

## The Mech 4801

### Chapter 4801 Leadership Approaches

The aliens stored a lot of different goods and weapons on this floor.

Ves and the others had essentially figured out that the floor above served as the main living space of the aliens.

It also happened to be the floor which held the crucial portal that could bring them back to normal space if activated.

Ves did not understand why the pescans built their main settlement inside this prison facility so close to a portal that opened up right in the middle of the capital city of the human conquerors. He could only chalk it up to irrational alien sensibilities.

At this time, a new firefight had begun. The pescan soldiers, many of whom originated from this floor but managed to retreat in good order, tried to push back from the entrances they controlled.

The actions of the aliens forced the human troops to split themselves up and prevent the aliens from pouring back out and turning this hard-won floor into a contested area again!

Although the human forces managed to hold their ground due to the fact that the aliens only sent forth their own infantry so far, the constant fighting continued to deplete precious ammunition and energy.

Whoever was in charge on the other side was not a bad commander!

Given how many supplies and other goods the aliens managed to bring into the prison facility at the time, the aliens would most certainly outlast the humans in a battle of attrition!

The actions of the defenders forced the attackers to hurry up with their consolidation and launch a brutal assault as soon as possible.

Given how the human infantry troops had taken a certain amount of damage and expended crucial resources, Ves and the other technical-minded people dove into the surviving alien structures and tried to make sense of whatever intact alien gear and supplies the pescans had hastily left behind.

Ves and his family had recently entered an alien armory of sorts. Although a lot of its racks were empty and barren, the aliens failed to take away half-a-dozen suits.

Right now, Ves and Gloriana had teamed up to examine one of the tall and oddly-proportioned armored suits.

The tech was rather primitive by their standards, but that did not mean they could decipher its workings and immediately make use of this alien suit. The circumstances were anything but ideal as the mech designers lacked a lot of time and did not have access to a lot of equipment.

"These goddamn aliens don't make use of handheld rifles like other humanoid races." Ves cursed as he tinkered around one of the arm cannons of the alien suit. "What is worse are their energy sources. Their energy density is impressive, but the output is too violent and inconsistent. It will take too much time and energy to make them compatible with our own weapons."

His wife maintained a distasteful expression as she examined the alien tech through her own lens.

"The pescan race have done the best they could with the technology that they have mastered, but their workmanship has clear limits. The control system is also rudimentary. There are no direct mind or implant interfaces. The servos respond to physical movements, which means that there is always a lag in making movements. No wonder the armored pescan soldiers cannot move quickly. They also haven't integrated any antigrav or flight modules in their equipment."

"I'm not surprised." Ves responded. "Antigrav technology or the alien equivalent to it is mostly used to produce artificial gravity in starships. The nunsers have clearly tried to bottle up the pescan people on their own home planet, which means that there is not much of a reason for the local aliens to master this tech and utilize it on a wide scale."

The abandoned armored suit exposed many of the shortcomings and limitations of the pescan civilization. The humanoid aliens had evolved too late and in the wrong time period as well.

If these aliens managed to expand their civilizations to the stars tens of thousands of years earlier, they had a much better chance of becoming an established regional power. That meant it would be much more difficult for the nunsers to convert the pescan star nation into a protectorate.

As Ves and Gloriana continued in their attempts to try and make sense of the primitive alien tech, their children wandered around and examined the other odd alien gadgets in the armory.

Marvaine grinned and picked up a few odd pieces of gear that looked like the alien equivalent of spy drones.

"This is so cool!"

Andraste on the other hand found an arm module that extended into three long and wicked-looking blades.

Though she was incredibly eager to study the alien claw sword, she took Ketis' training into mind and did not act recklessly around the naked blades.

In fact, Clixie remained close at hand and would immediately intervene if Andraste tried to do anything foolish such as using her own body to test the sharpness of the odd alien weapon.

Only Aurelia looked disinterested. She had grown old enough to no longer become fascinated with every piece of alien tech that came along. Compared to the more modern and sophisticated tech of the Fractured House of the Collapsing Star, the pescan products were way behind the times.

She was more interested in examining what Ves had done earlier.

"Papa?" She asked as she walked up to her father and patted his Unending Regalia. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Of course, my dear." He smiled. "I am not too busy. Ask away."

"Is it really necessary for good leaders to accompany their soldiers on the battlefield?"

"No! Absolutely not!" Gloriana answered before Ves could ever get a word in. "Don't get fooled by your father, Aurelia. Ves may be successful, but his decisions are not always as well-considered as you think. Your father has a lot of bad habits that he can't get rid of anymore since he has become set in his ways. It is not too late for you to develop a superior leadership style."

Ves threw an annoyed glance at his wife. "Aurelia, you are a member of the Larkinson Clan first. The Wodins and the Hexers have their strengths, but there are good reasons why they have lost the Komodo War. Instead of learning from a bunch of losers, you should learn from your father. Unlike most people, I have produced dozens of victories."

"That may be true, but the cost is also great at times." Gloriana retorted.

"You may have a point in the past, but those days are long gone." Ves shook his head. "I have invested a lot of effort and resources into building up our strength. We are not as pathetic as we used to be when we started out. We have thousands of combat mechs, hundreds of carrier vessels and numerous expert mechs at our disposal. We can easily expand our ranks due to our wealth, our production capacity and our effectiveness in recruiting new soldiers. We have become strong enough to contend against most formidable opponents. It is only situations like these where I have to resort to the tactics that have earned me victories in the past. Winning is all that matters, Aurelia. Do not forget that lesson."

Compared to Gloriana's cautious warnings, Aurelia found her father's words to be a lot more appealing.

Ves could see the stars in her eyes. She admired him and adored the moments where he stood up and acted boldly.

Her mother could clearly see that. She became distressed at the thought of losing influence to her husband!

"You are not your father, so don't try to imitate his leadership style and approach. You may be a Larkinson, but you are also a Wodin. Do not forget that, my dear. What you need to do is to learn the best from both of your parents and combine that to forge your own leadership style. After all, your father was born into a third-class household and had to act forcefully in order to climb his way upwards. You on the other hand enjoy much more superior conditions. You cannot throw your weight around as much once you begin to study at a first-class virtual school and start to make friends with many first-raters. You will need to learn a different set of skills in order to lead our clan by the time you are ready to take over."

Though Ves did not completely agree with Gloriana's words, he had to admit that she had a good point about different circumstances requiring different approaches.

Ves needed to work hard and go on expeditions in order to rush the clan's promotion to a first-class organization.

What then?

Even if the Larkinson Clan managed to enter the eyesight of first-class pioneers and organizations, that did not necessarily mean the Larkinsons had become bigshots all of a sudden!

Once the main branch of the Larkinson Clan had no choice but to emigrate to the upper zones of the Red Ocean, it would enter an entirely new and much more dangerous pond!

It was not so easy to climb upwards from that point because a lot of powerful first-class states and organizations were not easy to mess with. Ves needed to adopt a much more cautious posture as the influences of great powers such as the Rubarthans and the Terrans were unimaginably great.

Of course, that was a concern for the future. As long as Ves continued to stay in the playground for second-raters, he had much more freedom to act as he wanted. That was one of the benefits of operating in a lower and less scrutinized part of society. The Big Two didn't care too much about what third-raters and second-raters were up to because their actions posed no threat to human society.

The two parents continued to instill their own leadership ideals to Aurelia. The young woman absorbed everything like a sponge, but it was still unclear how she would develop in the future.

Ves made his stance clear, though.

"However you decide to develop in the future, I hope you never put yourself too far apart from the people you are in charge of." He told his daughter. "I am sure you are familiar with leaders such as President Yenames Clive, right? People like him may be effective to a lot of people, but to me he's a snake who reduces everything and everyone into numbers and resources. I don't want you to follow his example and become a schemer who only excels at hatching schemes in an ivory tower. Larkinsons such as ourselves must not forget their roots. No matter how high our positions have become, we are still a part of the same family."

Aurelia seriously nodded. "I understand, father. I won't disappoint you. I will become the best leader of the Larkinson Clan! I swear!"

"You don't need to be so serious about it, honey." He smiled at his cute daughter. "The Larkinson Clan might not be your ultimate stage. There are still plenty of other people in the clan that can take it over. Besides, I am still relatively young, so I don't need to retire anytime soon."

His wife had a different opinion about that. "You should if you want to become more serious about designing mechs. Your duties as a clan leader are increasingly interfering in your mech design work. Let's face it, Ves. You cannot wear two increasingly larger hats at the same time. The clan is not as small and easily manageable as in the past, and your projects experience continuous disruption due to all of the distractions that frequently occupy your attention. This is not a healthy development to your career. If you want to prove yourself worthy as a Master, you need to put mech design above everything else. You should let Aurelia relieve you when she grows old enough."

Ves sighed. "I hope she can become good enough to bear this heavy burden."

It was at this time that the prison facility rumbled again! Everyone's footing grew shaky for a moment as the ancient structure grew less stable!

"Damn, what are those pescans doing?!"

## Chapter 4802 Increasing Pressure

As much as Ves wanted to spend more time tinkering with different pieces of alien technology, he didn't have the time to mess around anymore.

The sound of weapons fire became more intense as the pescans on the floor above them intensified their attempts to push the human forces away!

Ves momentarily split his attention once again and accesses the live feeds of his honor guards.

Every suit of combat armor that he built for his personal guards could supply a lot of data to him. This was a way for him to observe what they were experiencing at the front without putting himself at risk.

He could see that Nitaa had been sparring against the aliens for a while now. The tall soldier held her thick and powerful heavy luminar crystal assault rifle and carefully fire high-powered slicer beams at the obstacles that the pescans used for cover.

Although a lot of shots ended up getting absorbed by the metal walls and other solid obstacles, repeated hits eventually created a tunnel that allowed the former Kinner soldier to fire a beam that punched through the last remaining matter and kill an armored pescan soldier armed with transphasic guns!

The alien soldier had already done a lot of damage, though. The pescan was armed with two transphasic laser cannons that could each penetrate through the excellent armor of a Davutan human trooper with just a single hit!

While the combat armor assigned to the elite guard troops of the colonial state was not weak, even if it managed to block most of the damage, even a fraction of the power of an energy beam was enough to produce severe burn wounds!

The only mercy was that the transphasic laser beam attacks did not outright kill the troopers struck by them as long as they landed on the limbs and less critical parts of the human body.

It did produce an awful situation where an increasing number of wounded soldiers had to be pulled back from the front!

At this time, a group of noncombatants had decided to step up and utilize their considerable medical expertise to tend to the wounded!

"Clear more beds and bring us more supplies!"

"We need to sterilize these chambers as soon as possible."

"Have you found their water source yet?! We can't operate on these patients without a source of clean water!"

Even though many of the directors of the various departments of Freewell Medical Services had long retired from conducting medical operations themselves, they still possessed a huge amount of knowledge and experience.

The shabby conditions of the alien base did not stop them from attempting to do their jobs. It did not matter that they lacked access to advanced medical tools and machines as qualified doctors were always educated to be able to treat their patients without relying on excessive automation.

Otherwise, doctors wouldn't be needed at all. People could just toss their wounded into automated treatment chambers and wait until they spat out healthy bodies!

It was the habit of humans to never develop an excessive dependence on advanced and automated technology that enabled the doctors employed by Freewell Medical Services to make themselves useful.

Although they clearly weren't comfortable with the awful conditions they were working under, they were veteran doctors who had worked under a lot of pressure in many different circumstances in the

past. They adapted as well as they could and tried their best to prevent the condition of the wounded soldiers from deteriorating.

In a way, the wounded soldiers were rather fortunate to get hit by laser beams. These weapons might produce deep and massive burns at best or outright flash-boil flesh until they exploded at worst, but they were not known to produce massive bleeding. This made it a little easier to stabilize their conditions in the short-term, though depending on their injuries their bodies could degrade for many other reasons such as losing the functionality of essential organs.

However, as much as the old but hard-working doctors of Freewell Medical Services stepped up, their efforts only reduced the losses. They did not directly contribute to a victory.

The only ones who could change the situation were the soldiers risking their lives to fight back against the entrenched pescan defenders.

The situation at the front changed instantly when the aliens tossed multiple bombs down the entrance that separated the floors.

"INCOMING EXPLOSIVES!"

If the infantry troopers were better equipped, then they would have been able to deploy automatic interception turrets that could shoot down the bombs before they could ever get close.

Unfortunately, the rifle-armed soldiers could do little aside from jumping aside or trying to fire their weapons in the hopes of scoring a lucky hit!

Nitaa and the honor guards she fought with did not cower in the face of this latest threat.

They raised their heavy assault rifles and began to fire multiple kinetic beams in quick succession.

They had already dialed down the power setting so that their weapons could fire the beams at a much faster firing rate at the cost of reducing their power.

However, the kinetic damage they inflicted onto the simple alien bombs was enough to give them such a substantial knock that these impact explosives detonated in mid-air on their own accord!

A few bombs managed to get through despite all of these measures. The honor guards who were close enough to get affected by the explosives did not do much aside from turning around and hunkering down behind cover.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Though the bombs were not transphasic in nature, they still tore a lot of alien construction!

A few soldiers who hadn't been able to respond quickly enough to run away from the blast zone got flung aside as if they were ragdolls!

Even if these armored troopers hadn't died on the spot, the powerful collisions had mostly exceeded the protective capacity of their combat armor!

Nitaa happened to be peripherally affected by one of the bombs. The cover that she was sheltering behind had been blown away, but the honor guard herself looked as if she had remained unaffected.

Her newly upgraded armor resisted much of the damage. In addition to that, as Ves' chief bodyguard, she also carried a fairly high-end personal shield generator that could resist much of the explosive force if necessary.

That hadn't been necessary as the first-class alloys covering her tall and heavy form were thick enough to resist this much pressure!

Her attacks did not cease for long. She soon began to fire her heavy luminar crystal assault rifle once again.

As a weapon personally developed and customized for his honor guards, the weapon possessed a great amount of power and versatility.

Even if it wasn't transphasic, its effectiveness was at least five times better than the premium rifles utilized by the other soldiers!

Aside from a few unusual private guard troops who were equipped with extravagant weapons bought by their employers, hardly any target could resist the energy attacks launched by the oversized luminar crystal weapon for long!

That didn't appear to be enough, though. Not only did the pescans have a stockpile of bombs at hand, they also maintained a considerable defensive advantage.

As Ves closed the live feeds transmitted by his honor guards and looked around the scattered and damaged alien base, he judged that he should be able to cobble together a few machines that could help with the fight.

It was too bad that there wasn't enough time for him to produce anything meaningful!

The military leaders in charge of the various units did not wait for anyone to develop a miracle solution from the goods they managed to capture from the aliens. The rumbling of the prison facility had spooked them to such an extent that they decided to hasten their next deployments!

As the troops prepared to launch a costly and brutal assault against the enemy's defensive positions at the various entrances, Ves and Gloriana shared their concerns to each other while their children huddled together in fear of what might happen.

"What is happening, sisters?" Marvaine pitifully asked.

Both Aurelia and Andraste came close in order to embrace their younger brother.

"It will be fine." Aurelia said. "Papa will take care of everything."

Andraste grinned. "You heard all of the stories about papa, right? He always managed to beat the bad guys and get away in the end. This time is no different because he is just that awesome!"

The two girls had a strong belief in their father. He might be a little silly at times but he had always loomed tall over their heads for as long as they lived.

"Miaow!"

Even Clixie agreed with their assessment!

It helped that Ves deliberately maintained a confident and self-assured demeanor for the sake of their children.

In truth, he was shaking inside his mind. The previous quake was more violent than the last one, which signified that a powerful influence may be inflicting heavy damage onto the prison!

Combined with the heavy premonition which clouded his mind even more, Ves felt as if a lot of awful stuff was about to happen if the pescans had their way!

"When Jaharon's projection talked to us at the time, he said a bunch of words that suggested that he was not only in communication with a phase lord, but also intended to free this powerful alien individual."

"Are you sure the words of an unhinged alien leader can be trusted, Ves? The pescan also did not make use of a good translation program."

"Your doubts are not invalid, but I think that the overall words stated by Great Chief Jaharon clearly states his thoughts on this matter."

Ves played a recording that he made of the odd dialogue.

[GHAGAHGAHGHAA! ANCIENT GOD MORE ANCIENT AND BLOODED THAN YOURS IS OUR GOD! FINAL COUNTDOWN IS UPON US. DESTROY CHAINS AND UNDO OUR HOME! TOO LATE, ALL WILL BREAK. FALSE GOD YOU SHALL DECEASED!]

This caused Gloriana to frown. "The word 'ancient god' can be interpreted in many ways. The Red Ocean features two types of false gods that derive their divinity from phasewater. The more common ones are the different indigenous aliens that become powerful by imitating the methods of a more powerful and remarkable race. Then there are the actual phase whales who are considerably more powerful by virtue of their large bodies."

That caused Ves to pause and think. "Wait... are you saying that the ancient but powerful prisoner that the pescans have somehow managed to wake up is not a phase lord, but instead a genuine phase whale?"

Even as he said these words, he thought back on the large-sized prison cell that was built in the center of the ancient prison facility.

His blood froze when he thought that this cell hadn't been emptied at all when the prison was evacuated, but had instead been occupied all along!

Although he didn't understand why anyone would empty out an entire prison aside from its most important cell, Ves could not rule out the possibility that the cell reserved for the most dangerous and powerful prisoner may indeed hold an actual living phase whale!

Ves groaned. He wanted to smack his palm against his face!

"What is up with these phase whales?! Why do we keep bumping into them all of the time?! First it was the Flesh Conqueror at Purgatory. Then it was the unclean whale trapped in the center of the Palace of Shame. Now there might be another delinquent phase whale trapped inside this pocket space. The most ridiculous part about all of this is that this is all taking place in Davute! Shouldn't this place be swept clean of any phase whales?!"



Although Ves did not have any solid proof that an actual member of the phase whale was trapped inside the center of this place, this was pretty much the worst case scenario if it was true.

He would rather overestimate the threat than do the opposite!

"We're screwed if a phase whale gets loose!"

Chapter 4803 Precious Manpower

The potential problem escalated to a dangerous degree, but the situation was still salvageable.

They just had to preempt the pescans and prevent whatever means they employed to free the alien captive at the center of the facility.

At worst, Ves could use Goldie to inform the Larkinsons on the other side to compel the government to call in the MTA on an emergency basis.

Even though the state would have to pay a huge price to call in the MTA's intervention, there was no way the mechers would stand by and let an escaped phase whale destroy an entire city during a breakout attempt!

However, Ves was deeply concerned about whether the MTA's fast response group could adequately control a fight against a formidable phase lord or phase whale.

Although he had seen the MTA suppress such powerful creatures in the past, that was mostly confined to battles in space where there was nothing important in the vicinity.

Any fight that might ensue between the MTA and a powerful alien 'god' would most definitely devastate the entire ancient prison.

If the phase whale was especially dangerous and powerful, the battle might even spill over Kotor City which was built around the center of the entrance to the pocket space!

All of this was bad news to Ves. He did not want to leave anything to chance.

The best way to deal with a possible calamity was to prevent it from happening in the first place!

As the pressure of all of these predictions weighed down on him like a blanket made out of Unending alloy, he felt as if he and his forces were the only ones that could save Kotor City from a disaster of the colonial state's own making!

It was the negligence of the founders of Davute that drove Great Chief Jaharon and his surviving aliens to this corner of a pocket space!

"We need to end this sooner rather than later!"

To that end, Ves temporarily said goodbye to Gloriana and his children once again. He then approached Nitaa who was hunkering just behind a structure that was close to the main entrance that led to the next floor.

The sounds and vibrations of weapons fire became a lot louder, and the risk of getting blasted by a bomb or other heavy weapon in the hands of the aliens was not light!

Nonetheless, Ves still possessed a strong belief in the strength of his Unending Regalia. He had already summoned his Amastendira and his primordial human skull was always ready to be used.

"What does the situation look like according to your opinion?!"

"The pescans are fully ready to meet our attack." Nitaa reported back. "There are more pescan soldiers as well as civilians that have hastily been armed with spare battle suits. Although most of these soldiers are fairly weak, their quantity is distressing. Our own troops have suffered moderate casualties already, so it is not certain whether they have the numbers to sustain an attack."

Ves had already taken a good look at the other soldiers. The Davutan guard soldiers still possessed the determination to fight and die for a good cause, but the same could not be said for the private guard troops that were loyal to other important groups.

If Ves wanted to make sure that both of them pulled their weight in the upcoming offensive, then he needed to give them the confidence that they could win without paying a grievous price!

He thought about this problem for a moment. He even called up a projection that showed a feed from a hidden spy drone.

The quantity of pescan defenders was quite exaggerated. Scores of defenders were stationed at every entrance, but over a thousand aliens had gathered around the main entrance alone!

Although the majority of those aliens consisted of civilian pescans that only hastily wore a spare battle suit, they only had to aim their arm cannons in a single direction in order to block any human force from pushing through a narrow entrance!

Ves already gained a headache from seeing all of the pescans looking ready to impale any humans that came within range.

The hatred exuding from them was palpable! Even if the expressions of most of these aliens weren't visible behind their thick helmets, Ves could clearly pick up the dark and seething emotions that were boiling inside their minds and spirits.

Almost all of the pescans that had hastily evacuated from their city state had lost many friends and relatives during the conquest of their planet!

These aliens would certainly fight until the bitter end!

Even if there was a miniscule chance that their race could be saved from extinction, they would definitely fight like hell in order to give their people a way to survive!

As Ves continued to study this situation from multiple angles, he suddenly found a possible method to break this difficult situation.

The current plan that General Verle had proposed was to take advantage of the extraordinary resilience of the combat armor of the honor guards to lead a charge through the main entrance.

By attracting the bulk of enemy fire, the Larkinson guards could buy precious time and space for the other soldiers to move up and overrun the enemy positions.

This was a simple and brutal plan that exposed his honor guards to a huge amount of risk.

Ves did not like it at all because he did not want his own men to pay the price for a victory. He wanted to achieve victory in a better way and he just thought of a way to turn the tide against the aliens.

He opened up a communication channel. "General Verle, I have a proposal."

It did not take long before General Verle agreed with the alteration to the plan. It was not as if Ves completely overturned the original strategy. He just augmented it by adding in his own contribution.

The only issue that Verle had a problem with was that it required Ves to stay fairly close to the action.

"Does it have to be you, sir?" The general asked with concern. "It would be better to entrust this responsibility to your guards."

"They can't. They don't have the skills and expertise that I have. Don't worry. I do not intend to charge at the forefront like before. I will keep a pair of honor guards around me just to make sure. Is that okay?"

"Very well..."

Although withholding two honor guards directly weakened the vanguard that was still scheduled to storm the enemy's position, first, it couldn't be helped.

In order to ensure that this part of the next attack would go well, Nitaa had decided to lead the charge in person.

Fortunately, Nitaa had already passed on the Larkinson Mandate to the Chief Ministers of the Larkinson Clan. Otherwise, the precious heirloom of the clan might actually get exposed to withering fire and get destroyed!

Once everyone completed their respective preparations, General Verle, Major Durant and the other leaders commanded their men to advance.

At this point, the soldiers did not need an extolling speech or encouragement from Zeigra in order to do what was necessary. They all knew the score and they didn't like being manipulated twice in a row.

"Take action!"

The attack commenced after a pair of heavy weapon specialists brought forward their laser cannons and fired them at the enemy's defensive positions in order to blow open a wide enough hole!

"Attack!"

A small group of honor guards charged forward, attracting the attention of hundreds of pescans and attracting a lot of enemy fire!

Even though the power and caliber of those weapons weren't all that great, the sheer quantity of hits already began to stress their combat armor!

The aliens defending up above began to yell and roar different alien sounds that express their undying hatred and ferocity against the human invaders and murderers!

The utter hatred had seeped so deep into their souls that they presented an invisible cloud of fury that utterly caused the advancing humans to feel the wrath of their race!

However, the humans did not rear back when confronted by the righteous anger of the aliens that they tried to annihilate.

Humanity was strong!

Every single human living in this age possessed a strong and unquestioned belief in the superiority and strength of their own race.

Although this was a fairly common occurrence among many races, it was especially strong in humans.

It was as if the technological superiority and the scale of conquered territories was directly proportional to the racial pride of different species!

Since humanity grabbed more territory than any other race in the galactic neighborhood, humans fully possessed the capital to rank themselves on top of every other alien race!

These pescans who never really managed to expand beyond their only home planet were incredibly pathetic in comparison.

It would be a shame for humanity to lose even a single battle against these final remnants that deserved to be swept in the dustbin of history!

Whether this pride was irrational or not, it significantly helped to boost the morale and determination of the humans that were climbing up a ramp, thereby completely exposing themselves to attacks!

The incoming attacks inflicted a lot of damage. The amount of pescans armed with guns were so great that dozens of infantry soldiers had fallen in battle.

They happened to be the troopers who were equipped with weaker and less resilient suits of combat armor!

The ones wearing better equipment managed to hold out longer, but even the honor guards started to falter under all of this fire!

Their first-class armor plating resisted a lot of energy attacks with relative ease, but there were still plenty of aliens who were armed with physical guns!

Each time these aliens lifted their two arm cannons and pulled the trigger, their muzzles boomed as pairs of ballistic projectiles slammed against the armor of the honor guard!

These attacks often caused the honor guards in question to falter in their steps or get pushed back to an extent.

The worst attacks launched by the pescans were grenades and other explosives. They not only affected multiple honor guards at once, but could even blast them off their feet if they were powerful enough!

One guard in particular suffered a series of blows. Not only did he get knocked flat on the ground after suffering an explosion at point blank range, a small team of pescan elite soldiers who had been waiting for the right opportunity suddenly exposed themselves and fired a dozen transphasic laser beams onto the same target!

Each of them coordinated their fire so that the timing and aim of the attacks landed onto the exposed chest plating of the fallen and immobile honor guard at the same time!

"AHHH!"

Ves snarled as he could feel the passing of the loyal honor guard.

Though Ves had never bothered to learn the soldier's name in person, he knew that the deceased fellow used to be a loyal Battle Crier armsman who had managed to prove himself worthy to become his most honored bodyguard.

The loss of such a skilled but more importantly dedicated guard was a significant loss to Ves!

Although the clan was capable of hiring a lot of elite guards these days, their loyalties were never truly secure.

Only certain groups such as the former citizens of the Kinner Tribe were willing to pledge unreserved loyalty to Ves in person. This had always caused Ves to favor the Battle Criers for the most sensitive and crucial jobs such as becoming the basis of his elite Nullifier Battalion.

Even though the human sharpshooters had already sniped the elite pescan soldiers that had finally exposed themselves, there were still more of them that were inflicting great damage.

As Ves observed another honor guard losing a limb as a volley of laser beams scorched the poor man's arm, he couldn't take it any longer.

Ves did not intend to let any of his precious men suffer any further.

Once he confirmed that the pescans had become fully preoccupied with attacking the vanguard, he stepped forward and began to make his move.

He lifted David's Skull and began to channel a classic combination of design spirits.

"Zeigra! Lufa! Qilanxo! Bring forth your power and engulf the aliens with your despair!"

#### Chapter 4804 The Power of Imitation

From the moment the glowing skull in Ves' hand began to spread a new glow, the entire battle surrounding the main entrance completely changed!

Ves imitated the performance of the Everchanger once again by utilizing his unique advantages to spread a glow far enough to encompass hundreds of alien combatants!

With the primordial human skull in his hands acting as a facsimile of the Everchanger's Iridescent Mercury, he truly felt as if he was embodying the performance of his favorite and most proud masterwork mech.

The effect of the infamous combination between Zeigra, Lufa and Qilanxo had an immediate effect on the immediate battlefield!

Hundreds of pescans who previously had nothing but fury and hatred in their hearts suddenly groaned and lost their concentration.

These aliens may have or may not have learned what the conquerors of their home planet had been up to as of late, but Ves seriously doubted that they had a clear and meaningful idea of what the glows of the Larkinson Clan represented!

Indeed, many of these aliens had lived a sheltered and isolated existence inside this cold and barren prison facility.

Their unwillingness to venture beyond the upper floors was a sign that they clung extremely close to their fellow pescans.

The first time an individual became exposed to the phenomenon known as glows was always the most impactful.

This was because the person in question had no psychological preparation for exposure, let alone develop any mental tricks that allowed them to maintain relatively clear heads!

As all of these pescans possessed no awareness of Ves' latest move, their reactions were just as exaggerated as he anticipated!

No matter whether they were humans or aliens, any sentient or non-sentient organism became susceptible to glows as long as they possessed the capability to feel emotions!

The high emotional range and sensitivity of the pescans worked against them this time!

"Keeeeeee!"

"Yahhhayya!"

"Reeeee!"

Dozens of distressed pescans no longer had the focus to train their arm guns at the nearest human targets. They all bent over or swayed as if they had been poisoned.

The mental burden imposed by the infamous disorientation glow that characterized the Doom Guard and the Ferocious Piranha mech lines devastated the cohesion of the nearby pescan lines!

Although Ves found it regretful that his range was far smaller than that of the Everchanger at his full range, he was not embroiled in a battle involving mechs at the moment.

The current range of his glow was more than sufficient to make a major difference in the fight!

The strange and sudden occurrence not only reduced the combat effectiveness of the aliens being tortured by the disorientation glow, but also affected the more distant pescans to an extent!

The brothers and sisters of the affected aliens could not ignore what was happening. They tried to shake the debilitated aliens out of whatever strange effect they had come under, only for their efforts to bear no fruit!

Some even became affected as well as they inadvertently strayed in the range of the glow radiated by David's skull!

With these mysterious ancient remains acting as a medium and an amplifier, the strain imposed by the disorientation glow was only just below the level that could be reached by a typical Doom Guard or Ferocious Piranha mech.

This was more than enough to disable all of the civilian pescans as well half of the professional soldiers among the aliens!

This was a significantly better result than Ves initially expected!

He thought that the pescans had hardened so much over the years that their utter animosity towards the humans would grind their willpower and make them more resilient to external shocks.

While that was undoubtedly the case, the surprise factor played an even greater role, causing many unstable pescans to become disproportionately affected!

As Ves studied the strange behavior of the armored pescans a bit more, he understood why his current glow produced such an exaggerated effect.

Zeigra's perpetual anger resonated a lot more with the current emotions of the pescans.

It was one thing for calm people to get incited by Zeigra's burning fury.

It was another thing for pescans who already harbored undying hatred against the humans to have their strongest amplified all of a sudden!

On top of that, Lufa's glow instantly replaced that of Zeigra, which instantly dragged the furious emotions of the pescans in the opposite direction!

It was as if their burning hearts got doused by a bucket of ice cold water. The sudden loss of strong emotion became jarring to the aliens that had been living with hatred for multiple years.

Not only did it become difficult for them to retain the motivation needed to fight against the humans with all of their effort, but it had also become a lot more challenging for them to maintain their awareness of the current situation!

The civilians among the pescans who were completely unused to fighting became especially affected by Lufa's glow.

This was because as much as they wanted to fight against the humans, they longed to return to the peaceful and idyllic lives they enjoyed before the arrival of the extragalactic invaders.

Their lives weren't so awful in the past. Each of them harbored a strong longing to return to the good old days.

Even if Lufa suppressed all of their emotions, the Angel of Tranquility clearly had a stronger effect on the stronger ones first, causing the pescans affected by it to experience all of the feelings that they had suppressed in the past.

Among humans, the longing for the past and the unceasing desire to return to a state of life that could never be attained anymore could be regarded as a mental affliction.

Right now, a lot of aliens had become so distracted by their recollection of the past for a moment that it was as if the battle didn't matter as much anymore.

It was a pity that Lufa soon made way for Zeigra again before the aliens could properly indulge in those memories!

The rapid switching between their two diametrically opposite glows had tormented millions of humans and aliens throughout the Red Ocean over the last years.

Now, the pescans had become the latest group of victims to learn that the rules had changed since the introduction of living mechs.

"EEEEHHH!"

"Rughwa aaiiii!"

The keening and shouting of aliens sounded completely incomprehensible to the baffled human soldiers pushing forward, but they quickly adjusted their mentality and broke through the blockade of pescans with much greater confidence!

The weight of fire from the armored pescans combatants had dropped dramatically. The difficulty of going through with this assault had eased to such an enormous degree that the honor guards no longer experienced any significant pressure anymore!

As long as hundreds of armed pescans no longer focused their fire on the eye-catching red-coated infantry troopers, the elite honor guards could still rely on their battered but intact first-class armor plating to withstand the remaining attacks!

Despite their names, the elite Battle Crier troops did not need to call out to each other or shout any meaningless slogans.

They cherished this precious reprieve and hastened their pace in order to breach through the blockade of the pescans as soon as possible!

Suddenly, the air around them flashed in bright red as a pair of powerful laser beams instantly surged forth and demolished a pair of defensive installations that stood in their way!

The heavy weapon specialists in the rear had never stopped providing fire support to the advancing human troops.

Although their portable laser cannons had already grown so hot that the surrounding air started to grow hazy, their users did not hesitate to overstrain their weapons because they knew this was the most crucial moment of this assault!

A thinner but stronger laser beam struck a well-protected machine gun nest that had been suppressing the weaker troops for too long.

Although Ves wanted to be more frugal about the firepower of his Amastendira, he nonetheless aimed his first-class laser pistol at a crucial target and fired a high-powered laser beam whenever he felt it was necessary!

The occasional shots caused the more sober and resilient pescans to pay more attention to him. Ves had moved a bit more forward than he liked in order to enable his glow to affect more pescans, but that also turned him into a viable target!

He tried his best not to flinch when laser beams and kinetic projectiles started to slam into his Unending Regalia.

Ves knew exactly how much damage his combat armor could safely withstand, and he already dismissed the majority of attacks.

Qilanxo's reassuring influence also gave him a lot of mental encouragement, allowing him to suppress his fears even as he made himself more vulnerable to enemy fire.

The few turrets and heavy weapon analogues in the hands of the aliens had already been taken care of for the most part.



The only aliens that could truly pose a threat to him were the elite pescans armed with integrated transphasic guns, but the Davutan sharpshooters had become a lot more skilled at taking them down before they could do much damage.

Every elite soldier wore a battle suit that was slightly bulkier and was covered with considerably more decorative markings.

The pescans had not done anything to camouflage the status of these elite troopers!

Once the sharpshooters or other human troopers took these aliens down, there was no need to worry about the threat of their guns anymore.

Due to the unique physiological constraints of the pescan race, they were unable to make effective use of handheld external weapons.

The aliens predominantly merged their weapons into their battle suits, which meant that once one of their soldiers had been felled, the weapons he carried became useless to the survivors because they could not be transferred in the field!

Ves sneered contemptuously at these aliens. Although integrated weapons had their advantages, there were good reasons why infantry and mechs still made use of external weapons in most circumstances.

The ability to switch weapons or pass them on to others was incredibly valuable. Being able to replace a broken rifle with a spare one that was intact could ensure that a combat unit could still make useful contributions during the same battle.

It also made maintenance and combat power retention a lot easier during long and grueling campaigns!

"These aliens clearly haven't fought a real war." Ves contemptuously sneered.

He revelled in the chaos and disruption he produced. With Lufa and Zeigra working in tandem as they had always done for years, the glow exuding from the glowing skull continued to torture and torment the weak and vulnerable mentalities of the surrounding pescans.

Only the most elite and professional soldiers among the aliens could maintain a sober mind under all of this pressure, and even they found it difficult to keep their aim straight or listen to the frantic instructions of their confused superiors.

Under the current circumstances, the only pescans that remained truly unaffected were those that were positioned further away.

This had always been one of the major weaknesses of glows.

However, Ves did not feel overly threatened by these distant combatants as they didn't have a clear line of sight on his position.

As long as he did not fully ascend up the ramp that led to the next floor, it became nearly impossible to target him unless they possessed guided munitions or smart weapons.

The lack of sophistication of the armaments employed by the enemy along with other constraints meant that it was unlikely for Ves to get confronted by them. The aliens would have used them by now if they actually possessed this capability.

Just as Ves thought that he could single-handedly turn the tide of this battle, a large and tall presence approached the front of the pescan defensive line.

Although the solid floor did not shake at its approach, the tall mechanical construct nonetheless loomed over every other fighter, no matter whether they were humans or aliens.

Of all of the people that became shocked by this alien construct's appearance, no one was more surprised than Ves!

"Oh hell... the pescans built an imitation mech?!"

Before he could do anything else, the alien 'mech' lifted up a large and intimidating kinetic arm cannon and aimed its large muzzle straight towards Ves!

#### Chapter 4805 Alien Innovation

As an experienced and talented Journeyman Mech Designer, Ves possessed a high degree of understanding towards mechs.

He had traveled far and wide and experienced many battles involving different mechs up close, perhaps too close for his liking.

No matter whether it was a third-class mech, a second-class mech, a first-class multipurpose mech or even a biomech, Ves possessed enough knowledge to comprehend how they worked in broad strokes.

He could even get a good impression of the personality and design strategy of the mech designers in question. This was a basic ability that everyone in the profession possessed, and it constantly grew more effective as he came in touch with more and more mechs.

At his level, it would be ridiculous and absurd if he saw a new mech and failed to comprehend the meaning of its existence.

Yet that was exactly what he did when he became confronted by a sight of a genuine alien 'mech'!

His first impression upon seeing this alien mechanical monstrosity was that the engineers who worked on it were not unskilled.

Whoever Great Chief Jaharon managed to drag into this pocket space possessed an excellent artistic touch as well as a thorough understanding of war machines in general.

The solid and bulky form of the alien machine reminded Ves of the alien tanks that he had previously observed in the archival footage of the conquest of the planet.

The city state of Davute was the most powerful pescan polity for good reasons, and fielding a strong military was one of them. Supported by an abundance of wealth and knowledgeable researchers, the alien city state's development of tanks, airplanes and other vehicles had reached an impressive state by local standards!

It was not inconceivable for the pescan engineers to make use of their existing expertise in conventional war machines to create an unprecedented mech.

They just had to have the right reasons to work on one. Perhaps the pescan race suffered so much trauma at the hands of human mechs that the survivors thought that only legged war machines could give them a chance to compete against their attackers.

It might also be a desperate attempt of the aliens to cope with the trauma of losing their family and home planet.

Whatever the case, the aliens invested a significant amount of resources and time into the design and construction of their first native mech.

This was an impressive feat for a race that never dealt with them before and had no experience in making.

Ves could see that the aliens had put careful thought on the design of their first mech. He could see that the aliens initially approached the project as a tank but replaced its traditional locomotion with bipedal legs.

Naturally, a mech was more than just a tank with legs. Issues such as trying to maintain the balance of the machine and slimming down the upper parts also became important, and all of that required a lot of careful thought and consideration.

The selection and placement of weapons also introduced a whole set of problems.

However, since the aliens already had a tradition of mounting weapons onto their battle suits, it was not that big of a technical leap for them to mount mech-sized armaments to their arms.

Then there was the matter of control. Ves seriously doubted that the pescans mastered the technologies involved in the creation of neural interfaces. It was impossible for them to invent this kind of tech in a short amount of time and under extreme conditions to boot.

From the stiff and robotic movements of the alien mech, Ves could already conclude that the aliens had likely resorted to the simplest and most convenient control option imaginable.

They utilized a combination of mechanical controls and a high degree of automation to make the mech pilotable.

All of these decisions ultimately caused the pescans to develop their first frontline mech, if only barely.

In truth, not even the most rookie Novice Mech Designer would design such a heap of trash!

The alien mech was abominably slow for its mass and size. Ves could easily utilize the exact same materials put into designing this mech and come up with a tougher, more optimized machine that moved at much more reasonable speeds.

The configuration of the double gun arms was unreasonably long. Most human-developed frontline mechs tended to be more sparing about their length because the tradeoff in flexibility and cost.

The alien mech possessed no neural interface. On top of that, its construction was unreasonably massive and slow. There was no need to extend the arm so long and mount a heavy laser cannon at their ends.

Not only did this make the aiming process even slower, but it also made it a lot harder to maintain the balance of the machine and keep its aim consistent.

Aiming was a serious problem, especially to engineers who were making mechs for the first time. Although the pescans had lots of experience with creating similar integrated weapons in their battle suits, there were still plenty mechanical and physical differences between infantry-sized armor and mechs that massed more than tanks.

The long-ranged accuracy of this first-generation mech was extremely dubious. It might be sufficient for it to strike a target that was a hundred meters or so away, but the hit rate should decrease by an enormous degree at a distance of a kilometer or more!

It was rather fortunate that the pescans rolled out this homebrew mech in a confining battlefield like this. The alien imitation mech would have performed a lot more poorly if it was deployed on open terrain!

In fact, the aliens shouldn't have bothered to develop a mech to begin with. There was no point in making one if the only reasonable means of controlling them was by using mechanical controls with AI assistance.

There was no flexibility or fluidity in its movements. The fine control that played such a great role in allowing human mechs to outperform conventional war machines was completely absent in its entire construction.

The alien pilot had to control way too many settings and pay attention to far too many variables in order to make the most of his cumbersome machine.

A simple tank would have been able to do the same job a lot more effectively while costing less.

The only viable reasons for the pescans to develop a mech was for psychological and research purposes.

Ves could see many signs that this was indeed the case. This was an experimental prototype that had been tinkered many different times. Gloriana could probably see this a lot more clearly, but even he recognized that a lot of parts had been added and removed over the years as the pescans attempted to get a grip on the concept of mechs.

It was too bad that all of those revisions still hadn't brought them close enough to the meaning of human mechs. They were way too far behind and did not understand anything about how mechs should be used.

Even the first mechs unveiled by humanity at the end of the Age of Conquest were much better than the trash presented by the ignorant engineers of the pescan race!

No matter whether they started from scratch or not, these aliens clearly got a good glimpse of a lot of the mechs employed by the Davutan forces.

Since the pescan remnant also possessed the capability to spy on what was taking place on their former home planet, they should have been able to collect a lot of useful data on mechs. Just a study of their physical shapes was enough to give the pescan scientists and engineers a good direction for research.

How could they botch this simple job to such a severe extent when they had years to iterate on their first homebrew mech?!

Ah, it must have been their insistence on trying to design a mech based on a pescan shape.

Ves could see that the designers tried their best to shape the mech according to the pescan humanoid form, whose body parts possessed different proportions than the human norm.

Yet these aliens clearly hadn't put sufficient thought and calculation behind reconciling human mech design principles with such an odd mech shape.

Trying to design a pescan mech while sticking to human mech design principles was like trying to design a human suit for a gorilla. The maker would never be able to meet the goal because the setup was flawed from the start!

Ves realized all of these thoughts and more as the mech gradually lifted up a kinetic gun barrel in his direction.

Even the firepower of this kinetic weapon was seriously flawed. The pescans clearly downsized the weapon in order for the mech to be able to lift it and handle it with reasonable care.

The ammunition feeding system was also an improvised mess. Gloriana would probably be bleeding her eyes out if she ever saw such an awful implementation!

Ves did not waste his time any further. He may have only scratched the surface of the threat posed by the alien mech, but he had already learned enough flaws and shortcomings to make his move!

While the awfully slow and sluggish alien mech was still taking its time to aim its weapon, Ves had already extended his pistol arm.

He merely snapped his gun towards the mech and took an instant of time to adjust his aim to land a more precise hit.

Although Ves was not a trained marksman or a soldier in a sense, his recent sublimation and evolution had increased all of his bodily characteristics, including ones relating to stability and coordination.

His control over his own body was much greater than in the past!

What helped a lot was that laser weapons were extremely easy to aim and use to begin with. They lacked many of the complications of ballistic and gauss weapons due to being able to ignore the effect of muzzle velocity and bullet drop.

Although Ves often had complaints about the Amastendira being devoid of life, it was still an excellent technological product on all fronts. Its aim was extremely precise and calibrated to the point where he could hit a human from one side of a city on the other side as long as his marksmanship and vision were good enough!

As such, when Ves knew he had trained his Amstendira at a specific section of the native mech, he pulled the trigger without hesitation, causing the air in between to flash as a high-powered laser beam cut at the elbow section of the alien mech!

Just as Ves expected, the arm buckled and dropped as it lost the ability to lift the limb!

The aliens hadn't put enough thought in protecting the joints of this mech, especially a section as crucial as the elbows!

As the alien mech staggered from this blow, Ves repeated his move at the other limb.

The second arm collapsed and fell!

Now that the alien mech had lost both of its weapons, it had become a lot less threatening all of a sudden!

It was at this time that the heavy weapon specialists in the rear finally had time to react to this latest threat.

A pair of thick and powerful laser beams struck the mech at the left knee.

The laser cannons discharged a lot of energy by virtue of their far greater sizes, and the concentration of two attacks instantly vaporized the relatively thin armor plating that covered this section before damaging the joints and other sections that ensured that the lower leg was solidly connected to the upper leg!

The alien mech performed exactly like any other bipedal mech once it lost the functionality of a leg. It started to tip over and fall to the side!

Due to the primitive machine's awkward control scheme, the controller couldn't even respond in time to adjust the falling trajectory of the mech.

The tall machine ended up dropping on top of more than a dozen other pescan combatants! Their battle suits did nothing to prevent their bodies from getting squished by tons of solid metal!

The sounds of battle faded a bit as hundreds of pescans observed what had happened to one of their proud war machines.

The absurdly quick downfall of what they thought to be a powerful new combat unit inflicted a heavy blow on the morale of the survivors!

Ves grinned and boldly stepped forward so that he could encompass more resisting aliens with the glow of his skull!

"Keep pushing forward! These aliens aren't as tough as they look! Let us teach them that only humans are allowed to use mechs!"

#### Chapter 4806 Enemy Adaptation

Many of the pescans fighting at this entrance became disheartened by the fall of their native mech.

Combined with the mental torture inflicted by Ves channeling a disorientating glow with the help of his handy ancient skull, the alien defensive line started to crumble despite the disparity in numbers!

The pescans outnumbered the humans by over 5 to 1, but the differences in momentum, technology, tactics, combat acumen and more could not be bridged so easily!

It had been a mistake for the pescans to rely on a first-generation mech to begin with. Their engineering wasn't that bad, but rashly starting to develop a mech under extremely barren conditions was a fool's errand!

Ves no longer bothered to fire his Amastendira. He had been counting his shots and knew that it could only fire a limited amount of high-powered shots before it was forced to enter a lengthy cooldown cycle.

Everything had a price and a weapon as compact as the Amastendira simply wasn't able to fire so many extremely powerful shots without needing to worry about its rapid heat accumulation.

Ves resolved to mitigate this problem and expand its capacity as he had always found that the ability to fire a lot of high-powered shots in a short interval of time was extremely valuable under the right circumstances.

It could even allow him to disable an actual second-class mech as long as its defenses weren't too good!

However, it appeared that the fall of the pescan mech triggered the fury of the commander of this force.

Even as the honor guards had made it to the next floor and began to clear a lot of space around them, the pescans were finally beginning to adjust to the latest circumstances.

A lot of soldiers and civilians who were still able to maintain enough awareness received urgent instructions to back away and escape the range where they became susceptible to the disorientation glow!

Even though only a minority of the alien combatants retreated from the risk zone, these pescan fighters undoubtedly consisted of the most skilled and elite of their group!

Backing off did not affect their ability to land their shots at the human targets.

Although more and more human soldiers took advantage of the hard work of the Larkinson honor guards and made it to the top as well, their arrival also provided more targets for the pescans to kill.

The firefight became a lot more brutal, especially when the aliens were surrounding the incoming humans from every angle!

A circle had formed of sorts that made it difficult for the human soldiers to defend against. No amount of cover could help them escape enemy fire because there would inevitably be a pescan soldier that could land a clear shot at their exposed backs.

The encirclement made it a lot more difficult for Ves to affect them with his glow. He could only disorient aliens in a sphere around his position, which meant that he could only engulf a part of the alien encirclement at best.

In addition to that, Ves would have to expose himself to a lot of enemy fire if he dared to move too far forward in any direction.

"Sir!" General Verle yelled over a communication channel. "More pescan troops are converging on your position! The aliens are urgently trying to push back our forces and make us fail in our attempt to take over their main floor. Our scouting drones have already spotted the appearance of multiple heavy vehicles! There are two tanks and one self-propelled missile artillery launcher. All three vehicles are about to open fire!"

"Wait, what?!" Ves responded before realizing the danger. He immediately issued a warning to the soldiers around him. "SPREAD OUT AND GET TO COVER!"

They didn't need his warning as General Verle and Major Durant had already warned them in advance.

It was at this time that the tanks fired at the same time. Their large guns fired powerful transphasic laser beams that punched through all of the obstacles in their way before striking several clusters of human soldiers at once!

What was worse was that the tanks had been aiming at his honor guards. Though they had managed to split up in time, Ves couldn't do much but watch how one of the laser beams speared through one of his elite guards while another barely managed to jump away, only for his leg to get burned!

First-class armor plating or not, the application of armor was so thin that getting hit by a transphasic tank-grade weapon could not avail the guards!

"Nitaa!"

Ves became alarmed when he saw that his favorite guard pretty much lost her leg and received a major shock to her body!

The heat blast alone had cooked much of her body and organs, causing her to lose her combat effectiveness in an instant!

Fortunately, her advanced combat armor immediately injected her body with a cocktail of chemicals. Her suit also began to release a lot of steam as the cooling systems worked hard to vent all of the excess heat that had entered her severely damaged body.

An automatic recovery system went online. After testing whether the antigrav modules of her damaged combat armor was still operational, it automatically began to float in the air and steadily retreated back to a friendly rallying point unless it received an overriding order.

Ves had personally programmed this system in her suit, so he knew that he could rely on it to bring the wounded guard back to safety.

Hopefully, those medical directors employed by Freewell Medical Services could keep her alive long enough to save her life.

The fight had become a lot more personal now that someone he knew and trusted well had fallen in battle.

Nitaa had been with him for so long that Ves could not imagine trusting his back to a more reliable guard.

"Damn these aliens... I am going to finish the job that the Davutans have started. The pescan race must not be allowed to survive past this day!"

"Take out their heavy vehicles! Don't give their missile vehicle a chance to open fire!"

It was at this time that the heavy weapon specialists armed with missile launchers took action. They already spend precious time to program their final batch of missiles as well as wait for strong targeting assistance from nearby human soldiers in order to ensure they dealt effective damage.

Once they fired their missiles, the guided munitions followed a winding path through the entrance and arced in the air before moving straight to the vulnerable sections of the armored vehicles!

BOOOM!

The missile launcher got struck down easily enough after getting hit by a single warhead.

The tanks got hit by three missiles each. The transphasic warheads possessed enough penetration power that they managed to punch through a decent amount of armor before detonating!

BOOOM!

BOOOOOOM!



One tank blew up completely as one of the explosives evidently triggered a volatile substance or warhead.

The other tank amazingly managed to avoid outright destruction, although it suffered crippling damage to several systems!

Its engine, a portion of its turret and a power generator had been knocked offline.

Unfortunately for the humans, the remaining alien tank was not completely out of the fight!

It soon barked out a second laser beam, one that was fuzzier and spread out in a cone due to a malfunction!

Even though the uncontrolled blast killed numerous nearby pescans by mistake, it also burned a cluster of Davutan guard troops, causing them to suffer miserable burns!

"Ahhh!"

"It hurts!"

Ves grew distressed at the survival of this vehicle. This was not a normal tank, but a protector that was specially designed to escort the great chief of the city state of Davute!

"We need to finish off the remaining tank. Do we still have any missiles left?!" Ves questioned.

"I'm sorry, sir, but we have just expended their last missiles. The only weapons we have left that can threaten the alien tank are our laser cannons and that high-quality pistol in your hands. Even then, it is doubtful whether you can inflict enough damage when attacking its front. Tanks are designed to resist much more damage from the targets, and I am sure you know better than I that this alien design follows the same idea."

Ves knew this quite well. "Understood. It is just a matter of outflanking the tank, right? The big hunk of metal has been immobilized by the missile strike, so it should be easy enough to finish it off entirely."

"Look at the enemy deployments!" General Verle retorted. "The pescans know they need to rely on their most powerful asset to repel our troops. Our men will never be able to get past the crowd of pescans that are positioned to strike them down!"

When Ves accessed a map that showed a top-down view of all of the deployments, he could clearly see how the professional soldiers among the pescans did just that. They had positioned themselves in such a way that they would enfilade any enemy unit that sought to disable their only tank!

His suit sounded an alarm as it detected another buildup of heat from the tank.

Ves ducked as a broad and wavy laser blast burned the area in front!

The damage to the tank's laser cannon system was more focused than before. It appeared the vehicle's crew made adjustments or its self-repair systems had fixed some of the issues that caused it to scatter its firepower to such an exaggerated extent.

The effective range of the weapon had increased!

If not for the fact that the human soldiers had responded by distancing themselves from the massive vehicle, more of them would have suffered massive burn damage!

This was clearly unsustainable to the humans, though. The transphasic tank had swung the momentum of the fight back in favor of the pescans.

The aliens were already beginning to regain their confidence after seeing that one of their only remaining super war machines put up a good fight!

Now that they recovered from the various setbacks, the pescan combatants were beginning to lay down effective fire against the humans trying to take over their floor.

"There are too many of these aliens!"

"That alien tank has destroyed a lot of cover! We are sitting ducks out here! We need to take it down sooner or later!"

"How are we supposed to do that without missiles or room to maneuver? Those pescans aren't stupid."

"We should just head in the opposite direction of the tank. So long as its main gun remains damaged, its threat shouldn't be too great from a distance."

"Are you crazy? That will give the aliens plenty of time to repair that gun. We will be screwed if this transphasic vehicle is able to fire its cannon just as well as before."

The disparity in equipment and numbers became evident once more. Ves had hoped that his side would be able to overwhelm the pescans by exploiting a suppressive glow and building up enough momentum, but the aliens weren't that easy to defeat.

The pescans may be incompetent in many areas, but they weren't complete fools!

They knew how to wage war. They only lacked enough perspective due to the low development level of their civilization.

All that mattered a lot in normal space, but in a confined place like this, Ves and many humans felt beyond frustrated that they couldn't leverage the great strength of their own mighty society!

Ves wished so badly that he had one of his mechs at his side.

It was beyond excruciating for a mech designer like him to be caught in a battle without a single friendly mech by his side!

Let alone the Everchanger, just a Bright Warrior or even a humble Desolate Soldier would satisfy his need!

In fact, even a weak and weaponless industrial mech like a Hymenoptera would do, because he at least knew how to modify it so that he could increase its lethality.

Chapter 4807 Quiet Obstruction

A sword existed to kill.

This was a truth that every Swordmaiden understood by heart.

Ketis may not have been born with a sword, but she had come to embody it ever since she first got recruited by Lydia's Swordmaidens.

From training in the distinct swordsmanship style of the Swordmaidens to learning how to design swordsman mechs under Mayra after her learning ability stood out, not a day went for her without working with swords in a fashion.

She missed those days. Though the circumstances of the time weren't that great, she constantly trained and worked alongside the sisters she trusted with her life.

Ketis was no longer a reckless girl, though.

She had grown into a Journeyman Mech Designer and a swordmaster. Either of these identities placed her far above most of the people in human space, but she had gone above and beyond the rest by becoming both at the same time!

Her status underwent a huge change at that point. She not only became a legend in the swordsmanship community of the Heavensword Association, but also attracted a lot of interest from the Mech Trade Association.

Even though Ves Larkinson sucked up most of the attention from the public whenever anyone thought of the Larkinson Clan, Ketis was quite aware that she was definitely its second-most prestigious figure!

Everyone else could only rank a distant third at most. Neither her husband, Madame Gloriana Wodin, General Ark Larkinson, Commander Casella Ingvar or anyone else could match her value.

She had even been promoted to a tier 8 galactic citizen as of late. The Mech Supremacist Faction which she only sparingly cooperated with on certain matters appreciated her input and did not look down on her for being 'just' a Journeyman. Her dual perspectives on swordsman mechs and extraordinary swordsmanship granted her a lot of insights that even benefited Masters.

Whenever she visited the Arcadia Sanctum in Davute, Director Astoria Kelric of the unofficial branch headquarters of the Mech Supremacist Faction always received her with great enthusiasm.

"You could do so much for the Association and our faction if you become mecher." The woman related to an MTA Master Mech Designer gushed. "Normally, we do not open any channels for mech designers as old as you, but we would be happy to open a backdoor for you to join our ranks."

Ketis always responded with the same reply. "No thanks. The Larkinson Clan has become my new home. I would never separate myself from the Swordmaidens."

Astoria frowned in disapproval. "You do not know what you are rejecting, madame. Our association can provide you with incomparable access to research, resources, tech and more. While you must first prove your worth and make significant contributions, a unique mech designer such as yourself should have no problem supplying our databases with original research. We can take you much further in your journey to become the ultimate swordsman mech designer than a small and ultimately limited clan."

Her appeal would have worked for almost any other mech designer. Joining the MTA was the ultimate dream to those who used to live as space peasants beneath the feet of the mighty Big Two. The Association had always been painted as the holy land for mech designers, and it could provide unimaginable benefits to any professionals who previously worked under a huge amount of constraints.

It was a pity that Ketis happened to be a difficult case.

"Don't ask me any further, director." The athletic mech designer shook her head. "I already told you why I refuse to join your organization. Here in the Larkinson Clan, I can always entrust my back to my fellow sisters and my fellow clansmen. The same cannot be said for the MTA. Any scheming mecher is liable to stab me in the back at the first possible opportunity. That is unacceptable to me. Maybe others are able to thrive under the same circumstances, but I am not one of them. I will never abandon my comrades and family."

Her clear answer essentially made it impossible for the MTA to absorb this unique talent.

Though Director Astoria Kelric did not alter her expression, she couldn't help but feel disappointed. She had encountered such rejections before, but rarely from a mech designer.

It was mostly the expert pilots and ace pilots that said no to any invitations. These stubborn soldiers and warriors were incredibly loyal to their people and would rather remain stuck in the middle of nowhere than to become a part of one of the top powers of human civilization!

Director Astoria personally thought that these idiots were all mad as well as stupid, and it appeared that Swordmaster Ketis Larkinson had inherited a number of those traits.

The mecher inwardly sighed and decided to take a step back.

"Several MTA mech designers have expressed interest in collaborating with you on more confidential research and design projects." Director Astoria said without showing any sign that she was affected by the earlier rejections. "There are certain rules within our Association that make it difficult to establish extensive cooperation outside of our organization. This is mostly for your sake as you are still at a stage where you should be left to explore your design philosophy and work direction by yourself. It will become much easier for you to collaborate with our mech designers once you have advanced to Senior or Master."

"You will have to wait for that." Ketis stated as she crossed her arms. "I am still far behind in my progression compared to the likes of Ves and his wife. There is too much for me to explore, and I still need to master a lot more sciences before I am ready to take the next step. I also spend much of my time on improving and expanding my swordsmanship on top of that. The only good news I can tell you is that improving my mastery of different sword styles often gives me lots of inspiration that can feed back into my mech design-related work."

Director Astoria adopted a patient expression. "We can be patient, Swordmaster Ketis. Our Association has stood for over four centuries. It will hold for longer until you are ready to take on greater responsibilities."

They switched to other topics. Although Ketis had no intentions of joining the MTA, she did not mind taking advantage of this relationship to obtain additional information and other goodies.

If Ves could do it, so could Ketis.

At one point, the swordmaster asked a question that had been bothering her for a while.

"Given your Association and faction's interest in my abilities as a swordmaster, I would have thought you guys would have done more to increase the popularity of traditional swordsmanship." She spoke. "Instead the only state where this practice is prevalent is a small second-class state in the

furthest edge of the galactic rim. I have tried to change this by using my popularity to start new swordsmanship classes, but I have always encountered one obstacle after another. I am not blind, Astoria. I know you mechers are obstructing me. Why is that the case?"

The director of the Arcadia Sanctum's expression turned a lot more serious. She put down the cocktail that she had been sipping.

"Let me begin by informing you that it is nothing personal. It is a matter of policy. Have your acquaintances from the Heavensword Association not explained their situation to you, swordmaster?"

"The other swordmasters barely know anything." Ketis frowned and answered. "I get the feeling that the Heavensword Saint knows a lot more about this topic, but he has been mum about it in the few times we have spoken."

"That is not a surprise. The issue at hand goes a lot deeper than you think. We do not like to spread around the exact reasons why, and the few people who know more than what we have said on the surface are bound by secrecy agreements. If I hadn't been recognized as a designated contact to you, I would have remained in the dark as well."

That caused Ketis' eyes to sharpen. "The MTA has no reason to clue you in unless it is relevant to your mission."

"Smart." The older woman nodded in respect. "I suppose that your previous conduct and cooperation has given us enough trust in you to unveil a part of the information that you seek. I trust that as a swordmaster, you will not divulge what you hear to others, not even your fellow Larkinsons, understand?"

Ketis stood up and reached out to draw her Bloodsinger. She solemnly knelt on a single knee while tipping her large greatsword onto the stone floor of the exclusive resort.

Her great will radiated from her blade, causing Astoria to feel as if she was being pinned by a thousand needles!

"I swear to uphold the confidentiality of any secrets that you share with me today."

This was an ironclad promise. If the information ever leaked out to others, then the blame wouldn't lie with Ketis!

Director Astoria Kelric smiled. "That is sufficient."

She snapped her finger, triggering a command that caused a number of privacy screens and jamming fields to come online. The entire resort room became enclosed with metal shutters that further dampened any signals.

Ketis never let go of her greatsword, though she put the sheath back on in order to reassure her conversation partner.

Once the representative of the Mech Supremacist Faction became confident in the security of this space, she began to divulge the information that she had recently been authorized to share.

"For what reasons do swords exist?" Director Astoria began.

This was a rather pedantic question to ask to a swordmaster.

"Swords exist to kill." Ketis instantly replied. "I am sure you know all about the story about how tools such as axes and spears can be used for relatively peaceful purposes such as chopping down trees or hunting prey for food. Swords aren't any good at that. They are weapons that are exclusively designed to kill others, particularly humans and aliens that are similar to our race."

"Good answer. Swords are killing tools. Their blades are designed to shed blood while their hilts are predominantly meant to be wielded by warriors who have learned the art of killing. In modern times, swords do not have any special significance. Aside from being the default weapon that every mech cadet must become proficient in first, they are not tainted by any negative associations. Our efforts in modernizing and pruning the practice of swordsmanship has greatly contributed to this development."

That caused Ketis to sit up straighter. The director's words implied a lot of unpleasanties.

The swordmaster glanced at her personal greatsword. She called it Bloodsinger for good reasons.

Not only did it sing to her whenever she wielded it, she also hoped that it would spill a lot of blood throughout her career as a swordmaster.

Director Astoria was quite sharp and easily captured Ketis' body language.

"You understand, don't you? Swords are killing weapons. Those who train in swordsmanship tend to develop extreme martial tendencies. How stable do you think our society would be if there are dozens of swordmasters in every state? How much of their violent and combative tendencies will they pass on to their pupils and admirers if they are not restricted in any fashion?"

Ketis frowned again. "Swordmasters are not as threatening as you described. They can be just as honorable and law-abiding as expert pilots. The latter can inflict much more damage to a city than a single human with a sword. Why must the Association treat Swordmasters as pariahs?"

"Expert pilots are empowered by their expert mechs, but they are also restrained by their dependence on such machines. We do not fear rogue pilots because their dependence on society and our Association are too great." Astoria steadily replied.

"That should hardly be the only reason."

"You are correct, swordmaster. The greater truth is that traditional swordsmanship is... tainted. Its past is far more bloody than you think. There were swordmasters who rose up to become heroes worthy of admiration, but there were also swordmasters who had fallen to darkness and stained their blades with the blood of millions of innocents. Do you think our society can accommodate these heroes and villains?"

"I... do not know."

#### Chapter 4808 The Perils Of The Sword

Why had Ketis never heard about these supposed heroes and villains?

When had traditional swordsmanship ever been ubiquitous enough for skilled practitioners to exist in every state?

Ketis grew confused. Though she was not particularly well-versed in the history of the traditions of the Heavensword Association, traditional swordsmanship had never entered the mainstream of human society as far as she was concerned.

What Director Astoria Kelric just said did not seem to add up. Had someone censored the history books?

"I understand your confusion." The woman in charge of the resort floating above the streets of Kotor City spoke up. "It is difficult to reconcile what I have said with the information you currently possess. This is not a deliberate attempt to distort the history of our civilization. It is instead a consequence of trying to reshape humanity into a better and brighter future."

This caused Ketis to look offended.

"Are you saying that swordmasters are a bunch of murderous thugs?!"

"They are not necessarily detrimental, but they can be, just as any soldier or mech pilot." Astoria admitted. "In truth, it is the environment that shapes the warrior. In a distant past, there used to be many more swordmasters and swordsmen in general. This is a time where firearms and such had yet to become a prevalent weapon among our race. Limited technology combined with primitive societal norms have produced a culture where drawing one's blade against others used to be more common. Any human with a sword can pose a threat against another. A swordmaster is at least a hundred times as dangerous."

Although Ketis found it odd that Astoria remained a bit fuzzy about the period of history where all of this was supposed to take place, she could indeed imagine a primitive society where swordsmen and even swordmasters did as they pleased.

"We don't live in those ages anymore." She retorted. "I admit that swordmasters can do a lot of damage if they have grown corrupted, but we live in a better society now. Expert pilots copy many of our methods and most of them are honorable and upright soldiers as far as I have seen. The Heavensword Association has been working hard to foster a disciplined and law-abiding society where swordmasters can utilize their skills for productive ends. Many swordsmen mech pilots flock to the state in order to learn its many remarkable sword styles."

Director Astoria remained impassive as she heard the response from the swordmaster.

"The Heavensword Association is tolerated exactly because its leaders and swordmasters go above and beyond to maintain a positive and peaceful environment for their national obsession. Think about it, Ketis. The state is literally founded around traditional swordsmanship. Every layer of society and every rule is related to it one way or another. It is only through so many measures that this practice has remained well-controlled and well-regulated."

All of this sounded a bit woozy to Ketis. She was not a leader and she knew little about how to run a state. She could only take Astoria's word that it took so many measures to keep sword practitioners in line.

"Fine. Let's assume this is the case. Is there really no way to spread traditional swordsmanship throughout the Red Ocean?"

"We can tolerate a small degree of dissemination." Director Astoria replied. "It does little harm to start a single school and allow for low-level swordsmen and swordswomen to teach their sword styles to others. The Heavensworders are also allowed to do that to a degree as we are aware that the threshold to become a swordmaster is unreachable to many people. It is only when swordmasters begin to get serious about passing on their practice to students on a wider scale that we begin to have issues with what is happening. They are unable to control so many disciples. Any one of them can turn into deadly criminals that can pose a significant threat to both the common folk and more important figures."

Ketis chuckled at that. "Is there any need to make a distinction between the two? People are people. Everyone is equally vulnerable to get killed by a swordmaster as long as the distance is close enough. For example, you have always stayed within my lethal range. I only need to make a single move in order to chop your body in half. That doesn't mean I would go through with it. I can assure you that I and every swordmaster will only draw our blades against those who are asking for it. I am not different from a sniper, except I can't kill from a distance."

"That is where you are mistaken, young woman. It appears you truly do not know the implications of your own existence. Swordmasters such as yourself can perform feats that are impossible to perform by anyone else. Only high-ranking mech pilots can match or exceed your capabilities, but as we have discussed earlier, they are constrained by highly complicated mechs rather than a sharp lump of metal."

"Swords are more than a simple metal chunk with an edge." Ketis sardonically said.

"I do not mean to cause offense, but you should understand my meaning." Director Astoria bowed her head in apology. "I cannot go into too much detail about the historical context of swordmasters and why our Association does not want them to become too prevalent in today's society. You can go over what I have shared and draw your own conclusions. We merely wish to inform you of the sensitive nature of your profession and provide you with an understanding of what is permissible."

Permissible. Such a domineering word. The swordmaster in Ketis hackled at the MTA's attempts to impose limitations on a warrior such as herself.

She was a Swordmaiden!

Swordmaidens never bowed down to tyrants!

Unfortunately for her, the mechers were the biggest bully on the block, so she had little choice but to acquiesce to these bastards.

She now knew what it felt like to be in Ves' shoes. He most definitely had to work under a lot more restrictions than that given what he was capable of with his inventions.

The conversation turned into a more pleasant direction after that. Ketis still didn't understand the MTA's problem with traditional swordsmanship, so she tried to weasel out more information from Director Astoria.

"Wait a minute. If you don't want more people to become swordmasters, do you have a problem with the swordsman mechs that I have designed as of late?"

"What do you mean exactly, Ketis?"



"I have designed swordsman mechs that help mech pilots master powerful sword styles with much greater ease than if they learn from a teacher. My Monster Slayer allows my customers to master a style centered around greatswords while my Needle Dancer teaches a style related to fencing. Each of my mech designs have proven to be effective at passing on different sword styles, many of which are not that much inferior to the styles where entire sword schools have been built around."

"Ah. That." Director Astoria smiled. "We have no issue with that. The reason why that is the case is that the beneficiaries of your work are mech pilots. We see great promise in what you can do. If you are able to polish this design application further, you will likely become a popular mech designer among the pilots that specialize in wielding bladed weapons. I can also imagine that many swordsman mech specialists will be able to advance to the rank of expert pilot with the help of your teachings."

Ketis frowned in confusion. "I don't understand. Even if the ones that end up getting stronger are mech pilots, won't they be able to teach the same sword style or a different one that they have invented based on my teachings? I would imagine that you would grow a lot more concerned about the rapid spread of swordsmanship."

"Not so much, swordmaster. First off, we are talking about expert pilots. These are highly driven individuals who are mainly concerned with spending their time on developing their own strengths. Sword styles designed for mechs are not exactly the same as sword styles designed for humans. If they are in the mood to teach their skills, they will only think about passing on their skills to other mech pilots. Norms who are unable to interface with mechs do not fall under their consideration."

Ketis grimaced. That was quite true. It was a fact of life that mech pilots thought that they existed on a higher level than everyone else. The MTA's favoritism towards mech pilots exacerbated this phenomenon.

She felt rather relieved that the mechers put so much trust in mech pilots. It sounded as if it allowed Ketis to get away with her actions.

"I appreciate your tolerance, then." Ketis remarked. "Not all of the swordsman mechs that I intend to design in the future will come with free lessons, but I do intend to turn it into a signature feature in most of my mechs. Many ordinary mech pilots seem to appreciate it, and they can sorely use better instruction from a teacher who knows more about how to handle swords than any of the teachers they had before."

eaeglesnovel`c,om "And we look forward to your expansion. Just because we do not want ordinary people to learn powerful sword styles does not mean we hold the same stance towards mech piloting. It is one of the many reasons why we tolerate the Heavensword Association."

Ketis sighed. "This again. If you people are so afraid of traditional swordsmanship, why haven't you attempted to prohibit it completely? It seems you only want mech pilots to learn the stripped-down versions of swordsmanship that do not come with any bells and whistles."

The other woman took a sip of her cocktail as she thought about how to provide a satisfactory answer to the swordmaster's persistent question.

"Let me put it in the following terms. Swords are designed to kill, correct?"

"Yes."

"Swordsmen and swordmasters dedicate their lives to mastering the ability to wield these weapons, correct?"

"Yes."

"There is no better method to mastering a powerful sword style than to use it in actual combat, as it was always meant to be used. In comparison, swordsmen who continually practice their drills in their practice yard or strike their weapons against each other during highly regulated competition environments do not experience as much improvement. Is this correct as well, Ketis?"

The younger woman glowered at the mecher. "You are not wrong in that. The same applies to mech pilots. They improve much faster when they go through real fights. That doesn't turn them into murderers. Swordmasters are the same."

"You underestimate the moderating effects of piloting mechs." Director Astoria said. "Fighting opponents by piloting a mech is a vastly different experience than killing people with a sword. The former is more impersonal because the pilot is mostly struggling to fight against large but sterile machines. The latter is more visceral because the wielder of a blade spills blood at close range. Can you see how the psychological impact of these two actions are far apart? Tell me honestly, Ketis. Have you ever developed the desire to keep killing once you have started to take numerous lives? Have you ever struggled to keep your cool during the heat of battle?"

"...I do." Ketis admitted. She had no choice but to tell the truth because that was the sort of person she was. "That is how true battles are like. Rationality takes a backseat while emotions drive you forward."

"That is what we fear, Swordmaster Ketis. Swordmasters are killers. Swordmasters are exceptionally good killers. Their training and life's mission inevitably revolve around the use of swords, which automatically means using it for its actual purpose. Do you know why many swordmasters in the Heavensword Association have never reached the rank of sword saint? This is partially the reason why. Swordmasters must step onto mountains of corpses in order to develop their sword styles further. You are no exception to this rule. I fear that there may come a time where once you enter into combat once again, you are unable to control the demon deep inside of yourself."

"A demon?"

"A demon." Astoria confirmed. "The more you kill, the stronger it becomes. We have... sources that state that many swordmasters do not end up well after killing one too many enemies. The psychology of killing so many organisms at close range is so corrosive that it can destroy even the mightiest of warriors. Take care not to fall into this abyss."

## Chapter 4809 Wrath of a Mother

As Ketis prepared to launch a surprise raid onto the alien positions, she couldn't explain why she recalled one of her discussions with Director Astoria Kelric of the Arcadia Sanctum.

She held numerous deep and interesting discussions with the mecher over the years.

Though she was not a core figure within the Association due to lacking the ability to pilot or design a mech, she had served as a useful window into what the Mech Trade Association was like by virtue of being born within its ranks.

Swordmasters were killers. Trained killers. Proficient killers. Yet still killers.

Director Astoria said this as if there was anything bad about killing.

Soldiers were killers as well, but hardly anyone complained about them. The mech pilots and infantry soldiers who fought on behalf of a state most often killed lots of people in wars, but none of them received any admonishment for their actions.

As such, Ketis never thought that she and her fellow swordmasters were as dangerous as the MTA made them out to be. The possibility that they could degenerate into demons was nothing more than an excuse to suppress their kind so that mech pilots had no competition in becoming the ultimate warriors in the Age of Mechs.

Though it was plausible for swordmasters to lose their grip on reality and turn into unrelenting killing machines, that was unlikely to happen.

Exceptional warriors such as Ketis gained their strength by developing their willpower to the extreme. That made swordmasters a lot more principled and strong-willed than ordinary people.

It was absurd to think that someone like herself would lose herself in her own bloodlust!

"I am not a monster." She reminded herself as she lifted her borrowed sword in front of her face. "I am a slayer of monsters."

Losing control was antithetical to the Swordmaidens and to Ketis. She only killed in order to rid the cosmos of demons, not to become one herself.

Now that she was about to fight against a band of indigenous remnants, she harbored even less guilt for her upcoming actions.

"No one threatens my child and gets away with it." She sneered as her one-handed sword gained a sharp and threatening sheen.

Her expression softened just a second after she thought about Kirian.

While she had thankfully left her youngest daughter Mayra Larkinson behind at the Cat Nest due to her age, she regretted the decision to bring Kirian to the founding ceremony.

Now, her son became implicated in an improbable revenge or escape plot hatched by the former occupants of Davute.

If her husband Joshua was here, then he would probably harbor a lot of sympathy or guilt towards the pescan race.

These aliens had never done anything to deserve the mass extinction event that had befallen their race. They never harmed any humans in the past nor possessed any objectionable visual or behavioral traits that merited their destruction.

Their only 'sin' was living on the wrong planet at the wrong time. Humanity wanted to take over their home and did not take no for an answer.

Even if the pescans were more than justified in their attempt to hit back at the humans who occupied their planet, Ketis took a lot of issue with it because it not only affected her and her fellow Larkinsons, but also implicated her oldest child and son!

Little Kirian often fantasized about becoming a fearsome warrior and swordmaster like her mother one day, but he was just a cute and adorable child for the time being.

The pescans should have never dragged her son into this pocket space!

"This is the worst mistake they have ever made." Ketis' eyes burned with repressed fury. "The MTA might complain about killing too many humans, but I doubt they will have any issue about slaughtering aliens."

As the Swordmaiden mech designer thought about how much alien blood she could spill today, a mechanical cat floated in front of her and tried to act cute.

Ketis loosened up a bit and patted Lucky's body. "Thank you for backing me up in battle again. I don't know how well I am able to avoid alien attacks when there are so many opponents in the field. I will be counting on you to take care of the most dangerous enemies, alright?"

"Meow~"

Once the battle finally commenced, it immediately went off-script.

Ketis and the rest of her group hadn't even started to rush through a smaller and less important entrance before the main assault force had breached into the first floor controlled by the pescans!

It wasn't until the humans secured this floor and resumed their assault on the second floor that she could truly make a difference!

She had to wait a long time, though.

The pescans guarded the entrances fairly well. Each of them were guarded by a dozen or more soldiers. Many of them enjoyed defensive advantages such as walls and energy shields.

Ketis and Lucky just happened to set their sights onto one of the smaller entrances. The fixed defenses were much less present in this particular place.

The pescans had assigned more soldiers here to compensate, and more than a couple of them were armed with transphasic laser arm cannons.

As a mech designer, Ketis could intuitively judge that the penetration power of those integrated energy weapons could pose a real threat to the rather average second-class suit of combat armor that she also borrowed from a random soldier.

Normally, Ketis still thought she could chop apart all of the elite pescan soldiers, but the problem was that she would have to overcome the energy shield blocking the entrance first!

She needed help with breaking this energy shield. She also had to put quite a lot of effort in helping to take it down.

Doing so would make her vulnerable, though. This was why she had yet to make a move. Defense was never her strong suit and she needed to wait until an opportunity arose.

Just as she expected, the main assault force once again pulled through. The human troopers managed to break through the largest entrance and gain enough of a foothold on the next floor to attract a lot of alien attention!

The pescan commanders began to pull an increasing amount of idle soldiers away from other positions in order to put them where they were most needed.

The humans pouring out of the main entrance had to be contained and pushed back!

More alien bodies were required to do so as the pescans were still suffering a lot of losses from getting hit by the superior weapons employed by the humans.

One of the spy drones that Ketis connected to managed to capture the movements made during this time.

At first, only three or so pescans left this post.

Then, seven more pescans received urgent instructions to reinforce the battle at the main entrance.

After that, 14 more pescans had been drawn away from this site, leaving just 8 pescan soldiers to stand guard and ensure that no humans would ever be able to breach this entrance.

Ketis smelled weakness. She gripped her sword tighter even as it began to glow and shimmer with unusual energies.

"The time is now!"

A lot of events took place in quick succession.

First, Ketis had turned the corner and fully exposed themselves to the surprised pescan guards and struck her sword against the transphasic alien energy shield!

Although her initial strike did not deal that much damage to the integrity of the energy shield generator, it most definitely could not be ignored!

This was especially when the swing of the sword also released a strange starry energy wave that had a surprisingly destabilizing effect on the energy shield!

By this time, both sides started shooting at each other.

Special guards equipped with stealth suits momentarily dropped their active cloaking so that they could use their various weapons to break the energy shield in the fastest possible time.

This was such an important priority to them that they did not hesitate to reveal their existence before they could sabotage anything meaningful!

Fortunately, the pescan aliens who were doing their best to defend their positions became alarmed and tried to counterattack at the closest opponent, which happened to be Ketis!

"BREAK FOR ME!" Ketis roared as she tried her best to remain mobile and evade most of the incoming attacks.

this minor entrance weren't able to keep their aim straight anymore due to how much the human swordmaster oppressed them from a short distance!

Though she did not always succeed in preventing any attacks from landing on her combat armor, her defenses held for the time being.

The alien energy shield wasn't doing so good, though!

The repeated attacks along with the consistent weakening effect of Venerable Dise's Phase Cutter technique caused the alien defensive measure to lose shield integrity at a rapid rate!

Even though the nearby pescan soldiers urgently called for backup over their communication channels, the aliens already had their hands full trying to stop the much larger group of humans from winning the fight at the front!

Ketis grinned when she saw that no enemy reinforcements were forthcoming.

With her willpower pressing over the surrounding environment, the poor pescans assigned to guard this minor entrance weren't able to keep their aim straight anymore due to how much the human swordmaster oppressed them from a short distance!

"Your shield will fall to my sword! Nothing is impervious to my blade!"

When the weakened transphasic energy shield finally fell, Ketis immediately jumped forward and raised her blade towards the nearest pescan soldier!

"You're first!"

Despite the height difference, the pescan's head soared into the air as Ketis cleanly cut it off its neck!

"You are next!"

She hardly slowed down and quickly stabbed another pescan soldier!

The tip of her sword had been imbued by her sharpness and therefore easily managed to poke through the chest of the enemy soldier!

Though Ketis was not that well-versed in alien anatomy, her intuition told her that stabbing in this particular spot would definitely be fatal to her victim!

She retracted her blade. Covered with alien blood, its edge still remained as sharp and potent as ever under the blessing of Ketis' true resonance!

"More!"

Her armored figure zipped back and forth at speeds that made it difficult for the lumbering pescan soldiers to track.

By the time she stabbed through the chest of a fourth pescan despite all of the armor in the way, the aliens guarding this particular entrance had fallen!

"Meow!" Lucky arrogantly proclaimed his own wins as he had single-handedly killed four pescan soldiers while Ketis was busy.

"Good job, buddy, but this is but a drop in the bucket."

Even as Ketis reoriented herself in order to determine where she should go next, she could faintly feel the passing of numerous human individuals.

The stealth operatives working for the various kidnapped groups had activated their stealth systems again and quietly sneaked their way into the enemy camp.

The chaos of battle served as the best form of distraction for these smooth operators!

Ketis showed no regard towards them as she had her own duty to fulfill.

"What do you think looks more important, Lucky? Should we find a way to relieve the others by disabling that damaged tank, or should we reach that tower that looks like a command center?"

Lucky thought for a moment before pointing his paw at the tank with the powerful cannon. "Meow meow meow."

"I suppose you are right. Ves and the other attackers need our help!"

Ketis resolutely advanced towards the tank that was situated a fair distance away.

Throughout her journey, the swordmaster had to cut down dozens of pescans who were either in the way or could warn their superiors of her passing.

She needed to attract as little attention as possible in order to operate at her best!

Even though the pescans showed signs of adapting to this latest threat, Ketis had managed to reach her target in record time.

Once she came close enough, she did not stupidly attack the solid transphasic armor plating that had allowed the elite war machine to stay in the fight.

She instead began to thrust her blade into the exposed and vulnerable sections of the tank!

#### Chapter 4810 Enemy Troop Qualities

When Ketis finally got loose inside the ranks of the pescan defenders, she completely came into her element!

She had waited long and hard to get this far. She remained patient and held herself back when she knew that the furious pescans killed a lot of good men and women with each passing minute.

Ketis knew her limits, and just because she was a swordmaster did not mean she could literally fight an entire army by herself.

She was also older and more responsible than her younger self. She had a husband and a pair of lovely children to get back to. She also had a lot of mech design-related ambitions that she wanted to fulfill.

"I am not going to die in this awful place!"

It was only now when all of the alien commanders and most of the pescan soldiers became fully preoccupied with resisting the main group of human attackers that she could finally let loose!

With Sharpie inhabiting the high-quality one-handed sword that she forged herself, the weapon began to shine and resonate with her powerful will.

A connection had formed between Ketis and the weapon she had forged in the past!

No matter whether the sword had been made for the hand of another soldier, Ketis could wield many different blades, and the ones she made herself were especially compatible due to the inherent bond between a maker and her work!

Even though a part of her deeply wished she could have brought her oversized but insanely sharp and strong Bloodsinger, the performance of this sword was not that bad.

She did not worry about the blade snapping or breaking at the worst possible time. The true resonance she generated with her sword reinforced its hardness in an unexplainable way, much like how expert mechs readily performed several times better than their technical capabilities suggested.

The biggest boost she was able to apply to her sword was a massive increase to its sharpness.

Ketis had already tried to imbue the blade with as much sharpness as possible. Resonating with it and allowing Sharpie to bless its properties amplified the strength it already possessed and multiplied it to a point where cutting through ordinary alloys felt like cutting through butter!

As she sprinted and weaved across the alien houses and other constructions, her sword arm frequently slashed and stabbed at the weak points in the armored battle suits of her opponents.

"I could certainly use a cutting edge." She muttered as she tested how easily she was able to penetrate through the armor of her adversaries.

The pescans were larger, taller and more sluggish than humans. Speed was not their forte, so they developed a fighting approach that relied on strong armor, strong energy shields and powerful penetrating weapons that were designed to brutalize other tough opponents.

These battle suit-wearing pescans excelled at fighting their own kind, but experienced great difficulties trying to fend off fast-moving attackers like herself!

One of the reasons why Ketis declined to borrow a quasi-first-class suit of combat armor from the honor guards was because each of them had been designed with defense as the main priority.

As the guards to the most important individual of the clan, it was their duty to absorb attacks in place of Ves!

Their bulkiness and lack of fluidity not only affected her swordsmanship, but also her movement speed.

She did not have that problem with her current suit which she borrowed from a Davutan guard soldier.

Not only did it fit her dimensions better, but it had partially been designed with rapid relocation in mind.

Even if it was not as fast as she wished, the speed produced by the powerful servos built into the limbs of the combat armor were more than powerful and responsive enough to enhance her advancement speed.

These aliens didn't know how to cope against fast-moving soldiers!

Their vision and experiences were too limited. Even if they were sharp enough to anticipate her movements and predict her positioning, Ketis was always able to read their intentions in advance and turn her orientation on the spot to avoid getting caught in a trap.



The intuition of a swordmaster towards imminent danger was just as good as that of an expert pilot!

In fact, it was even better because any attack was liable to damage her precious body, whereas expert pilots could still rely on the strong resonance shield and thick armor of their mechs to tank any incoming blows.

"My blade hungers for your alien blood!" She roared as she dashed towards a pescan officer equipped with a more decorated battle suit.

The additional frills and integrated equipment did not avail the alien officer. Although a turret mounted on the shoulder of the battle suit rapidly tracked Ketis' incoming form, the swordmaster dove to the side and hid behind a thick supply crate an instant before the weapon discharged a moderately powerful laser beam!

The cover wouldn't have been of much use if it had been a transphasic weapon, but fortunately the small turret was just a regular energy weapon.

Once the turret had unloaded its firepower, Ketis dashed out again and circled around so that she could swing her sword onto the thick neck of the enemy officer.

Swish!

Another helmeted alien head soared into the air!

Ketis sneered as the powerful servos of her borrowed medium combat armor helped her dash behind a half-ruined alien food storehouse.

She briefly glanced at the blood that was rapidly sliding off her glowing sword.

The blood that flowed from pescan bodies was red, just like that of human bodies. This was because both of them relied on iron in their blood to supply oxygen to their bodies.

Although there were many physiological differences between humans and pescans, it didn't matter to a Swordmaiden.

She was not an exobiologist. She was a swordmaster. She killed for a living and these aliens happened to be in her way!

"Die!"

Ketis exhibited no mercy as she utilized the antigrav module of her combat armor to boost her way up the roof of a two-story alien housing unit. She dashed across the roof and jumped off the edge, causing her to dive in the middle of a squad of armored pescan civilians that had been trying to huddle together for safety.

"Fall beneath my edge!"

The sword in her hand manifested an energy blade that was thrice as long and thick as the original!

As Ketis' feet landed onto the shoulders of an unfortunate alien, her empowered blade hacked onto the heads and torsos of five more aliens at a time!

Machinery failed and blood spurted from the cavities as the blade had done its job!

Some of the blood spilled over the combat armor of the woman responsible for creating the wounds, but Ketis had already shifted her attention to finishing off the remaining aliens!

"Reee!"

"Yayahhaaa!"

"Ijjjjaaannjaa!"

The poor pescan civilians didn't even know how to respond to what had happened. Instead of training their arm cannons at the human that had landed in their midst, they instead got caught up in their panic and screamed useless alien sounds.

Ketis wasn't interested in learning about their distress, their life stories or how traumatic it had been for these innocent alien civilians to lose their homes and become the last survivors of their race.

"Either you die, or I die! There is no peace between the two of us! Not after you have threatened my son!"

Her motherly instincts caused her to feel more urgent about turning the tide of this battle!

Her resonance grew stronger and her sword became a little sharper. It became easier for her to cut and stab through the alien battle suits worn by the pescans.

Of course, she still took the path of least resistance and made sure to attack the weak points of her opponents.

Her background as a mech designer played a useful role throughout this battle. Even if she didn't perform literal calculations in her mind, her familiarity with technology easily allowed her to dissect an opponent's weakness within an instant.

This advantage became especially useful once she encountered a pair of elite pescan soldiers.

"Yaahhgaaaaa!"

"Reeeereeeee!"

Unlike the bumbling civilians or the sluggish rank-and-file soldiers, the elites of the pescan combatants were much more difficult to defeat.

For one, they were faster than their brethren!

Just as Ketis was about to approach the pair of elites, she discovered that they had placed their backs against each other.

This allowed at least one of them to always be able to target her. Ketis' instincts screamed in warning as she hastily stopped her stride and jumped in a different direction the instant one of the elites shot a pair of transphasic laser beams!

"Kiyayaaayaa!"

The beams cut through the metal structures in the way and retained sufficient power to strain Ketis' defenses if they struck their targets.

Though the alien eventually missed, the furious swordmaster tried to approach the pair from another angle, only for the aliens to detect her well in advance and shoot their transphasic energy weapons through several structures yet again!

"Troublesome!"

These pescan elites were much more difficult to take down. Ketis wished she brought a decent ranged weapon, but she knew that an ordinary gun wouldn't be able to take down their transphasic battle suits so easily.

The intelligence supplied by the Davutans suggested that Great Chief Jaharon enjoyed the protection of over a hundred elite infantry troopers. These were the equivalent of a royal guard. Not only did they receive the best of training, they also got to use the best equipment that the former city state of Davute were able to develop!

Ketis could feel the sophisticated sensors of their high-quality battle suits tracking her signature from a distance.

Automated targeting systems combined with considerable skill enabled these elite alien soldiers to target her form and consistently fire energy beams that threatened to spear her body if she did not evade a moment in advance.

Laser guns were lightspeed weapons, so there was no possibility of evading them once they discharged their energies!

Ketis could only bet on her intuition, experience and judgment to consistently predict the aim of her opponents.

Several more elite soldiers were converging on her position. The pressure on her shoulders increased as she noticed that they had started to lock onto her with their weapons as well!

It would be bad if she got caught in a crossfire. The difficulty of evading their transphasic laser beams rose dramatically if they all coordinated their actions and fired their weapons in a grid around her body.

From the training and tactics they had shown so far, these pescans showed that they were more than capable of demonstrating this much cooperation!

Yet before these elite alien soldiers could put their tactic to use, one of the soldiers suffered a surprise attack!

"MEOW!"

With all of the humans fighting on this floor, the aliens spared no thought for the movement of an odd bronze-like mechanical construct.

This turned out to be a mistake, because the gem cat in question phased right through the walls of an ordinary house and struck the neck of an elite pescan soldier with his energy claws!

Krsh! Krsh! Krsh!

Unlike the battle suits assigned to regular soldiers, the models utilized by the elite pescans featured thicker and more deliberate protection to the neck.

Lucky's energy claws barely managed to burn through the layers with a single swipe. Lucky was forced to swipe his glowing energy claws three times in total to gouge out the neck of the tall humanoid alien soldier!

As the cat had managed to kill one of the two original pescan elites, the other alien failed to react in time.

"Meow!"

Taking out this soldier was even simpler as Lucky dove onto the back of the other elite soldier and began to use his sharp teeth to bite through the activated transphasic rear armor!

"Meow meow meow!"

Though his teeth weren't making as much progress in biting through the resilient armor as he would have liked, Lucky managed to bite through the back and sever the spine of the alien soldier!

"Good assist, Lucky!"

"Meow!"

"You're right. We've got a tank to kill. Let's get rid of these flies before we complete our greater goal!"