

# The Mech Touch

## Chapter 7536 Edible Mech Challenge

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Though the months-long isolation affected every mech designer, they still soldiered on in their work.

Mission after Mission, they steeled their hearts and locked down their focus on the immediate tasks at hand.

Every challenge tested the four Larkinsons in different ways. They could never solve a problem by resorting to old solutions. Due to the strange and harsh requirements imposed by the Mission Hall, they had no choice but to reinvent the concept of mechs several times.

For example, one crazy Mission demanded that Ves (and by extension his assistants) design a complete mech that was 100 percent edible by baseline humans!

Yes, edible by ordinary people!

It had to be edible to the point where a random person could walk up and literally take a bite out of the exterior without breaking his teeth!

That very same individual should theoretically be able to eat and digest any part of the mech, including the power reactor and energy cells!

At the same time, the mech had to be completely functional. It needed to possess all of the basic functions of a typical third-class combat mech. If even a single criteria fell short, then Ves would not be able to satisfy the Mission's requirements!

Suffice to say, Gloriana was no fan of this crazy Mission.

"This is impossible!" She complained back then. "Human food and mechs are completely different categories of objects. There is no overlap between the two. To try to equate one with the other is absurd. Even if we only have to produce a work that can compete against third-class mechs, that is already a very high standard if we are talking about an edible biomech. We have to make so many compromises that anything we design will invariably become too weak."

Neither Ketis nor Alexa voiced their own opinions, but that was because Gloriana already encompassed their overall thoughts and opinions!

How did Ves react towards their reluctance?

He ignored their judgment and accepted the Mission anyway!

"Come on, honey. You are being way too dismissive about this concept. Sure, designing a mech that is both functional and edible at the same time is absurd, but think of how much we can learn once we have managed to pull this off. Even if there is never an instant in the future where we must design a comparable biomech, we should at least be able to return to the stars a lot easier than before if we ever become stranded on a planet devoid of civilization."

That sounded way too much like a weak argument. Gloriana and the other girls remained unconvinced that they could truly gain a meaningful amount of inspiration and lessons from this effort.

It was only until they reached the end of this particular Mission that Ves proved that he had been closer to the truth.

All four of them had managed to learn new stuff over the course of designing this biological monstrosity.

Ves and Alexa assumed the greatest burden while working on this assignment. Both of them possessed at least a decent grasp of biotechnology and related subjects, so they had little choice but to take the lead and put their expertise to use.

Of course, their grasp of biotechnology may be useful in this case, but their knowledge base was not broad or deep enough to solve every problem related to edible mechs!

In order to convert the more difficult and demanding parts such as the power reactor into a completely edible construct, both Ves and Alexa had to browse through a dozen or so textbooks.

They had to learn new and specific theories and methods just to be able to satisfy the requirements of a single exotic Mission!

Though both mech designers had to work hard in order to compress their progress and avoid wasting one day more than was absolutely necessary, they still managed to pull it off, if barely.

At the same time, Gloriana and Ketis could only provide marginal assistance due to their lack of familiarity with biomechs and organic sciences.

While they all found it necessary to study the more introductory textbooks on biomechs and biotechnology in order to provide the minimum level of qualified assistance, there was no way they could catch up to the likes of Ves with just a single hasty effort.

By the end of this particular Mission, neither Gloriana nor Ketis had gained enough knowledge to design a basic biomech by themselves from beginning to end.

They only managed to learn enough to gain a deeper sense of appreciation towards biomechs.

"I hope this is the last time that I work on a biomech design project." Gloriana said with an exhausted voice. "These dirty organic constructs possess so much variance and fluidity that it is impossible for them to become completely fixed. They are too responsive towards growth."

Ves had always maintained the general opinion that growth was an unequivocally positive process, but his wife did not quite see it that way.

She placed a larger weight on consistency. Even if she had come to fall in love with living mechs, that did not mean she approved of their wild and unconstrained growth directions.

Gloriana vastly preferred it if her mechs grew according to the trajectory that she had already set beforehand.

Though her design direction might sound limiting to many people, it was precisely due to the consistency of her growth processes that she was able to guarantee that none of her works dropped in quality since she had brought them to life.

If Ves was purely in charge of this, then all of his works would have wobbled a lot more severely, causing them to become weak on some days while becoming absurdly strong on other days!

Gloriana always felt a lot of pride for successfully 'taming' her husband's living mechs.

The only glaring exceptions were oddballs such as the Riot Mark III, but she had already disowned them in her mind.

In any case, her work on the edible biomech had not shifted her stance on this matter, but what she did manage to learn throughout this assignment was a greater tolerance towards the wild factors of a biomech.

"This has certainly been a unique and unforgettable experience." She said as stood beside Ves at the moment he had submitted his work. "I almost regret the fact that we cannot bring out our work and show it off in front of our families. They would definitely be impressed by how we managed to develop an entirely edible mech from the ground up. The special energy system adapted to this project deserves an award in my opinion."

Alexa Streon responded with a modest smile. "The solution is quite obvious if you think about it. A 100 percent edible mech cannot possess any concentrated power sources because those parts will inevitably become too hot or toxic for humans to eat. The most obvious solution to remedy this issue is to diffuse the energies throughout the entire mech frame. By turning every cubic centimeter of an organic mech into a miniature energy cell and power reactor, we have developed a biomech that does not rely on a single massive power source. This is the natural approach. Most other organisms work in a similar fashion. We only had to imitate nature more closely in order to grasp the key of this challenge."

That had truly been their greatest singular lesson as far as she was concerned. She even began to question whether it was still necessary for biomechs such as the Woodsap mechs of the Arboreal Project to retain their central bioreactors!

Ves did not think of going back to his old work and reworking his Woodsap mechs.

For one, it would be a huge waste of time. The Arboreal Project was already very close to completion.

Perhaps he might think about implementing this radical change in the Mark II sometime in the future, but this was an unlikely event.

That was because diffusing the power system across so much biomass drastically reduced the efficiency of the biomech.

Ves and Alexa may have crammed a lot of new biotechnology-related knowledge in their minds, but they were still unable to solve this fundamental issue.

The lack of a single, purpose-built bioreactor made it a lot harder to efficiently convert fuel into usable energies.

Just for the sake of making a biomech edible, they had to duplicate the same processes billions of times throughout the entire mech frame!

Perhaps they might have been able to drag the efficiency upwards until their work was able to approach the efficiency of a mutated beast with additional time, but none of them believed that it was a worthwhile effort.

This was how they ultimately managed to end up with an edible biomech design that only barely met the requirements set by the Mission.

"So?" Ketis impatiently asked. "What is the verdict? Did you earn enough points?"

Ves paused for a few more seconds before his lips gradually curled upwards. His shoulders slumped in relaxation as he finally took in the System's evaluation.

"Good news. The System not only accepted our work, but only imposed a 16 percent penalty on my earnings. That still makes me 92 Ascension Points richer!"

The other three women looked just as relieved as Ves.

Their painstaking work had not been in vain!

Even if the penalty was still a little higher than usual, it still put Ves comfortably in the green!

It was due to this unusually high payoff that Ves insisted on accepting this Mission in the first place.

All of the doubts and frustration they experienced along the way may have caused them to come close to giving up at certain points, but Ves never stopped believing in himself!

"I am one step closer to accumulating a sum of 400 AP. There are not a lot of Missions left, and their demands have only grown more convoluted, but we should not give up at this point."

Ves wanted to spend a lot of AP this time!

Over the past few months of design work, Ves' mind frequently mused about the many possible options that he could choose from. He had memorized the descriptions of all enlightenment fruits and often tried to imagine how he could apply them to his specific circumstances.

There were many days where his imagination failed to come up with any truly promising ideas, but that was fine.

What Ves truly cared about was the handful of times when he suddenly became inspired by the benefits of a particular enlightenment fruit!

Those rare moments did not happen frequently, but over the course of so many days, Ves managed to build up a respectable list of highly promising ideas.

He had yet to narrow down his options too much. He felt it was way too soon for him to lock onto a specific solution and redeem the expensive enlightenment fruits necessary to turn it into a reality.

Ves constantly felt frustrated about this, but he did his best to hold back his overabundant enthusiasm.

He instead used his impatience as an additional source of motivation!

"I can pick my enlightenment fruits faster as long as I complete these Missions sooner!"

He repeated these words to himself so many times until he had finally reached the critical day.

Once he submitted the final Mission that he deemed attainable, there were only a handful left in the Mission Hall.

Ves never even thought about attempting to complete them. They were either martial-oriented Missions tailored to Ketis or the Dark Apostle, or cultivation-related Missions that imposed outrageous demands such as blood sacrifices!

"We have squeezed all of the AP that we can obtain from the Mission Hall." He concluded. "The only way we can harvest large amounts of AP is to let enough time pass in realspace for the board to refresh its offerings."

There was no way for the mech designers to drag their marathon in perpetuity.

Even if their mentality would not completely collapse after spending years on so much 'meaningless' work without interruption, the Mech Designer System clearly did not support this behavior!

They had already overstayed their welcome as far as Ves and the others were concerned.

Now that Ves had built up a considerable stash of AP, he needed to hurry up and spend it before everyone returned to reality.

"Let's put this matter to an end."

