

Mech 4621

Chapter 4621 Confronting A Phase Lord

The enemy phase lord finally made an appearance!

Of all of the possible enemy combatants that the rapid strike force could face, the mysterious entity that most certainly enjoyed a high status on the enemy battleship represented a wildcard.

Humanity had yet to gain a good understanding of the abilities and combat power of these indigenous 'gods'.

They rarely displayed their prowess on the battlefield, and if they did, they mostly fought against the well-prepared and overpowering units of the Big Two!

From what Ves and other people could tell from the archival footage that the MTA had seen fit to release, many of these alien powerhouses mastered specific and unusual tricks.

Just like mechs, a lot of phase lords spent their time, effort and resources to excel in one specific application of phasewater manipulation rather than spread themselves thin and become mediocre in the end.

After studying the prior footage of the nunser phase lord in action, the Golden Skull Alliance learned that the alien that was rapidly advancing towards the Antonio Cross excelled in generating area of effect attacks.

In addition to that, the phase lord also appeared to be extremely tough as he was able to generate powerful spatial barriers around his body.

If the phase lord was tough enough to repel the attacks from an ace mechs, then the expert mechs of the Larkinson Clan had little chance to inflict real damage onto his actual body!

This presented numerous difficulties to the rapid strike force. The phase lord had made an excellent tactical choice by opting to chase after the distant

expert mechs. The aliens had yet to make any significant progress in taking down their latest human adversaries and urgently needed to produce any win in order to keep up their morale.

"This bastard is trying to kill off the small fry first!" Ves called.

If the phase lord hadn't been able to overcome the defenses of the Unrelenting in a short amount of time, he wouldn't have been able to overrun the Mars either. This was why he was most likely looking forward to engulfing the human expert mechs and accompanying fleet carrier with his devastating shockwaves!

"We can't allow the phase lord to get close to the Antonio Cross! Our expert mechs must block him from producing spacequakes that can shatter the hull of our fleet carrier!"

"Should we recall the Mars?!"

"No. We still need Patriarch Reginald to pester and entangle the enemy battleship. Tell him to be ready to provide us with remote support if requested. Now that the phase lord is away, the Tower of Babel has become vulnerable at closer ranges. This is the perfect opportunity for the Mars to get close!"

That was a good point! As soon as Reginald figured out that the ship's most powerful individual protector had left his original post, the ace pilot became a lot more excited and no longer felt as constrained as before!

"Your ship is mine now, hahahaha!"

The Mars no longer circled around the Tower of Babel at medium range but flew closer with the certainty that the enemy vessel's ungainly gun batteries could not do anything to repel the incoming threat!

When the distance between the ace mech and the half-ruined battleship shrunk, it became a lot easier for the Mars to circle around and outflank the vessel.

No matter how fast the Tower of Babel's maneuvering thrusters tried to spin around her hull, there was no way to prevent the Mars from targeting the ruined and vulnerable front of half of the ship.

Already, large parts of the abandoned sections of the hull had already caught fire, but when the Mars struck these damaged sections with the resonance-empowered positron beams of the ARCEUS System, a lot of weakened and vulnerable structural parts broke down at a rapid pace!

Broken and molten debris constantly burst out from the damaged hull as the Reginald and the Mars eagerly engaged in destruction at a wide scale!

However, before the Mars could rampage even further, the alien vessel made a desperate move.

"The enemy battleship has activated her main thrusters! Her maneuvering thrusters are stabilizing her orientation. She... the enemy vessel has just set a course that leads straight back to the brown dwarf star!"

"What?!"

The condition of the alien battleship was not great to say the least. Even if Ves ignored the ruined and derelict front half of the hull, the rear half was not in a good condition either. There were clear cracks, deformations and other marks of damage.

Not only that, her segmented energy shield coverage had mostly become a lot less effective. This was crucial because those very same transphasic energy shields were responsible for protecting the hull against the dangerous environmental effects of entering the outer atmosphere of the brown dwarf star!

Ves could understand the decision made by the aliens. Given that the Mars was making better progress than ever in targeting the weak points of their battleship, it was a lot better to take their chances with the brown dwarf star. At least the damage inflicted by the failed star was relatively gentle and uniform.

"Damnit, the ship wasn't supposed to retreat to this safe harbor so early!" Ves cursed. "The Penitent Sisters and the Glory Seekers need to hurry up and arrive sooner. Their Valkyrie mechs can't approach the Tower of Babel anymore of the ship has moved too close to the brown dwarf star!"

The Mars might be powerful and robust enough to endure the pressures of the failed star at close range, but Ves knew quite well that most regular mechs simply weren't designed to operate within gas giants, especially one that was bigger than usual.

"Our second element has received our message and has begun to accelerate in order to launch the battle formation attack in time. According to our calculations, it is not too late as the enemy battleship needs to traverse a considerable distance before she can take shelter in the brown dwarf star again."

Speed was of the essence. It would be even better if the expert mech contingent could lend a hand as well, but they needed to address the more immediate threat first!

By now, the expert mechs had all reorganized themselves to prepare for their upcoming fight against the powerful alien menace.

Ves deeply hoped that this battle would not turn into a repeat of the Golden Skull Alliance's past encounter against Saint Yila Mayorka and the Olympus Mons.

Back then, the disparity in absolute power was so great that no expert mech stood a chance of defeating a single, isolated ace mech!

Everyone knew that it wouldn't be easy to defeat the enemy phase lord. Ves personally thought that their side might have to resort to special measures in order to gain an edge.

What made the phase lord exceptionally difficult to deal with was his penchant for producing large shockwaves in space.

This directly made it a lot more troublesome for the melee expert mechs to gang up on the phase lord.

After a brief argument, the expert pilots eventually decided that it was best to confront the phase lord up close with two melee expert mechs at a time. The rest had to maintain their distance and do their best to contribute to the fight by firing their spare rifles at the phase lord.

The most durable melee expert mechs stepped up first.

"Venerable Linda Cross. Venerable Rosa Orfan." Ves transmitted to the two expert pilots who shouldered the greatest burden. "We are not asking much from you. Just hold on as long as possible while doing your best to drag the phase lord's heels. We will constantly monitor the condition of your expert mechs and warn you to pull back before it is too late. It is crucially important that you do not linger for too long."

"Hey, my Riot is not a baby! Stop treating it like one. No stinking alien will get through my defenses."

"We will see."

The phase lord advanced quite quickly. If there was one thing the indigenous aliens were good at, it was exploiting the potential of phasewater. Their

efficiency and mastery over the use of this crucial exotic was still leagues ahead of any human applications!

As such, the expert pilots did not have too much time to prepare before the enemy powerhouse finally came close enough to initiate a confrontation!

The first ones to attack were the ranged expert mechs.

The Amaranto struck first by launching a resonance-empowered laser beam from her Instrument of Doom.

Just as expected, the probing attack struck a powerful spatial shield and failed to make the phase lord flinch.

The other ranged expert mechs attacked shortly afterwards as their expert pilots grew more confident in their ability to hit a small but fast-moving target.

The Minerva's Irvan luminar crystal rifle induced much less strain on the phase lord's powerful spatial barrier.

The Promethea's Ignitron luminar crystal rifle was just as ineffective with its initial shots. Venerable Isobel Kotin's true resonance was only capable of burning solid matter. Energy shields weren't substantial enough for her flames to catch on, so her expert mech was not able to leverage its specialty in the slightest.

It wasn't until Venerable Isobel applied a special technique based on the Alfari Corps Detonation Code that the Promethea finally started to discomfort the phase lord a bit more!

Each energy beam that struck the phase lord's spatial barrier produced a powerful localized explosion!

Though the damage of these explosive strikes still didn't come close enough to matching the firepower of an ace mech, they always produced bright, blinding blasts that briefly impaired the vision of the phase lord.

Though the powerful alien champion most certainly possessed other means of observation, it was still useful to impair his eyes!

"Keep it up, Isobel! Try to time your attacks so that you can deprive the phase lord of his sight during a crucial move or attack!"

"Understood, sir."

Whether this would help depended on how well the phase lord was able to sense his surroundings with other senses.

"He's coming!"

As the phase lord was about to collide against the expert mechs that had been positioned forward, the Amphis Mark II braced its tower shield and prepared to meet an incoming charge.

The expert mech glowed as Venerable Linda Cross tried to leverage her true resonance to increase the mass of her expert medium space knight and increase its resistance towards heavy blows.

"Careful!"

A powerful spatial shockwave expanded from the former coordinates of the Amphis Mark II as the defensive machine had become the first to endure the brunt of the phase lord's power!

Venerable Linda did not dare to meet the charging phase lord head-on, and had instead opted to angle her tower shield at the last moment.

While this decreased the blocking efficiency of the Amphis Mark II, it prevented the space knight from getting crumpled by the overwhelming momentum of the enemy powerhouse!

As it was, the Amphis Mark II endured a heavy blow that deformed its tower shield and damaged the rest of its frame before causing it to bounce away while remaining reasonably intact.

The phase lord on the other hand not only lost a lot of forward momentum, but his also deflected off the angled tower shield so that his trajectory no longer led straight to the Antonio Cross.

Instead, the phase lord's abrupt course change caused the alien to soar right in the direction of the Riot, which had been waiting to launch a piercing blow with his spear!

"Come on, old pal." Venerable Rosa Orfan encouraged her expert mech.
"Let's show this nunser how we party!"

Though the phase lord attempted to launch an attack against the riot, numerous ranged attacks including the blinding explosion produced by the Promethea interrupted his rhythm.

This gave the Riot enough room to avoid getting struck by the phase lord's body while thrusting his spear forward to launch a piercing resonance-empowered strike!

"PIERCE!"

The glowing speartip struck the same spatial barrier that had blocked the previous attacks and proceeded no further.

The Riot's attack had been foiled!

"Ahhh! Damnit! What does it take to peel off your shell?!"

Chapter 4622 The Need For Transphasic Armor

After the enemy phase lord tried and failed to get rid of the entanglement of the expert mechs, the nunser eventually figured out that his human adversaries would not allow him to wreck the Antonio Cross straightaway.

If the alien champion wanted to destroy the crucial human fleet carrier, he first needed to deal with the expert mechs that were doing their best to inhibit his actions.

The alien stared hatefully at the Antonio Cross that was continuing to boost away from the immediate danger zone.

No matter what, the relatively mobile but fragile fleet carrier could not afford to get affected by the phase lord's spatial shockwaves!

"Keep firing at the alien! There has to be a limit to his spatial barriers. Fighting against a phase lord is just like fighting a phase whale, but our adversary is smaller this time!"

Fortunately, the Golden Skull Alliance already possessed valuable experiences in fighting a phase whale beforehand.

Though the unclean whale found at the Palace of Shame was hardly a representative example of his kind, he was still similar enough to give every participant of the Battle of the Boryan Belt a good idea on the characteristics of this enemy type.

Phase whales and phase lords generally fought by relying on their strong biological bodies and their strong phasewater manipulation abilities.

Their ability to attack at range was generally poor, but their combat effectiveness was incredible as the range became smaller.

Their staying power was also considerable as long as their phasewater concentration surpassed an important threshold.

At that time, their actual bodies had become so large that they could accommodate a lot of powerful and productive organs. The compression of space produced by their inherent abilities helped to prevent all of this bulk from transforming the phase lords into giant astral beasts!

"This is like hitting a wall! How much does it take to push this alien back?!" Venerable Orfan complained as her Riot continually struck the spatial barrier of the phase lord. "Even if this fellow's spatial barrier is unreasonably strong,

his own tiny body should have bounced away from now. Why isn't it happening?!"

The Amphis Mark II tried to help the Riot out by throwing out its signature chainsword.

From the moment this chained weapon flew out and struck the phase lord, the alien powerhouse hardly seemed to notice the momentous blow.

The alien withstood a heavy blow that could have bounced away any expert medium mech, especially after Master Benedict almost completely overhauled the original Amphis a few years ago. For the phase lord to behave as if he got struck by a harmless kitten was a disappointing result!

Though the Riot and the Amphis Mark II ultimately failed to pose a serious threat against the phase lord, the alien was under no such restriction.

"Careful! The nuns are rearing up again!"

The quadruped alien clearly didn't care that he was openly telegraphing his moves. The phase lord shrugged off every incoming attack with ease while making his forehoofs descend upon an invisible surface!

The release of his accumulated energy produced a spatial shockwave that rippled through the surrounding area!

While the expanding shockwaves quickly weakened to the point where they posed little threat against the distant ranged expert mechs, the two machines that were closer suffered much more damage!

The Riot and the Amphis Mark II both reinforced their resonance shields, which helped a lot with absorbing the damage.

However, the nature of the spacequake meant that it affected space instead of the objects occupying it. This meant that the expert pilots found it extremely

difficult to block the harmful ripple effects as they eventually tried to attack the machines from within!

The qualities of true resonance managed to block the harm produced by the insidious attacks, but not completely.

Compared to ace pilots whose resonance strengths allowed them to project full-sized Saint Kingdoms, the resonance shields of expert pilots were much poorer in terms of defense!

Ves almost jumped when he saw how much internal damage the Riot had incurred. Though the expert spearman mech had at least managed to retreat far away enough to prevent greater damage, repairing all of the damaged and misaligned parts was bound to be a hellish job!

Not only had the mechs incurred a bit of internal damage, but the bodies of the pilots themselves became affected to a degree!

"Ah! I am beginning to feel sick." Venerable Orfan spoke as she did her best to prevent the contents of her stomach from spilling out of her mouth. "I'm also starting to get a headache."

"Be more careful about tanking those spatial shockwaves up close." Ves warned the expert pilots. "They can pass through all of the defenses of your machines and affect your bodies to an extent. Make sure to pay attention to the condition of your heads. Your brains are the most crucial parts of your body. If anything goes wrong, the man-machine connection that is crucial to controlling your expert mechs may become impaired!"

That news caused a lot of distress among the expert pilots!

There was no worse way to retire from mech pilot than suffering too much brain damage!

Even though expert pilots developed much more resilient brains as a result of their evolution, they still weren't as strong and remarkable as the brains of ace pilots.

As such, each time these expert pilots become affected by a powerful spatial shockwave, they essentially risk getting crippled in a personal capacity!

"It's similar to a death energy battle formation attack." Ves uttered with concern. "It's an attack method that is incredibly good at bypassing conventional defensive measures. Our expert pilots are able to hang on for the time being, but if that space quake hits our ship up close, most of the crew probably won't be able to survive!"

In other words, this was an unblockable attack that could devastate entire fleets under the right circumstances!

As Ves became engrossed with all kinds of doom scenarios, Master Benedict began to gather more data. He pulled up a few charts and studied the data before he provided his own insights.

"The alien phase lord's area attacks can be blocked, but we need the right resources to do so." The older mech designer stated. "I have looked up the the damage incurred by the two closest expert pilots, and it turns out that Venerable Linda Cross did not receive as much damage as Venerable Rosa Orfan."

"That's because Linda is piloting a defensive mech."

"That is true, but that is not enough of an explanation. Both the Riot and the Amphis Mark II are medium mechs, and the latter is not that much more massive or tougher than the former." Benedict retorted. "I have studied the data and performed a few calculations. According to my preliminary conclusions, the key reason why Venerable Linda was not as affected was because her expert mech is clad with much thicker transphasic armor plating."

Ves went still for a moment.

The explanation made a lot of sense. He felt fortunate that he had sent the Riot first as opposed to a more vulnerable expert mech such as the Dark Zephyr or the First Sword.

Although the defenses of the two machines were not weak, their greatest shortcoming in the new frontier was that their armor systems were based on Unending alloy instead of increasingly more common transphasic materials!

Unending alloy offered a unique combination of benefits, but they did not offer the strong protection against spatial attacks like other alloys that had been infused with phasewater!

Ves already intended to replace the armor systems of his more outdated mechs with quality transphasic alternatives. This incident caused this initiative to shoot up in priority!

"Be careful, Orfan! I don't think it is permissible for you to get struck by a spatial shockwave again. The ExTrans Armor System might be able to provide partial protection to your mech and body, but the layer is too thin."

"I know." Venerable Orfan grumbled. "I will make sure to run back faster as soon as this alien begins to rear his body again."

The recent realizations messed up the battle plan, forcing the human combatants to make adjustments.

The ranged expert mechs were fine for the most part, but the melee expert mechs had to pay a lot more attention.

As soon as the phase lord tired of trying to bash his armored head against the resonance shields of the expert mechs in front of him, he began to make a familiar move while accumulating a lot of energy.

"He's rearing up again! Get away!"

"You don't need to tell me that again. I'm outta here!"

The Amphis and the Riot quickly aborted their attempted attacks and flew away as fast as they could!

Ultimately, the phase lord managed to produce another thunderous spatial shockwave!

"The space quake is larger and more powerful than the last one!"

The phase lord's attacks weren't static. He apparently exerted significantly more power than before and caused the resulting space quake to channel significantly more damage at longer ranges!

Fortunately, the two closest expert mechs had run away sooner, thereby causing them to become less exposed.

The Amphis was slower but managed to endure the shockwave attacks a lot better. Her defensive configuration and stronger resonance shield adequately resisted the effects of the space quake and only produced minor internal damage.

The Riot managed to get a bit further, but mobility was not his strong suit. The expert mech's relatively thin ExTrans Armor Systems tried to mitigate as much of the incoming shockwave, but ultimately came up short.

The expert mech jerked and momentarily interrupted his flight as the internal damage produced by the second spatial shockwave compounded the internal damage he had incurred just a moment earlier.

The Riot seemed to scream in pain as many components and subcomponents glitched or malfunctioned!

Not only that, but Venerable Rosa Orfan incurred such a shockwave that she momentarily lost control of her body as well!

"Ahhh!"

Her helmet automatically opened up a gap to allow her to vomit out the contents of her unsettled stomach without hindrance.

Fortunately for the expert pilot, the housekeeping systems of the sophisticated cockpit of the Riot still remained in working conditions.

A special gravitic field came to life that easily captured the foul biological matter and gently siphoned it all away, thereby keeping the cockpit clean and hygienic.

"I... I don't think I can stay in the fight any longer." Venerable Orfan wearily said as she coughed a few times.

"Don't worry." Ves immediately responded. "Don't worry about anything else and keep retreating. The Antonio Cross is ready to receive your expert mech. The Riot is not in a good shape at the moment."

"You'll fix him, right? He's my best battle buddy."

Ves seriously nodded. "I will promise that I will work on upgrading the defenses of your Riot so that you can fight against your future opponents with greater confidence. Perhaps the materials that we can salvage from the Tower of Babel will help with that. Let's hope we can win this battle. You have contributed enough. We know what the phase lord is capable of thanks to your help."

As the Riot and the Amphis Mark II pulled back, the next batch of melee expert mechs flew forward.

"It's my turn now!" Venerable Vincent excitedly said as he showed little fear of getting brain scrambled by the phase lord's confounding phasewater manipulation abilities. "It's been too long since I last punched an alien with my fists!"

Ves had much better hopes for the C-Man. His armor system was mainly made up of TESMAS, which stood for Transphasic Energized Smart Metal Armor System.

With 5 kilograms dispersed throughout the C-Man's transformable exterior, Venerable Vincent should be able to withstand a few more space quakes than Venerable Orfan.

The Blade Chaser Mark II surged forward while wielding both a sword and a pistol!

Unlike the C-Man, the Blade Chaser Mark II glowed a lot brighter, signifying that Commander Casella already channeled her power into her brother's expert mech!

"Let's hope these two fellows are able to do a better job." Ves crossed his arms in expectation.

Chapter 4623 One Against Many

"Come on! Break already!"

From the moment the C-Man's turn came up, Venerable Vincent drove his expert mech straight at the deceptively small phase lord and started to unleash a flurry of punches at his target.

None of the punches seemed to bother the phase lord that much. The armored nunser's spatial barrier resisted every impact from the oversized fists of the C-Man with as much ease as with any attack.

Kicking made no difference either!

"What about this, then?!"

The advantage of a brawler mech was that they were more flexible and versatile in their movements than other mech types. Venerable Vincent took advantage of that by commanding his machine to embrace the phase lord with

his arms in an attempt to hold or wrestle the alien powerhouse into submission.

What actually happened was that the C-Man could only hold onto the spherical spatial barrier at best.

The move did nothing to prevent the phase lord from rearing up his body in another attempt to shake the surrounding fabric of space with a powerful shockwave!

"Get back, Vincent! Don't resist this shockwave when you are as close as you can be! Retreat before it is too late!"

"You don't have to tell me!" Vincent squeaked as his C-Man rapidly let go and distanced himself from the threatening alien opponent.

However, when the C-Man already put several kilometers between himself and the phase lord, the latter did not go through with his power move and instead pointed a single hoof at the fleeing C-Man as if to mock Vincent's panicked response.

Vincent's face grew red with shame. "Don't mess with me, you bastard!"

The C-Man immediately turned around and went back to wailing the phase lord's spatial barrier with repeated punches again.

Though the previous incident did not seem like a big deal, many other people grew concerned at the implications.

"The alien is not a simple brute." Ves remarked. "He is a high-ranking individual in his own society, and I think his combat acumen is not low. This is not a nerd who happens to possess great personal power. This is a fighter who is at home on the battlefield."

According to the sources, all kinds of alien individuals could become phase lords. From military leaders to pacifist statesmen, each of them pursued the

same path to godhood, making it difficult to distinguish whether they could make good use of their capabilities.

As the C-Man was ineffectually trying to punch through the phase lord's spatial barrier, the other melee expert mech did not stay idle.

The Blade Chaser Mark II weaved between the ranged attacks of the other expert mechs and flew close enough to charge at the phase lord's rear with the tip of his sword!

Since the expert mech had managed to build up a bit of speed, the piercing power of this thrust attack was considerable.

Yet despite putting the entire weight of the charging behind it, the sword utterly failed to make a single dent in the spatial barrier!

This was a sword that Ketis had specifically developed for Venerable Imon Ingvar, and was considerably sharper than most bladed weapons.

Not only that, but the Blade Chaser Mark II not only relied on the true resonance generated with Venerable Imon Ingvar to power up his charge attack, but also borrowed a considerable amount of juice from Commander Casella Ingvar as well!

Unfortunately for the two Ingvars, their combined strength failed to meet the exceedingly high threshold of overcoming exceedingly resilient defenses of the phase lord.

The only damage produced by this failed attempt to break open the phase lord was the destruction of the sword wielded by the Blade Chaser Mark II!

Imon's expert mech originally wielded two swords, so he was not out of the fight yet. The Blade Chaser Mark II already drew out his second sword but did not circle around to commence another attack right away.

Instead, Imon and Casella decided to fire the Gray Lotus at the resilient phase lord.

As the heirloom weapon became charged with Helena's death energy, it started to spit out gray beams empowered by resonance at the brave and powerful alien adversary.

Different from many other attacks, the gray energy beam did not get blocked in its entirety.

Though much of the power behind the energy beam did end up getting stopped, a small part of it successfully phased through the thin but absurdly powerful spatial barrier!

Once the remnant energy beam managed to overcome the most difficult obstacle, it proceeded to sink straight through the phase lord's oversized suit of armor and strike his naked body!

Though several people like Ves initially had high hopes of this surgical death energy attack, the beam appeared to have entered into a dark and bottomless hole.

The phase lord did not even twitch his body when struck by this exotic attack type!

Master Benedict shook his head at the sight. "The conventional components of the energy beam will get blocked. Only the more esoteric component can pass through, but its power is rather lackluster by itself. It may be possible to kill a dozen people in a row, but a phase lord is an entirely different sort of organism. Their actual body mass is enormous and they are strong in other ways as well. The Blade Chaser Mark II needs to fire that special gun at least several hundred times in order to seriously threaten the phase lord's life."

That took way too much time and energy!

Though Venerable Imon Ingvar did not get discouraged and continued to fire the Gray Lotus whenever possible, the phase lord was not about to sit still and allow himself to get poked by these death energy needles all day.

"Careful! The phase lord is rearing up his body again!"

The C-Man and the Blade Chaser Mark II did not delay in turning around and moved as far away as possible, but it turned out that the phase lord pranked them all again!

"Wait!" Ves called as he looked at the graphs showing the spatial fluctuations generated by the enemy powerhouse. "The phase lord is performing a different technique! Two different coordinates of space are beginning to fluctuate. Wait, he's gone!"

The phase lord teleported!

In one moment, he was fairly far away from everyone else.

In the next moment, the phase lord had teleported to a location that was close to the Minerva!

"The nunser identified our command unit and is attempting to take down the Minerva!"

The Minerva had been boosting the Blade Chaser Mark II all of this time, so the command-oriented expert mech had put down its guard to an extent.

Not only that, but the Minerva also maintained its distance from other friendly expert mechs in an attempt to prevent any area attack from affecting multiple of them at once.

While that meant that the phase lord could not easily attack multiple vulnerable expert mechs at once, it did allow him to confront Commander Casella Ingvar's expert mech by himself!

"SISTER!" Imon called as his Blade Chaser Mark II gained a desperate boost in speed! "Hang on! I'm coming!"

The Minerva was caught off-guard and Casella's reaction became delayed by the need to pull her power back from the Blade Chaser Mark II.

In the meantime, the phase lord had already closed the remaining distance and attempted to gore through the Minerva's fragile torso with his armored head!

A dark gold resonance shield prevented the phase lord from succeeding in this action, but the power of the attack combined with the lower defensive capabilities of the Minerva meant that it broke soon afterwards!

"The Minerva is exposed! Don't let her get hit again!"

Commander Casella Ingvar did not engage in any heroics. The Minerva did not pull out a backup knife so that she could dance with the phase lord.

Instead, the expert command mech wisely tried to back off while making sure to exert a little pressure by firing her luminar crystal weapon at the advancing opponent.

The Minerva quickly detached the long gun barrel from the Irvan in order to transform her into a lighter and more manageable submachine gun.

Soon enough, the shortened Irvan spit out a staccato of rapid-fire laser beams at the phase lord.

Though the nuns' powerhouse experienced a bit of hindrance from all of the light flashing straight into his helmet's optical sensors, the phase lord continued to close the distance with the help of the more powerful warp bubble that he was able to generate around his body!

"SISTER!" Imon roared as he felt that his sister was much closer to death than before!

There had never been any time where he wished that his expert mech possessed more speed than now, but no matter how fast his Blade Chaser Mark II moved, he couldn't beat a member of a race who had been playing around with phasewater long before the human race became civilized!

Though the Blade Chaser Mark II and the C-Men weren't fast or close enough to make it in time, there were two expert mechs that did manage to make it to the phase lord in time to inhibit his actions.

The Conavis Mer Mark II piloted by Venerable Imaris Cross happened to arrive first.

However, the expert light skirmisher might as well resemble a fly because it utterly lacked the power to affect the phase lord in any way.

Its daggers bounced off the spatial barrier in complete disregard of the threat and the power of the weapons empowered by the true resonance generated by a seasoned veteran.

"I can't do anything!" Venerable Imaris Cross complained.

"Then get out of the way!"

A second light mech closed in shortly afterwards even as the Conavis Mer Mark II retreated from the unstoppable enemy.

Unlike the Cross Clan's expert light skirmisher, the one fielded by the Larkinson Clan possessed a bit of extra gear in order to cope against powerful opponents, particularly ones that could not be fought in a normal manner.

The Dark Zephyr did not bother to draw out his Unending alloy knives. Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson knew that they would be utterly useless when employed against a spatial barrier of this magnitude.

Instead, the expert mech drew out a pair of grenades from a couple of his bandoliers and tossed them towards the phase lord right away.

For good measure, the Dark Zephyr drew out another pair of grenades and tossed them right afterwards!

The phase lord actually slowed down and took the initiative to reinforce his spatial barrier as the first two grenades came close.

This appeared to be a prudent decision as the transphasic grenades exploded a short distance away, engulfing the phase lord's position with phasewater-enriched blasts!

Though the phase lord seemed to take these blows in stride, his advance had slowed, granting the Minerva a significantly greater reprieve!

The second pair of transphasic grenades arrived soon afterwards and peppered the disoriented alien 'god' with identical blasts!

The grenades produced a greater effect on the phase lord than any other measure employed so far!

"I wish those had Stormsurge payloads." Ves lamented.

He had been too much of a cheapskate when he equipped the Dark Zephyr with a set of decent but ultimately inadequate transphasic grenades.

"Our current measures are not enough." Master Benedict warned. "We need to employ our trump cards in order to neutralize this threat. The enemy phase lord cannot be allowed to threaten our units any further."

Ves firmly nodded. "Agreed."

In response to this, the Amaranto began to fully charge her Instrument of Doom while calling upon the blessing of the Phase King.

This was an exhausting process for both the expert mech and her pilot. They had already drawn upon the power of the Phase King many times before when they bombarded the enemy battleship, but they could still squeeze more shots if they put more effort.

However, as the Phase King began to infuse the Instrument of Doom with his unique presence, the phase lord abruptly stopped his pursuit.

The powerful alien completely forgot about the Minerva and turned his main optical sensors towards the increasingly brighter Amaranto.

For a moment, the area seemed to stagnate.

Then, a spontaneous spatial shockwave erupted from the phase lord!

"Much to the surprise of every human, an alien sound transmitted over many different communication channels!

"YUUAAEUAH!"

"Uhh, I think we made the cow angry!"

"Watch out, Stark! The phase lord is charging straight in your direction!"

The phase lord advanced at a considerably faster pace than before! He posed such an acute threat towards the Amaranto that Stark did not delay any further and pulled the trigger!

A blindingly bright resonance-empowered energy beam struck the phase lord head-on!

Chapter 4624 Cultural Misunderstandings

During the initial test of the Instrument of Doom, its full-powered blast managed to pierce through sixteen or so asteroids before it could penetrate no further.

Though the test was anything but rigorous due to the considerable variations between asteroids, it was still a clear sign that the penetration power of this weapon was unreal!

However, nothing came for free.

The Phase King had to cooperate with Venerable Stark and the Amaranto to channel a considerable part of his energy to the attack.

Doing it once or twice was not a big deal, but the more the design spirit had to exert his power, the more strain everyone incurred.

Design spirits existed in a different realm and were not meant to affect the material realm to such an exaggerated degree.

Though the Instrument of Doom had become an interface that allowed the Phase King to exert his powers in different ways, it did not change the fact that he was operating out of the confines of his own reality.

The Amaranto meanwhile had to struggle to control and withstand the additional power provided by the Phase King. The expert mech had not been designed to wield the enormous power of the Instrument of Doom and already incurred a small amount of internal damage as a consequence.

As for Venerable Stark, she constantly had to exercise her mind and will to control and direct all of the forces at her disposal. Each time she called upon the Phase King, she had to leverage her force of will and true resonance to give the design spirit greater room to operate in the material realm.

When Ves studied the operation of blessed weapons such as the Instrument of Doom and the Gray Lotus, he concluded that they weren't actually that powerful when utilized by mundane mech pilots.

The two guns were first-generation products that possessed significant flaws and shortcomings.

The greatest deficiency was that they lacked a fully functional channel that bridged the gap between the imaginary realm and the material realm. The design spirits that resided in the former could not channel their energies freely to the latter.

For now, true resonance generated between expert pilots and expert mechs provided a barely functional bridge between the two realms, but this was not an optimal solution.

Ves needed to invent a more permanent channel in a similar vein to Master Benedict's signature Endex System. This was the only way to allow his blessed weapons to operate without requiring the cheating power of a high-ranking mech pilot!

This was an avenue of future research that Ves was more than willing to embark upon if time permitted.

However, that was a matter for the future.

At this time, Venerable Stark had no choice but to help the Phase King bridge the gap between the imaginary realm and the material realm by leveraging her formidable willpower.

She did so with considerable effectiveness. When Ves glanced at the resonance meter for the Amaranto, he could see that the expert rifleman mech's true resonance peaked at 39.1 laveres!

That was deep in the territory of a mid-tier expert pilot. Venerable Stark's growth had always been stellar due to her strong conviction and her incredible fortune for being paired with a masterwork expert mech.

As long as Davia Stark's resonance strength reached 40 laveres, then the Larkinson Clan would gain its first official high-tier expert pilot!

However, this was an artificial distinction. The lavere scale was mostly arbitrary and the thresholds that defined low-tier, medium-tier and high-tier expert pilots were also arbitrary for the most part.

For all intents and purposes, Venerable Stark damage output had already reached the standard of a high-tier expert pilot, especially when her expert

mech had access to powerful firearms such as the Instrument of Vengeance and the Instrument of Doom.

This was why Ves had high expectations for the powerful shot that the Amaranto just unleashed against the phase lord.

Yet as the explosion of energies settled down so that many different sensors could observe the aftermath of the blessed attack, Ves and many others grew disappointed at the result.

"Is... that it? That... is not what I expected."

The good news was that the Instrument of Doom was capable of punching through the phase lord's unreasonably strong spatial barrier.

Unlike the battleship he launched from, the alien powerhouse was only capable of maintaining a single layer at a time.

As long as any attack managed to get through, it was free to inflict damage onto a more solid target!

That was what the Amaranto's latest attack had managed to do. The assistance of the Phase King played a crucial role in helping the powerful energy beam attack drill through the powerful spatial barrier through a combination of skill and power.

Yet despite all of this effort, the exceptional suit of armor worn by the phase lord managed to fend off what little managed to squeeze through!

Although the armor incurred enough damage to weaken its ability to fend off another attack, it was not quite the result that Ves desired.

"Even if this attack managed to punch through the armor, the nunser's physical body is comparable to a biomech in terms of size and resilience."

The phase lord reacted as if he was taken aback by the effectiveness of the attack.

The powerful alien had previously sparred against the Unrelenting for a brief amount of time.

Venerable Neville Magrin had just come off his best state at that time, but even he failed to overcome the phase lord's armor.

Patriarch Reginald and the Mars probably wouldn't have been able to do any better.

The reason why a weaker mech managed to outperform the two ace mechs in this aspect was due to the interference of the Phase King!

Different from every other variable, the Phase King was technically a native.

Not only was he derived from an artificial species that had lived with phasewater for over a million years, but the formidable design spirit recently absorbed the vast majority of the unclean whale's remnant spirituality!

The Phase King couldn't be more familiar with native phasewater manipulation methods. Even if his formidable knowledge and instinctual understanding weren't entirely systematic, the design spirit's phasewater affinity was so great that he was by far the best at overcoming powerful spatial defenses!

Venerable Stark clearly recognized this advantage and already readied her Amaranto for another shot!

The expert mech along with its oversized energy cannon began to glow again. The manifestation of the Phase King seemed to dance around the formidable weapon as if he was caressing it like a lover.

However, the hostile alien god was anything but pleased with the sight. After getting struck by an astonishingly penetrating attack, the enemy made his displeasure known in a much clearer manner than before!

"Sir! We're picking up another transmission from the enemy phase lord! This time, the alien has translated his words in human standard language!"

That certainly caught the attention of Ves and Master Benedict.

The two mech designers curiously listened to what the alien wanted to say.

[I AM THE TRAMPLER OF STARS, THE HOUSEMASTER OF THE FRACTURED HOUSE OF THE COLLAPSING STAR, THE VANQUISHER-COMMANDER OF THE RED CABAL. WHO IS THE HUMAN THAT HAS SUBVERTED THE POWER OF ONE OF OUR GODS?]

Master Benedict along with several other people immediately turned to Ves.

"Ehhh... should I respond?"

"Well, you do have a way with words, especially when it comes to toying with people's beliefs." Benedict quickly responded. "You may as well give it a try, Ves. It would be best if you can negotiate a deal with the enemy, but that is unlikely to succeed. Therefore, try to unbalance the phase lord as much as possible. The more irrational he becomes, the more he is prone to making a mistake."

"Okay."

Ves transmitted his response on the same open channels utilized by his adversary.

"This is Patriarch Ves Larkinson, Journeyman Mech Designer and leader of the Larkinson Clan." Ves spoke in his official tone though he doubted that the powerful nunser could appreciate this nuance. "I am the human you are referring to. The 'phase whale' that you are witnessing is our friend and ally. Do you have a problem with that, Mr. Trampler?"

The phase lord had resumed his struggle by now as he wasn't stupid enough to suspend hostilities while he was in the middle of the battlefield.

The powerful alien no longer bothered to chase after the fleeing Minerva. Compared to taking down the command mech, the nunser much preferred to

confront the Amaranto, as it was the only expert mech that had managed to breach his defenses!

That wasn't the only reason why the phase lord wanted to chase after the Amaranto.

The angry alien strongly expressed his dissatisfaction with another translated message!

[BLASPHEMER! YOU INVADERS HAVE GONE TOO FAR NOW. IT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR YOU TO TAKE OUR STARS. CAPTURING A GOD AND ENSLAVING HIM FOR YOUR OWN PURPOSES IS ONE OF THE MOST UNFORGIVABLE CRIMES YOU CAN COMMIT! I SHALL NOT PERMIT THIS GRIEVOUS ERROR AND CORRECT THIS TRAGEDY. GODS MUST NEVER SUBMIT TO HUMANS! THIS GALAXY IS NOT YOUR HOME!]

Ves blinked when he heard the reason why the phase lord became so aggressive all of a sudden.

"Did you enslave a phase whale, Ves?"

"No! This is a misunderstanding!" Ves defended himself. "The Phase King is not an enslaved phase whale! He's not really a member of this species to begin with. I have formed a mutually beneficial agreement with the design spirit. If he wasn't willing to cooperate with us, then he would have never empowered the Instrument of Doom."

Sure, the Larkinsons originally killed him to begin with, but the Phase King eventually got over it. The design spirit enjoyed his new life a lot better now that he became exposed to the wider cosmos. He also occupied himself by building his own private kingdom in his own corner in the imaginary realm.

In short, Ves did not coerce the Phase King into using his powers to the benefit of the Larkinson Clan.

Such deals tended to be rather suboptimal to Ves as the collaborator rarely did his best under these circumstances.

It was too bad that the phase lord didn't see it that way. In the powerful nunser's mindset, no phase whale willingly lent his power to the destructive human invaders that were in the process of devouring their home galaxy. This was such an inconceivable idea that the only viable explanation was that the evil humans were exploiting an unwilling phase whale!

[FREE OUR GOD!]

The Amaranto fired another fully-charged shot as a response!

This time, the phase lord made sure to turn his body around so that the incoming shot did not target the same damaged section of his suit of armor.

It was a pity that the Instrument of Doom did not contain any Opticonium. This was the resonating exotic that was responsible for allowing the Instrument of Vengeance to bend its energy beams.

Even so, the second ultra-penetrating shot managed to punch through the phase lord's spatial barrier a bit better. The phase lord's armor incurred significantly greater damage this time. Parts of the alien powerhouse's body had become exposed!

"Damn it, he's rearing up again!"

The phase lord performed this classic movement again, but nobody blindly assumed that he was about to unleash an omnidirectional spatial shockwave.

Ves closely observed the sensor readings and saw that the phase lord did not repeat his previous techniques.

"Careful! The phase lord is attempting to pull off another technique this time."

"What is he doing, sir?!"

"I don't know, but we'll find out in the coming seconds!"

Once the phase lord accumulated enough energy, the nunser's armored forehoofs struck the space in front, producing a terrifying spatial fissure that rapidly cracked forward as if it was creating a tear in the fabric of space!

It turned out that the phase lord did possessed a means to attack at range because the spatial fissure followed an irregular path that led straight towards the Amaranto!

Venerable Stark aborted her next attack attempt and tried to push the Amaranto away from the path of the growing fissure, but the unusual attack method continued to track towards the retreating expert mech!

Chapter 4625 Collective Effort

As the spatial fissure continued to tear through the fabric of space, it was clearly gaining on the fleeing Amaranto.

The expert rifleman mech never excelled in speed to begin with, and she was also weighed down by the considerable mass of the Instrument of Doom.

"I will have to toss aside my energy cannon if this doesn't end!" Venerable Davia Stark warned.

That would certainly help with freeing up the Amaranto's speed, but no one knew what would happen after that. If the fissure went on to destroy the Instrument of Doom, the rapid strike force might lose its only chance of punching through the phase lord's near-impervious spatial barrier!

In order to preserve this essential capacity, the rapid strike force needed to relieve the Amaranto's predicament!

Ves looked at the live feed centered on the phase lord and noticed a crucial detail.

"The enemy phase lord has become stationary! He is not making any further movements. Concentrate all of your attacks on him! Do not let up on the pressure!"

Many expert mechs had already begun to do so. Other powerful ranged mechs such as the Minerva, the Promethea and the Star Dancer Mark II implicitly coordinated with each other and concentrated all of their attacks on a precise point in the spatial barrier that was right in front of the alien opponent's damaged armor sections.

"No defense is unassailable!" Venerable Brutus Wodin spoke as his expert mech did not produce any noticeable results up until this point. "Activate your strongest attacks! The alien isn't moving or taking any other actions to mitigate the damage, so this is our greatest chance!"

The ranged mechs in question all started to glow brighter as their pilots charged up to launch more powerful attacks.

More machines joined the fray as well. Melee expert mechs such as the Dark Zephyr and the First Sword ignored their vulnerability against spacequakes and boldly surged forward in order to add their might to the ongoing offensive!

As the various power attacks struck the phase lord, the alien looked visibly more discomfited.

"I don't believe you can ignore my shots anymore!" Venerable Imon Ingvar spoke as the Blade Chaser Mark II continuously fired his Gray Lotus at the same spot from the same angle.

The death energy phasing through the spatial barrier and striking the phase lord's body directly started to produce clear differences at this time. Portions of the alien's external body began to fade and necrotize as Helena's power did its job.

If that wasn't enough, the melee expert melee mechs finally unleashed their own power moves!

The first one to arrive came from the C-Man. The expert mech charged forward with as much momentum as he could build while rearing up his increasingly brighter first!

"VINCENT PUNCH!"

The resulting impact produced a significantly greater result than Vincent's last one. The stressed spatial barrier destabilized a bit further, but still managed to hold up to this point.

The Dark Zephyr followed up next. Though the light skirmisher did not look as if he could exert anything close to the raw power of a brawler mech like the C-Man, it possessed a lot more finesse and precision!

The Larkinson Clan's iconic expert light skirmisher advanced in a different manner than before.

Previously, the machine prioritized speed over anything else. This time, Venerable Tusa entered his Shadow Dance mode, causing his expert mech to become a lot more deadlier and graceful than before.

Once the Dark Zephyr danced his way to the unmoving phase lord, the expert light skirmisher stabbed out both of his shadow-empowered knives at once as he completed his mysterious sequence!

"The Finale!"

This time, the spatial barrier briefly showed a few cracks after getting struck by the Dark Zephyr's oddly lethal attack, but they quickly disappeared as the phase lord's formidable strength proved to be superior in the end.

"The alien is showing weakness! We can do it! We need one more blow to break the spatial barrier!"

The continuous succession of heavy, concentrated attacks not only weakened the integrity of this powerful defensive measure, but also slowed down its recovery rate.

The latter was the most crucial part! The attacking side just needed to launch one more powerful strike to prevent all of the prior strikes from going to waste.

Venerable Dise waited for this moment. She and her First Sword both shared a lot of frustration about their continued inability to fight against the more powerful indigenous threats of the Red Ocean.

In one battle after another, the expert swordsman mech either had to play second fiddle or be forced to take up a paltry ranged support role.

The First Sword was never designed to cheer on other mechs. She was designed to be the ultimate swordsman mech and one that could leverage the skill of her expert pilot to defeat all opponents, no matter how strong or confounding they may be. This was the ethos of the Swordmaidens and it was one that Venerable Dise and her battle partner were determined to pursue!

Unlike other expert pilots, Venerable Dise had no desire to wait until the Larkinson Clan's mech designers upgraded her expert mech again.

The First Sword was hardly the strongest or the most cutting-edge expert mech of the Larkinsony Army anymore, but Venerable Dise deeply understood her expert mech and how to control the machine to an extremely fine degree.

Not only that, but she had also put a lot more effort into training and improving her fighting style than any of the other expert pilots.

That was not to say that her colleagues and peers were weak. They all possessed their own strengths, but it was undeniable that many of them had developed a high dependence on the tech at their disposal.

Venerable Dise was the only active expert pilot who fully embraced traditional swordsmanship.

She embraced its somewhat archaic and cumbersome customs and regularly exchanged insights with other powerful swordmasters.

One of the problems that they became increasingly more concerned about was the challenge of breaking through the powerful defenses often employed by the native aliens.

The Heavensword Association had already sent out multiple batches of pioneers to the Red Ocean, and some of them found that their vaunted swordsman mechs attained less than desirable results in confrontations against alien forces.

Whether it was the spatial barriers projected by organic powerhouses or the more ubiquitous transphasic energy shields produced by highly advanced generators, many sword styles that had proven to be effective in the past no longer became as reliable as before.

Many sword styles in use today had been adapted to mech combat. Their creators and contributors never paid much attention to the need to employ them against phasewater-based defenses.

All of that changed in recent years.

The various swordmasters working on these collective projects freely pooled their efforts together in order to work for the common benefit of the Heavensword Association and all traditional swordsmen.

It was an impressive development and one that started to produce several useful results due to the involvement of so many powerful warriors.

Venerable Dise might not have been able to contribute much to this great endeavor, but she and Ketis were able to absorb all of the new insights.

Armed with lots of new theories, the two powerful Swordmaidens collaborated on supplementing their sword styles so that they would have a way to breach through the energy shields of a powerful warship in the future!

Although the phase lord was not exactly the opponent that Venerable Dise had in mind when she created her latest sword technique, she had little doubt that her upcoming attack would be just as effective.

As the First Sword surged closer, the expert swordsman mech lifted up her Decapitator and began to infuse it with true resonance.

The long, sharp and heavy greatsword did not glow as brilliantly as other weapons, but it radiated a degree of lethality that was much more contained than usual!

Venerable Dise and the First Sword did not try to empower the Decapitator's next strike by themselves, though.

Aware that this might be the only opportunity for her to launch a power attack onto her opponent, Dise did not hesitate to call for help from the lead designer of First Sword!

"Ketis!"

"I know! I've been observing the battle from remote. Let me give you a hand."

Despite being separated by a couple of light-years, Ketis remained as up to date on the situation on the battlefield as the rapid strike force.

She not only understood Venerable Dise's predicament, but also shared her goal in trying to prove that melee mechs had not become obsolete in this new and different galaxy!

"Sharpie. It's time to shine!"

"Sharp! Sharp!"

Just like Ves, Ketis possessed an active connection to all of her masterworks.

This came in exceptionally this time as Ketis somehow managed to transfer her companion spirit from the Bloodsinger which she carried onto her person to the Decapitator that was currently held by the First Sword!

As soon as a part of Ketis' extraordinary power entered the much larger blade, the Decapitator's sharp edge glinted with additional power.

"Respa." Dise called out.

Not many people were aware that Ves actually bestowed Venerable Dise with her own companion spirit. The swordsman mech specialist rarely showed Respa off and mostly spent her time cultivating her own strength.

However, that didn't mean that Respa was useless to her. Not only did the greatsword-shaped spirit serve as the basis of the battle formations of the Swordmaidens, she also got along really well with Sharpie!

As soon as Respa entered the Decapitator's conceptual space, the humanoid-looking Sharpie grasped the spiritual greatsword and held it aloft as if she was a champion swordswoman!

"Sharp! Sharp! Sharp!"

The companion spirits of Venerable Dise and Ketis did not conflict with each other. Instead, their different powers resonated with each other, allowing them to exert greater strength than if they were on their own.

The two Swordmaidens shared a common history. They also worked together so extensively that their close cooperation already approached the standard of the Gemini Family!

They truly saw each other as sisters in heart if not in blood.

Once the Decapitator was almost bursting with power, the First Sword finally reached the phase lord and unleashed a slash that was followed by a glittering wake of stars!

"PHASE BREAKER!"

The First Sword smoothly flew away as the expert mech completed her most magnificent sword technique to this date!

Though the Phase Breaker was not as piercing as the Sword of Lydia or as overwhelming as the Blade Storm, the extraordinary sword move possessed its own charm!

This became evident when the glowing river of stars struck the spatial barrier an instant after the Decapitator's enormous blade moved past.

As the glittering points of light struck the translucent surface, the spatial barrier did not begin to crack.

Instead, it seemed to melt as if a thin wall of ice had just been struck with many different flames!

The phase lord reacted violently to this unexpected attack. The powerful alien interrupted the spatial fissure that he had been extending through space and hastily performed a short but instant displacement technique to evade the next round of attacks!

Ves and many other people did not expect the First Sword to make such a massive difference!

"It was almost too late."

The First Sword's attack had saved the Amaranto.

This was because the spatial fissure had reached the expert rifleman mech and tore a deep cut into one of her legs!

If the spatial fissure persisted any longer, then Venerable Stark might have been forced to eject the cockpit in order to preserve her life!

"Attack the phase lord! Now is the time!"

Now that the alien 'god' temporarily lost his spatial barrier for some reason, no one wanted to give him the opportunity to restore it again.

One energy beam after another struck the phase lord's body with unerring accuracy. Pieces of armor quickly disintegrated and completely exposed the alien to the full fury of many different expert mechs!

However, before the vulnerable alien endured any more hits, his body abruptly started to grow in size!

"What is happening?!"

"The phase lord... is unveiling his true body!"

A considerably more powerful presence radiated onto the battlefield as a nunsar that was the size of a corvette-class starship had come into shape!

Chapter 4626 Storms

The phase lord's appeared to have no choice but to expose his real body.

He was much larger than he initially appeared. Upon reaching a size that was comparable to a typical corvette, the giant nunsar thankfully did not grow any bigger.

He already made for an intimidating sight, though!

Even if this so-called 'Trampler of Stars' did not match the scale of mighty battleships such as the Tower of Babel, it was still rather scary to witness his true body.

If he was already strong and difficult to deal with when he was in his miniature form, how much worse would he be when he was in his full form?

Ves had no doubt that the phase lord became a lot more dangerous after this transformation. He could clearly feel how the immense power of the Trampler of Stars became a lot less constrained.

Though the alien still had trouble with reforming his vital spatial barrier, his physical body resisted the incoming attacks with a level of durability that matched the toughness of first-class biomechs!

Every single part of the phase lord's body was naturally reinforced with phasewater, some parts more than others. Though the giant nuser was most certainly accumulating a steady amount of damage, all of that seemed a bit pale compared to the immense bulk and inherent resilience of his body.

The phase lord looked incredibly furious. He had been tormented by these expert mechs far too long.

The powerful alien had lost the ability to transmit a message with the disintegration of his suit of armor, but the phase lord needed no words to convey the absolute animosity he held towards the human machines, particularly the Amaranto and the First Sword!

However, just as the Trampler of Stars was about to initiate the second round of combat, the alien sensed something amiss and turned around.

While the phase lord had been fighting against the expert mechs launched from the Antonio Cross, the Mars and the alien battleship concentrated on their own dance!

The Mars initially held an advantage and managed to inflict a lot of damage onto the ruined front half of the Tower of Stars!

Already weakened by prior attacks as well as the flames spread by the Promethea, the Mars came like a wrecking ball and not only opened fire with its ARCEUS System, but also came even close so that it could shred more materials with its shotgun!

Each blast from the shotgun poked a lot of new holes in a wider expanse of the hull. When the Mars flew even closer and began to chop at the hull with its transphasic axe, it started to make brisk progress towards the more intact parts of the alien battleship.

However, everything changed once the Mars neared the crucial threshold. Just as Patriarch Reginald was ready to destroy more meaningful ship compartments, he sensed an acute threat and quickly pulled his Mars back out before a powerful series of explosions engulfed a part of the Tower of Stars!

It turned out that the aliens had already planted explosives that allowed them to detach the derelict half of their battleship.

The violent explosions destroyed so many structural parts at once that the battleship essentially snapped in half!

No one cared about the burning and utterly ruined half of the hybrid alien vessel. What mattered was the intact rear half which had lost a lot of deadweight all of a sudden.

Though the balance of the remnant was completely different, it was undeniable that the ship had also become a lot smaller and lighter all of a sudden!

The separation of so much deadweight allowed the shortened battleship to regain the initiative in the fight and radically speed up her movements as well as fill up the gap in her defenses.

When the Mars next attempted to attack the most vulnerable side of the shortened battleship, the powerful positron beams fired by the ARCEUS System struck one of the segmented energy shields produced by a generator that the aliens had moved to this side in an emergency.

Even if it looked as if the vulnerable side was only covered by a single layer or two layers of energy shields at best, this was still a lot more than what the Mars could ordinarily punch through!

Normally, that was enough to deny Patriarch Reginald Cross and the Mars the satisfaction of ripping the alien battleship apart, but this time was different.

Reginald had already primed the special packages loaded inside the shoulder-mounted missile launchers of his ace mech.

It only took a single thought to launch both missiles in quick succession!

One of the new experimental Stormsurge Missiles flew ahead of the other and crossed the short distance until it exploded against the segmented energy shield.

Instead of producing a conventional explosive blast, a violent electrical storm came to life, scrambling and overpowering the transphasic energy shield with much greater effectiveness than ordinary EMP attacks!

As the phasewater-enhanced storm faded, so did the energy shield. The generator responsible for projecting it had completely overloaded!

The second Stormsurge Missile advanced much slower, but that allowed it to strike the second segmented energy shield with the same electrical fury as before!

Just as the second layer disappeared, the Mars quickly charged through the momentary gap before the aliens had any chance of plugging it with another set of segmented energy shields!

"Hahahaha! I'm inside now!"

Patriarch Reginald had lots of reasons to feel ecstatic.

There was a huge difference between staying on one side of an energy shield and the other side of an energy shield!

Even though the Tower of Babel's formidable array of orven energy shields were still operational, none of them could hinder the ace hybrid mech any further as the Mars had moved well past their minimum projection range!

"Those Stormsurge Missiles were worth their weight in phasewater!"

Expensive as they may be, the value these experimental products provided far exceeded the loss of a couple of kilograms of phasewater and a heap of money.

This was because as long as Reginald successfully took down the alien battleship, the Golden Skull Alliance was bound to salvage materials worth far in excess of what the Cross Clan spent!

The Mars immediately took advantage of its superior positioning by firing all of its integrated energy weapons at several different primary gun batteries!

Several extremely powerful resonance-empowered positron beams struck the thick and wide bases of several massive kinetic cannon turrets.

Though the human-developed first-class armor resisted the attacks to an admirable degree, they could withstand repeated attacks from the ARCEUS System.

The Mars had already fought for a while and outputted a lot of energy in the process, but its energy reserves were still relatively healthy thanks to the use of an extra energy pack.

The Tower of Babel did not allow the ace mech to attack her most powerful cannons with impunity.

Numerous defensive systems designed to repel starfighters and other close-ranged threats came online.

Hundreds of tertiary batteries had already been opening fire onto the Mars for a while now. The small but rapid-firing laser cannons, flechette cannons and

interceptor missiles did little but induce more strain onto the ace mech's Saint Kingdom.

What was different now was that the Mars had come close enough for the Tower of Babel to deploy strange rods with holes along their length.

It soon became obvious what these rods were meant to do as powerful currents coursed through their structures.

Soon enough, incredibly powerful electrical bolts launched from the rods and struck the Mars with much greater violence than any other attack it had endured!

The bolts struck the Mars so quickly that the ace mech could not evade them at such a close range!

Powered by the gigantic reactors of the alien battleship, these electrical bolts struck the Saint Kingdom of the Mars with ruinous power, causing it to destabilize at an alarming rate.

However, it was not as if the Mars had no choice but to passively endure the attacks.

"Begone!" Patriarch Reginald roared as his Mars lifted up its transphasic shotgun and opened fire on one cluster of power rods.

The resonance-empowered pellets unleashed by this weapon instantly scythed the power rods at many different points, causing the rods to quickly collapse and tear themselves asunder as they no longer possessed the physical integrity to control the powerful currents!

The Mars also utilized its ARCEUS System to cut off the rods that were further away, causing them to snap in half without any suspense!

It only took a few more seconds for all of the electrical rods within range to be wiped off this side of the battleship's hull!

Though the small but annoying tertiary guns kept firing at the Mars on a continuous basis, Patriarch Reginald was too lazy to eliminate them. He directed his Mars to continue its assault on the surviving primary kinetic cannon batteries and just managed to eliminate a few more before he suddenly sensed the arrival of yet another potent threat!

Reginald wasn't arrogant enough to disregard this threat. He suspended the next attack and quickly commanded the Mars to evade.

The ace mech was more maneuverable than before, so it did not entirely make it out of the trajectory of a small but incredibly powerful plasma bolt!

In the end, the domain field of the Mars resisted much of the damage before the remainder of the bolt only managed to scorch the leg of the ace mech.

Reginald became a lot warier though as he tried to guess what sort of threat may be powerful enough to launch that kind of attack.

He knew that the battleship was large enough to host a small contingent of starfighters.

What he expected to see was the appearance of a powerful starfighter that was able to match the performance of a first-class multipurpose mech.

What Reginald didn't expect to see today was the emergence of a genuine human first-class multipurpose mech!

He could scarcely believe what the sensor systems of his machine were feeding back to his mind.

The mech that emerged from one of the vehicle-sized hatches of the Tower of Babel was undeniably human without doubt.

Its shape was classically humanoid and did not resemble that of a nunsen, a puelmer or a phase whale.

Its material composition appeared to be made out of relatively standard first-class alloys.

Though Reginald himself did not understand much about these materials, Master Benedict who had been paying attention to what was happening over here quickly informed the ace pilot that the alloys were not native products.

This was because they blended locally sourced exotics with materials imported from the Milky Way Galaxy!

Master Benedict was able to gather a lot of other clues. From the design of the first-class mech to the exposed weapon systems of the machine, everything about this newcomer was marked with an undeniable human brand!

Reginald could even feel that the mech pilot inside the cockpit of the impressive machine was human as well!

Yet why did this mech deploy in support of the aliens?

"Who are you?" Reginald aggressively queried over an open communication channel. "Identify yourself!"

The response from the first-class multipurpose mech was to fire at the Mars with a combination of integrated weapons!

A powerful plasma bolt as well as a more exotic attack method that came in the form of strange gravitic balls struck the Saint Kingdom of the Mars, weakening it further to a substantial degree.

Reginald shook in his cockpit. What he saw today broke his faith in humanity.

To see a member of his race fall to this extent was a traumatic sight to the ace pilot.

"You... you... TRAITOR!"

The Mars exploded with power! Its ARCEUS System fired a full salvo straight at the first-class mech, only for the traitor machine to resist the powerful with a transphasic energy shield that was strong enough to resist this astonishing blow!

Reginald did not know who or what the first-class mech was standing for, but it didn't particularly matter.

This was because every human traitor deserved his contempt!

"DIE, TRAITOR!"

Chapter 4627 Two Powerful Mechs

Two powerful mechs dueled against each other above the hull of a half-ruined alien battleship!

On one side was the Mars, an ace hybrid mech that not only pushed the limits of second-class tech and materials, but also amplified the extraordinary qualities of its powerful mech pilot! The union between ace pilot and ace mech was high, allowing the latter to exert considerably more combat power than normal!

On the other side was an unnamed first-class multipurpose mech. Though the machine was unquestionably human in origin, neither its design nor markings gave the Golden Skull Alliance any clue where it came from. Its mech pilot was also skilled enough to control a machine of this caliber but did not possess any notable skills that could help with deciphering his origin.

The two mechs came from two different worlds as far as everyone was concerned. They had little in common and were never seriously designed to clash against each other.

However, the circumstances did not permit any other outcome.

So long that the Golden Skull Alliance wanted to rescue Lord Pearian Yorul-Tavik, the Mars needed to gain the upper hand in this battle!

As for the humans who sided with the aliens, they must have their own reasons for saving the alien ship from defeat.

As the two machines danced around each other while exchanging blows with their ranged weapons, Patriarch Reginald became surprised at how well the other machine held up against the assault.

It was unacceptable for a human traitor to be piloting a mech this good!

"Die already!"

Each time the Mars opened fire with its ARCEUS System, the first-class multipurpose easily resisted the attacks with its uncommonly compact and powerful transphasic energy shield!

Each time the enemy machine employed a variety of integrated plasma weapons, gravitic weapons and more, the Saint Kingdom of the Mars suffered significant blows and reduced its capacity to absorb further damage.

"This bastard is still alive!" Patriarch Reginald angrily roared. "Why is everyone prancing around with unbreakable energy shields these days?! What does it take to beat this machine?!"

"There is a broad spectrum of first-class multipurpose mechs." Master Benedict quickly replied over a private communication channel. "Your Mars can definitely crush the weaker ones with ease, but your current adversary is several tiers above that. This first-class mech is on par with the best Terran or Rubarthan standard mechs. It still falls short of matching the performance of an MTA mech, but the gap is not that great. The mech pilot also appears to be on par with a mech pilot from a first-rate superstate. His genetic aptitude should at least be A- and he has a full set of augmentations that significantly boosts his cognitive facilities."

"What does that mean!?"

"It means that the enemy machine can keep up with your Mars despite not being an ace mech itself! It also means that the enemy mech pilot may not be as good as you, but his reaction speed and other basic performance parameters are barely good enough to keep up with your maneuvers. You are fighting against an opponent that is close to the pinnacle of what standard mechs can offer in this mech generation!"

"So it's like fighting against a Terran or a Rubarthan mech, that's it?!" Reginald questioned as he continually tried to figure out the weaknesses of his current adversary.

"You can say that." Benedict replied. "First-class multipurpose mechs generally hold an advantage in ranged combat. Battles of this nature tend to depend more on the hard performance of your mechs rather than the skills and abilities of the mech pilots. My suggestion is to get up close and overwhelm the pilot and mech with your ferocity. If the mech isn't specifically designed to fight against high-ranking mechs, then it shouldn't be able to prevent your Saint Kingdom from affecting the enemy mech pilot. That may be the key to defeating your opponent in the most efficient possible manner."

That was a good suggestion! The greatest advantage that ace pilots possessed over everyone else was the powerful domain fields that they could project around themselves.

Saint Kingdoms were one of the few phenomena that could bypass almost every conventional barrier!

The Mars immediately moved into action. Its projected cape left a bright red tail behind its passage as the machine flew straight towards the first-class multipurpose mech while opening fire with its transphasic shotgun!

Though the shotgun blast did not debilitate the highly advanced machine, the mech that sided with the aliens met the incoming charge by fortifying its

energy shield while at the same time generating some sort of gravitic singularity in front!

Though the Mars could take this attack, Reginald was wary of moving head-long into this exotic attack. He therefore directed his ace mech to circle around before hacking at the first-class multipurpose mech from another angle!

Yet before the Mars could crash its transphasic axe onto the first-class mech's energy shield, the latter opened up yet another gun port and launched out a physical net that was made of extremely tough materials!

It only took an instant for Reginald to judge that his Mars wouldn't be able to cut the net with a single chop of his axe.

Although his ace mech could still shred the net through other means, that took up a bit too much time and effort for his liking.

The Mars evaded the net as best as possible, though its recent changes had made it worse in this aspect. The ace mech was forced to use the flat side of its axe as a tool to push the net aside before it could reach the first-class mech itself.

"Break for me already!" Reginald roared as his Mars unleashed a shotgun blast at short range while at the same time lashing out at its target with a kick!

The energy shield resisted the attacks just as well as before, but Reginald knew that it was impossible for the first-class mech to last forever.

The Mars unleashed its ARCEUS System at the first-class mech at close range, hammering its strained energy shield with the full force of nine resonance-empowered positron beams!

However, the first-class mech did not remain passive at this time. By relying on its energy shield to block any interruptions, a pair of hot and burning plasma swords extended from the arms of the high tech machine!

These plasma swords struck at the Mars with energy levels that surpassed the original plasma sword of the late Neo Amadeus!

While the newly unveiled weapons did not benefit from any true resonance amplification, they didn't need it as the extremely powerful energies fueling their active states was devastating in itself!

"You don't deserve to wield those weapons!" Reginald accused as his Mars deftly avoided the plasma swords whenever possible.

The emergence of the plasma swords constrained the Mars at close range, but not by much. This was because there was a huge difference in skill!

The pilot of the first-class multipurpose mech was definitely qualified to control such a powerful machine, but he was still subject to many human limitations.

Reginald had moved beyond that point! He had undergone two major transformations, which meant that his skills, his instincts, his combat acumen and more were far superior to that of any standard mech pilot, even first-raters who enjoyed the best growth environment!

There were many qualities that money simply couldn't buy. When the pilot of the first-class mech cavorted with aliens or like-minded traitors, Reginald had been struggling to fight to save himself and his clan from extinction!

Even before that point, he had thrown himself in battle every chance he got. He fought for glory and for the honor of his clan. He braved death more times than he could count and vanquished over opponents who enjoyed more advantages than himself!

He had earned his way up to ace pilot, and that made him different than this treacherous coward who would rather consort with aliens than to help humanity prosperity prosper!

As his Mars continued to tangle with the plasma sword-wielding machine, Reginald's Saint Kingdom passed straight through the transphasic energy shield and directly affected both the enemy mech and the enemy mech pilot!

Although the two were surprisingly able to resist the worst of Reginald's influence, that did not mean that they were immune to domineering Saint Kingdom!

"Don't think you can mess with the pilot of a first-class mech as easily as that of a second-class mech." Master Benedict reminded Reginald. "Every first-class mech is equipped with a first-class neural interface. There are many reasons why first-class neural interfaces are better than its lesser versions. Chief among them is offering greater safety and security. Not only do they allow mech pilots to get away with more without risking brain damage, they also fortify the man-machine connection that effectively enables both the mech and mech pilot to resist adverse metaphysical effects to a greater degree."

"Can you translate that to normal people's words, mech designer?!"

"Your Saint Kingdom is less effective against a first-class mech!"

"But it still works, right?!"

"Barely."

Patriarch Reginald grinned as his ace mech just evaded another plasma sword strike. "That's enough."

The Mars hardly let up the pace. It continued to maneuver closely around the first-class mech in an attempt to flank it or force it to utilize its plasma swords in a more clumsy manner.

The ace mech never stopped attacking. It exerted constant pressure by attacking with its ARCEUS System, its transphasic shotgun and transphasic axe in quick succession and on rotation.

Even if the Mars did not have the variety of attack methods of its current adversary, it was already enough to do the job!

The poor battleship underneath the brawling machines suffered almost just as much from all of the fighting.

Each time the Mars or the first-class mech evade an attack, the chances were great that the hull would bear the brunt of damage.

Patriarch Reginald deliberately took advantage of his by attacking at higher angles, thereby making sure that every missed shot would land on the hull of the Tower of Babel!

Although the first-class mech tried its best to discourage Reginald from destroying their playground, it was exceedingly difficult to control an enemy ace pilot in battle.

"Traitor! Nothing will stop me from tearing apart your precious alien ship!"

"Why do you call yourself a human when you have sold your soul to aliens?"

"The pathetic alien races of the Red Ocean don't deserve your help! What are you doing here? Since when must humanity consort with the weak?"

"Are your parents proud of you? Is this what you truly wanted to do with your life? Tell me, pilot!"

It didn't matter whether the first-class multipurpose mech had shut down all communications. The mech pilot sitting in the cockpit couldn't not escape

Reginald's questioning as his Saint Kingdom directly allowed him to shout into his enemy ears!

Over and over, Reginald pressed upon the mind of the mech pilot. Even if the unknown traitor enjoyed a lot of protection from his active connection with a powerful first-class multipurpose mech, there was no changing the fact that the metal pressure was taking a toll.

First-class multipurpose mechs were extremely difficult to control by nature. They incorporated so many different functions and demanded so much more attention that their pilots needed to perform to a much higher standard all of the time.

This became a lot harder now that Reginald purposely utilized his Saint Kingdom to attack the mentality of his adversary!

The first-class mech began to make mistakes. It only took a single moment of inattention for the Mars to take brutal advantage of the hole and launch extra devastating attacks onto the energy shield of the machine!

Still, despite all of this progress, the Saint Kingdom of the Mars was growing increasingly more feeble after trying to mitigate a lot of plasma attacks and other forms of attack.

Neither side could keep this up for long!

Eventually, a change had to occur in order to break this unwelcome stalemate.

Reginald just received a notification of what was about to happen.

"The Penitent Sisters and the Glory Seekers are just swinging around the corner of the brown dwarf star! Keep holding back the first-class mech and make sure you destroy as many primary and secondary gun batteries as possible!"

Chapter 4628 Mine Now

In the command center of the Antonio Cross, many people started to get impressed by the duel between the Mars and the mysterious first-class multipurpose mech.

Ves and several other people had already sent a message to the MTA in order to warn them about the appearance of human traitors.

They had no idea how the mechers would respond to this news, but it was bound to rile them up given how much stronger the aliens had become due to human collusion.

As Ves began to pay more attention to how well the first-class multipurpose mech was keeping up with the Mars, he began to imagine how powerful the MTA must be. Their numbers were incredible and they were able to field an incredible amount of mechs that performed just as well as the mystery mech that fought to protect the alien battleship!

"Mechs like these are quite numerous, but they aren't as common as you think." Master Benedict told him after the older man noticed his fellow colleague's fascination. "Think about what it takes to equip a mech with a highly miniaturized shield generator that is able to project a transphasic energy shield of this magnitude."

"It must cost hundreds of millions of MTA credits. Its performance is just too incredible considering that it is resisting as much damage as a fully-fledged warship."

Benedict scoffed. "I wouldn't be surprised if its actual cost is over a billion MTA credits, especially if it is an experimental piece of cutting-edge high technology. The greatest limitation of high technology like this is materials. It takes extremely potent high-grade exotics to produce this extremely difficult technical feat. Do you think that the supply of these exceedingly high-performing materials is abundant?"

"I am guessing not." Ves replied.

"To be fair, many exotics can be found in many different locations. They are not exactly scarce per se. The real issue is that the demand far exceeds the available supply. Take a key material such as phasewater for instance. I estimate that the transphasic energy shield of that first-class mech can only be produced by a shield generator that has incorporated at least 3 kilograms of phasewater."

"...I see what you mean." Ves replied. "It is easy enough for a typical first-rate state to equip one elite mech with this shield generator model. The state can even scrounge up enough available phasewater to equip a squad of mechs with this extravagance. Any further than that and the state will have to sacrifice other projects that also have an urgent need for phasewater."

Master Benedict nodded. "That is correct. Phasewater is an exotic that has wide applications in many different fields and sectors. That makes it so that the available supply of phasewater can run out extremely quickly. Do you see why the MTA has implemented many measures to collect as much of this substance as possible? The mechers have the ability to harvest it themselves, but if they want to build more mechs of this high standard, they will quickly run out of their reserves, and that just applies to phasewater."

"I see."

Ves was not completely ignorant of the state of first-class mechs. Though he did not spend too much time on studying them in order to avoid getting afflicted by tech envy, he already understood that the amount of mechs relative to the population was much less.

The cost of building mechs and raising mech pilots had become so much more expensive that most states tended to focus on quality rather than quantity.

Material constraints probably played a role in limiting the absolute numbers of first-class mechs as well. With hard limits on how much phasewater and other rare materials could be obtained, it was better to concentrate them on a smaller group of top-performing mechs rather than a larger group of middling machines.

This caused Ves to develop interesting questions about the origin of the mystery mech and its pilot.

"Where does this mech hail from?" Ves wondered.

"We might never know." Master Benedict shrugged. "I have been studying the design of the mech for several minutes, but I have yet to find any identifying features that can pin down where it was built and who worked on it. The mech was deliberately designed with deniability in mind. Its design is so devoid of eccentricities that many possible first-class mech designers could have designed such a mech. I believe that even the shield generator is based on more generic principles despite performing so well. It relies more on the raw power of phasewater and other high-value materials than on any exquisite tech or methods that can be traced to a specific developer."

Anyone who was good enough to design such a strong first-class mech most definitely possessed the skill to prevent it from getting traced!

Ves could speak from personal experience in this regard. While it may be a lot harder to avoid leaving any identifying markers with a more powerful mech design, a Master Mech Designer should easily be able to cope with this challenge.

As the Mars and the first-class multipurpose mech continued to wear down each other's defenses, another development took place that finally pushed the battle into another phase.

The fleet carriers and combat carriers that had previously split ways with the Antonio Cross finally managed to turn around the brown dwarf star!

The flotilla of carriers came at an excellent time. While the enemy battleship had not yet lost all of its formidable cannons, the Mars successfully wrecked the most threatening primary kinetic cannon batteries as well as a decent amount of secondary laser cannon batteries.

Even if the Mars no longer destroyed any additional guns, the high relative velocities of the flotilla relative to the Tower of Babel meant that it became exceedingly difficult to shoot down the fast-moving ships on approach!

This was a much better scenario than what the Golden Skull Alliance originally planned for. Ves and the others originally assumed that the alien battleship would be able to retain her full complement of warship-grade armaments. However, now that the Mars had slipped inside the main defensive perimeter of the Tower of Babel, this huge threat no longer became such a big deal!

That was not to say that the enemy did not try to prepare to meet the incoming wave of threats.

Several high-quality starfighters deployed from the same hangar bay the first-class multipurpose mechs had emerged, but before they could go anywhere, a salvo of resonance-empowered positron beams easily shot them down before they could begin their defensive mission!

Though the Mars had to endure a few more attacks from the first-class multipurpose mech in order to intercept the alien starfighters in time, Reginald found it was well worth the price!

"Hahahaha! No one is going anywhere when I am around! Don't think about running away!"

The approach of the Penitent Sisters and the Glory Seekers boosted his confidence and depressed the morale of his opponents. He already found that the enemy mech pilot's efficiency had dropped.

"Are you scared now?" Reginald asked as he utilized his Saint Kingdom to gain a better read on his opponent. "Our mechs might not mean much to you, but we have beaten alien warships before. This half-ruined ship that you are trying to defend is already marked for death. You would stand a better chance of accomplishing something meaningful by running away while you still have the chance. I might be persuaded to let you go if you turn your mech around and get the hell out of this star system."

Patriarch Reginald grew disappointed when the traitor pilot did not take the bait.

It would have been so nice if the pilot gave in to the pressure and lost the courage to persist against the Mars. Reginald was confident that he would be able to contain the fleeing first-class mech somehow!

The first-class multipurpose mech started to show off more nasty tricks.

For example, the mech launched a small spread of missiles that actually contained highly illegal fusion warheads!

The sudden launch of these potent missiles at short range might have caused many mechs to suffer, but the Mars and its pilot were different!

As soon as the missiles escaped from their hidden launchers, Patriarch Reginald's Saint Kingdom acted on them with no restraint!

Unlike the frame of the first-class mech, the missiles weren't directly connected to the mech pilot. They had wholly detached themselves from the machine they came from and operated through self-contained AIs and algorithms.

Normally, that wasn't really important, but that just happened to give Reginald an opportunity to exert his unique strength!

Every ace pilot possessed a strong ability or specialty. It was what defined them at this stage and also paved their way to their possible ascension to god pilot.

Saint Yila Mayorka was able to bludgeon her targets with much greater physical force than her mech could produce.

Saint Jeremiah Gauge was far more powerful when he fought with swords.

Saint Saint Jelmer Osenring could produce massive, expanding shockwaves with every kinetic strike from his ace heavy artillery mech.

Saint Marissa Lewandowski was able to obscure her ace light skirmisher and the surrounding environment by turning her Saint Kingdom into an obscuring domain that blinded everyone and everything inside.

Given all of these powerful tricks, Patriarch Reginald's own domain should have been just as powerful or useful, but he never really had an opportunity to show what he was capable of in previous battles.

This time was different, because he finally met an opponent who was stupid enough to launch missiles at the Mars!

"Hahaha! Are these yours? Well tough luck, because they are mine!"

The missiles had already entered the range of Reginald's expansive Saint Kingdom, so he was able to leverage his formidable willpower to forcibly take control over the missiles!

He had no idea how it actually worked, but it wasn't important. Patriarch Reginald was an ace pilot that naturally sought to dominate his adversaries, and his extraordinary willpower reflected this obsession!

Though the missiles were actually quite challenging for Reginald to subvert due to their sophisticated security measures and extensive precautions, his willpower ran through everything that stood in its way and finally managed to take over control before they could get close to the Mars!

The four hijacked missiles only soared without direction for a moment before they shifted their trajectories to their new targets!

One of them turned around and flew right back at the first-class multipurpose mech while the other three spread out and attempted to strike the hull of the alien battleship at three different points!

The Tower of Babel somehow detected the danger she was in quite soon. Her tertiary gun batteries redirected their fire to intercept the missiles, managing to down just one of them before it was too late.

The first-class multipurpose mech succeeded in shooting down another missile, the remaining two missiles already struck their targets before it could do anything more!

Two powerful explosions engulfed different points of the alien battleship's hull!

The fusion warheads were of limited power, but their might was so concentrated that by the time they had expended all of their power, the Tower of Babel gained two new holes on her structure!

The performance of the alien battleship dropped even further, making it much more difficult for this formidable vessel to stop the advance of the incoming mech troops.

As the aliens and the human traitors came under heavy pressure, the latest arrivals rapidly closed in from the distance.

Soon enough, several thousand mechs deployed in space.

Given that they launched from carriers that were already moving extremely quickly in space, the machines themselves were also approaching the Tower of Babel at high speed!

Almost all of the mechs looked alike. The Penitent Sisters preferred to field the base form of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark II, as the original model maintained the strongest connection to Helena.

The Glory Seekers tended to field more specialized and varied variants of the Valkyrie Redeemer Mark II, so their machines were not entirely uniform.

The most powerful among them were the two expert mech versions that the Larkinson Clan had especially designed for the Handmaidens of Death!

Alongside these two Glory Seeker expert mechs, the Penitent Sisters also brought forth a champion.

Venerable Joshua once again found himself taking up the responsibility to lead a troop of radical female mech pilots once again.

"The initiative is all yours." Legion Commander Valerie Chancy transmitted to Joshua from one of the carrier vessels. "Our sisters will put their faith in the Daughter of Death and you. Good luck and kill as many aliens as you can. Make sure you get the timing right."

"You don't need to remind me, commander." Joshua tersely replied.

Chapter 4629 Begging For Life

Venerable Joshua had mixed feelings about his mission.

He did not have much sympathy for the aliens. The Tower of Babel crushed Lord Pearian Yorul-Tavik's pioneering fleet a few months ago, thereby depriving lots of innocent humans of their lives.

After that, the alien battleship immediately opened fire on Otrus Magrin's pioneering fleet.

Even if no one working for the notorious vulture were exactly innocent themselves, the aliens could have chosen to turn around and flee without facing much resistance.

Instead, the alien commanders in charge of the Tower of Babel chose to perpetuate the cycle of violence and almost wiped out the forces of Cenatus Prospecting entirely!

Whether the aliens of the battleship deserved mercy or not was no longer a question that Joshua was willing to consider.

He was a human, and he needed to stand up for his own race. It would have been much easier for him to reject his current task if his adversaries were much more reasonable.

"Is this the actual state of the cosmos? Is there no other way to put a halt to this unending cycle of violence?"

"DON'T BE SUCH A PUSSY, JOSHUA." His living expert mech replied. "A BATTLEFIELD IS NO PLACE FOR YOU TO DAYDREAM OR CONTEMPLATE DEEP PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS. IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO ADD ANOTHER PILE OF SKULLS TO YOUR LONG AND EXTENSIVE KILL LIST."

"Hey! Don't attribute all of the enemies killed by the battle formation attacks to my name! I am only helping Helena do her job. That is all. It isn't as if I have killed all of those people myself!"

Regardless of what Joshua thought about his matter, his expert mech was right. He needed to set aside his confusion and lead the Penitent Sister battle formation once again.

He truly wanted to be doing something else, such as fighting against the enemy phase lord alongside the rest of his colleagues.

Still, until the Penitent Sisters produced an expert pilot of their own who was able to pilot an expert mech variant of the Valkyrie line, the Larkinson Clan had no one else to turn to but Joshua and his Everchanger.

The young father found this responsibility to be increasingly more distasteful. The killing was far too... industrialized for his liking. It did not match the romance of mechs that drew many children to this profession in the first place.

"LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, JOSHUA. KILLING THESE ALIENS WILL EARN US A LOT OF CREDIT FROM THE MTA. STOPPING THESE HUMAN TRAITORS FROM SPREADING MORE SECRETS IS AN EVEN GREATER CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANITY. THIS WILL HELP US ADVANCE OUR POLITICAL GOALS."

"Ah. I you're right, I guess."

The Everchanger was no longer 'just' a third-order living mech. He had recently become the first grandmaster of the Anima Order.

Though the newly-established order did not have much time to get anything done, the Everchanger already formulated several long-term plans. Trying to get on the good side of the mechers would be helpful if they ever found out that living mechs had started to organize underneath everyone's noses!

The expert hero mech was even more eager to kill all of the occupants of the alien battleship than Joshua for that reason.

Just like a true hero, the Everchanger needed to step up and set an example for his fellow living mechs!

As the Valkyrie mechs of the Penitent Sisters and the Glory Seekers started to enter into formation without encountering any significant opposition from the aliens, possibly the only innocent individual on the enemy ship was wondering what was going on outside.

"Hello? Is there anyone there?" The human captive called out from his empty and isolated cell. "At least come and give me food! It's been days since I last saw a nutrient pack!"

Lord Pearian looked a lot more lethargic than before. His body laid limp next to the nunser watering pool because he would just waste a lot of energy if he made any unnecessary movements.

Though he periodically called out for food only to remind his captors that he still existed, no one had come in the past few days.

It all started when the hull of the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star shook so badly that Pearian thought that the ship was about to fall apart!

Though that hadn't happened, Pearian quickly deduced that the alien ship must have suffered a heavy blow because his captives no longer bothered to patrol this cell complex.

For a time, Lord Pearian thought that 'Helena' had taken action and that he needed to pray to this 'Daughter of Death' in order to save his life!

He felt ashamed at how eagerly he fell to knees and clasped his hands in order to beg for mercy and protection.

Hardly anything had happened. The ship still remained operational more or less and Pearian was still stuck in the same damn cell!

The only change was that the usual nunser guards had disappeared.

He first celebrated the departure of these intimidating guards, but that quickly changed a half day later when none of them returned to toss a nutrient pack in his cell.

By the time another half day passed, Pearian was willing to devour the nutrient pack without removing its slime-covered wrapping!

At this time, the scion of the Yorul-Tavik Clan had suffered so much neglect in captivity that he was practically traumatized by this experience!

Never in his entire life had he experienced a time where more than 8 hours had passed since he last filled his stomach.

Whether it was breakfast, lunch, dinner or snacks, he always possessed the confidence that his attendants and servants would provide him with an opportunity to fill his stomach and enjoy a varied gastronomic experience in the process.

Nowadays, Lord Pearian had become so hungry that he was even willing to eat the grass or whatever alien food the nunsers consumed!

"What is going on out there?!"

It wasn't until the starship started to shake once again that Lord Pearian felt a lot more hopeful.

Any change was good in his eyes!

At least, that was what he thought before a major explosion shook the hull and rattled the cell block to the point where Pearian thought that the ceiling would collapse on his head!

"Is it time now?!"

Lord Pearian had a feeling that this second attack was more serious. Even though he felt humiliated for praying to 'Helena' without anything serious happening, he did not dare to neglect the warning he received almost a week ago. The mistake of getting it wrong was too great!

He reluctantly moved his body out of its energy-saving mode and pulled up his body just enough for him to enter his praying position once again.

"Helena... if you exist, please spare me. I have already gone through enough suffering to last me a lifetime. Please spare this humble soul from your

impending wrath. If you save me from dying in this awful cell on this awful alien ship, I will promise you that I will convert to your faith! No, I will do even better than that. I will build an enormous temple in your honor and make sure that other people in this dwarf galaxy will learn of your splendor! Please, oh merciful Daughter of Death, save me from this torment and deprivation so that I can go back to civilization and never have to face a stinking alien again in my lifetime!"

He was never going to go back to this stupid and ill-thought venture again! The frontier was too dangerous for the likes of himself!

As Lord Pearian prayed to Helena as sincerely as possible, another human on the ship was feeling a lot less secure.

Jugal Meren experienced a turbulent time in the last few days. Whereas Lord Pearian had been completely forgotten by everyone, the aliens did not forget about their human collaborator at all. They even accused him of enabling the attack that crippled the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star to occur!

"I am not in the same group as the humans that attacked your fine and magnificent homeship!" The representative of the Cosmopolitan Movement had to plea in native nuser language while utterly prostrating himself before the Trampler of Stars. "As we have explained many times in the past, the human race is divided into many factions and groups. I am completely opposed to the pioneers that this fleet belonged to. I will arrange a greater transfer of technology and resources if you wish to obtain proof of my sincerity!"

It took a lot of begging and convincing to maintain their current cooperation. Though Mr. Meren had to make a lot more concessions than he was willing to make, it was not that difficult for the Cosmopolitan Movement to increase the amount of assistance it provided to the aliens.

In fact, this turn of events worked out quite well for Meren, as the goal of the Cosmopolitans was to bolster the strength of the native aliens to begin with! The more tech and resources the Red Cabal received, the greater its chances of stopping the Big Two's relentless invasion in its tracks!

Everything changed for the better until a second human force arrived in the star system!

It became evident that these newcomers were much more prepared to fight against the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star.

The disturbing effectiveness of the second force even caused Jugal Meren to become suspicious.

When he recalled what happened in the past week, he managed to tie all of the clues together and deduce that the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star was caught in a conspiracy!

The problem was that he wasn't the only one on the ship who could figure this out. The smartest and more thoughtful aliens made the same connections!

"HUUHHYYAY!" A nunser high officer roared as he bent down his head and snatched Jugal Meren by his voluminous purple robes!

The alien officer lifted up the human's body and flung it towards the bulkhead of the alien bridge.

"The Cosmopolitans are not at fault!" He repeated in native nunser language once again. "This is not the time to indulge in your unfounded suspicions. I have just accessed my archive stored in my implant and identified the human threat that we are fighting against. We are in great danger! Do not underestimate these adversaries. Those second-class mechs that are rapidly advancing towards our ship are far more dangerous than you can imagine! You need to warp away from this star system as best you can before it is too late!"

The furious nuns officer did not listen to him! Instead, the quadruped alien stomped over to Meren's fallen position and picked him up by his robe yet again so that he could fling the puny human against another bulkhead!

"Ah! I am being serious! Contact your housemaster! Allow me to speak to him and impress the importance of evading the attack that I know is coming."

"HHAAAHUAYAHHAA!"

"There is no time for that! Look, those mechs have come a lot closer while we have been wasting our time. Activate whatever warp drives if any of them are still functional! If not, command everyone to abandon your homeship so that we still have a chance to survive the impending slaughter!"

The aliens didn't believe him! For all of his notable communication skills, the nunsers and the other species crewing the starship had completely lost all of their trust of humans.

"No! You fools! It is too late! The mechs... are right on top of us! Look! One of humanity's gods has already appeared!"

The aliens on the bridge initially dismissed the threat of the weak standard mechs, thinking that the starfighter-like machines were no different from the ones fielded by Cenatus Prospecting.

That quickly changed when not just one, but several manifestations of a young woman in gray appeared over the rapidly approaching formations of mechs!

As the three near-identical manifestations came closer, the alien officers just started to panic and issue emergency orders to the crew, but by that time the infamous battle formations of the Golden Skull Alliance had already sent out three different waves of death at rapid speed!

Though the aliens didn't know it, Jugal Meren knew without a doubt that there was no time to respond!

The only action he could do was fall to his knees and prostrate in front of the rapidly-advancing waves of death.

The Cosmopolitan did what he was always good at. He pleaded and begged the incoming threat to spare his life!

"Human goddess... forgive this humble human soul... spare my life... and I shall become your eternal slave and devotee!"

Before he could continue his prayer, three waves of deaths successively coursed through the length of the crippled alien battleship!

Chapter 4630 Meanings Of Death

When the Penitent Sister and Glory Seeker mechs advanced towards the alien battleship at blazing fast speeds, their pilots all became of one mind.

Each female mech pilot earnestly wished to call down the wrath of Helena and snuff out the lives of the alien crew members who stood in the way of the Golden Skull Alliance!

This was not the first time the Penitent Sisters and the Glory Seekers called upon the power of one of their gods. Each time they took part in a battle formation attack, they felt incredibly honored and privileged to become connected to one of the greatest women alive.

Their faith became more invigorated as their small and limited minds touched upon a much greater and vaster consciousness.

No matter the differences and distances between the two, whenever a battle formation took effect, both god and human became connected by a bond that became a life-changing experience for the latter.

The power disparity between the two was so great that the mech pilots who came into touch with the Daughter of Death retained a tiny fraction of the vast death energy that Helena brought to bear!

No one was more in tune with the female design spirit than the Handmaidens of Death.

Aside from Venerable Brutus Wodin, Venerable Olivia Remis and Eona Ballentine had become the faces of the Glory Seekers.

Along with the increasing number of female expert pilots that broke through as they served in the Hex Army, the Handmaidens of Death had become the apostles of a young but spirited death goddess.

Both women took their responsibilities extremely seriously. They were utterly unlike Venerable Joshua who only led the Penitent Sister battle formation on a part-time basis.

What displeased Venerable Remis and Venerable Ballentine the most was that their previous efforts always paled in comparison to that of the young Larkinson hero.

Each time Joshua took charge of any battle formation, the resulting output gained life, allowing Joshua to effectively control the destructive energies by remote!

This was an incredibly useful and versatile modifier that vastly enabled these kinds of attacks to be more effective.

For example, Joshua could turn around the death energy wave attack or enable it to thread through the thickest mech formations.

Even though the Handmaidens of Death were much more devoted to Helena, they did not possess the vibrant vitality of the golden boy of the Larkinson Clan.

How could they ever do the Daughter of Death justice and channel her lethal splendor in a more effective manner?

The two Glory Seeker expert pilots prayed in front of their own expert mechs. As living machines that possessed a direct connection to Helena, they functioned as the best altars to their goddess!

Unlike many of the gods that humans revered throughout the Milky Way and the Red Ocean, Helena actually answered their prayers.

She did not do so through cryptic phenomena or drug-fuelled hallucinations either. Instead, as long as there was a legitimate totem in the vicinity, she chose to manifest in front of those devoted to herself.

"I have heard your prayers." Helena spoke one day as her gray-robed form manifested in front of the two devoted expert pilots. "I'm getting rather tired of hearing you beat yourselves up all of the time, so I decided to come and set matters straight."

"My lady!"

"Your Worship!"

Helena made a cutting motion with her arms. "You don't need to bother with all of that bowing and scraping. Serving the Glory Seekers and protecting my idiot younger brother is all of the service that I need."

"That... that is what we are struggling with, milady." Venerable Olivia Remus humbly spoke as her altered black hair quivered due to her nerves. "We lack guidance in how to better channel your great and awesome power."

She may be a confident expert pilot in front of others, but only Helena could turn her back into a mortal!

Venerable Eona Ballentine nodded as well. Her hair used to be in a different color, but she had dyed it black in honor of the woman she pledged to serve with her life.

"Each time the people in our fleet speak of battle formations, they think of the one that is tied to you. Yet when they are asked to speak about who can produce the best results, they do not speak of us, but rather of a Larkinson."

"What is the problem with that?" Helena asked with a coy smile on her expression.

"We do not have any ill will towards Venerable Joshua Larkinson, but... he's not a Hexer, nor a woman." Venerable Ballentine spoke.

"We can see that we can do more to help you spread your might on the battlefield, but we do not have the faintest clue how to accomplish this. We have asked for advice from numerous people including Venerable Joshua himself, but none of their words have helped."

"I am not surprised." Helena responded in her slightly echoing and ethereal voice. "Everyone is different. Expert pilots are different as well. Joshua is about as opposite from you as you can find. What works for him does not work for you. He is actually much further ahead in exploring and figuring out the uses of his unique strengths than you. He can do what he has done before because he is good at cooperating with others, particularly mechs and design spirits. The two of you cannot match him in this area, so you shouldn't use him as a model."

That piece of news disappointed the two expert pilots.

Helena smiled at the two lost expert pilots. "Don't look so glum. It is not as if you are any worse. Everyone has their talents, and the two of you happen to match my element. The only reason why you haven't been able to do anything

yet is because you haven't properly decided how you wish to leverage your power."

"What do you mean by that, milady?"

"You spend too much time on looking up to me and not enough time on looking at yourselves." The design spirit replied. "The two of you are demigods already. While I am honored by your devotion, you should develop your own personal strengths as well. Don't try to imitate me. Be different. Think deeply on how you wish to fight and defeat your opponent and focus on developing yourself to realize it. For example, Joshua decided to make cooperation the core of his fighting style, while Brutus treats the battlefield as a dancing floor."

The two Hexer expert pilots already gained a better idea on what they needed to do. They just had to figure out a way to distinguish themselves so that they could develop their own advantages in battle.

"I understand what you mean now, milady." Venerable Ballentine gratefully said. "However, it is difficult for me to imagine how we can apply the power of death in our own way. It is a force that kills. Nothing more. How can we apply it differently? There are hardly any other high-ranking mech pilots that we know of that we can use for inspiration."

Helena chuckled and removed the Death Lotus from her hair. She changed the spiritual artifact into a pistol and tossed it in the air as if it was a toy.

"Death is a fundamental concept that is part of the root of reality. Its versatility is far beyond what you can imagine. Don't just look at the literal meaning of this concept. Try and look at its symbolic meaning as well. Death can represent an ending of something brilliant, the heat death of this universe, the passing of an entire race or the disappearance of culture. Anyway, there are many more meanings that I have not bothered to mention, but you should

have a good idea by now. Think about what meaning of death speaks to you the most and commit yourself to exploring it to the limit and beyond. That is what expert pilots like you should be doing."

Her insightful words had led to a lot of soul searching for the Handmaidens of Death.

Though the two women were still at the beginning stages of their individual explorations, they had already produced a few results that signified their future development directions.

As such, when the fast-moving Valkyrie mech formations finally channeled the power of Helena onto the battlefield, three distinctly different death energy waves engulfed the heavily-damaged alien battleship in quick succession!

The first wave came from the Penitent Sisters. The ominous gray energy wave tinged with a corona of green not only accurately engulfed the entire cross-section of the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star, but also slowed down as best as possible so that it could prolong its contact with all of the life forms inside the hull!

Though it had been extremely difficult for Venerable Joshua to slow down the fast-moving death energy wave, he managed to slow it down by at least 50 percent so that it ultimately acted on the aliens to a stronger degree than usual!

Many weaker aliens collapsed in an instant. There were actually relatively few of them aboard the ship as only the elites of the Red Cabal had been assigned to the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star!

These aliens collapsed silently as their bodies still remained operational but whatever consciousness they possessed had been snuffed out by the power of death.

The stronger aliens managed to hold out a lot better against these waves, especially when they were still passing through relatively quickly.

Surprisingly enough, most of the nunsers and puelmer crew members managed to persist at a remarkably high rate!

Their races were considerably different from each other, but they both happen to share strong minds and willpower.

The nunsers possessed a strong collective spirit and they tended to perform better when they were gathered alongside other nunsers!

Since the crew members serving under the Trampler of Stars were mostly members of his herd, there were always nunsers gathered into groups!

Each of them drew a lot of strength and reassurance from each other, allowing them to barely resist the first couple of death energy waves!

The puelmers might not be so capable of drawing strength from each other, but they were actually individually stronger in mind!

They had to be because of the diminutive size of their ball-like bodies. Many of them were incredibly clever and adept with technology, and they relied on their formidable accumulation to cling to their own lives and resist the energies that sought to deprive them of their souls!

However, these hardy nunsers and puelmers did not face a single rapidly passing battle formation attack.

There were also other waves that were nearly identical!

One of the waves came from the Glory Seeker battle formation led by Venerable Olivia Remis.

During her own exploration of death, she decided to branch out and explore how the power of death could affect machines as well as life!

"Even technology can die!"

As such, when the energy wave passed through the hull of the alien battleship, the aliens who were still alive not only had to endure another brutal test, but the various parts and ship systems around them also began to glitch!

Most of the tech of the brand-new battleship was hardy and robust, so relatively few systems malfunctioned due to the efforts of Venerable Remis. She needed to become a lot stronger if she wanted to affect a ship of this caliber!

Venerable Eona Ballentine managed to produce a slightly more pronounced effect.

Whereas Venerable Remis focused on killing electronics and other machinery, Venerable Ballentine decided to compliment that by killing the bodies as well as the souls of individual lives!

After all, there were still individual out there that possessed remarkably strong minds who could resist the power of death head-on. If the Glory Seekers ever encountered such an opponent, then their greatest strength would become invalid!

Venerable Ballentine did not accept this, and sought to expand the versatility of her death power by focusing on killing the body cells.

At least an opponent who was strong in mind but weak in body would still suffer!

This was exactly what ended the lives of the most resilient officers among the nunsers and puelmers.

Each of them were veterans in their own right and managed to survive the successive death energy waves that had snuffed the vast majority of the crew.

Yet when the energy wave infused by the domain of Venerable Ballentine passed through the hull of the alien battleship, their bodies all became so weak and sapped with energy that many of them could no longer support themselves!

The puelmers especially had it bad as their ball-like bodies were simply not as strong as that of many other races.

When their bodies faltered, their spirits no longer possessed a solid base, causing them to become a lot more vulnerable!

In the end, no matter what tricks the aliens relied upon to resist the extraordinary attacks, all of them failed in one way or another.

This was exactly what the Golden Skull Alliance wanted to accomplish!

The power of death had engulfed the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star so thoroughly that only a few individuals were left alive at the end!

One of them happened to be locked in a cell for days on end.

"I... I'm still alive?" Lord Pearian wondered in utter bewilderment.