

The Mech Touch

Chapter 7534 Fair Evaluation

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After Ves, Gloriana, Ketis and Alexa completed their work, they anxiously awaited the judgment of the Mech Designer System.

[...68 Ascension Points...]

The amount granted by the System did not match their expectations.

"68 AP?" Gloriana looked puzzled.

In her estimation, the System should have decided between two different outcomes. Either it judged that Ves' work was valid and gave him the full amount, or judged that he had violated a rule and disqualified his submitted works entirely!

She did not expect the System to be more nuanced than that and chose an option in between!

Ves momentarily looked confused as well, but he quickly regained his clarity after he read the supplementary feedback from the System.

"I knew it." He said before turning towards his fellow mech designers. "Good news, guys. We have confirmed through our own efforts that our gambit has worked. Despite the fact that the three of you have performed a lot of assisting work, the System is still discerning enough to recognize that I am still primarily responsible for designing those mechs. It is clear that its evaluation criteria is refined enough to distinguish between my contributions and that of others. The downside of this is that it is too good at its job. You and I all know that despite our attempts to keep our responsibilities separated, there is no way to avoid every situation where your biases and decisions affect my own. The way you solve your problems often gives me hints on how to design a section in a way that aligns a little more with your design philosophy than normal."

This could never be avoided. If Ves worked alongside a completely different trio of mech designers, then his submitted mech designs would probably deviate from the current ones by at least 10 percent!

Gloriana's involvement ensured that Ves paid more attention to quality management.

Ketis possessed such a strong and personal interpretation of ideal melee mechs that it was hard for Ves to ignore her design direction.

Alexa's technical understanding and mastery of many common first-class high technologies surpassed that of Ves to such an extent that he often failed to figure out any improvements.

Although they all tried to minimize these influences as best as possible, they could not help it. Mech designers had always tried to present the best possible solutions in their work even if they originated from others.

Ves was not arrogant enough to believe he could surpass the other three mech designers in every single aspect.

He had long made peace with the fact that he possessed very distinct strengths and weaknesses.

This was also why he liked to collaborate so much. It was much more pleasant for him to delegate responsibilities to mech designers with different passions and interests.

It was the combination of different but complementary specializations that often produced the greatest sparks of brilliance!

"The outcome of this experiment is within an acceptable range." Ves declared after taking a deep breath. "Compared to earning the complete reward of 75 Ascension Points, getting just 7 AP less is not a big deal considering how much time and effort I have saved by borrowing your assistance. I reckon that the System has precisely tracked your material contributions and made a precise calculation of how much of your work has exceeded the normal scope of assistance."

None of the three women disagreed. They were all high-ranking mech designers. When they looked back on the completed mech designs, they could roughly ascertain that a tenth of it matched their own design philosophies more than his own.

Gloriana relaxed after making this realization. "The Mech Designer System is still fair. It is not affected by emotion or subjective biases. In the absence of further proof, we can assume that it will continue to apply the highest standards when we complete other Missions."

The four Larkinsons grew more at ease with this conclusion. They could work with this situation. As long as the System remained consistent, they could essentially guarantee consistent output. Both their work and outcome became somewhat predictable.

At this moment, each of them became eager to exploit this circumstance!

"So we proceed as we have previously planned?" Ves asked.

Gloriana smiled. "Since it has worked once, it will work again. We only need to take the penalties into account. We may not be able to reduce our unintentional contributions by the same proportion all of the time. Some Missions inherently provide more openings than others. However, as long as we can keep the average penalty rate below 20 percent, then I can tolerate the results."

Ketis crossed her arms. "It seems to me that the System would rather have us complete these Missions by ourselves. It might not have any objections to our approach, but the penalties imposed by it upon completion makes it less than ideal if we care about total AP earned."

The swordmaster made an important observation.

If the four continued to work like this, then just one of them would be able to earn several times more AP than typical, but that came at the cost of depriving the rest of all of their remuneration!

What was important in this was that the income earned by the former could never completely match the effort of the latter!

This meant that they could never adopt this strategy on a permanent basis if they cared about efficiency.

A 10 to 20 percent reduction in AP income across their whole cohort would set them back a huge amount over a span of decades!

Neither Gloriana nor the others could accept such a significant slowdown.

Ves clapped his hands to signal the end of this particular debate. "Alright. It's decided then. We will continue work as we did before for the remainder of our stay in this space. It is very important to remember why we are doing this. The reason why we are willing to accept the penalties that come with working together is because we need to redeem a more expensive and powerful enlightenment fruit that we ordinarily aren't able to afford by ourselves. I won't dream of obtaining anything as expensive as the Divine Blacksmith Records, but as long as we are not afraid of a lot of challenging work, I should at least be able to accumulate a sum of 400 AP at the end of this marathon."

Ketis winced in pain after hearing this sum.

Given how few design-oriented Missions were left and how they all came with troublesome requirements, they would definitely have to go through a lot of hardships!

Mech designers generally loved to design mechs, but this was not an absolute rule.

Even mech designers were still human!

The more rewarding Missions set by the Mech Designer System never asked for anything easy or convenient!

They seemed deliberately set on bringing mech designers out of their comfort zones.

On a higher level, Ves and the others may have realized that this was the Mech Designer System's way of training them into becoming more versatile and competent at their primary occupations.

Yet just because they recognized the tangible and intangible benefits of doing all of this design work did not mean they could remain passionate and engaged all of the time!

Ves rubbed his palm against his forehead. "We have a hard time ahead, but the sake of saving the lives of the soldiers of the combined fleet and pushing back the deathborn incursion into our dwarf galaxy, we have to set aside our need for comfort and tough it out for a while. The harder we work, the greater the chance that our ultimate contributions will lead to a decisive victory in the Hypeh-Tekas System."

They all understood his underlying meaning.

Ketis in particular looked ready to wring every bit of productivity from her body!

No matter how much responsibilities mech designers took on over the course of their careers, their problems and hardships could never match the severity of that of the people they served!

Mech pilots directly utilized the works provided by mech designers to confront the enemy!

These brave soldiers had to face the threat of death every time they deployed on the battlefield. They had entrusted much of their success and survival to the efforts of many other people. They never had many choices in the matter, which made them all the more deserving of recognition.

The stress and exhaustion accumulated by the foursome in the coming period were all trivial compared to the very permanent consequences faced by actual soldiers!

As long as Ves reminded himself of this fact, he could not tolerate any refusal to cooperate. If they were all serious and genuine mech designers, then they would not let all of the suffering ahead of them stop them from completing every Mission that they could theoretically complete with their current set of skills.

They might feel like absolute crap by the end of the marathon, but what did it matter?

If they ended up obtaining a solution that could increase their probability of winning the decisive battle by 5 to 10 percent, then all of it would be worth it in the end!