl' shape around the Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem!

This was how the V'gahnt-Zezne was able to form a makeshift 'fourth layer' of energy shields!

The only difference was that it could only be applied in a relatively small area.

Even so, this emergency measure was enough to sap the momentum of the Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem!

Though the seven Saints had already speculated whether the tricky V'gahnt-Zezne had an extra ace up her sleeve, to see this happen nonetheless caused them to feel less confident in their ability to push through.

It took time and effort to charge a powerful attack. Even ace mechs couldn't unleash multiple potent resonance-empowered attacks in quick succession.

The Thunderer Mark II was a slow ace mech by nature and was far from firing another charged volley.

The energy weapons of the Mars and the Embodiment of Love also needed time to build up a charge as well.

The Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem had only just exhausted all of their accumulated power and momentum.

It seemed that the ace mechs had no way left to break through the improvised fourth layer of energy shields, but that was not the case!

None of the ace pilots had managed to get this far in their progression without encountering unexpected surprises on the battlefield. They were accustomed to planning for the worst.

"I knew the orvens would try to fool us." Patriarch Reginald Cross scoffed.

At this time, the Thunderer Mark II abruptly opened fire with all of its heavy gauss cannons.

This was despite the fact that the ace mech and ace pilot were nowhere close to charging up this attack volley!

Nonetheless, the ten gauss rounds that surged forward at reduced speed and much less resonance empowerment than before still delivered a lot of damage after they struck the fourth energy shield layer!

If that wasn't enough, the Embodiment of Love borrowed as much true resonance that the Gemini Saints could muster at short notice and fired a relatively potent positron beam with its transphasic energy rifle!

The snap attack struck with just enough power to finally exhaust the fourth layer of energy shields.

The way was open for the Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem to push forward!

"The way is free!"

"Wait! There are more!"

Whoever or whatever was in charge of the orven battleship's defenses had responded quickly. Many more energy scales from the third, second and third

layer of energy shields disappeared from their original positions and formed successively deeper bowls around the two ace melee mechs!

"Damnit, the V'gahnt-Zezne has just formed a fifth and sixth layer!"

The fifth layer was already bad enough, but the fact that the aliens found it necessary to form a sixth layer was either an indication of panic or a demonstration of technological superiority.

Whatever the case, the effort required to break through both layers was exceptionally difficult to the current gathering of ace mechs!

That didn't mean the ace pilots were willing to give up. They were not the sort of warriors who accepted defeat so easily!

The Saints had already made their own preparations for this eventuality.

The Embodiment of Love had completely expended its power, but the relatively slower but physically stronger Embodiment of Sacrifice had yet to make any move at this time!

The ace space knight didn't have any ranged weapon other than a compact energy pistol, but Saint Sandro Gemini resorted to another means to deliver a powerful attack.

Just like what Saint Jeremiah Gauge had done during the Battle of Pima Prime, Saint Sandro Gemini had commanded his ace mech to toss its mech sword in the direction of the next segmented energy shield a short time ago!

Both Gemini Saints had empowered the mech sword with as much true resonance as they could beforehand, but the Embodiment of Sacrifice had held on to the weapon in order to save its power for just this kind of situation.

Now, the sword had soared into space with far greater power and momentum than its modest size suggested!

It arrived in front of the fifth energy shield layer at the best timing and generated a forceful explosion upon impact that almost shattered the segmented energy shield entirely!

Though the Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem weren't quite ready yet to launch their follow-up attacks, there was another ace mech that was not as burdened.

"It's my time again!"

The Mars had surprisingly surged forward just after it had opened fire with its ARCEUS System earlier.

The advantage of an hybrid mech was that it carried multiple different weapon systems, and that just happened to play an incredibly useful role in this instance!

As the Mars charged forward, it lifted its transphasic shotgun and fired a powerful slug that crossed the short distance and struck the weakened energy scale like a hammer!

Thanks to the damage inflicted by the Embodiment of Sacrifice's mech sword, the potent shotgun attack had delivered just enough damage to break this obstacle.

"The sixth layer is exposed!"

The Mars was far from done at this time. The ace mech initially deployed into battle with a set of missile launchers mounted on its shoulders.

These launchers had begun to fire a full salvo of transphasic missiles that quickly reached the sixth layer and generated rippling explosions that substantially weakened the segmented energy shield in question.

This presented Patriarch Reginald Cross with a great opportunity to launch a follow-up attack!

Though the Mars had already exhausted all of its available ranged weapon solutions for the time being, it had one weapon left that could still deliver a powerful blow.

The ace hybrid mech charged forward and lifted up its transphasic axe before chopping it down towards the damaged sixth layer with all of the momentum that the Mars had accumulated!

The powerful axe strike not only broke the stressed segmented energy shield, but also preserved a bit of momentum for the Mars.

"We finally got through!"

Yet as the Mars and the other two nearby ace melee mechs attempted to pass through the 'tunnel' that they had opened up through their collective efforts, the V'gahnt-Zezne flexed her defensive prowess once again!

Just as many people thought that the orven battleship was only limited to projecting this many layers at most, many more segmented energy shields disappeared only to reappear in front and around the Mars, the Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem!

"This is getting ridiculous!"

"How many times can the damn alien battleship keep up this farce?!"

A seventh, an eight and even a ninth layer of energy shields had formed around the breach!

Though the eighth and ninth layer of energy shields looked a bit more unstable due to their extreme positioning, that did not change the fact that they firmly blocked the way ahead.

"We can't expand the gap any further!"

The ace mechs that had worked together to break through the successive layers of energy shields had all fallen into a lull state at this time.

The powerful machines and their ace pilots needed precious seconds to accumulate power and prepare for another attack.

The V'gahnt-Zezne was determined not to give the humans this opportunity!

Already, over five of her primary plasma cannon batteries and dozens of secondary kinetic cannon batteries were about to open fire at the three ace mechs that had stopped in front of the seventh layer of energy shields.

Once these city-destroying gun batteries unleashed their might at the breach, the ace mechs in question would have little choice but to retreat in order to prevent their defenses from getting overwhelmed!

Yet if they did so, all of the effort they had put into breaching through the successive layers would be for naught!

Just when people thought that the six ace mechs had failed to get inside, a certain ace light skirmisher suddenly appeared well inside the defensive envelope of the orven battleship.

What surprised everyone was that the ace mech of the Adelaide Mercenary Company had appeared much closer to the hull of the V'gahnt-Zezne than the other ace mechs!

"What?!"

"How did it get there?!"

Chapter 4458 Ace Mech Rampage

The extravagant seventh, eight and ninth layer of energy shields looked extremely foolish at this moment.

For all of their efforts to contain the six ace mechs that had flamboyantly taken action earlier, they were utterly incapable of preventing the Jedda Sandivar from approaching the surface of the orven battleship's hull.

It turned out that while both the humans and aliens had paid close attention to the high-profile ace mechs, the Jedda Sandivar had deliberately adopted a low profile.

By hiding inside the smoke cloud generated by its Saint Kingdom, the ace light skirmisher was able to move around without anyone able to determine its coordinates.

Saint Marissa Lewandowski cleverly took advantage of this trait and snuck her small and slim ace light skirmisher through all of the gaps that had formed in the first, second and third layer of energy shields.

These gaps had appeared when the orven battleship hastily tried to plug the breach by forming the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth layers of energy shields!

Each bowl-shaped layer that was meant to contain the ace mechs was successively larger than the previous layer.

Perhaps that might not sound like much at the beginning, but the V'gahnt-Zezne had to draw away a lot of segmented energy shields after forming so many emergency layers!

This had given the Jedda Sandivar a great opportunity to sneak through the defensive envelope of the battleship through a different channel.

The problem was that the battleship did not conveniently create gaps through all three layers at the same spot.

It attempted to minimize the chances of something dangerous getting through as much as possible by taking away the energy scales from many different positions.

If any mech wanted to squeeze through all three layers in succession, then it needed to fly through the narrow space between the layers at least twice before it could get inside the defensive envelope.

This was nearly impossible to accomplish, but the Jedda Sandivar managed to do it! The ace mech did so by taking advantage of its small and narrow profile to fly through the narrow space of the active layers.

Although the orvens had tried their best to minimize this dead space as much as possible, the energy shield generators were not capable of pressing the layers any closer to each other due to technical reasons. The sandwiched energy shields would interfere with each other's operations and cancel each other out if they were close to touching each other!

As it was, the Jedda Sandivar successfully squeezed through all of the narrow spaces like a mouse scurrying through a maze and reached the other side without immediately alerting the orvens!

In fact, there was a large chance the Jedda Sandivar might not have been able to pass through all three main layers at once.

The controllers of the V'gahnt-Zezne's defensive systems had tried to be as clever as possible and mainly redirected the energy scales from the first and second layers.

They treated the third layer as a final guarantee and tried to touch it as little as possible.

The problem was that the impulsive decision to create a seventh, eight and ninth layer of energy shields drew away far too many segmented energy shields!

It wasn't even possible to form a complete envelopment with these new layers unless the battleship stripped extra energy scales from the third layer.

This was how a few crucial gaps had opened up in the third and most crucial layer. Though they were positioned far away from the gaps of the second layer, the Jedda Sandivar moved with great speed despite trying to maintain its low profile!

As such, the ace light skirmisher finally managed to succeed where all of the other six ace mechs had failed.

"It turns out that the ace mechs that tried to break past all of the energy shields served as a distraction. If the alien battleship turned out to possess way more than three layers, then the machines had to create as much of a commotion as possible in order to attract the attention of the aliens."

They succeeded. The Embodiment of Love, the Embodiment of Sacrifice, the Mars, the Thunderer Mark II, The Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem had all done their utmost to generate as much threat as possible.

Though they had all come close to breaching through six layers of energy shields in a row, ultimately the ace pilots had already taken into account that they might not be the heroes of this moment.

They instead adopted the role of sidekicks, all for the sake of allowing one of their number to pass through unnoticed!

Now that everyone could see that the Jedda Sandivar had moved much closer to the hull of the V'gahnt-Zezne than any other human mech, everyone suddenly gained a lot of confidence that the beast could be felled!

"Watch out, Lewandowski! Those plasma cannons are about to fire!"

The Jedda Sandivar immediately conjured up an enormous smoke cloud within the confines of its Saint Kingdom.

The Mars, the Infinite Gear and the Royal Jeem safely retreated from the gap they had just made before the primary plasma cannons finally unleashed their awesome might.

Several gigantic plasma bolts swept through the prior positions of the aforementioned ace mechs.

Several more plasma bolts swept inside the smoke cloud where the Jedda Sandivar had taken shelter in, but they passed through without any indication that they had struck a mech.

The ace light skirmisher was simply too difficult to hit when it was trying its best to evade damage!

Saint Lewandowski hardly experienced any difficulty at all in approaching the surface of the hull.

The V'gahnt-Zezne had shown incredible defensive capabilities. Her ability to reposition her energy scales to form temporary new layers was an excellent way to prevent an opposing warship from punching through her original three layers of energy shields.

It was an advanced defensive solution that was highly effective in battles against other natives of the Red Ocean!

Yet when employed against a bunch of human ace mechs, the V'gahnt-Zezne's most powerful defensives ultimately proved to be flawed.

Now, the reckoning had come. The flagship of the Unspoken pirate group had threatened and frustrated the humans long enough. It was time for the Jedda Sandivar to show what it could do to a formidable armed capital ship when it had reached the exterior of the mighty vessel!

Many of the secondary and tertiary gun batteries had formed a dense and inescapable net of physical and energy attacks along the hull.

Dozens of attacks had to be blocked by the Saint Kingdom of the ace skirmisher mech, but that hardly bothered Saint Lewandowski.

What truly concerned her was the gigantic plasma cannons that were trying their best to recharge as quickly as possible.

"Disable the plasma cannons first! As long as you can stop them from firing, the alien battleship is already half-finished!"

"Roger that."

The Jedda Sandivar drew out its two kamas and infused them with true resonance as it charged towards one of the large and imposing plasma cannons.

As the distance between the two rapidly shrunk, the ace mech did not slow down in the slightest.

Instead, it continued to accelerate and build up more momentum!

"PIERCE!"

A small explosion rocked the massive hull as the Jedda Sandivar tore open the outer structure of the plasma cannon battery before subsequently slipping inside!

As the ace light skirmisher continued to pass through the dense internal components, it attacked so rapidly with its kamas that it was able to tear its way through the other side of the massive structure!

Less than a second later, the heavily-damaged plasma cannon became engulfed in secondary explosions as the damage inflicted by the Jedda Sandivar proved to be too much!

"One down, thirteen left to go." Saint Lewandowski whispered to herself.

The Jedda Sandivar still did not slow down. It proceeded to fly towards the closest plasma cannon battery and proceeded to tear through its structure in the same manner as before!

Though the massive battleship had employed several different measures to prevent the Jedda Sandivar from running roughshod along her hull, none of these measures were effective against a powerful ace mech!

With the protection and support of its unreasonably effective domain field, the Jedda Sandivar not only resisted all kinds of attack and debilitating measures, but also amplified its performance so that it could knock out the plasma cannons even faster!

A dozen more explosions erupted across the surface of the alien capital ship's hull. It took less than a minute for the Jedda Sandivar to tear through many layers of relatively weak hull and structural plating and single-handedly eliminate all of the primary armaments of the once-formidable battleship!

"The V'gahnt-Zezne has been castrated!"

Many people cheered when they saw how easily the ace light skirmisher made short work of the cannons that were all powerful enough to destroy the ships of the human coalition.

Though the secondary and tertiary guns still remained a significant problem, the Jedda Sandivar had no time to attack all of those batteries.

"Open up a gap for us!" Patriarch Reginald Cross impatiently requested. "Drill inside the battleship and destroy as many power reactors and shield generators as you can find. As long as you destroy enough of them, the rest of us can get through and make short work of this battleship."

That was a good way to proceed. Although the Jedda Sandivar was in a prime position to tear apart the orven battleship by itself, an ace light skirmisher was one of the least destructive mechs at this level.

It would take many precious minutes for the Jedda Sandivar to completely disable an enormous capital ship that was probably highly compartmentalized.

"On it." Saint Lewandoski spoke before she flew her Jedda Sandivar to a destroyed plasma cannon battery and began to utilize its kamas to drill deeper into the hull.

Utilizing the vast influence of his Saint Kingdom, the female ace pilot was able to get a grip on many advanced alien technological parts and systems.

A few of the large devices generated or expended huge amounts of energy. It was not hard to guess that they were the targets that she was supposed to destroy.

Although it took a bit of time for the Jedda Sandivar to breach through one compartment after another, the ace mech eventually managed to destroy two nearby power reactors as well as half-a-dozen alien shield generators.

Though the V'gahnt-Zezne was hardly crippled at this point, the ace light skirmisher inflicted just enough damage for the battleship to experience significant problems in trying to maintain all three layers of energy shields.

When the ace pilots waiting outside saw that the coverage of the three layers had grown a lot spottier, they finally couldn't wait anymore.

"This is our chance! Break through!"

This time, the Thunderer Mark II and all of the other five ace mechs waiting outside began to initiate a similar sequence of attacks than before.

The difference was that the V'gahnt-Zezne was no longer capable of repelling the intruders!

The battleship had lost too much functionality at this time. What was worse was that many of the crew members were distracted by the ace mech that was still rampaging well inside the hull!

"We're through!"

Aside from the Thunderer Mark II, all of the other ace mechs had finally passed through the breach that they had just made.

"You know what to do. Have fun and try not to get in each other's way!"

All of the ace pilots had turned into kids that had entered a candy store. There was so much for them to destroy that they eagerly began to tear into the once-formidable V'gahnt-Zezne without any further fears!

A cacophony of explosions erupted on and inside the hull of the Unspoken flagship as a bunch of parasites continued to destroy more and more functionality.

Just as the orven leaders of the V'gahnt-Zezne had issued an order to abandon ship, a powerful spatial fluctuation began to spread across the battlefield.

It took a moment for the human specialists to figure out what was happening.

"We've run out of time! The enemy reinforcements are about to arrive!"

Chapter 4459 The Superiority Of Ace Mechs

Seeing the Unspoken battleship known as the V'gahnt-Zezne was like seeing a piece of moving art.

Every mech pilot, every mech designer and every supporter of mechs derived a lot of confidence and satisfaction from seeing 'their' mechs vanquish over the big bad warship.

A part of them saw the future in this single confrontation. Though warships still possessed an undeniable advantage in inflicting mass destruction at the greatest possible scale for a mobile combat asset, their ability to fight against small, tiny but incredibly powerful mechs was simply not as good!

It was not difficult for people to imagine that this battle was a representative reflection of the rivalry between the Mech Trade Association and the Common Fleet Alliance.

Though the orven-built battleship was not even close to matching the performance of a modern CFA armed vessel of the same size, it still operated along the same fundamental principles that underpinned the strength of warships.

In the same way, the seven ace mechs of the temporary coalition were far from matching the insane level of performance of the MTA ace mechs that generally led the charge in the ongoing invasion of the Red Ocean.

That did not take away the fact that the Mars and all of the other ace mechs taking part in the Battle of the Boryan Belt relied on many of the same principles to gain an edge over their opponents.

Ves gained a lot of stimulation from this fight. Ace mechs may be way out of his league considering that he was 'just' a Journeyman at the moment, but that did not stop him from fantasizing about designing powerful mechs that could effectively counter similar warships to the formidable V'gahnt-Zezne.

As Ves imagined a future where mechs decisively pushed warships of any kind to their knees, his wife interrupted his train of thought.

"Ahem, have you forgotten about something?"

"Like what?"

"It took seven ace mechs to defeat one battleship." Gloriana told him. "That does not exactly make for a glorious victory. The amount of time, effort and resources needed to raise seven ace pilots and develop seven suitable ace mechs for them all is enormous."

"I am pretty sure that the orven battleship is much more expensive than seven ace mechs in absolute terms." Ves retorted. "Just look at how many tons of metal it took to build the alien battleship. The quality of the materials may not be the best, but the sheer quantity it took to build up her structure is enough to bankrupt our clan several times over."

"The requirements to build up a complete infrastructure for warships is much simpler than that of ace mechs. It is easy enough to obtain the resources and develop the right tech for them. Crewing the ships also isn't a problem. You just need to erect as many schools as needed to produce the graduates required to obtain trained naval engineers and naval officers. In contrast, no amount of investment is guaranteed to produce another ace pilot. There are too many variables that cannot be controlled."

Ves turned and smirked at her. "Really? That argument might work on anyone else, but I am different."

His wife blinked and quickly recalled one of her husband's most important innovations.

"You... may be right, but... are you ready to unveil the new possibilities to the rest of humanity?"

"Er..."

"Exactly." Gloriana huffed at him. "Don't talk about changed paradigms if no one can actually benefit from them yet. For now, we live in a reality where the emergence of ace pilots is highly constrained. You can build hundreds if not thousands of warships with every ace mech. The amount of people it takes to crew the former may be a million times higher than the latter, but you can train all of the spacers you want with a large enough population base. Personnel is no bottleneck at all. The only major restriction to building more warships is

resources, but that can easily be solved by conquering more territories, which is exactly what the Big Two is doing in the new frontier."

Ves looked back at the unfolding destruction of the V'gahnt-Zezne. The alien battleship that used to cast an oppressive shadow over the Palace of Shame had been rendered completely impotent in the might of the 'flies' that attacked her hull with impunity.

The Jedda Sandivar had already destroyed all 14 primary plasma cannons that could have overwhelmed their Saint Kingdoms through brute force.

The hundreds of secondary and tertiary gun batteries were pretty much irrelevant. They were too slow and too weak to threaten the ace mechs. Many of them couldn't even angle their muzzles at a low enough angle to repel the ace mechs that had landed on the surface of the hull!

Every ace mech tried to inflict as much damage as possible in their own ways.

The Thunderer Mark II that had opted to remain in the rear truly showed its worth as a high-end engine of destruction.

As the mech type that most closely matched a battleship on a conceptual level, the formidable heavy gauss cannons of the ace heavy artillery mech was beginning to treat the V'gahnt-Zezne as if she was a highly fortified space bulwark!

Each salvo from the Thunderer Mark II that struck the exterior of the orven battleship did not produce any powerful impacts.

Instead, the extreme penetration rounds largely phased right through the outer hull of the massive vessel and continued to pierce through dozens of compartments, bulkheads, delicate parts and even the bodies of alien crew members that just happened to be in the way!

Though the rounds were eventually blocked by the armored citadel that protected the core of the alien battleship, they had managed to inflict serious damage to the internals of the vessel.

This decreased the V'gahnt-Zezne's ability to defend herself and escape her current predicament.

In contrast to the Thunderer Mark II, the Mars was a lot more hands-on in its quest to dismantle the massive battleship.

Its ARCEUS System charged and fired a salvo of nine resonance-empowered positron beams at the highest possible frequency onto anything that happened to be in front.

In the meantime, the Mars had holstered its transphasic axe and transphasic shotgun and drew out the long and heavy mech saber that had been resting on its back.

The Whale-Cutting Saber had been designed for just these kinds of occasions!

Patriarch Reginald became a lot more satisfied when he saw how much more damage he could do with each mighty swing of his heavy weapon.

The saber cut through solid matter with much greater ease. Combined with its longer reach, this enabled the Mars to drill towards the center of the alien battleship a lot faster!

Another ace mech managed to beat the Mars in this race, though.

Compared to the ace hybrid mech that needed to make slow and heavy swings in order to go forward, the Royal Jeem constantly moved forward at a slow but constant pace with every thrust of its spear.

The ace spearman mech was practically in its element right now. Similar to the spearman mechs designed by Mr. Dulo Voiken, the Royal Jeem just happened to excel at unleashing rapid stabbing attacks!

When these attacks were all empowered by Saint Kalasandra Boojay's powerful true resonance, each rapid stab struck like a directional explosion that caved in a lot of structural elements and deepened the tunnel by at least a dozen meters.

Soon enough, the Royal Jeem breached its way past the citadel and began to inflict serious damage onto the many systems that kept the alien battleship running!

Other ace mechs were doing their own part to clean up the V'gahnt-Zezne before any enemy reinforcements arrived.

The Embodiments of Love and Sacrifice opted to maintain a modest distance from the alien battleship in order to remain on guard against any surprises. In the meantime, the ace rifleman mech and the ace space knight leisurely destroyed the exterior modules of the powerful battleship.

The fast and elusive Jedda Sandivar that had earned great credit in opening up the battleship to destruction was currently zipping around.

Once the crew of the V'gahnt-Zezne started to evacuate, the Jedda Sandivar ruthlessly hunted down every starfighter, shuttle or other craft that attempted to escape the battlefield or run back to the Palace of Shame!

Aside from that, the Jedda Sandivar also continued to make the lives of the determined alien pirates miserable by blinding them inside its smokey domain field.

Now that the ace mech had drawn closer to the hull of the orven battleship than before, many more alien spacers became affected by Saint Marissa Lewandowski's unique method of interference!

As the V'gahnt-Zezne continued to incur more and more damage as time went on, the signs of incoming reinforcements became more obvious.

No one knew why the area around the Palace of Shame began to exhibit more and more spatial fluctuations.

It was as if a calm lake gradually started to get affected by a distant storm that was slowly starting to draw closer. The winds whipped up by the approaching weather disturbance might not be strong at the moment, but the fact that they continued to grow more and more violent and unstable painted an ominous picture about what was coming.

"What the hell is going on?" Ves demanded from his crew.

"We cannot say, sir. This is completely different from all of the other known spatial phenomena that we have witnessed before. We have even attempted to find a match for the patterns that we are registering to the entries in the MTA database, but we have failed to find any at our current access level."

That did not necessarily mean that the MTA could provide no answers, but if they did, Ves and the Larkinson Clan weren't qualified to know.

Ves studied the sensor readings himself and spotted so many oddities that he felt that the mechers probably wouldn't be able to come up with any answers either.

The readings were too abnormal!

"If we extrapolate the escalating figures, then what is coming... is bigger than anything else we have encountered. Let alone an alien battleship or a phase whale, I don't think a warfleet can produce spatial fluctuations of this magnitude!"

His wife grew alarmed as well and pulled up the sensor readings to confirm his assessment.

"You... you're right. What is happening is far greater than any form of phasewater manipulation that we have ever encountered before, barring our transit from the Milky Way to the Red Ocean. This isn't the sort of displacement that can be accomplished with an ordinary warp drive or teleportation device. A phenomenon of this scale can only be produced by making use of hundreds of kilograms of phasewater at a time! It may even be more than a thousand kilograms phasewater!"

Ves almost had a heart attack when he heard this extravagant sum!

The limit to what the Larkinson Clan was capable of using was the recently acquired Gravity Net.

While the Gravity Net had played a critical role in preventing the alien warships from speeding away with the help of their warp drives, this powerful inhibition device completely failed to suppress the escalating spatial disturbances.

Ves recalled that the Gravity Net incorporated a whopping 26.5 kilograms of phasewater. This should have granted the advanced technological marvel enough strength to prevent almost any ship from going in or out, but right now its strength turned out to be completely inadequate to handle the ensuing crisis.

Whatever was responsible for producing such powerful spatial fluctuations was definitely a lot more powerful than the Unspoken and all of the other pirate groups that had just suffered a total defeat!

Many scientists and other specialists were doing their best to gather more information and come up with potential solutions.

Eventually, a science officer made a bold and shocking hypothesis!

"Our assumptions are wrong, sir!"

Ves immediately turned to the science officer that just spoke out. "Explain!"

Chapter 4460 Escalating Fears

While almost everyone else tasked with figuring out what was coming next assumed that something powerful was inbound, one individual came up with a completely different theory!

Ves and many other people in the bridge of the Spirit of Bentheim turned their attention to the young but clever man that dared to make a counter-intuitive claim.

"We are all working on the idea that something powerful is about to arrive on the battlefield, sir. I do not think that is the case. The Boryan System is a star system that is engulfed by the powerful magnetic field activity of a neutron star."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that outsiders should not be able to accurately teleport to our location. Any attempt will either fail or misfire so badly that any incoming arrivals will go wildly off-course."

"Then what is your alternative theory?"

"I think that the assumption that reinforcements are coming is wrong." The science officer claimed. "According to my analysis, it's the reverse. We are all about to get displaced. Wherever the spatial fluctuations have reached will soon be swept away from the Boryan System and appear in a completely different location! In other words, we are about to get caught in a trap!"

"WHAT?!"

Many more scientists and other geeks who possessed at least a passing familiarity on phasewater technology and its various displacement applications began to analyze the data from a different angle.

They no longer tried to assess whether a super phase whale or a small moon was about to drop in from afar.

Instead, they utilized a different set of formulas and methods that worked the data in different fashions.

They soon discovered that while they couldn't produce any precise answers, the data became a lot more decipherable by their altered approach!

"His hypothesis is likely correct! The ongoing phenomenon is likely produced by the lengthy activation process of an unknown but incredibly powerful spatial device! This object is currently drawing upon a huge amount of power to displace an incredibly large volume of space from the Boryan System to a completely different location!"

More and more shock and alarm spread throughout the bridge and beyond as the scientists produced more and more indications and proof to support their latest assertion.

Ves and many others started to grow incredibly afraid. Teleporting far away from the edge of the border between the Krakatoa Middle Zone and the Zelmar Upper Zone had never been on their agenda!

The Golden Skull Alliance had already moved close enough to the active frontlines of the ongoing invasion. If they jumped a lot deeper in the wrong direction, they might emerge deep in the middle of alien territory with hardly any friendly human stronghold within their reach!

"What is the range and direction of this probable displacement?!" Ves demanded another answer.

"We cannot tell, sir! We do not possess enough of an understanding of phasewater technology or the super device that is responsible for producing the spatial disturbances. Our best estimate is that this will not be a short-

ranged displacement. It will likely bring us hundreds if not thousands of light-years away!"

Getting teleported a hundred or so light-years away did not sound like a big deal.

As long as the destination was not in the middle of a hidden alien stronghold, it shouldn't be too big of a deal for the human coalition to get back to familiar territories.

It was different if they were about to get dragged over a thousand light-years away, especially if their new location was situated a lot closer to the center of the dwarf galaxy.

Ves already started to recall all of the action dramas that he had watched in the past when he was a young kid. He never imagined that those stories about ships or fleets getting teleported deep into unknown or alien space would actually befall his expeditionary fleet.

Just thinking about all of the deaths, tragedies, losses and trauma that took place over the course of all of those popular series sent a shudder through his spine.

Not just him, but many other people did not look forward to getting stranded in deeply hostile territory either!

"Fix this, Ves!" Gloriana screeched at him! "You brought us into this mess. Now help us get out of it before the worst-case scenario happens!"

Their children had picked up everyone's distress. Though Aurelia and Andraste tried their best to put up a brave face as they had been taught by their mother, their younger brother was not as prepared.

The escalating commotion around him had woken up from his nap. As fear, panic and distress continued to spread from the bridge operators, the young boy started to get overwhelmed by all of the negativity.

"Waaaaahh!"

He burst into tears yet again!

His mother immediately pressed him deeper into her embrace. "Hush now, baby. It's okay. I will always protect you. Don't be afraid. Be a brave boy, okay?"

"Maybe it is best if you take him back to his room." Ves suggested. "Our children no longer need to witness what will happen next. Can you bring them back to our grand stateroom?"

"I want to stay!" Andraste protested. "I'm a big girl, now! Since I will be fighting against these aliens when I grow older, I don't want to miss what happens next."

"This isn't one of those silly cartoons, daughter!" Ves admonished his second child. "Go back to your room with your mother. Your presence has become a distraction to us all. We can't take care of you if the situation becomes more dire."

"No! I don't want to! Aurelia, help me out here. You want to stay as well, right?"

The oldest sister among the children nodded. "Please let us stay. Both of us will lead our clan in the future. It would be better if we can learn from you. Besides, you will be able to protect us, right?"

Her remarkably mature argument had an effect on her parents.

"Let... Aurelia and Andraste stay." Gloriana said. "If the two of them think they can handle this, then let them expand their horizons. They will have to learn how to lead our clan sooner or later. They may as well start early."

She proceeded to stand up and carry a frightful and emotional Marvaine out of the bridge.

As soon as the blast doors slid shut and prevented anyone else from going in or out, Ves turned his attention back to the immediate crisis.

"How long will this go on?" Ves asked as he waved his hand at the projection that displayed increasingly more concerning sensor readings. "It doesn't appear that the displacement event will happen in the next minute. Will we be able to escape this phenomenon?"

"No, sir. The range of this phenomenon is too large and wide. Perhaps our smallest and fastest starships may be able to get away in time, but the majority of our ships will not be able to escape in time. Even the ones with warp travel capability cannot get away because the magnitude of the spatial fluctuations is already making that impossible."

"Damn it! If we can't escape from this event, why not stop it, then? Have you identified where it originates from? Does it come from the V'gahnt-Zezne?"

"No. We have just confirmed that the probable super device that is responsible for producing the spatial fluctuations is likely rooted deep inside the Palace of Shame."

Ves widened his eyes. How could he forget about the Palace of Shame!

The large and intimidating asteroid base no longer attracted as much attention as before after its perceived threat level had dropped.

The Thunderer Mark II and had managed to wipe out most of the formidable anti-ship gun batteries installed on the surface.

Its hangar bays were also empty after sending out all of the starfighters that the local pirate groups could scramble at this time.

All of this meant that the Palace of Shame should no longer be able to threaten any outside enemies anymore.

The story would probably be different from any invaders that attempted to step foot inside the asteroid base, but that could easily be dealt with after the human coalition gained control over the surrounding space.

What was happening at this moment completely defied everyone's expectations. They never thought that the 'secret treasure' that had lured the Gemini Family into organizing this joint operation turned out to be able to threaten their entire fleets at this junction!

Ves narrowed his eyes. "We need to attack the Palace of Shame and disable whatever is inside as soon as possible. Has the Gemini Family said anything?"

"The Geminis are still deliberating after we have supplied them with our findings. Wait, they have just transmitted a message. They agree with our assessment and have decided to switch to Plan X."

Plan X was one of the contingency plans which assumed that the Palace of Shame posed an existential threat to the human coalition and needed to be handled in the most expedient manner possible.

If the situation had deteriorated to the point where such extreme measures were needed, then no one should hold back on account of preserving whatever valuable treasures the aliens had hidden inside the mysterious asteroid base.

Securing their survival was much more important than increasing their profit!

Everyone recognized that it was impossible to enjoy any spoils if they died in the process!

Ves turned grave. "I don't know what is going on, but I doubt the aliens who are in control of the Palace of Shame will be charitable enough to do us a favor. We need to break open this asteroid base as soon as possible!"

Everyone moved quickly. The Eye of Ylvained along with other ranged mechs no longer paid much attention to the remnant pirate starfighters and warships that were still in the fight.

Instead, they all began to open fire at the Palace of Shame, prioritizing any areas that were no longer covered by segmented energy shields.

The amount of damage they could inflict on the asteroid base was massive, but the problem was that it was covered by so many reinforced alloy walls and other artificial structural elements that it became increasingly more difficult to drill to the center.

"Let us do the work!"

Compared to all of the regular mech forces, the ace mechs were much more capable of drilling their way to the core of the alien asteroid base!

As always, the Thunderer Mark II excelled in inflicting mass destruction. Though Saint Jelmer Osenring previously received instructions that prohibited him from dealing too much damage to the interior of the Palace of Shame, his latest orders played a different tune!

The ace mech's formidable artillery mechs pounded at the Palace of Shame and inflicted impacts and shockwaves that tore huge chunks of internal space apart!

The Mars, the Infinite Gear and the Embodiment of Love utilized their own ranged weapons to follow up on the strikes of the Thunderer Mark II.

The overwhelming firepower of four powerful ace mechs resulted in a rapidly deepening hole. The tunnel ignored any existing internal layouts and drove straight towards the center of the enormous base!

As the ace mechs continued to open a way forward, the spatial fluctuations continued to rise in scope and power.

Not only did the disturbances affect a larger area, but they also began to interfere with the performance of many different transphasic systems.

"Our Gravity Net is down!"

"Any attempts to activate a warp drive will cause an explosion!"

"Our ace mechs are able to retain their original functionality, but their pilots are reporting that they need to exert increasingly more power to resist the adverse environment."

Ves had the feeling that they were running out of time. If they didn't take action in the next minute or so, it may be too late for them to stop the event!

"Our ace mechs have hit something!"

Everyone quickly turned their attention to the main feed which displayed what the ace mechs had bumped into after drilling a hole to the center of the Palace of Shame.

"That's... a spatial barrier. Wait, there is something underneath. It... looks organic."

As the hole continued to widen after the ace mech launched follow-up attacks, it slowly dawned on everyone what had been hiding in the center of the Palace of Shame all along.

"That's... a phase whale!"

Everyone's hearts skipped a beat when they realized the horrible truth that had been hiding under their noses all along!

Though Ves initially accepted this shocking finding, he quickly grew suspicious when he sensed something disturbing about the creature buried inside the asteroid base.

"That's... not a regular phase whale. A noble and intelligent creature like that wouldn't randomly hide inside a giant space rock called the Palace of Shame for no reason. I'm afraid this beast is something worse. We may have stumbled upon an outcast of the phase whale race."

"You mean..."

"I think we have just drilled a hole in the cell of a rare but dangerous unclean whale!"

An unclean whale!

Unlike regular phase whales who continuously augmented their enormous bodies by engaging in bioresearch, an unclean whale instead engaged in cannibalism to steal the augmentations of their own kind!

They were the most feared and notorious criminals of the Red Ocean! Their danger level exceeded that of regular phase whales due to how violent and unscrupulous they behaved!