

## Mech Touch 6261

Chapter 6261 Specialized Phasefighters

The C-Man was in a lot of trouble after getting entangled by over a dozen nets!

These nets were not made out of ordinary metal cords. They were surprisingly tough and difficult to tear even if the C-Man exerted all of the brute force that it could generate through its limbs.

"What the? These nets are transphasic! They used actual phasewater to make them stronger." Venerable Vincent reported with amazement.

"That is nice to know, but you need to get out of there, Vincent! Your C-Man is being targeted by the primary and secondary armaments of at least half a dozen warships! The Ghirard Fleet intends to saturate your coordinates with concentrated warship-grade cannon fire!"

Even though there were tens of thousands of nuser phasefighters that could open fire at the trapped C-Man, many of their attacks would only end up damaging the net and allowing the expert brawler mech to go free.

This was why the native aliens were willing to spend a bit of additional time so that their warships could bring their huge guns to bear against Venerable Vincent's immobilized machine.

Try as it might, the C-Man was unable to dislodge itself from the net. Its loadout was not suited for this at all, which was probably the main reason why the green net-throwing fighters chose to target the expert brawler mech first.

As the distant enemy warships were about to open fire on the immobilized C-Man, Venerable Vincent let out a frustrated grunt.

"Fine! I didn't want to resort to this, but I will if I have to! A man can never be stopped in his tracks!"

The C-Man's muscular form began to convulse. Its exterior layers actually began to distort in shape until much of the outer plating began to grow a lot of sharp blades all of a sudden!

That was not all. The blades actually began to buzz before moving across the exterior of the C-Man as if they were chainsaw teeth!

The C-Man was easily able to reshape its exterior because most of the mech frame was actually made out of smart metal as opposed to conventional metal parts.

The C-Man was actually quite similar to the 80th Element of the Cross Clan!

The biggest difference between the two smart metal mechs was that the latter had a higher proportion of nanomachines than the former.

This meant that the C-Man couldn't simply extrude itself out of the successive nets as if its mech frame was entirely made out of liquid. Even if it was able to do so, it was doubtful that the mech pilot could go along for the ride.

The best way for the C-Man to resolve this problem on its own was to cut through all of the bonds that kept it in place!

The change in shape helped to accomplish this. The sturdy transphasic cords that kept the C-Man in place started to snap in rapid succession as the sharp smart metal blades continually grinded against the bonds.

Meanwhile, the other expert mechs made a lot of progress in shooting down one green phasefighter after another.

The larger craft were protected by considerably stronger azure energy shields than usual, but the firepower from expert mechs such as the Lionheart was too much for these machines to bear. They could only endure one or two hits at most before they were downed.

The other expert mechs such as the Riot Mark II and the Blade Chaser Mark II both arrived as well. The two expert mechs primarily focused on cutting the lines that were mostly responsible for immobilizing the trapped C-Man.

All of this sounded as if it took a herculean effort to free up the C-Man, but the reality was that it took a lot less time than that to help the C-Man break out of its trap!

By the time the other expert mechs managed to cut through half of the lines, the C-Man managed to get rid of enough nets to regain enough movement speed!

Five green phasefighters that still maintained their grip on the C-Man found themselves involuntarily pulled in different directions as the smart metal expert mech began to get moving again.

The remaining lines quickly got cut off as the Lionheart quickly shot down two of the special phasefighters while the other lines got cut by the Riot and the Blade Chaser.

"I'm free!"

It couldn't happen a moment too soon. Although the C-Man hadn't been able to avoid all of the incoming attacks, it had managed to get away quickly enough to only endure five powerful blasts.

Unlike the 80th Element, the C-Man was in a much better position to resist the attacks!

Its TESMAS was not even required to physically resist the powerful attacks as the C-Man's powerful resonance shield easily blocked the powerful attacks.

"I'm okay, at least for now!"

"Good." General Ark said. "Finish off the green phasefighters. I will try my best to shoot down any I can spot with my energy cannon. Be wary of the other unfamiliar nuser phasefighter models. I have a strong suspicion that the Ghirard Fleet has prepared more anti-expert mech countermeasures."

The native aliens fought against humans long enough to get thrashed many times by the high-ranking mechs of the latter.

While it was difficult to defeat a human ace mech without fielding champions of their own, the native aliens had a much better shot at countering expert mechs by relying on mundane solutions.

The green phasefighters was just the first of many such attempts. The use of nets to immobilize expert mechs was fairly crude and simplistic. Once the expensive transphasic nets got cut, they practically turned useless, so in that sense, this experiment had clearly failed.

The nunsers did not seem too upset at this result. The bulk of their phasefighters began to swarm all of the expert mechs at once.

Perhaps the main reason why they did not choose to mob one or two expert mechs was that all of the craft would just get in the way of each other.

Even so, every expert mech was forced to weather thousands of incoming attacks. The lack of regular mechs accompanying the expert mechs meant that the enemy could fully concentrate their firepower on the select amount of enemy champions.

The repeated low caliber attacks steadily drained the resonance shields of all expert mechs. Every expert pilot had to endure increasing strain on their minds and will as they struggled to resist each and every attack that threatened to strike their respective machines.

"We need to get down to the surface of the planet and complete our mission as soon as possible!"

"Advance! Don't try to evade every attack. It is futile. Just go forward!"

Although the expert mechs tried their best to begin their angled descent to the surface of Duqaste XI, the native alien did not let them do as they wished.

A new set of enemy phasefighters appeared. Larger than the previous special craft and coated in yellow, the newly emerged small craft looked a lot larger and sturdier than all of the other craft.

What was even more important was that the front of their fuselages ended in flat metal surfaces!

The purpose of these large metal surfaces could not immediately be discerned. The Lionheart and the other expert mechs armed with backup pistols started to shoot them down in order to preempt their threat.

The yellow phasefighters were oddly resistant towards damage, but the firepower of the Lionheart proved to be too great for them to bear. The reason for this became quite evident when they did not attempt to slow down all that much as they approached their respective targets!

"Evade the yellow phasefighters! Their functions are probably similar to the nets shot by the green phasefighters! As long as multiple of these craft manage to collide into your expert mech from different directions, you'll get squished between their frontal plates!"

It was difficult for the expert mechs to deal with the yellow phasefighters as the latter was a lot more resistant to damage than the other phasefighters.

The good news was that they were heavier and slower than the other craft as well, which meant that it was still possible to avoid collisions.

The expert mechs were still forced to divert from their course and found themselves unable to proceed to Duqaste XI unless they managed to overcome the blockade of yellow phasefighters.

The only expert mech that was effectively able to take them down was the Lionheart. The integrated energy cannon of the powerful expert command mech possessed an abundant amount of firepower and easily managed to cripple or destroy the shielded and armored craft.

The Riot Mark II, the Blade Chaser Mark II and the C-Man Mark II were unable to match the performance of the Lionheart in this regard as they only had access to weaker backup pistols at best!

"This is no way to fight!" Venerable Vincent spoke in a frustrated tone. "I'm not afraid of these lumbering yellow fighters. We can take them out with ease as long as we don't attack them from the front!"

The C-Man blasted forward, much to Ark's chagrin, but the sudden maneuver successfully diverted the attention of a lot of yellow phasefighters.

The special nuser craft began to spread out in an attempt to envelop the C-Man from every direction.

Vincent registered what was going on, but trusted in the C-Man's ability to navigate through this perilous trap.

As soon as the C-Man got close to one of the yellow fighters, the expert mech abruptly began to roll and juke to the side before quickly circling back to strike at the special craft from its underprotected side!

As the C-Man was about to launch its attack, its active space suppressor was already working at full power to weaken the yellow craft's transphasic defenses to the maximum possible extent!

"PUNCH!"

Though the C-Man lost a lot of momentum due to this, the expert brawler mech was still able to launch a devastating punch that crushed the yellow craft's azure energy shield and punched a large hole in the fighter frame!

Vincent deliberately commanded his C-Man to punch next to the cockpit. This meant that the fist had successfully crushed the nuser pilot into meat and launched the pieces into space!

"These yellow craft aren't so tough after all." Vincent grinned. "Their defenses from the front are insanely tough, but I bet that their protection is mostly directional. As long as we can flank them, we can disable them with ease!"

However, as the C-Man got rid of one yellow phasefighter, three more had already converged on the expert brawler mech's position from three directions!

Vincent's eyes glinted as his C-Man boldly charged towards one of the yellow phasefighters. Before the two could make contact with each other, the C-Man pivoted until it was able to kick itself off the flat surface of the yellow phasefighter's exaggeratingly large nose before launching itself away!

Moments later, the three yellow phasefighters all collided against each other, having failed to squish the C-Man in the middle!

The expert brawler mech was constantly forced to evade and maneuver around in order to prevent the yellow mechs from trapping it in place.

Though Vincent was able to rely on clever maneuvers to eliminate a handful of these annoying craft, the problem was that a third batch of special phasefighters approached from afar!

These heavy fighters were coated in purple, and each of them stood out due to the fact that they all carried heavy missile loadouts!

"Careful! The aliens are about to make use of their more expensive munitions! Intercept or evade those missiles as much as possible!"

The sensors of the expert mechs detected that the phasewater content inside the warheads was insanely high. That was bound to pose a large threat to the expert mechs regardless of the state of their resonance shields!

Due to the interference from all of the yellow phasefighters, the C-Man was unable to get away from the purple craft, allowing the latter to gain a solid lock and launch all of their potent missiles at a range that made it difficult to escape the deadly warheads!

Chapter 6262 It's Tiny

The Ghirard Fleet was a lot better equipped than other assault fleets.

The Tireless Engine took the humans a lot more seriously than many of his peers. He had used the months preceding the start of the Red Tide Offensive to make use of his considerable wealth and connections to increase the preparedness of his fleet.

Whether his efforts paid off or not, the exotic phasefighters added to his small craft lineup generated considerable difficulties for the expert mechs!

It became abundantly clear that the nunser assault fleet had arrived in the Duqaste System with the distinct expectation of fighting against human expert mechs!

General Ark and the other expert pilots taking part in the operation even felt especially targeted by the measures employed by the opposing aliens.

They possessed the distinct expression that the native aliens had been scrambling to develop effective anti-expert mech countermeasures that did not require the intervention of a phase lord.

The aliens made a wise decision to do so. Expert mechs possessed a lot more agency than other machines and had a disproportionate effect on the battlefield. Even if they weren't as outrageous as ace mechs, they could still ruin a lot of plans by exercising their strength at the right time and place.

Since the native aliens had only recently gotten serious about developing real technological counters against expert mechs, their solutions appeared to be crude and haphazard.

There was no obvious cohesion or coordination between the different experimental models. The designs of the special phasefighters diverged a lot, showing that they were all designed by completely different companies or research institutions.

Their quality also left a lot to be desired. The native aliens had only recently started to utilize phasefighters in order to counter mechs, but there was still a distinct difference in refinement between ordinary phasefighters and these more specialized craft. The experimental designs clearly looked as if the aliens had taken a standard phasefighter design and hastily grafted additional modules on them in order to make them more suitable to hinder expert mechs.

The green starfighters with their strange nets was an expensive if somewhat effective solution to contain an expert mech, if only for a short duration. Even if the C-Man did not possess the ability to morph its exterior into ripping chainsaw teeth, Venerable Vincent could have utilized his willpower to break out of the trap if he was willing to expend more willpower.

The yellow phasefighters were a bit more confounding. Instead of trying to keep their distance, they utilized large and thick plates mounted to their front as walls to push expert mechs around. Although there weren't as many of them, it only required four or five of these expensive craft to pin an expert mech in place!

Regardless of whether the yellow phasefighters managed to entrap their targets or not, the purple phasefighters that appeared from the midst of the enemy swarm gained enough opportunities to lock on to their targets and launch their powerful transphasic missiles!

The threat posed by these missiles were much greater than usual. The sensors of the expert mechs detected that the warheads were not only filled with much more powerful explosive materials than usual, but also contained a higher phasewater content!

"The aliens are really willing to spend a lot of money and phasewater to take us down!"

"It's worth it so long as the missiles manage to do their jobs."

"Evade the missiles and shoot them down as quickly as possible!" General Ark roared.

He began to get more serious. Three more integrated luminar crystal cannons opened up on his Lionheart. They already began to glow white before unleashing a rapid barrage of resonance-empowered light beams that accurately struck a missile each.



The firing rate of the luminar crystal cannons was impressive, though it clearly exerted a lot of strain on the crystals. It was only due to the true resonance acting on the crystalline components that they were able to perform way above their safe margins without bursting into shards.

The effects were impressive. Dozens of transphasic hyper missiles fell in a matter of seconds, causing them to fall apart, explode prematurely or go way off-course.

The other expert mechs did not sit around either. Even if they were much more inclined towards melee combat, none of their pilots dared to be pedantic at this time and utilized their backup pistols to intercept one missile after another with extraordinary skill.

As high-tier expert pilots, their marksmanship had already reached an impressive height even if they did not specifically invest a lot of time in this skillset.

Most of the transphasic missiles eventually got wasted mid-flight, but a couple of them ultimately managed to get through the relentless barrage and were on the verge of striking the C-Man!

Venerable Vincent Ricklin, whose expert mech had been especially targeted by the enemy special phasefighters from the start, had grown increasingly more furious at being singled out all of the time.

He poured his anger into his C-Man, causing it to resonate even stronger with his willpower.

Just before the transphasic missiles were about to strike the expert brawler mech, the C-Man suddenly released several resonance-empowered spikes of smart metal and accurately caused them to pierce the cones of every incoming warhead!

Numerous powerful explosions set off in front of the C-Man, forcing the machine to jerk away.

"Are you okay, Vincent?"

"My mech is fine, but I am pissed. I had to sacrifice a small amount of smart metal to block those powerful missiles."

"You made the right decision. The purple phasefighters have already launched most if not all of their payloads. They shouldn't be able to launch a second salvo anytime soon unless they return to their motherships to rearm themselves. We need to get past this blockade and execute our mission. Do not let our efforts be in vain."

"Fine, but I am not going to let these special phasefighters gang up on me for free!"

The Lionheart continued to utilize its powerful integrated armaments to take down one special phasefighter after another. The expert command mech paid special attention to the yellow phasefighters that still tried to ram and cage the expert mechs with their ridiculously large front sides.

The other expert mechs also tried to whittle them down by shooting them with their backup pistols. Their secondary ranged armaments may be weak, but their shots still packed quite a punch by augmenting their power with true resonance.

Even so, the elite pilots of the yellow phasefighters tried their best to avoid letting their craft get hit from the sides or rear if they depleted their azure energy shields.

Their frontal sides behaved similar to the physical shields of knight mechs. While it was possible to break them, it took a disproportionate amount of effort to do so. The expert mechs wasted far too much time on trying to fell these hardy craft to the point that it was delaying their advance towards Duqeste XI.

The C-Man spent more time on trying to outflank and crush the yellow phasefighters than actually trying to fly past the annoying craft.

Venerable Vincent even decided to get more serious by employing another trick!

A moderate quantity of smart metal and other small components split off from the C-Man, causing the expert mech to look a little thinner and less armored at some of its exterior sections.

As the glob of TESMAS wobbled in the vicinity of the expert mech it came from, a companion spirit emerged from the cockpit of the C-Man and entered the mass of smart metal!

"Vinny, let's beat these aliens up!" Venerable Vincent called.

"Huah!"

Unlike the companion spirits of many of his fellow Larkinsons, Vincent's own spirit actually resembled a miniaturized muscular version of himself.

When Vinny began to take possession of the glob of smart metal, he channeled his principal's willpower and quickly reshaped his new home into a miniature version of the C-Man!

Although the miniature version of the C-Man lacked a lot of components that made the expert brawler mech so strong, it was still powerful enough in its own right due to the strong true resonance holding it all together!

The mini-C-Man theatrically slammed its fists together before launching away at the nearest squadron of yellow phasefighters.

The small smart machine did not possess any powerful propulsion systems, but its vastly reduced size and mass allowed it to move swiftly through space, especially with Vinny actively working to resonate with the nanomachines that made up its small form.

The nuser phasefighters quickly registered the new threat and tried to shoot it down, but their miss rates were much higher due to the small size and impressive maneuverability demonstrated by the miniature C-Man.

As soon as the small machine managed to get close to an enemy phasefighter, it repeatedly punched the craft's azure energy shield with its tiny fists.

Despite the ridiculous size of this humanoid mass of smart metal, the tiny machine actually inflicted serious damage on the phasefighter's energy defenses!

This was not just due to its resonance empowerment, but also because it had actually been mounted with a miniature space suppressor!

The space suppressor's effect was very weak, but as long as Vinny amplified its effects with true resonance, it was able to weaken the transphasic effect of the opposing energy shield quite well!

The nunser pilot of the yellow phasefighter grew astonished when he finally realized the threat posed by the tiny version of the C-Man.

Size apparently didn't matter as the small smart machine eventually managed to tear through the azure energy shield before slamming its fists straight into the cockpit!

Despite all of the armoring and reinforcement, it did not take too much effort for the construct controlled by Vinny to punch through the layers and pulverize the body of the hapless nunser fighter pilot!

"Huah!"

Vinny let loose a victorious roar before he abandoned the disabled craft and hunted down another yellow phasefighter!

The other Larkinson expert pilots had never seen this before. While they had developed their own synergies between their expert mechs and their companion spirits, they never went as far as to create a miniature copy of their own machines that could apparently fight on an independent basis!

"What is that, Vincent?!" Imon Ingvar asked.

"That's my new mini-mech." The pilot of C-Man boasted. "I call it my Tiny C. Just look at it. Doesn't it look manly? Don't underestimate its size. I can't do everything with it, but it has potential. Once Vinny grows stronger, it can pilot a larger smart metal frame. I can't wait until it is able to reach the size of a phase lord like the Tireless Engine one day!"

Venerable Vincent certainly had big dreams.

For now, the 'Tiny C' was only a nuisance compared to its progenitor, but its current capabilities already presented a lot of potential uses.

General Ark was already able to think of an especially helpful application to the Larkinson!

If the Tiny C grew a bit smaller, it could become compact enough to squeeze into indoor areas that were normally only accessible to infantry. This would allow the smart metal construct controlled by

a companion spirit to easily board enemy starships or hostile installations and disable them from within!

Even if the Tiny C was not able to match the power of the full-sized C-Man in this diminished form, it was still far stronger than any infantry soldier of the same size!

If Venerable Vincent was able to advance to the rank of ace pilot, then the power of his Tiny C would drastically rise.

This was especially the case if the Design Department upgraded the C-Man and replaced its old TESMAS with a much more powerful and technologically advanced smart metal armor system!

All of these improvements would make it a lot more difficult if not impossible for any internal defenses to stop the smart metal machine if it decided to go on a rampage!

Chapter 6263 Exploding Munitions.

As interesting as Venerable Vincent's 'Tiny C' may be, the appearance of a miniature copy of the C-Man did not fundamentally ease the difficulty of getting past the enormous phasefighter screen.

It served more of a distraction than anything else. It was not until the Tiny C moved in coordination with the C-Man that it started to produce more results. The two worked together to pincer their targets or make it more difficult for them to slip away.

The miniature construct controlled by Vinny was also able to take advantage of the space suppressor mounted on the larger expert mech to quickly tear through the defenses of the same phasefighter.

The expert mechs still had to struggle to eliminate and outpace the special phasefighters that were specifically designed to counter high-ranking mechs. Precious minutes went by as the powerful machines no longer held back as much.

Everywhere they moved, they constantly came under attack from phasefighters flying in every direction!

The resonance shields of the high-tier expert mechs depleted at a worrying rate. The delays generated by the special phasefighters had caused the machines to get stalled a bit longer than General Ark accounted for in most of his plans.

However, even as the expert pilots felt as if they were trying to climb up a steep mountain, the nunsen fighter pilots experienced their own difficulties.

These pilots were better trained than most other phasefighter pilots, but their professionalism was still not up to par. They attacked the expert mechs so many times, yet most of their shots either missed or struck the resonance shields without producing any apparent results.

No human or alien was able to remain upbeat after putting so much effort into trying to defeat enemies that were clearly gods rather than mortals.

Although a lot of aliens were confused about why the human gods were so small, they were just as tough if not tougher than the much larger native gods!

The phase lords and phase whales were at least a lot easier to attack due to their enormous true bodies.

The expert mechs of red humanity were no larger than their ordinary counterparts, but were often a lot faster and maneuverable, all the while being able to resist a lot of damage with the help of their resonance shields!

The combination of excellent defense, compact size and high mobility resulted in a package that was nearly impossible to damage, even when the native aliens badly outnumbered their adversaries!

Their morale dropped the longer the battle dragged on. Even if they were successful in delaying the advance of the hostile expert mechs, that was cold comfort for them when the Lionheart blasted apart dozens of phasefighters with its powerful integrated luminar crystal cannons.

The other expert mechs were also becoming more proficient in taking down phasefighter after phasefighter. The Blade Chaser struck hard enough with its twin blades to punch through an azure energy shield and destroy an alien craft with a single swing.

The Riot simply charged forward and crashed through any enemy small craft in his way, not caring if he was first able to pierce the enemy fighters with his spear.

The C-Man and the Tiny C worked together to punch a route through the swarms of phasefighters that reluctantly tried to utilize their own defenses as makeshift walls.

The momentum of the expert mechs constantly rose while the nunsers grew more discouraged. The powerful glows from the expert mechs seemed to press down onto the alien fighter pilots even harder, causing them to be afflicted with greater doubt and apprehension.

The alien commanders frantically issued all kinds of orders to their subordinates, but the alien fighter pilots were becoming less coordinated and attentive by the minute!

The expert mechs were too strong!

They were like gods that came in a smaller package than usual!

How could mortal nunsers like themselves ever think about challenging these powerful deities?

Even though many of the nunsers had been informed that human expert pilots were hardly the most powerful human champions, the indomitable performance of the advancing Larkinson expert mechs caused the aliens to lose hope of ever achieving a victory.

The expert pilots clearly noticed the drop in resistance and pushed forth even harder as a response!

"The aliens cannot sustain this intensity of losses. The fighter pilots have become too intimidated by us to press their attack. Let us not give them a reason to redouble their efforts. Push forward and do not look back!"

It was not without reason why General Ark Larkinson repeatedly affirmed his decision to proceed with the operation despite encountering one setback after another.

The high-tier expert pilot just knew that numbers alone would not be enough to stop his powerful team of expert mechs. The Larkinson expert pilots had fought and lived through many challenges in the past, and even the relatively inexperienced Kolak Glendale was able to weather the storm and keep up with his more powerful peers.

Eventually, the expert mechs succeeded in reaching low orbit of the lifeless planet and finally began to descend towards the surface!

The gravity of the planet was not high, which was one of the reasons why the native aliens utilized it as a staging ground. Many cargo vessels were safely able to descend from orbit and land on the surface.

Now, many of the cargo vessels that had been in the midst of loading or unloading their cargo were frantically trying to lift off and flee to safety.

Many of the smaller transports had already made a getaway, but the larger and more lumbering cargo vessels and civilian homeships were unable to do so as they took a lot more time to lift off the surface!

"Hahaha! Those ships are sitting ducks! Let's destroy them all!" Venerable Vincent Ricklin suggested now that he and his expert mech were finally able to let loose!

General Ark disagreed. "Forget about the smaller vessels, and only take down the larger ships if they are in your way. The native aliens have too many supply ships at their disposal. Destroying fifty or a hundred hulls won't make a dent in their ability to resupply their forces. Our primary objectives remain the same. Focus on destroying the munitions, spare materials and other supplies that the aliens have stashed on this planet. We can directly buy more time with our efforts."

"Fine."

The enemy phasefighters that were tasked with bringing the expert mechs down were no longer able to fight as unscrupulous as before.

A lot of alien installations were in the way. If the phasefighters fired their weapons carelessly, they might end up destroying valuable property or killing the nunsers assigned to man the supply depots and other local bases.

The gravity of the planet along with the unavoidable obstacle posed by the terrain severely constrained the movements of the phasefighters and deterred them from pursuing the expert mechs too aggressively.

The human expert pilots readily took advantage of this shift and attacked the various base installations with even greater confidence than before.



Many large-scale transphasic energy shields and defensive turrets came online, but none of them could stop the expert mechs for long.

The powerful machines paired up and utilized their combined efforts to breach one transphasic energy shield after another.

The Lionheart was readily able to bombard the exposed depots with its powerful integrated luminar crystal cannons.

While the expert command mech's ranged arsenal was not as powerful or numerous as the ARCEUS System of the Mars, the luminar crystal armaments still packed enough of a punch to demolish the storage containers and carve through many different base facilities.

Meanwhile, the expert melee mechs such as the Riot did not immediately make use of their melee armaments to destroy the depots. The efficiency of doing so was too low.

The Riot, the C-Man, the Blade Chaser and the Greenaxe all pulled out the transphasic grenades that had been added to their loadouts beforehand and tossed them at various different locations designated by the Lionheart.

The expert command mech's sophisticated processors had already conducted detailed scans of the up-to-date situation on the surface of Duqaste Xi.

Combined with information gathered by intelligence units, the Lionheart was able to formulate an updated attack plan that should theoretically enable the mechs to inflict the greatest damage with the least amount of effort.

The expert mechs proceeded to put that to the test by tossing their supplied transphasic grenades at the designated coordinates.

Enormous explosions soon erupted after the transphasic grenades did their jobs!

While the grenades were not capable of destroying such large installations by themselves, they were very much able to explode in the midst of lots of powerful munitions and cause the warheads and other volatile weapons to explode, causing powerful chain reactions that eventually engulfed most of the depots!

"Wooohooo!"

"Now that is what I'm talking about!"

"The phasefighters don't dare to fire their weapons as frequently at our expert mechs than before. They're too afraid of hitting their own stuff!"

"How many transphasic missiles and bombs did the Ghirard Fleet ship over? We need to wipe out all of them! The more they have left, the more our mechs and defensive fortifications will suffer. Tell us where we can find more!"

The Lionheart designated additional depots that were located further away. Several expert mechs split away in order to take care of these outlying bases while their transphasic grenades lasted.

"I think the aliens are about to learn one of the most important reasons why we don't make use of guided munitions as much anymore." Venerable Kolak Glendale said as his Greenaxe utilized its eponymous weapon to shatter a transphasic energy shield before skillfully tossing a transphasic grenade at a collection of anti-ship missiles.

The explosions that ensued from this grenade toss were especially violent and satisfying!

General Ark did not look too surprised. "This is why I insisted on launching an attack at this time. The Ghirard Fleet arrogantly assumed that they would not need this staging point for a long time. The nunsers only put up basic defenses and made sure their supplies could easily be retrieved once their leader ordered an all-out assault. I can already see from the state of this planetary site that the native aliens were getting close to doing so. We came just in time."

Explosions continued to pepper the surface of the airless and lifeless planet. However, their frequency dropped pretty quickly once the expert mechs ran out of transphasic grenades.

None of the machines possessed any pocket spaces that they could use as a convenient stash for extra explosives. Now that they had expended their most easy means of inflicting mass destruction, many expert mechs had to get close and resort to more physical means to wreck all of the alien goods!

Fortunately, the human raiders had already destroyed the majority of fuel tanks and explosive munitions, so that allowed their expert mechs to attack the various goods and machines that were not as prone to blowing up when heavily damaged.

Energy cells got split into pieces. Landbound artillery cannons got cut in half. Spare transphasic energy shields got stomped beneath the feet of numerous expert mechs.

The expert mechs mostly focused on wrecking the more expensive pieces of the hardware. It would be a lot more painful for the nunsers to replace these lost goods than anything ordinary!

In the meantime, the native aliens reluctantly began to adjust their tactics in an effort to stop the escalating raid.

The phasefighters attacked the expert mechs on the same height as opposed from top to bottom.

They also organized themselves a little better and formed up into wings that could combine their efforts without getting in each other's way.

However, the mass of warships that were still lingering in high orbit for most part did not dare to open fire on the expert mechs!

The intruding machines may have destroyed a lot of supplies already, but warship cannon fire from orbit would just make everything worse! Many goods could still be salvaged or secured so long as the human assault did not last too long.

"That's enough!" General Ark urgently said. "We have overstayed our welcome. We need to pull and retreat!"

"Aww! There's so much more for us to destroy! Can you wait a minute?"

"We don't have a minute! I am already having a bad feeling about this planet. We need to leave!"

#### Chapter 6264 Too Easy

Though the daring raid only caused the Ghirard Fleet to lose roughly 30 percent of the supplies and other war material stashed on Duqaste XI, much of the destroyed hardware consisted of expensive explosive munitions or high-value hardware that couldn't be resupplied as easily.

The operation was already a success in this regard. The damage should be able to postpone the alien assault on Duqeste VII by at least two weeks if not longer if the aliens suffered greater logistical problems.

General Ark was tempted to let this go further. The original plan demanded that the raid destroy at least 45 percent of all of the supplies stashed on the surface. This should produce enough of a delay to deter the Ghirard Fleet from launching an all-out attack by 3 to 4 weeks.

In the current context of the Red Tide Offensive, a delay of at least 21 days was an eternity!

That was enough time to reinforce the Duqeste System with a handful of mech divisions and an even greater quantity of human starfighters.

The additional delays would also give the mechers and the fleters more time to fortify the planetary and orbital defenses further and force the aliens to spend more effort to take control of the entire place.

The ripple effects of these delays were fairly small, but still significant enough to represent a major contribution to the war effort. The fate of the Torald Middle Zone may eventually be decided by this action.

In short, the more the Warborn were able to delay the Ghirard Fleet, the greater the chance that the 3rd defensive band in the Torald Middle Zone would eventually be able to hold on. That was enough to give General Ark and other participating expert pilots a huge sense of fulfillment.

However, the reason why General Ark decided to err on the side of caution was because he was feeling more and more uncomfortable as the operation continued.

The more time passed by, the more Ark felt uneasy about the relative lack of resistance from the native aliens.

Sure, the defenders of Duqaste XI were still doing what they could to repel the expert mechs.

However, their warships, most of their phasefighters and their static defenses were ultimately not equipped to counter powerful and highly maneuverable expert mechs.

The most the defending nunsers could do was to take lots of shots at the rapidly-moving expert mechs and hope that one of their attacks occasionally struck the resonance shields of the expert mechs, thereby causing their defensive buffers to thin a little further.

General Ark quickly inspected the state of the resonance shields of the Lionheart and the expert mechs that were transmitting their basic telemetry to the expert command mech.

The Lionheart's resonance shield was in the best state. It had only lost 40 percent of its integrity.

The other expert mechs were a little worse off. The Riot and C-Man had lost over 50 percent of their resonance shield integrity while the Blade Chaser was a little better off due to its better evasion and relatively unremarkable appearance.

Much of the reason why the expert mechs sustained so much damage so far was because they momentarily got delayed by the special phasefighters.

The Lionheart and the other expert mechs had already eliminated enough of these experimental craft that the remainder shouldn't pose much of a problem anymore. That should make the return trip a lot less time-consuming and dangerous.

Then why did General Ark feel as if he was about to get in a lot of trouble?

It was as if a giant set of jaws was slowly emerging from the shadows and about to engulf the Lionheart and all of the other expert mechs!

The only obvious threat that could make Ark feel so threatened was the Tireless Engine. He had made sure to pay attention to the duel unfolding further away from the planet in case the nunser phase lord decided to disengage from the Mars and attempt to bully the weaker expert mechs.

No such thing had happened, though. Although the battle between the two powerful transcendent beings occasionally swing in the favor of one side to another, the Tireless Engine did not have the luxury to divert his attention elsewhere.

Then what else could make him feel so apprehensive? Was it the presence of hidden archships? Was it the arrival of incoming reinforcements? Was it because the Ghirard Fleet was secretly preparing to deploy an unknown superweapon that could make his life miserable?

Any of these possibilities could be true. General Ark did not have enough information for his intuition to form a more solid guess, but the mere hint of a danger on the horizon was already enough for him to decide his team had done enough.

Even though a part of him still felt a bit of regret that he had yet to encounter a challenge dire enough to draw out his hidden potential, he was not about to gamble so recklessly his life and the lives of his subordinates.

"We're pulling out." He repeated his instruction. "This fight has been too easy and not too unpredictable so far. Rather than assuming that the Ghirard Fleet doesn't have the means to defeat us, it is better to act as if they are ready to spring a trap on us all. Have you already seen that the native aliens have been moving to encircle us and block our escape routes as much as possible?"

"I am glad that I am not the only one who feel this way." Venerable Orfan said. "I think I have a slightly better idea why it is better that we leave sooner rather than later. According Qilanxo, a powerful being is on the way. It is approaching Duqaste XI from the edge of the star system in warp travel. It's either a really powerful alien warship, or another phase lord."

"Another phase lord?!" Venerable Imon Ingvar sounded alarmed. "We can't handle another big guy like the Tireless Engine. Even if the new phase lord is weaker, none of us can resist the attacks of such a powerful being for long."

"Well, whatever is on the way, we need to get out before it is too late. We still have a chance to avoid confrontation."

Though Venerable Vincent Ricklin personally wanted to stick around and have a shot at the newcomer, he was sober enough to understand it was not wise to fight this bout so deep in enemy-occupied territory.

His C-Man and Tiny C both pulled out from the half-destroyed warehouse that they had been rampaging in and flew straight into the air.

The other expert mechs followed suit as well.

Expert pilots possessed keen intuitions and were often able to sense serious threats to their lives by observing the tiniest of clues.

These clues could consist of anything, such as the nervous movement patterns of enemy phasefighters or the lack of strong resistance from the native aliens during this phase.

The more General Ark thought about it, the more this situation started to feel like a vague trap.

"Be on the lookout for any surprises." He said. "If my hunch is correct, the native aliens will soon do everything in their power to delay our departure in the hopes of bringing in the powerful threat that is coming from afar."

The only consolation was that the distant threat still needed a bit of time to arrive in orbit of Duqaste XI. A delay of a few minutes wouldn't change the situation all that much, but if they ended up getting stuck for fifteen minutes or more, there was much greater chance that they might never be able to leave!

As the expert mechs ascended from the surface, the native aliens finally began to employ their first means to hinder the human raiders from making a getaway.

A combination of nuser sub-capital warships and particularly large nuser phasefighters began to form a loose net in higher orbit before they began to deploy a powerful energy field that altered the properties of a wide swathe of space!

"What are they doing?!"

"Unknown! My mech is taking measurements and analyzing the data as quickly as possible, but the energy field generated by the Ghirard Fleet is unlike anything humans have encountered before!"

The Larkinson expert pilots already started to make a lot of wild guesses, from deploying an immensely large energy shield to trying to distort the fabric of space to slow down the escaping expert mechs.

Whatever the case, the native aliens were keen on protecting the warships and phasefighters that were generating this unknown energy field, because the remaining enemy assets began to open fire at the expert mechs with much less restraint than before!

Although the alien warships and phasefighters refrained from firing any kinetic projectiles, they did not hesitate to fire energy beams so long as the firing angles did not cause the attacks to strike the surface of the planet.

The warships were especially difficult to deal with as many of them mounted missile launcher arrays that were able to launch sizable salvos of transphasic missiles at the expert mechs!

The Lionheart had to work harder to shoot down the missiles before they could reach their targets, and the other expert mechs sometimes had no choice to resist the attacks with their resonance shields due to their poor missile interception capabilities.

The expert pilots all understood a little better why first-raters liked their multipurpose mechs so much. The versatility of such machines allowed them to handle this kind of situation a lot easier than specialized mechs!

As the expert mechs struggled to weather the storm and get past all of the alien assets, the energy field continued to grow stronger, yet still failed to produce any noticeable results.

General Ark only grew more and more apprehensive as this strange phenomenon continued. All his sensors could determine for certain was that the enemy warships and phasefighters were expending a lot of power to maintain this collective effect!

"What are they doing?!"

"I... do not feel directly threatened by their strange actions. I don't think the nunsers are targeting us directly!"

"Then what are they trying to accomplish?! Have they formed a giant spatial barrier that will block our attempts to leave the battlefield?!"

"That is not it." General Ark frowned. "There is no barrier of any kind in our way. Matter can still pass through the energy field without a problem."



The more the expert mechs struggled through all of the attacks, the closer they came to the collective energy field.

The expert mechs still did not feel anything threatening about the unknown energy waves saturating the surrounding space. The expert pilots made sure to use what remained of their resonance shields to block these exotic energy waves for fear they might have an adverse effect.

It was not until the expert mechs were halfway out that the purpose of the giant energy field finally became clear.

"DANGER! MOVE AWAY!"

The expert pilots all sensed an acute threat and frantically moved their expert mechs away just as a huge surprise dropped on site all of a sudden!

"Is that the Tireless Engine?!"

"No! Ghirard is still fighting against the Mars over there! This... this is a different nunsur phase lord!"

The expert pilots all grew shocked at what occurred. They never imagined that the Ghirard Fleet had a way of speeding up the arrival of an incoming phase lord by generating a strange energy field that essentially allowed the newcomer to take a spatial shortcut!

The warships and phasefighters responsible for making this happen visibly looked drained. This effort had taken a lot out of their systems, but the results more than justified the damage they incurred!

The new phase lord needed a little time to regain his bearings, but once he managed to stabilize himself, he openly announced himself to both friend and foe!

"I HAVE ANSWERED YOUR SUMMONS, FATHER. FEAR ME, DESPOILERS OF THE RED OCEAN, FOR L'KOI, THE FACELESS WARRIOR, SHALL END YOUR TYRANNY UPON THE STARS!"

Phase lords came in many different forms. While they all grew big and gained spatial abilities, they tended to evolve in dramatically different directions due to variations in development trajectories.

The starting point of phase lords also affected their properties.

It was also important to keep into account that the body cultivation approach of the native aliens originated from the phase whales. It was only natural for the phase whales to get more out of it and gain both tremendous physical might as well as an excellent affinity for phasewater at any stage.

In comparison, nunser generally got a lot less out of the same method adapted to their race. Their imperfect rituals and other flawed adaptations might affect the efficiency of their growth as well.

Whatever the case, nobody could deny that the nunser possessed larger and more physically powerful bodies than most of the other intelligent races of the Red Ocean. They tended to attain more physical gains if they managed to evolve into phase lords.

That was not to say that their spatial affinities were awful. They were just comparatively worse at it than more sensitive races such as the orvens.

Out of the few nunser phase lords that the Larkinson Clan had encountered so far, the Trampler of Stars actually turned out to be a little more atypical of his species.

The nunser warlord had spent an inordinate amount of time on developing his spatial abilities. He had to put in greater effort just to develop a single strong specialization, but his efforts paid off as his ability to shake entire battlefields had become unparalleled among lesser phase lords.

However, the time and effort he put into becoming good at projecting his power across wider distances had not given him sufficient time to develop his physical prowess all that much.

While he needed less time to strengthen his physique than most other races due to being a nunser, there were plenty of other native gods in alien society that thought that the Trampler of Stars had taken unnecessary detour.

The Tireless Engine currently engaged in battle against Patriarch Reginald Cross and the Mars was a bit more typical of his species.

While the upper-tier lesser phase lord was still capable of destabilizing and weaponizing the surrounding fabric of space on a more passive basis, it was undeniable that he had developed his impressive physique into a well-oiled combat machine.

If not for the fact that an ace mech such as the Mars was too damn small, fast and tough, the Tireless Engine would have been able to put up a much better fight!

It was only after he had shed his impressively large raiment and shrunk his body proportions that the Tireless Engine was finally able to pose a real threat against the Mars, especially when he was wielding his recently awarded Saint Piercer spear.

Ever since the Tireless Engine had taken on his more compact form, he was unable to exert his true physical strength.

Yet what he gained in return was greater speed and control over his own motion. The phase lord was able to empower his smaller body a lot more effectively, enabling him to react faster, make tighter turns and land attacks that would have otherwise missed.

The two combatants frequently circled around each other before charging forward to exchange a handful of blows!

In some bouts, the Tireless Engine managed to pierce its threatening spear past the guard of the Mars and nick the high-quality armor of the ace mech.

The ace mech's Saint Kingdom offered remarkably little resistance against the special alloy that made the Saint Piercer such a potent experimental weapon.

Its speartip gleamed as it pierced through the domain field emitted by the Mars at all times. The mysterious alloy continually resisted every effort made by Patriarch Reginald to retard the weapon's progress and weaken its lethality!

As such, whenever the Saint Piercer managed to get through and strike the upgraded Abasis Armor of the Mars, the ace mech incurred another visible scar or cut!

The Mars already collected over a dozen cuts across its formerly pristine Abasis Armor. It was a testament to its material quality that the Saint Piercer had not been able to punch through all of the layers and damage the internals of the ace hybrid mech.

Even so, Patriarch Reginald already guessed it was only a matter of time before the spear struck an important component. He had to admit that the Tireless Engine was a highly skilled spear wielder. The alien phase lord was constantly learning from his mistakes and adapting his fighting style against his opponent.

The integrated energy weapons of the ARCEUS System were particularly vulnerable against the enemy's spear strikes!

In order to preserve their integrity and allow them to keep firing at the Tireless Engine in order to deplete the phase lord's spatial barrier faster, Reginald had to fight more cautiously than he was comfortable with and skip many attack opportunities in order to play it safe.

Patriarch Reginald was not comfortable with adopting such a cautious fighting style, but his opponent had become so threatening with his special spear that he did not want to end up getting impaled by the weapon due to a moment of carelessness!

He initially entered this battle with the attitude of beating down the Tireless Engine and adding the giant skull of the nunser phase lord to his collection of trophies.

Now, he was no longer trying so hard to attain victory. While his 'teammates' may be fearing that he had lost himself to the throes of battle, Patriarch Reginald still maintained enough awareness to understand that defeating the Tireless Engine was not the point of this operation.

He just needed to hold back the spear-wielding phase lord long enough for the Larkinson expert mechs to do their jobs and retreat without getting pursued.

Now that Reginald had gained the Tireless Engine's measure, the ace pilot looked forward to resuming his duel against the nunser warlord on a proper battlefield.

The current situation was too unfavorable for Reginald to fully commit to a duel. There were too many alien warships and phasefighters that could intervene on behalf of the Tireless Engine and exhaust the Mars a little faster.

It was better if the two could fight a proper duel with their respective forces at their backs. At least then neither side would gain an overwhelming advantage in this regard.

The powerful ace pilot assumed that the Tireless Engine implicitly agreed with this intention.

Though the phase lord was still trying his best to score a punishing blow onto the Mars, the alien powerhouse refused to make any risky gambit. He tried his best to play it safe and prevent the ace mech from taking advantage of any openings.

It was only now that Reginald realized that his assumption about his opponent was off the mark.

The accelerated arrival of a second phase lord, a smaller one maybe, but still a genuine one, proved that the Tireless Engine had just been waiting for backup!

The appearances of Ghirard and L'Koi diverged a lot, but the sharp-eyed mech pilots could still spot the family resemblance.

A temporary lull ensued as both sides took a step back in order to take stock at the drastic change in circumstances.

The nunsen spacers and phasefighter pilots all made pleased guttural alien noises as soon as they received confirmation that the proudest and strongest son of their warlord had arrived to lend them a hand!

The humans on the other hand all reacted with dismay. No matter how strong or weak this 'L'Koi' may be, even the least powerful lesser phase lords was still more than a match for most expert mechs!

The arrival of a second phase lord and a blood descendant of the Tireless Engine no less had such a massive impact on the battle that its flow had been completely disrupted!

This was slightly to the advantage of the Warborn champions as most of the alien warships and phasefighters had stopped their fire for the time being.

Even so, the addition of a second phase lord on the battlefield might make all of this moot, as the expert pilots didn't think they could retreat from Duqaste XI if L'Koi chose to stand in their way!

"Is this... your son, alien?" Patriarch Reginald asked with a hint of wariness and respect in his voice.

"HE IS." Ghirard proudly transmitted back in his translated speech. "I HAVE SIREN MANY SONS AND DAUGHTERS. I AM PROUD OF MOST OF THEM, AS THEY SHOULD. YET OUT OF ALL OF MY MORE MARTIAL DESCENDANTS, ONLY L'KOI HAS PROVEN HIS SUPERIOR STRENGTH, LEADERSHIP AND VALOR. NOW THAT I HAVE REACHED THE LIMIT OF MY GROWTH AS A LESSER PHASE LORD, I HAVE CHOSEN TO RAISE L'KOI INTO GODHOOD SO THAT HE MAY SUCCEED ME IF I FALL."

The nunsers cared a lot about family, both their immediate relatives and their more extended relations. The aliens were quite similar to the Larkinsons in this regard.

The choice made by the Tireless Engine was not too unusual. Most phase lords tended to remain stuck in their lesser stage for the rest of their long lives.

Each lesser phase lord aspired to promote to a greater phase lord, but precious few managed to make this transition. Phasewater production systems were too scarce, and until recently, the phase whales had been extremely reluctant to award a PPS to deserving alien powerhouses.

The lesser phase lords were therefore stuck in an awkward position. They possessed great might and authority and were able to accrue a lot of money and resources for these reasons.

It took a lot of resources in order to elevate a descendant into a phase lord. The rituals responsible for transforming mortal aliens into newborn gods were so flawed and dangerous that the death rates were quite considerable.

Who knew how many sons and daughters the Tireless Engine had sacrificed in the hope of fostering a true divine descendant!

The more ambitious and optimistic phase lords tended to save most of their wealth in preparation for an extensive upgrade spree if they manage to become a greater phase lord.

The more realistic and pessimistic lesser phase lords instead spent all of their assets on building their mortal empire and cultivating their descendants.

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Who knew how many sons and daughters the Tireless Engine had sacrificed in the hope of fostering a true divine descendant!

Still, no matter how many lives and resources Ghirard expended, he finally managed to realize his goal.

L'Koi still looked young, and his body size was much less impressive than his father at his height.

Even if the two phase lords looked somewhat similar size at the moment due to the Tireless Engine's voluntary shrinkage, L'Koi was still a lot weaker due to his much lower phasewater concentration and his much less developed phasewater organs!

Yet still the presence of the second phase lord practically paralyzed the Larkinson expert mechs.

General Ark and the others could already feel the eagerness in L'Koi's true body. The newly arrived alien had come to lend his father a hand, and what better way to do so than to crush the expert mechs that had just made a mess out of the depots of Duqaste XI!

The younger phase lord already locked his gaze onto the Lionheart.

Out of all of the expert mechs, this one was clearly a cut above the rest.

"YOU. PILOT OF THE WHITE MACHINE. WHAT IS YOUR NAME?"

"I am General Ark Larkinson, the commanding officer of the 77th Warborn Mech Division."

"LARKINSON. I RECOGNIZE YOUR NAME. THAT IS GOOD. I SHALL EARN MORE GLORY IF THE FIRST 'EXPERT PILOT' THAT I HAVE SLAIN IS DESCENDED FROM A MORE BLESSED LINEAGUE. I SHALL DO MY BEST TO PRESERVE YOUR TINY HEAD SO THAT IT MAY OCCUPY A PRIZED PLACE ON MY THRONE, THOUGH FORGIVE ME IF I CANNOT ADEQUATELY CONTROL MY STRENGTH. I CANNOT MATCH THE CONTROL OF MY FATHER."

General Ark twitched his lips. "It's okay. Just use the head of my expert mech instead. It is a more dignified mark of my existence, and I would rather be remembered by the splendor of my expert mech than the frailty of my human body."

"GOOD! YOU MAY CLAIM MY OWN HEAD IF YOU HAVE CLAIMED VICTORY, BUT THIS SHALL NEVER HAPPEN BECAUSE I DO NOT INTEND TO LOSE AGAINST PREMATURE GODS SUCH AS YOURS! ONLY YOUR SO-CALLED SAINTS CAN GIVE ME A PROPER CHALLENGE!"

L'Koi went into action as soon as he spoke those words!

The time for talking had passed!

The only way the two sides could resolve their differences was through an exchange of arms as opposed to an exchange of words!

Chapter 6266 L'Koi

The Larkinson expert pilots felt a lot of pressure as their expert mechs floated before the second nunser phase lord.

Unlike his much more formidable father, L'Koi, who apparently styled himself as the Faceless Warrior, did not tower too much over the mechs.

It was highly unlikely that the newly arrived phase lord was holding back in this regard. If this was the case, then L'Koi probably ranked at the bottom among other nunser phase lords.

Even so, that was no reason for General Ark and the other Larkinson expert pilots to underestimate this new adversary.

Even if L'Koi was fairly young and new to his current condition, his father had probably given him a small but useful package of phasewater organs.

L'Koi's true body shouldn't be able to fit too many phasewater organs at the moment, but just a basic set was already enough to add new strengths and improve his specializations!

Another reason for concern was his equipment. As far as phase lords went, it was a lot easier for them to acquire new equipment than to obtain powerful phasewater organs.



L'Koi did not wear a full raiment that covered his entire body in thick armor plating, but it was still a very well-armored suit that provided plenty of physical protection to his flanks and rear.

His choice of armaments were two transphasic hyper axes. The weapons exuded an unnaturally strong sense of force, which meant that the weapons were likely able to inflict much heavier impacts upon contact!

What also looked concerning was that L'Koi's raiment also featured two proportionately large autocannons. The machine gun-like armaments were only able to point their muzzles forward, but were connected to large ammunition caches, allowing them to open fire for an extended period of time.

There were many other technological features to the raiment. It came with a fairly modest set of azure shield generators that provided the phase lord with additional energy barriers, thereby giving L'Koi the luxury to attack without needing to worry too much about suffering retaliatory attacks.

If the Tireless Engine pampered his favored heir as much as General Ark suspected, then the autocannons likely fired solid transphasic hyper projectiles that would definitely hurt a lot on impact. The resonance shields of all of the expert mechs would definitely have a lot of trouble with trying to resist a continuous barrage.

What was worse was that L'Koi was not alone. The entire Ghirard Fleet was still up and about.

The warships and phasefighters could provide fire support at all times, allowing them to wear down the defenses of the expert mechs so long as they had a clear shot at their targets.

As L'Koi was beginning to move into action, a helmet unfolded and wrapped around his large head.

True to his title, his helmet lacked any obvious eyes and other features, making it seem as if he did not possess a face.

"I SHALL TEAR YOUR MECHS ONE AT A TIME!"

The aggressive nuser phase lord charged forward and already began to open fire with his twin autocannons!

The expert mechs were already on the move, allowing them to easily evade the twin streams of projectiles.

According to the sensor systems, the solid rounds were not all transphasic. Only one in fifteen of them possessed enhanced penetrative properties, likely in an attempt to save on costs and resources.

What was more concerning was that the rounds were all laced with a fire hyper material that could inflict additional heat damage on impact.

Perhaps getting struck by a single round was not that scary, but getting struck by hundreds of them would drain the defenses of any expert mech within a minute!

Fortunately, it was frankly not that difficult for the expert mechs to evade the ranged attacks. The firing angles of the flank-mounted autocannons were very poor, and their aim jostled a lot whenever L'Koi made any physical exertion.

Even so, the autocannons exerted a lot of pressure onto the expert pilots and forced them to stay alert and on the move at all times. The mental burden of keeping constant track of where the autocannons were aiming would steadily take a toll on the psyche of the expert pilots.

That was probably the real point of this weapon system.

Though the autocannons chewed through ammunition at a prodigious rate, the nunser warlord's body was so large that his raiment was able to attach plenty of ammunition canisters on its back!

"What do we do, general?!" Venerable Imon Ingvar asked as the stress of the situation was affecting his mood.

"This is what you all signed up for. This is our challenge." Ark told the other Larkinson expert pilots. "First, forget about retreating. The younger phase lord has the strength and the ability to prevent us from escaping. Splitting up will only allow him and his fleet to hunt us all down in quick succession. Our only chance of making it out alive is to beat L'Koi badly enough that he is no longer willing or able to pursue us. Kill him if you can, but our greatest priority is to create a moment for us to disengage."

There was no way that L'Koi would run out of rounds any time soon, which meant that the expert pilots actively had to move away from the front of the phase lord for a long time.

"What do we do, general?!" Venerable Imon Ingvar asked as the stress of the situation was affecting his mood.

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It was actually better if they didn't kill L'Koi. Doing so would probably set off his father. If the Tireless Engine went berserk, then even if the Mars was able to survive the powerful phase lord's wrath, the expert mechs would definitely not be able to resist getting impaled by the so-called Saint Piercer!

"How do you want to engage the phase lord?" Venerable Orfan asked.

"We get close and try to stick to his flanks and rear at all times." General Ark answered. "We cannot separate ourselves from L'Koi. Doing so will give the Ghirard Fleet very clear shots against our expert mechs. Only by staying close to our targets will the enemy warships and strike craft refrain from opening fire against us for fear of hitting the Tireless Engine's precious son."

Nunsers valued family very much, and they were also very hierarchical. General Ark already knew that the nunsers hated friendly fire with a passion. Landing a single hit on L'Koi would probably be a death sentence for the spacers and officers responsible for making this happen.

This was why the expert mechs needed to use L'Koi's considerable bulk as a shield against enemy fire.

The other expert pilots had no objection to this plan. They were predominantly melee mechs anyway, so they were bound to fight up close regardless.

"Who will try to catch his attention? The enemy phase lord needs a target to fixate on, or else we all have to be on guard against his powerful attacks."

"I will." General Ark said. "My expert mech is the strongest and it is also in the best condition. My machine is good at attracting attention. I can guarantee you that L'Koi will not divert his attention to you as long as you do not give him a reason to look in your direction."

The expert pilots of the 77th Warborn had trained in comparable virtual training scenarios in the past. They all roughly understood how they needed to coordinate with each other.

Against a phase lord like L'Koi, it was important to give the large enemy a reason to fixate on one machine above the rest. General Ark voluntarily assumed the most difficult responsibility out of a sense of duty but also ambition.

There was no better way to squeeze beyond the limits of his current potential than to attract the ire of a phase lord!

While there was still a chance that the expert mechs might win against L'Koi, the victory margins were depressingly thin.

The best way to turn this entire situation around was for an ace pilot to emerge and beat down the phase lord in a short amount of time!

This confrontation presented General Ark with the best opportunity yet to accomplish his breakthrough.

If it did not work, then General Ark did not have a lot of ideas to fall back upon.

"Attack!" He urged the other Larkinson champions. "Focus on disabling his autocannons first. Concentrate on punching through the armor next. We need to damage and cripple at least some of his phasewater organs to deter him from pursuing us any further."

The plan sounded simple, but this was anything but the case.

As the four expert mechs closed in on the enemy phase lord, they all evaded the two heavy axe strikes and began to assail the nuser phaselord from different directions!

L'Koi did not allow him to get swarmed without retaliation. The alien turned around a lot faster than the expert pilots expected and almost managed to avoid getting chopped into pieces by evading the twin axe strikes!

Though the powerful machines manage to evade the attacks without issue, the problem was that the powerful axes also cleaved into dimensions, thereby producing strange spatial phenomena that turned the surroundings into a weak spatial hazard!

The phase lord experienced no harm from this effect, but the same could not be said for many other people!

The more L'Kai swung around his axes, the more the unnatural blades of the weapons destabilized the surrounding fabric of space!

Unlike the Mars which was able to bull through the messy spatial phenomena due to the power of its pilot, the expert mechs were much weaker!

Their resonance shields strained each time they needed to reset a patch of space so that it behaved normally again.

While General Ark and the rest were still glad that their powerful machines were able to resist the surrounding spatial activity, their resonance shields were depleting at an accelerated rate just by maneuvering around the phase lord!

Sticking around L'Koi was not so safe either. One way or another, they had to gain the upper hand and defeat the enemy phase lord so fast that no petty ability would be able to block their vast might.

However, the expert mechs had already begun to attack.

The Riot stuck to the rear whenever possible and decided it was best to maintain to stick to the rear whenever possible. The machine had to juke frantically from time to time in order to avoid the vengeful hoof strikes coming from below.

As the expert spearman mech's weapon made frequent contact with the azure energy shields that covered the alien, Venerable Orfan grinned in satisfaction when she saw that the segmented energy shields were crumbling quite quickly.

"L'Koi isn't wearing a high-quality raiment as we feared! He is fitted with generic shield generators, and there aren't as many of them so his energy barriers are not that strong. We can win as long as we can get through!"

The expert pilots had already come to this conclusion a short while ago. The expert mechs began to strike at the azure energy shields more violently. Their space suppressors did a good job at weakening the energy defense, causing every segmented energy shield to fall at a faster rate.

However, L'Koi also grew more aggressive as a result. His powerful axes swung harder and produced more spatial disturbances that were constantly getting in the way of the expert mechs!

"The Blade Chaser's resonance shield has dipped below 15%!"

"23 percent for my Riot."

Ark, whose Lionheart was still busy trying to buzz in front of the enemy phase lord as much as possible, knew that the risk of suffering casualties would be much greater once those resonance shields came down.

He needed to turn the tables against the phase lord soon, or else the strike force of high-ranking mechs would meet its end on this battlefield!

The Larkinson decided to bring out one of his big guns.

"Noah! It's time to perform!"

"Rwoar!"

A large white lion companion spirit emerged from his body and grew eager to strike a telling blow against L'Koi!

Chapter 6267 A Cleansing Light

So far, none of the attacks launched by the expert mechs had stuck.

The armored phase lord was not particularly agile or maneuverable in combat, but he was very well protected. His raiment granted him plenty of segmented azure energy shields, his spatial barrier remained fully intact and his physical armor had yet to sustain any damage.

On the flipside, the son of the Tireless Engine was unable to land any effective blows on the expert mechs either.

The phase lord's inherent physique and weapon choice made it very difficult for L'Koi to attack enemies harassing him from the sides or rear.

Sure, he was able to generate spatial hazards that constantly weakened the resonance shields of the circling expert mechs, but that was the extent of his efforts.

Occasionally, his armored legs attempted to kick out, but the expert pilots were way too sharp and alert for attacks like that to get struck.

The only expert mech that was in serious danger was the Lionheart at the moment. General Ark voluntarily assumed the role of bait and made sure to make his expert mech glow brighter in order to attract more attention.

The integrated luminar crystal cannons persistently launched light beams at the phase lord's energy defenses the expert command mech regularly dove forward in order to strike with its transphasic spear.

It was difficult for Ark to keep his Lionheart in one piece. L'Koi grew increasingly angrier as his powerful transphasic axes continually failed to hit the Lionheart.

The alien put so much power in each swing that Ark just knew that his Lionheart would lose its entire resonance shield if it got struck by a solid axe blow.

Any subsequent hits were bound to deplete the azure energy shield and penetrate the transphasic armor system of the Lionheart!

The majestic white lion reflected his principal's inherent majesty... as well as his pride. Not content with having a mere cat, Ark truly took pride in having his companion spirit take the form of a lion.

Though Ark wanted to put all of his focus on evasion in order to minimize the probability of getting struck by his adversary's dangerous axes, he knew that he couldn't afford to play it safe.

The expert mechs were racing against time. The longer this bout dragged on, the faster their defenses got depleted. L'Koi could easily outlast his opponents just by making sure they couldn't get away!

Since that was the case, Ark grew more desperate to break the deadlock. Hence why he finally decided to let Noah out of his cage.

The majestic white lion reflected his principal's inherent majesty... as well as his pride. Not content with having a mere cat, Ark truly took pride in having his companion spirit take the form of a lion.

The Lionheart started to back off a bit. The expert mech still hovered close enough that it had to dodge repeated axe attacks, but it was able to earn enough of a reprieve to stow away its transphasic spear and retrieve another weapon.

A bright white hyper plasma sword came online. It immediately lit up like a light bulb, which somehow caused the weapon to become more powerful due to the integration of light-attributed hyper materials.

General Ark had used the Cleansing Light enough times to know that it was overkill against most opponents. The Lionheart struggled to power the Terran-developed plasma weapon, and could not keep it active and at full power for long.

Yet so long as the Cleansing Light remained active, its damage potential was the highest out of all of the armaments of the Lionheart!

This was the weapon that Ark wanted to gamble upon to win this bout and open up an escape route for his strike force.

As Ark contemplated on what he intended to do, he already began to feel as if he was living up to the duties and responsibilities as a Saint.

Perhaps it was an illusion, but he could already feel his bottleneck beginning to loosen!



His intuition sent him a clear message that as long as he proved his valor before this powerful phase lord, he may be able to fulfill his dream today!

With that thought in mind, Ark became more decisive as he was willing to gamble everything on his upcoming performance!

The other expert pilots weren't stupid. They already had a pretty good idea of what Ark intended to do. It was a high-risk gambit as the consequences were dramatic if the mech commander failed to achieve any of his objectives.

"I am about to go all out. I will pull out all of the stops." General Ark warned his fellow expert pilots. "I will not be able to keep this up for long, but I should be able to breach at least one layer of defense. Take advantage of my actions and try your best to wear this phase lord down. Once I have reached my limit, my willpower and the systems of my mechs will suffer from the overexertion. If a miracle hasn't occurred... I won't be of much use in the remainder of the battle."

The other expert pilots weren't stupid. They already had a pretty good idea of what Ark intended to do. It was a high-risk gambit as the consequences were dramatic if the mech commander failed to achieve any of his objectives.

If time wasn't so short, then the expert pilots would have tried to dissuade Ark from choosing this course of action.

As it was, the situation had become so dire that none of them tried to propose an alternate plan!

"Go for it, sir."

"Success or failure, we need to try at least. We can't let this nuser phaselord grind us down. We need to take control of this battle!"

"Noah!"

"Rwoar!"

The companion spirit entered the Cleansing Light and harmonized with it, thereby amplifying the strength of true resonance acting upon the high-tech weapon.

The Cleansing Light not only glowed brighter due to this, but the plasma plume also started to ripple and fleetingly resemble the shape of a leaping lion at times!

That was not all. General Ark intended to borrow help from another source!

"Illustrious One! Hear my plea and lend me your light!"

The design spirit of the Lionheart readily answered the call. The Illustrious One had already been paying close attention to this battle from the start of this operation.

The silhouette of a glowing humanoid alien appeared above the Cleansing Light before inhabiting the weapon.

While the design spirit had to share the same space with Noah, the Illustrious One was nonetheless able to empower the blessed weapon as it was originally designed for the purpose!

The intensity of light output multiplied even further as a design spirit centered around light dramatically amplified many of its properties.

The light became so blinding that all of the nearby mechs had to reduce the sensitivity of their optical sensors in order to maintain a clear view of the battlefield!

"ANNOYING LIGHT, BUT FUTILE. I AM A GOD. I CAN STARE AT ANY STAR WITHOUT BLINDING MY EYES. OUR DIVINITY IS BEYOND YOUR CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND."

Most phase lords were indeed less susceptible to environmental hazards like excessively strong light sources..

Nonetheless, Ark never intended to rely on flashing a bright light to overpower L'Koi. Making his weapon shine brighter made his mech and the plasma sword a lot stronger.

Indeed, the potent weapon already started to shake a bit as it was not able to maintain the same degree of stability as before.

Though the weapon was unlikely to break due to its excellent construction and tolerance towards overloading, it undoubtedly needed a lot of maintenance if the weapon continued to operate far above safety parameters.

Yet as powerful as the Cleansing Light had become, this was still not enough!

Ark intended to fight against L'Koi with the strength of an ace mech as opposed to a really powerful expert mech.

There needed to be a clear and potent division in power between the Lionheart's previous attacks and the upcoming strikes.

General Ark still had another ace up his sleeve. This one was technological rather than mystical in nature.

Instead of praying to another design spirit or whatever, Ark simply reached out with his arm and flipped a few switches.

This simple action produced a terrifying consequence, as many of the safety limiters that were designed to keep the Cleansing Light stable were suddenly turned offline!

"Activate Giantslayer Mode!"

A huge amount of power began to channel through the Cleansing Light. If not for the fact that Ark was already a high-tier expert pilot, the plasma sword would have blown up by this time!

As it was, General Ark gritted his teeth as he forcibly used his willpower to contain the Cleansing Light's violent power as much as possible.

The reason why Ves, the original designer of this adapted Terran weapon, included this feature was because he designed for a scenario exactly like the current situation!

Expert mechs didn't always get to choose what they fought against. If a phase whale ever showed up, then the designers of the Lionheart wanted to make sure that the powerful high-tier expert mech had a weapon that could take a real bite out of a phase lord!

As the plasma blade of the Cleansing Light had grown at least ten times taller and wider, L'Koi grew incredibly alarmed at the sight.

His phase lord senses easily perceived the enormous concentration of power locked inside this handheld weapon!

If all of those potent energies discharged at once, then L'Koi did not feel confident in his ability to fend off the entire attack. The phase lord already started to back off and lift up his axes in a defensive posture, but the Lionheart quickly charged forward in order to bring down the bright white giant plasma blade!

"Do it, Ark!"

"We're with you, general!"

"Take this phase lord down a notch!"

The other expert mechs did not possess any attacks of comparable power, but they fully took advantage of the Lionheart's threatening action by going on the offensive.

The Riot, the C-Man, the Blade Chaser and the Greenaxe all struck the phase lord's segmented azure energy shields at abandon, causing them to pop at an accelerated rate.

Meanwhile, General Ark constantly struggled to maintain control over his vastly amplified weapon. The act of using such an exaggeratingly dangerous weapon to strike at a phase lord was so glorious and magnificent that he could feel his bottleneck loosen even further!

So long as he managed to land a telling blow against L'Koi, General Ark practically became certain that he would trigger his second apotheosis!

The strong desire to transcend to sainthood seemed to encourage the Lionheart and cause it to swing the giant plasma blade against the multi-layered defenses of the enemy phase lord!

"LET THERE BE LIGHT!"

"RWOOOOOAAAAAR!"

A blinding flash ensued from the moment the plasma blade struck the segmented azure energy shields!

The transphasic defenses seemed to evaporate upon contact! The power of the souped-up plasma sword proved to be far too much for the alien shield generators to handle.

The blessed, empowered and overloaded plasma sword went on to burn against the spatial barrier!

L'Koi became panicked as his poor spatial barrier sustained damage as if it had crashed right against a star!

Though the spatial barrier lasted a lot longer due to its inherent strength, the Faceless Warrior was unable to sustain it for long.

Even as the giant plasma blade started to fizzle out, the spatial barrier of the recently ascended phase lord gave in first!

"We did it! The phase lord is vulnerable!"

General Ark wanted to push the plasma sword right through the transphasic axes and cut straight through L'Koi's raiment, but before he could do so, the phase lord finally reacted in desperation.

The nunser's arm blurred in motion!

The phase lord tossed his precious weapons!

Two axes abruptly collided against the Lionheart!

One of them struck the Lionheart's resonance shield with so much force that the defensive layer burst entirely!

The other axe proceeded to slam into the Lionheart's waist, impacting it so strongly that the axeblood cut into the armor and damaged much of the internal components underneath!

Though the damage did not sound too critical, the greater problem was that the double impacts pushed the Lionheart back just enough for L'Koi to actually duck and evade the gigantic plasma!

"You missed!"

"You almost had him, Ark!"

Though General Ark quickly asserted control over his machine and tried to swing his overloaded plasma sword at the phase lord yet again, the Cleansing Light could no longer handle the strain.

The weapon malfunctioned and fizzled before Ark could get off another swing!

"Nooo!"

Chapter 6268 The Consequences of his Own Actions

He almost made it through!

If his Cleansing Light could just strike at L'Koi's raiment and burn through the armor plating, the Lionheart would have been able to inflict real harm on the phase lord's body!

Even if the damage ended up fairly superficial, the symbolic value of such a strike could not be overstated.

It was a powerful sign that the expert mechs posed a fatal threat against the relatively young and inexperienced phase lord!

As long as the Tireless Engine and his son weren't stupid, the best and most logical decision they could make was to back off and allow the raiding human mechs to retreat without any further incident.

Yet all of that became moot because General Ark failed to inflict the decisive blow that could frighten the phase lords into giving way!

The mech general felt crushed by his near-success. 'Almost' succeeding yielded certain results that were still very favorable to the strike force. The Cleansing Light in full Giantstayler Mode at least managed to burn through a lot of segmented azure energy shields to deny the alien full coverage and also burned its way through the crucial spatial barrier.

The effective neutralization of L'Koi's energy defenses meant that it became a lot easier for the strike force to inflict permanent and telling damage onto the nunser phase lord.

L'Koi still enjoyed the protection of his raiment, which was equivalent to transphasic hyper armor system of a first-class mech, but that was much easier to deal with for the gathered Larkinson expert mechs. They just needed to target the weak points and get past the armor layers in order to inflict real physical damage.

Of course, the expert mechs still needed to put in a lot of work in order to actually threaten the phase lord's life. L'Koi was larger than several mechs put together, so the expert mechs either needed to damage a lot of biotissue, or inflict enough penetrating damage to the brain or another well-protected organ.

Ark and the other Larkinson expert pilots had already gained a good idea of L'Koi's temper.

While the young nunser phase lord was indeed a cut above other nunsser warriors, he was not as tempered and experienced as his father. He also valued his life a lot more than his courage.

L'Koi had just become a phase lord. He had a whole new life ahead of him as a mighty god among the native aliens. Why should he risk his life to defeat a bunch of expert mechs when he had not even begun to develop his potential as a deity?

The massive blow inflicted by the Cleansing Light had most definitely spooked the phase lord and caused him to lose much of his confidence as a 'god'!

It turned out that even after his body grew larger and tougher, he could still be killed like a common nunser if he bumped into the wrong opponents!

The alien phase lord had already tried to put a lot more distance between himself and the expert mech that was almost responsible for burning through all of his defensive layers.

The transphasic hyper axes that he had thrown out just earlier automatically spun around and looped back to his position. L'Koi caught the spinning axes in an obviously trained motion, but his stance had already switched from an offensive one to a defensive one.

It was clear that L'Koi had already lost most of his courage!

His heart was not in the battle anymore!

In this regard, General Ark had produced a fantastic result. The threat posed by L'Koi was not as great as it was before. Even the warships and phasefighters hovering in the background reduced their activity for fear that one of their errant shots might actually strike the phase lord's raiment.

The massive blow that the Lionheart had struck against L'Koi also dealt a major blow to the morale of the Girard Fleet.

The growing doubts, fears and hesitation would definitely have a negative impact on the performance of the surrounding aliens. They became significantly easier to manage so long as their morale did not recover in the next few minutes.

In short, General Ark's amazing feat had given the remaining expert mechs a much better chance of making it out alive!

This was a feat to be celebrated, but General Ark's mood did not reflect this positive outcome at all. Dismay marked his expression as he felt anything but a winner after he had inflicted the most powerful attack that he had ever channeled through a mech in his career up to this point!

"I failed..."

"Rwoar..."

A tired and deflated-looking Noah returned from the Cleansing Light and hopped back inside Ark in order to rest.

The companion spirit had tried to pump as much power into the plasma sword as possible. He had worked hard to make the attack succeed, and while his efforts largely got rewarded, the failure at the very end struck the spiritual lion just as hard as his principal!



For a moment, General Ark lost complete awareness of his expert mech, the other expert mechs, L'Koi and all of the other elements of the battlefield.

His mind had entered into a pit of despair as his 'near-success' continually mocked and taunted him for his inability to pull off his entire attack.

The last-second pushback that Ark failed to guard against had ruined his moment of splendor!

He could still remember how his bottleneck had become so frail that it only took a small amount of effort to completely break it apart and attain his breakthrough.

Yet because of his failure to anticipate and respond against L'Koi's surprising decision to throw his twin axes, General Ark had missed out on completing a deed that would have become a part of his glorious legend!

This final failure at the end devastated Ark because he had lost the closest opportunity to break through to ace pilot in this battle, and perhaps for the entire duration of the current campaign!

His bottleneck had firmed up with a vengeance. Whereas it previously felt as if it had turned into a paper screen that could easily be torn with the slightest of touches, now it had turned into a solid alloy wall that could not be broken no matter how many times Ark banged his head against the surface!

The negative consequences of the earlier overloaded attack also didn't help. He had pushed his Cleansing Light so far that it had become busted. Many small and complicated internal components had been pushed so far above their tolerance levels that they had exploded or fizzled out. Ark's willpower had only temporarily forced them to stay intact, but as soon the true resonance receded, reality came back with a vengeance!

His Lionheart was not in a good shape either. The mech supplied a lot of power to the weapon, so the power lines and energy transmission systems had endured a huge load that damaged a lot of internal components.

The expert command mech might not look too damaged from the outside, but its internal situation had become a lot messier!

General Ark no longer had the confidence that he would be able to maintain the performance of a high-tier expert mech.

This was why his earlier move had been such a gambit for him. If he succeeded and managed to break through, then he had no doubt that his forced resonance at the ace mech level would have magically repaired all of the overstressed internal components and even make them a lot stronger in the process!

Yet because he failed to break through, Ark became stuck with the consequences of his own actions. His combat effectiveness had dropped so much that he wouldn't be of any use in the fight against L'Koi anymore!

Venerable Orfan, Venerable Vincent, Venerable Imon and Venerable Kolak were on their own going forward!

By attempting to play the hero and betting everything on a single power move, General Ark effectively lost all of his capital and could no longer participate in the game anymore.

It would already be a challenge for him to keep the Lionheart in a good enough condition to safely retreat to the stealth carrier hiding further away.

Had he made the right choice? Did he proceed with an action that benefited him the most at the expense of imperiling his subordinates and comrades?

Ark conceived of this entire operation for the purpose of putting him to the test. He had been so confident that he would be able to pull off a grand feat and successfully overcome his bottleneck in a magnificent blaze of glory.

He had invested so much in this attempt. He had willingly separated himself from the rest of the 77th Warborn for the purpose of allowing him to fight without the amplification provided by his subordinates.

His Lionheart had indeed lost a lot of combat effectiveness due to this risky decision, but it had also allowed him to rediscover what it was like to pilot a mech by himself and bring him closer to his own power as opposed to the strength borrowed from the belief of so many people.

When it came down to it, Ark's true motivation had been to break through by relying on his own power for the most part.

Sure, other factors such as Noah, the Lionheart and the Illustrious One contributed to his attempt, but that still did not take away from the fact that Ark had almost managed to pierce his bottleneck by 'himself'.

Yet almost was not enough in this instance.

As Ark continued to wallow in his malaise, he could already feel the disappointment and recriminations from the other Larkinson expert pilots.

They were all high-tier expert pilots like himself. They all knew what he had done and how his failure put them all in trouble.

There was no need for them to exchange any words because their willpower already communicated their true feelings.

"I'm a failure..."

Fortunately, Ark at least possessed enough sense to slowly pick himself up and focus on the job.

"What do we do, Ark?" Venerable Imon asked.

The male Ingvar sibling did not express much resentment towards Ark. To him, failure was a natural part of life. Everyone failed once in a while. Imon was much more interested in addressing the immediate future rather than retreading the recent past.

"I have done my work." Ark said in a measured tone. "L'Koi's energy shields and spatial barrier are gone. It is up to you to pick up where I have left off and beat the phase lord so badly that he no longer wishes to pursue us anymore. It will be harder for you to cope with him without my attempts to distract him, but you can do it. Those transphasic axes are deadly, but their reach is short and their wielder can't swing them all that quickly."

Just as the remaining four combat capable expert mechs were ready to resume their fight, a sudden change occurred!

Patriarch Reginald actually transmitted a warning over the command channel!"

"Ark, GET OUT OF THE WAY!"

Ark and Reginald had fought alongside each other often enough for the former to trust the latter without reserve.

The Lionheart already started to juke away before Reginald could finish his words!

General Ark did not need any further motivation to desperately move his expert mech to the side as he could already feel the approach of a very acute threat!

"Ah!"

Ark's deep connection with his second skin mech caused him to experience a piercing pain on his arm!

Outside of his cockpit, the Lionheart's right arm suddenly broke apart at the elbow as a fairly large and sharp polearm had almost pierced through the back of the high-tier expert mech!

Fortunately, the Lionheart had ultimately evaded quickly enough to sacrifice an arm.

As for the weapon that had almost impaled the expert mech, it had already come to an abrupt stop before L'Koi.

The phase lord recognized the weapon and immediately tossed aside his precious transphasic axes to grip the recently developed spear that looked a bit too long and thick in his arms.

The Tireless Engine had actually passed his Saint Piercer to his son!

**"WHERE IS YOUR COURAGE, MY SON?! I AM ASHAMED OF YOU! IT IS NOT A FAULT TO FLINCH AWAY FROM A POWERFUL ATTACK, BUT IT IS A SIN FOR A GOD TO LOSE YOUR CONFIDENCE ON THE BATTLEFIELD. TAKE MY ARMS AND REDEEM YOUR HONOR BY SLAYING THESE INSOLENT HUMANS! DEMONSTRATE THROUGH YOUR**

ACTIONS THAT YOU WILL NOT ALLOW THIS PATHETIC COLLECTION OF FAILED GODS TO CLAIM VICTORY OVER YOU! FIGHT, OR LIVE IN DISGRACE!"

The admonishment lit a fire in L'Koi's heart. The phase lord's doubts and fears burned away. The powerful alien only had fury and indignation in his eyes!

Chapter 6269 Lethality

"You are crazy!" Patriarch Reginald Cross roared as he witnessed his adversary throwing away his strongest weapon. "Why would you do that?! You have thrown away every chance of winning this duel!"

As he spoke, his Mars fired a furious salvo of resonance-empowered energy beams from the ARCEUS System and swooped in to slash the Tireless Engine's body with the Whale-Cutting Saber.

The Tireless Engine may have lost his main weapon, but he quickly retrieved a spare spear from his pocket space that was proportional for his current size and barely managed to block the heavy saber swing.

The two powerhouses had been going at it for a while. The Mars had received more cuts and puncture marks on its armor. A few strikes from the Saint Piercers even managed to dig a little deeper into the torso armor, causing the Mars to suffer minor performance issues.

Entire sections of armor plating had become compromised due to this powerful experimental weapon. While the Mars managed to elude more serious damage, the degradation of armor left these sections particularly vulnerable to follow-up attacks.

The Tireless Engine was in a better condition. Though the upper-tier lesser phase lord endured so many hits from the ARCEUS System and the Whale-Cutting Saber that large parts of his fur had been removed, most of the injuries were proportionally only skin-deep.

The physical resilience of the phasewater-empowered flesh was not trivial!

The ARCEUS System needed to focus a lot of attacks on a single body part in order to inflict more serious damage onto a phase lord. Their outer skin and flesh practically functioned as an organic form of armor that was capable of withstanding a lot of attacks while preventing actual crippling damage.

Try as he might, Patriarch Reginald was unable to concentrate on all of his attacks. The Tireless Engine had become small and mobile enough to spread much of the incoming blows across the surface of his entire body.

Of course, much of the reason why the Tireless Engine was able to avoid receiving too much damage to his weak points was because he was constantly swinging the Saint Piercer around.

As long as the phase lord launched a strike that had a small chance of hitting the Mars, the latter had no choice but to err on the side of caution and pull back in order to avoid getting impaled or cut in half.

This was why Reginald didn't understand his adversary's latest move. Why would Ghirard throw away his only means of effectively damaging the Mars and keep his body in decent condition?

"YOU FOOLISH FALSE GOD. MY INCOMPETENT SON IS REQUIRES THE SAINT PIERCER MORE THAN I. MORE IMPORTANTLY, I DO NOT NEED TO KILL YOU TODAY. I ONLY NEED TO DELAY YOU, AND I CAN DO SO WITHOUT MY BEST WEAPON. I HAVE ALREADY BUILT UP MY REPUTATION, BUT MY OFFSPRING HAS YET TO DO SO. I SHALL NOT FORGIVE HIM IF HE DOES NOT ACQUIT HIMSELF WELL. WITH HIS NEW ARMS, HE HAS NO REASON TO FAIL."

The Tireless Engine actually cared more about his son than himself!

"I will kill you for this!" Reginald roared! "Without your superspear, you won't be able to hold me back! Whatever weapon you are wielding right now is not enough to deter my Mars!"

The Mars and the Tireless Engine clashed several times. The ace mech persistently circled around and swooped in for the attack.

The Tireless Engine was able to parry the Whale-Cutting Saber numerous times with his backup spear, but its lack of penetration power made it very difficult for the phase lord to launch any counterattacks.

This was especially the case when the ace mech's Saint Kingdom still remained intact!

Even so, Ghirard still acted as if he was amused! It was as if he had already dismissed Patriarch Reginald and the Mars as a threat!

"I DO NOT FEAR YOU ANYMORE, YOU FOOLISH TINY FALSE GOD IN A METAL MACHINE. BEFORE I ARRIVED AT THIS FRONT, I RECEIVED AN ABUNDANCE OF WARNINGS ABOUT THE THREAT POSED BY 'ACE PILOTS' AND 'ACE MECHS' LIKE YOURS. AFTER FIGHTING AGAINST YOU, I HAVE DISCOVERED THAT THE WARNINGS ARE ONLY PARTIALLY TRUE. NOT ALL 'SAINTS' ARE AS THREATENING."

Reginald felt indignant not just for himself, but for all ace pilots!

"Do not underestimate us! We possess the capacity to kill any phase lord, especially lesser ones like you! I will not allow you to belittle my ace mech!"

"YOU CANNOT STOP ME FROM DIMINISHING YOUR LETHALITY. YOUR HOT MACHINE MAY POSE A DANGER AGAINST MY INCOMPETENT SON, BUT IT CANNOT THREATEN ME. MY DIVINE PHYSIQUE IS TOO LARGE. YOUR MACHINE CARRIES SO MANY WEAPONS, BUT NONE OF THEM ARE POWERFUL ENOUGH. EVEN YOUR LARGE BLADE IS TOO SHORT TO INFLICT MORE THAN SHALLOW WOUNDS ON MY BODY."

In other words, the Tireless Engine felt secure in his bout against the Mars because he was convinced the Mars lacked a killer weapon that could inflict crippling damage onto his true body!

Though Reginald tried to deny this possibility, he was not delusional enough to deny this obvious truth.

As much as he wanted to refute the insult, the ace pilot couldn't do so, because he held these complaints as well.

There were times when piloting the Mars that he lamented the lack of strong killing of his ace mech.

This was especially when he fought alongside other ace mechs that performed much better in this regard.

Sure, they were mostly swordsman mechs or rifleman mechs that lacked the versatility of the Mars, but that allowed them to specialize their configurations until they became really good at making use of their primary weapons.

The Mars had a lot of different weapons that it was like a cruder version of a first-class multipurpose mech. As proud and happy as Reginald was with all of the options he had at his disposal, none of them possessed enough lethality!

He still had a few weapon systems left that he had been holding back at this time.

The shoulder-mounted missile launchers of the Mars were filled with a mix of utility missiles and transphasic hyper missiles that were quite destructive.

Unfortunately, the missiles weren't lethal enough against a phase lord like the Tireless Engine.

At most, they could blast away a lot of flesh and blood, but that was far from dealing a crippling blow against this phase lord!

The shotgun had already been taken out of action, but even if the Mars was still able to make use of it, none of the shells were capable of inflicting strong enough piercing damage.

Reginald had no choice but to conclude that the smug phase lord was right. His Mars lacked the raw killing power needed to land an immediate killing blow against the Tireless Engine!

The Mars needed to steadily grind the phase lord down, but all of that cost a lot of time and resources that the ace mech might not necessarily have.

In the meantime, the Tireless Engine could easily endure the assault due to his prodigious body and near-endless stamina. The phase lord was more than willing to throw away a part of his pride and dignity so long as he was able to hold back the Mars from doing anything to his son!

It was funny how the tables turned all of a sudden.

Previously, the Mars tried its best to prevent the Tireless Engine from interfering with the other fight.

Now, it was the nunser warlord who wanted to prevent the Mars from coming to the rescue!



This had major consequences as the Larkinson expert mechs were all forced to contend against a shamed but angry phase lord that was out to redeem his reputation!

"MY WEAPON SHALL IMPALE EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU! NO HUMAN IS ALLOWED TO ESCAPE MY REACH!"

The expert mechs were constantly trying to back off, but the reinvigorated Faceless Warrior utilized his mastery over space to warp forward and catch up to the fleeting machines.

The expert mechs had no choice but to defend against spear-wielding phase lord and prevent themselves from getting struck by the Saint Piercer as much as possible!

The intuition of all of the expert pilots constantly set off alarms in their heads whenever L'Koi swung or lunged with his powerful new weapon.

Though L'Koi was not as skilled as his father, he clearly received enough training in the spear to be able to utilize it effectively enough!

"Careful, general!"

Out of all the expert mechs that harassed and attacked him so far, L'Koi reserved the greatest ire towards the Lionheart and its pilot. It was no surprise that the phase lord wanted to take revenge on this expert mech first. This was especially the case when he discovered that the white machine no longer performed as well as before!

"YOUR LIFE IS FORFEIT, LARKINSON!"

Just as the phase lord rushed down the evading Lionheart and attempted to impale its torso, the Riot charged forward and thrust his spear into the flank of the nunser phase lord!

There were not energy barriers in the way this time. The only defense in the way was the thick protection provided by the raiment, but the Riot's transphasic spear easily punched through the layers and ultimately pierced into the flesh!

The other expert mechs did not remain idle either.

The Blade Chaser boldly flew behind the head of L'Koi and utilized its twin blades to savage the relatively fragile rear side of the phase lord's helmet.

The C-Man and the Tiny C and teamed up to attack the rear side of the phase lord's armored body!

By punching away at a particularly sensitive place on the backside of the Faceless Warrior, Venerable Vincent sought to spook the phase lord and divert his attention.

The Greenaxe meanwhile approached one the rear limbs and began to hack away at the thigh armor with its massive transphasic axe.

The heavy blows cut deeply into the armor and had already begun to dig into the thick alien leg underneath!

These simultaneous assaults were not immediately crippling, but getting damaged in these places alarmed L'Koi so much that he had to pull out of his attempt to impale the Lionheart!

"CEASE!"

The phase lord released a powerful spatial blast that pushed all of the nearby machines away!

Most of them were already close to losing their resonance shields, so they were much less able to weather all of the spatial hazards generated by their adversary.

Though L'Koi wanted to resume his assault against the Lionheart, he already figured out that doing so was futile when there were 4 expert mechs that were metaphorically digging into his heels.

The new phase lord was clever enough that he could attain better results if he targeted another expert mech!

"Watch out for his spear! He is turning on us! He wants to finish us first!"

All of the expert pilots already had a good read on L'Koi's speed and maneuverability. They were already moving their expert mechs away in order to keep their distance against the so-called Saint Piercer.

However, their intuitions suddenly spiked in alarm as the phase lord made a surprising move.

"He's purging his raiment!"

With the exception of his helmet, L'Koi abruptly shed all of his armor!

It hadn't been doing anything too useful now that most of its azure shield generators had reached their limits. The layers of armor offered a bit of protection, but it was not enough against these expert mechs.

The phase lord made a spontaneous decision to rid himself of all of these burdens.

Now that his body had become free, the helmeted phase lord turned around with greater speed than before and thrust his Saint Piercer upwards towards the nearest expert mech!

"IMON!"

The Blade Chaser was not a slow machine, and it had already made good distance from its previous position.

Unfortunately, the Faceless Warrior spun around a bit faster.

Combined with the fact that the Saint Piercer actually had a lot of reach as it was meant to be wielded by a slightly larger phase lord, the threatening speartip made out of experimental alloys shot at the Blade Chaser Mark II with the speed of a projectile!

Though Imon tried to make his expert mech evade to the side at the last instant, it was too late!

The tip of the Saint Piercer punched through the very weak resonance shield that was already on the verge of failing and easily pierced through the rear armor.

The special spear turned out to be equally as effective in piercing through transphasic armor plating and continued to penetrate forward without encountering any meaningful resistance.

Just an instant later, the Saint Piercer breached the cockpit, completely obliterated the human body sitting within, and pierced straight through the frontal armor of the defenseless expert mech!

Every Larkinson pilot widened their eyes in horror as the sight of L'Koi impaling the Blade Chaser Mark II through the upper torso became forever seared in their minds!

"IMOOOOOOOON!"

Chapter 6270 The Ties That Bind

Light-years away from the Duqaste System, the expeditionary fleet of the Golden Skull Alliance had already become embroiled in their own battles against the invading aliens.

More alien reinforcements arrived in the Arvest Lima System and had begun to make a persistent push against the fortified planet defended by the humans.

Among the many mechs that took part in the defense of the star system, one of the most prominent machines aside from the ace mechs was the Minerva.

The valiant and feminine-looking masterwork expert mech reigned over the Larkinson mechs like a war queen overseeing her troops.

With the Living Sentinel mechs maintaining a protective formation around her expert command mech, Commander Casella Ingvar of the Larkinson Clan continued to Commandeer tens of thousands of living mechs.

Each of the affected machines glowed with power as they borrowed a faint amount of true resonance from the Minerva!

Their performance skyrocketed as a result. Each of them performed similar to quasi-expert mechs as their attacks, their damage resistance and their other properties significantly exceeded their physical limitations!

This turned the Larkinson Army into one of the best-performing mech groups on the battlefield!

Commander Casella and the cooperating Larkinson mech units frequently relied on this powerful approach to produce lots of results and earn lots of war merits in battle.

Though the dramatic performance of the Minerva and all of the machines that glowed in dark gold attracted a lot of hostile attention towards the expert command mech, Commander Casella was more than capable of holding her own in most fights.

If that was not enough, the Dark Zephyr Mark III or any of the other ace mechs on the battlefield would be glad to intercept any threats that the Minerva and her Commandeered mechs couldn't handle by themselves!

While the alien phasefighters and warships that pressed onto the Arvest Lima System had numbers on their side, the defenders could still rely on a combination of superior equipment and fortifications to hold their ground.

This meant that Commander Casella did not have to worry about an immediate collapse. She continued to remain confident as she fought back against the invading aliens and commanded her subordinates as best she could.

Whenever she was fighting at her peak, she stretched her multi-tasking ability to the limit. She paid attention to so many variables that it was impossible for any ordinary human to keep track of so many moving parts.

So far, nothing happened in the orbital battle that merited any special cause for concern or alarm.

Yet for whatever reason, Commander Casella had begun to feel slightly apprehensive starting from the morning she woke up earlier today.

The faint sensation of unease did not seem connected to any impending disaster in the Arvest Lima System, so she dismissed it and focused on her more immediate affairs.

The problem was that her unsettling feeling did not go away. It had always lingered in the background, and steadily grew stronger as time went by. It started to make her more guarded and alert.

What if it was a premonition of an imminent surprise attack by the phase whales?

Though she did not have enough information to alert other leaders over her currently baseless concerns, she kept this uneasy consideration in mind, but did not allow it to disrupt her rhythm.

As soon as the latest battle commenced, Casella naturally pushed this matter aside in favor of commanding and assisting her mech units as best as possible.

Yet the feeling had never disappeared. Ignoring it helped to keep her focused, but she found it much harder to get rid of her unease when it abruptly grew stronger.

For whatever reason, her concerns grew, yet she still did not know why. After putting a bit more thought in this phenomenon, she tentatively concluded that it was not herself that was the problem.

Her concerns grew a lot stronger all of a sudden. Casella became a lot more high strung. It was as if she was locked in battle against a predator that was powerful enough to chew up her Minerva.

How could this be? Her expert command mech was positioned well to the rear! The native aliens were unable to target her battle partner from this distance.

In addition, as prominent as her performance may be, the assaulting aliens had much greater priorities to deal with. It was not worth it for them to overreach in order to make an attempt at her life.

Minutes passed by as Casella continually tried but failed to discern the source of her unease.

If she was not engaged in battle, then she might have been able to deduce the origin of her discomfort, but she did not enjoy this luxury at the moment. Any significant distraction in a large-scale engagement could easily lead to the deaths of tens, hundreds if not thousands of human lives!

Casella was not irresponsible enough to let her personal issues inflict disaster onto others.

She tried her best to focus on the ongoing battle, becoming more mindful of the fact that the alien phasefighters were inflicting heavy casualties onto the underequipped interceptors of the Starfighter Corps.

The Red Fleet had the right idea by forming this new division, but the fleeters were far too stingy when it came to investing in quality starfighters.

The inability for the Starfighter Corps to contain the alien phasefighters meant more work for the mechs under her command.

The Larkinson mechs frequently had to come to the rescue in order to prevent the starfighter units from collapsing entirely.

As Casella did what she could to preserve the lives of as many human starfighter pilots as possible, her heart suddenly wrenched as if an enemy had stabbed her from the back!

The interruption was violent and shocking enough that she briefly lost her control of all of her Commandeered mechs!

Though the expert pilot quickly recovered and made up for her lapse, she still felt incredibly distressed for reasons that weren't immediately clear!

"What happened?!" She gasped as she reached out to clutch her chest. Her heart was beating madly, and her mood was beginning to decline for reasons unknown. "What did I lose?!"

Casella realized that she became hurt. She became afflicted by a mental wound that was so severe that it would have affected her much more severely if she realized the cause for her escalating distress.

Now that her mental anguish became a lot stronger, she was finally able to pin down the cause why she was experiencing this inexplicable ordeal.

"It is not me. It is... my brother."

Only a threat directed at her brother could make her feel this concerned!

To be honest, Casella hadn't actively thought about Imon for a while. Her brother wanted to develop his strength and prove that he could stand on his own by serving in another mech force than the expeditionary fleet.

Though Casella made sure to keep in touch with Imon from time to time, the physical separation between the two prevented them from remaining as close to each other as before.

Imon was clearly doing well enough within the 77th Warborn Mech Division.

General Ark Larkinson was a competent mech commander, and while she did not entirely agree with his direction, she entrusted the patriarch's uncle to keep Imon out of trouble that he couldn't handle.

She was well aware that it was impossible to truly protect Imon from every threat. Piloting mechs was inherently dangerous, and every battle could spell his end.

However, with so many Larkinson expert pilots as well as Patriarch Reginald Cross fighting alongside Imon, Casella did not have any serious concerns about her brother's safety and wellbeing.

At least that was supposed to be the case.

For her to feel as if her heart was literally bleeding meant that something must have gone very wrong with her brother!

Though Casella still tried to keep up with her responsibilities in the ongoing battle, she couldn't stop herself from diverting a bit more attention to what had happened to her brother.

She tried to reach out to him with her mind. Casella and Imon had been very close for a long time. The two had even developed a mysterious bond of sorts after becoming expert pilots.

Though the bond did not really make a big difference so long as Casella did not Commandeer Imon's expert mech, the two were vaguely able to sense each other's state.

Right now, Casella felt nothing from the other side.



"I need to know what happened to him." She said in a more desperate tone.

She couldn't activate her comm and call Imon directly. Ordinary communications were locked down in warzones, especially active ones.

The Minerva gave her battle partner a helpful suggestion. The living expert mech had been tracking all of Casella concerns through the man-machine connection.

"ASK THE GOLDEN CAT. THE ANCESTRAL SPIRIT WILL NOT REFUSE YOUR REQUEST."

That was a good suggestion!

"GOLDIE!"

"Nyaaaaaaa..."

A small manifestation of the Golden Cat appeared inside the cockpit in an instant. The fact that the spiritual entity answered the summon so promptly was a bad sign. The cat's reluctant appearance was another bad sign.

Commander Casella's mood sunk even lower as she received a second clue that something terrible had happened to her brother.

"Goldie... tell me the truth. What... happened to Imon?"

The Golden Cat's ears drooped as the cat made a mournful yowl. "Nyaaa..."

"Did he get involved in a tough battle?"

"Nya."

"Is he injured?"

"Nya nya..."

"Is he... dead?"

"....Nyaah..."

"..."

Several seconds passed by as Casella processed the response.

Though she did not understand cat speech, she was able to feel the emotions conveyed by the Golden Cat clear as day.

There was absolutely no ambiguity in Goldie's responses.

That included the last one.

Though Casella wanted to press Goldie for more confirmation and details, she was not a stupid expert pilot.

The truth had become clear. To deny it was not only folly, but also an insult to her intelligence.

Her body grew hotter while her eyelids shook. A wellspring of emotions surged from her wounded heart and surged into her head.

Heat and anguish began to fill her mind as Casella unwillingly acknowledged the truth.

"My brother... is dead!"

"This... should have never happened!"

"General Ark told me he would watch out for him and keep him out of trouble!"

"How could you fail to uphold your duty?!"

"What did you do to fail my brother so badly?!"

Commander Casella regretted that she allowed her brother to leave her side!

She just knew that if he remained within her reach, she would have been able to save him from whatever threat he faced!

Yet because she was fighting in a completely different star system from her brother, she was unable to "Why is my brother dead?!"

"WHY AREN'T YOU HERE TO ACCOUNT FOR YOURSELF, ARK?!"

"HOW CAN YOU CALL YOURSELF A MECH COMMANDER WHEN YOU CAN'T SAVE THE LIFE OF A SINGLE EXPERT PILOT?!"

"IS HIS LIFE THAT INCONSEQUENTIAL TO YOU, YOU CALLOUS JACKAL?!"

"I WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOU IF YOU ARE TO BLAME FOR MY BROTHER'S DEATH, ARK!"

"BROTHER! IF YOU ARE DEAD, THEN I WILL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO BRING YOU BACK TO LIFE! I WILL BREAK THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH ITSELF IF THAT IS WHAT IS NECESSARY TO REVIVE YOU! THIS, I PROMISE!"

Her vows along with her overflowing emotions was enough to send her over the edge!

She smashed past her limitations and instantly triggered her second apotheosis!

The Minerva suddenly exploded in power!

No one in Arvest Lima expected for an expert command mech that was calmly overseeing the Larkinson mech units in a comfortable position to trigger such a powerful phenomenon all of a sudden!

Many people immediately recognized what had happened!

"It's the Sentinel Commander! She broke through!"

"Our clan has just gained its third ace pilot!"

"This is a fantastic day!"

"Hail Saint Casella Ingvar!"

"Hail Saint Casella Ingvar!"

"Hail Saint Casella Ingvar!"