

The Mech 4871

Chapter 4871 Team Danilov

Ves often reminded himself of his principle that mechs should be treated with dignity. They should ideally be granted rights similar to those of humans as they could be just as intelligent and lively as the people they served.

While Ves recognized that mechs could never become fully equal to humans, they could still get close enough that the gap became irrelevant as far as everyone was concerned.

The way he treated the Sensia and the Furia at the moment violated his principles.

He took a natural adaptation process and sped it up so that months worth of familiarization took place in a matter of hours!

This was akin to rapidly maturing the body of a human clone. It was already unethical to make a clone in the first place, but to have it rapidly age so that it skipped its entire childhood made it even worse.

As Ves looked at the competition mechs he was working on, he recalled that he only really built them to last for this tournament and not much longer. They were expendable in his eyes, but that might be a fate too cruel to mechs that had just been born and had yet to enjoy the fullness of life.

He sighed. "You're right to point this out. I think a subconscious part of me did not want to confront this discrepancy at all, so I haven't thought about this before. That is not how a smart and principled mech designer should handle a serious problem. Thinking about it now, our Twin Souls truly deserve better. They may be designed with a very narrow purpose in mind, but that doesn't mean they can enjoy a second life after they have fulfilled their jobs. Normally, the tournament organizers take possession of all of the competition mechs. They will either recycle them or preserve them in order to put the successful and most interesting machines on display. I think it should be easy enough to ask them to transfer the Sensia and the Furia to our clan where they can serve other purposes."

The mechs weren't even close to ready to fight on a modern battlefield. Ves would have to redesign them from the ground up, but that took way too much effort. He would rather spend his limited time on more productive activities.

What he could do was hand the living mechs over to Maikel and Zanthar to see what they could make out of the competition mechs. It would be a good test of their design skills for them to reengineer an existing pair of Larkinson mechs.

Ves also thought about making light modifications to them before handing them over to one of his mech academies. The living mechs should be able to have a fruitful time helping mech cadets explore the potential of living mechs and teamwork.

He inwardly shook his head. He could think about the alternative uses of his Twin Souls later. It was enough to promise them that they would be able to have a good time in the Larkinson Clan after this day was over.

"Looks like you resolved at least one of your problems." Juliet said. "What about the accelerated adaptation that you are trying to pull off? Is it okay for you to treat living mechs this way?"

He pressed his lips as he quickly deliberated on this specific matter.

"From a utilitarian standpoint, I feel like I do not necessarily need to rely on this procedure to win the finals. However, I should never underestimate the competition. Team Hendrix almost managed to defeat us. There are other teams that are at least just as strong. I shouldn't let go of this advantage, and while it is not entirely ethical, there is no question that my mechs are made to win this contest. What I am doing will help them fulfill their purpose better. They were always meant to cooperate with Bobbie and Lizzie. I think the best way to look at it is that I am designing customized pets for a pair of clients."

Though Ves knew that this was not an entirely good answer, it was more than acceptable to him. It was at least sufficient enough to ease his troubled mood and soothe his conscience.

After Ves and Juliet fixed up their machines once again, they awaited the start of the fourth round of matches.

Not a lot of teams had managed to make it this far. With only 9 teams left in the competition, the dynamic in the waiting room had changed.

The ones that made it this far regarded their other competitors with respect and wariness. There was a tension between them all that discouraged casual chatting.

After all, who knew whether they would leak out any sensitive information about their works that could be used to target their weaknesses in the next round!

As for the losing teams, half of their mech designers had already exited the venue. They were usually the individuals who made a poor showing in this event. Their mechs got crushed too quickly while the panel of experts did not mince their words when they picked apart a lot of flaws.

The ones that remained at least managed to earn enough respect to preserve their pride and hold their heads high.

[Team Larkinson vs Team Danilov!]

"Go get them, boss." Dulo Voiken said as he clapped his palm on Ves' back. "The mechs developed by Team Danilov aren't pushovers. My mechs would have been able to fight against yours if it wasn't for our defeat in the earlier round. Our javelin mech and our spearman mech did manage to poke a lot of holes in the enemy mechs. I hope that helps."

Ves gazed over at Team Danilov. He wasn't familiar with them but he understood their type. They were yet another pair of older and more experienced Journeymen.

In fact, the ones that managed to make it to the later rounds tended to be over sixty years old!

There were geniuses among the younger generation of Journeymen. Why couldn't there be geniuses among the older generations as well?

Not every Journeyman was able to advance to the rank of Senior when they entered their fifties or sixties.

Everyone progressed at vastly different rates. Their talent, their life experiences, their knowledge accumulation, their mech designs, their work ethic and the complexity of their design philosophies all played a major role in determining whether they were ready to take the next step!

Early bloomers tended to be the exception rather than the rule. It took a lot of brilliant mech designers half a century to a century to advance to Senior despite all of their hard work and innovative efforts.

They simply set the bar too high. Mech designers who sought to solve more difficult and complicated problems needed to conduct at least thrice if not ten times as much research in order to progress their design philosophies to the next step!

This was the impression that Ves gained from James Danilov and Laurence Tsukai. Both mech designers were in their seventies and managed to earn quite a decent number of awards and accomplishments since they entered the mech industry.

"Oh, I remember their mechs now. They're one of the few who decided to design beast mechs, right?"

Dulo Voiken nodded. "The Lancernaut and the Killer Kitty. Don't be fooled by their silly names. Both mechs are strong and difficult to deal with. They both have excellent mobility despite the fact that their designs are substantially different."

He activated a projection of the Lancernaut.

Just as its name suggested, it was clearly a lancer mech, but that was not all to it. Instead of possessing a pair of humanoid legs like any other normal lancer mech, it featured double the amount of legs in a centaur configuration!

"Centaur mechs are much better at charging forward than lancer mechs." Ves remarked as he closely studied the design characteristics of this competition mech. "Aside from the obvious advantages of having double the amount of legs to do most of the work, their mass can easily be twice or thrice as much as an equivalent humanoid mech, yet still be able to maintain comparable speeds. The formula for momentum is $p = mv$. The amount of force that a centaur mech can channel through its lance is much greater than that of a smaller and lighter humanoid mech."

"That's right. This is also the main reason that the spearman mech designed by my sister and I got knocked out so soon. It wasn't mobile enough to evade the charge while its defenses failed after getting impaled by lance propelled with the force of a crashing starship."

Though Dulo exaggerated a bit with his description, Ves understood the sentiment after watching a brief clip of the collision between the Voiken spearman mech and the Lancernaut!

The spearman mech designed by Sara and Dulo Voiken may be a bit on the heavier side, but it was not as sluggish as a knight mech.

The spearman mech actually managed to sidestep in time for the Lancernaut to miss the mark.

What no one expected was for the centaur mech holding both a lance as well as a shield to cover its weak point to correct its course and turn at an unrealistic angle!

"What!?" Ves almost shouted. "That centaur mech has turned over 60 degrees to the left in just a fraction of a second! How is that possible!?"

It was as if a speeding shuttle managed to turn around the corner of a building. The amount of forces required to make this happen were immense, and the load on the mechanical components of the mechs was not low!

The footage replayed and zoomed in on the legs of centaur mech. Ves could see that they did not look like an average set of legs for this mech type. They had been reinforced and altered so that they could also push out to the sides with much greater strength than usual!

"James Danilov is a beast mech designer who is known to design mechs like this. He specializes in inertial redirection, so all of his beast mechs are known for being able to turn and shift direction a lot faster than usual." Dulo explained. "In the previous two rounds, the Lancernaut already showed off the ability to turn faster while it had already built up a lot of linear momentum. However, it only turned 30 degrees at most. The Lancernaut even missed a few times because its targets managed to jump just outside of the way of the incoming lance."

This spoke of strategy and forethought. The mech pilot of the Lancernaut deliberately undersold the full capabilities of the centaur lancer mech.

It was only when Team Danilov matched against a fairly powerful opponent like Team Voiken that the Lancernaut exposed its true strength!

"Wait." Ves said. "Being able to turn 60 degrees in an instant might not be its limit. What is the record for all of his centaur mechs?"

Dulo briefly looked up the information. "90 degrees, but that is an extreme case where James Danilov had been dared into making a single machine that could do this. The design of the experimental centaur mech was so extreme that it would be obvious to everyone that it is an odd machine."

When Ves carefully looked at the construction of the centaur mech, he figured that it was already straining to turn 60 degrees at its charging speed at the time. It might be able to turn even more, but not to the extent of 90 degrees.

"The Lancernaut is not easy to handle, but we'll figure it out, I suppose." Ves shrugged. "What about the Killer Kitty?"

"Oh, it's an annoying light tiger gun mech. It is fairly fast but is difficult to damage because it is equipped with energized armor plating. That is the specialty of Laurence Tsukai. He made it so that as long as the armor of the Killer Kitty remains powered, it can resist stronger attacks than normal, so don't think it will fall down easily after getting struck a few times."

That indeed sounded annoying to Ves.

"Any weaknesses?"

"The Killer Kitty attack power is weak. It only has a pair of light laser guns mounted to its side. They are accurate enough to aim at the weak points of opposing mechs, but their ability to penetrate armor is too poor. Its main role is to assist the Lancernaut."

"Alright. I think I understand what my mechs are dealing with. Hopefully Bobby and Lizzie will have a plan to deal with those tricky charges."

Chapter 4872 Lancernaut

Ves truly started to experience the competitive pressure of this tournament at this time.

There were no weak teams of Journeymen in the running anymore.

Even if a handful of them managed to luck out and face even weaker opponents on occasion, it was practically impossible for them to match up against three awful teams in a row!

The nine teams that managed to make it to the fourth round had all been tested in multiple ways and came out on top. Few mechs remained intact at this time as there simply wasn't enough time to repair every damaged section and component. This caused the surviving machines to look as if they had aged at different speeds.

Surprisingly enough, even Team Danilov that managed to perform fairly well in the first three rounds did not present any pristine mechs.

The Killer Kitty looked pristine because the mechs of Team Voiken did not bother to attack it at all during the previous round.

Only the Lancernaut mech looked as if it had gone through a beating!

"The mech pilots assigned to my team weren't able to keep up their mechs for long, but they went down swinging." Dulo Voiken smirked. "When the Lancernaut charged our spearman mech, it got impaled by a spear in turn. Our javelin mech meanwhile ignored the Killer Kitty and tried to launch as many javelins at the damaged centaur mech as possible. Quite a few managed to land on its large and formidable horse-like frame before it managed to run its lance through my baby."

The mass and volume of the centaur mech was considerable, so the penetrating attacks hadn't come close enough to take it down.

What the attacks did manage to accomplish was to inflict a lot of spread damage, some of which went a lot deeper than normal.

The large size of the Lancernaut meant that it took a lot more time, resources and effort to repair its condition. Team Danilov obviously did not have the time to fix up all of its holes, so it entered the arena in less than stellar condition.

Meanwhile, the Twin Souls returned to the arena in close to peak condition!

The previous match against the mechs of Team Polter ended faster than usual. This not only gave Ves and Juliet less work, but also enabled them to address issues that were not critical but should still be handled sooner or later!

[Ah, Team Danilov has turned out to become another favorite in this tournament, and for different reasons. The Lancernaut is an impressive lance-wielding centaur mech whose charges cannot be blocked. It is an impressive feat of mech engineering and I have always wondered how it will fare against the other top mechs in the competition such as the Furia. Now we finally have an opportunity to find out and see which one can prevail over the other!]

[Don't forget about their light mechs either. Even though many dismiss them as afterthoughts, they have played a crucial role in many matches time and time again. The Sensia has proven to be a deadly finisher if it is able to attack its targets from the rear, while the Killer Kitty has just as many lives as a real cat.]

Ves twitched at the mention of this name. He somehow felt as if Team Danilov had stolen what should rightfully belong to the Larkinsons.

Cats symbolized his clan!

How dare others try to defeat the Larkinsons by fielding cats of their own on the battlefield?!

It took a surprising amount of effort for Ves to suppress this silly thought. Tiger mechs were fairly common in the beast mech community. Just because they looked like big cats did not mean they were specifically employed to taunt the Larkinson Clan!

[Mobility is key in this match. All four mechs that are about to fight against each other are fairly maneuverable in different ways. The worst of the lot of the Furia, but it is clearly a hybrid mech that has traded armor for additional mobility. I wonder whether the hybrid mech is able to evade the infamous charges of the Lancernaut. A highly inflexible centaur mech is not difficult to defeat if it is forced to a standstill, but the challenge is to survive the initial attack runs.]

[Objectively speaking, Team Danilov has a greater chance of making it through than Team Larkinson. The Lancernaut is too suitable to fight in an arena that features flat and empty terrain. The area of the arena is also too small to give ranged mechs much time to cripple a melee mech from a comfortable distance.]

[I wouldn't dismiss the mechs of Team Larkinson that quickly. The Killer Kitty deals negligible damage and cannot offer too much assistance. Meanwhile, the Furia has a diverse arsenal of weapons. If its pilot is skilled and lucky enough, one of its weapons might be able to deal crippling damage to the Lancernaut by exploiting the battle damage that Team Danilov has only hastily managed to patch over.]

As the commentators prattled on, the mechs all got in position and started to go over their attack plans.

Both sides knew that they needed to take out the 'big brothers' of the opposing team first. The Sensia and the Killer Kitty were not as impressive as the Furia and the Lancernaut. The former mechs complimented the latter ones. It would therefore be up to the hybrid mech and the lancer mech to produce a breakthrough in this match!

[Start!]

"Go Larkinson!"

"Impale another mech, Lancernaut!"

"Here, kitty kitty. Go meow them all to death, little tiger!"

The voices of the crowd turned louder as the fans who did not really care about maintaining their image got caught up in the moment!

The fact that the mechs did not delay at all and immediately took action caused many people's blood to pump faster!

[The Lancernaut has directed its spear towards the Furia and burst into action! It seeks to end this confrontation in a single charge!]

[It is not as if it has any other choice. The longer the Furia remains in the field, the more damage it can pump out with its myriad weapons.]

Bobby Orwell knew that his mech would get targeted by the charging centaur mech from the beginning.

He had been ready to respond to this situation.

The first action he took was to command the Furia to detach its bandolier of throwing axes.

There was no point in throwing them out because the centaur mech was too tough to get taken down by a few axes.

It was not worth it to carry around all of that additional mass. The Furia needed all of the mobility it could get!

The second action taken by the Furia was to fire its full complement of missiles before detaching its cumbersome missile launchers in a hurry!

What was strange was that they did not strike the Lancernaut or the immediate area around it. The centaur mech moved around too much for the smoke to obscure its sight for longer than a second.

Instead, the Furia directed its smoke missiles to detonate almost as soon as they launched in front of the hybrid mech!

The immediate area around the machine became shrouded in smoke, making it a lot harder for the Lancernaut to pin down its target!

At the same time the smoke cloud broke the Lancernaut's line of sight, the EMP missiles continued to fly forward and detonated as soon as they came into proximity of the beast mech!

The Lancernaut slowed down for a moment as the EMP discharges affected the machine more than usual.

If the mech was in peak condition, then the EMP attacks would have done nothing as it was fully isolated and shielded against such effects.

However, the holes poked into its armor during the previous matches had left a considerable amount of weak points and damaged sections that could not easily be repaired in a short amount of time!

The pilot of the Lancernaut adjusted to the changes fairly quickly and the mech itself also possessed damage control functions that automatically prevented its condition from deteriorating even further.

Ultimately, a confused centaur mech plunged into the smoke cloud in the hopes that its sensors could detect the hiding Furia fast enough to impale it with a lance.

Boom!

Fizz!

The centaur mech suffered multiple attacks at an angle!

The shotgun slug along with the laser beams had damaged the armor on its flanks and created a few new weak points, but that was all. It was the next attacks that became a lot more serious.

Two gouts of flames started to engulf the centaur mech as it continued to hone in on the source of the attacks.

The flames not only blinded a lot of sensors, but also applied a small but steady amount of damage to the centaur mech's front.

The massive injury it suffered on its front during its previous match became aggravated as the hasty repairs conducted by Team Danilov proved insufficient to stop the flames from damaging the internals!

However, the activation of the flamethrowers completely exposed the position of the Furia.

Even through all of the interference, the Lancernaut clearly identified where it needed to go in order to impale the hybrid mech!

It charged forward with renewed speed despite all of the damage it was taking. Its pilot trusted in the armor and the solid construction of the centaur mech and concentrated solely on making its lance hit the mark!

"There!"

The Furia cut short its flames and jumped to the side at the most critical timing!

Bobby Orwell had to pick his timing extremely well.

Too soon and the Lancernaut would merely change its course in time.

Too late and the Lancernaut merely had to go straight forward to ensure a devastating hit!

What happened next caused many spectators to hold their breaths in excitement.

At first, the Lancernaut changed its direction, only to stumble for a minor moment as it briefly lost its balance and its smooth trajectory.

It turned out that its forelegs had inadvertently landed on the missile launchers that the Furia had just purged!

This caused the mech to slow down just a bit while its pilot lost his concentration.

Though the interruption was ultimately fairly minor, the delay bought the Furia enough time to evade the charge entirely!

As the centaur mech passed through without producing any results, the hybrid mech it passed by immediately opened fire with its shotgun and its integrated laser weapons!

The centaur mech incurred even more damage, this time on its sizable horse body.

It was hard to miss such a large target, and the Lancernaut was capable of performing evasive maneuvers like a conventional humanoid mech.

This was why the centaur mech turned around and commenced another charge as soon as possible!

The Furia came under threat once again. This time it did not have the benefit of the smoke cloud anymore as its own flames had burned or blown away the majority of its concealment.

As the Lancernaut closed in once again, the mech continually received hit after hit. The attacks targeting its main weak point were blocked by the shield held by the centaur mech's other humanoid arm.

However, this still left it unable to protect the hole that had been produced by previous attacks!

Since the centaur mech was unable to sway too much from side to side as it was building up momentum, quite a few attacks managed to exacerbate this damage!

From laser beams to shotgun pellets, the Lancernaut endured abuse that would have caused a light mech to falter.

However, the centaur mech continued to go strong as its internals were far too robust to fall apart after getting hit by a few attacks!

By the time Lancernaut had come close enough, the Furia failed to inflict enough damage!

"Evade!"

This time, the hybrid mech jumped to the right!

Though the timing was good, the pilot of the Lancernaut activated the special feature of the machine.

The legs of the centaur mech stomped the floor at an angle and forcibly pushed itself to the right!

Its steps thundered loud while its mechanical legs groaned under all of the powerful forces pressing onto their construction.

The centaur mech managed to turn by 53 degrees this time!

While it was not as good as before, it was still enough for it to pierce its lance through the Furia, if only barely!

The sudden redirection had caused the Lancernaut to lose a considerable amount of speed and momentum, but its remaining power was more than enough for its weapon to pierce through the frame!

[The Furia is struck!]

[Wait! The attack did not manage to take out the Larkinson hybrid completely. It only took out its arm!]

The arm of the Furia shattered from its shoulder, causing the hybrid mech to lose a flamethrower but fortunately nothing more.

Bobby Orwell had commanded his mech to jump to the right for a purpose, because that would allow him to preserve the shotgun-wielding arm of his hybrid mech as best as possible!

Just as the centaur mech passed by, the hybrid mech took control of its spinning form and shot its weapon at the distancing beast mech!

This time, the slug struck one of the Lancernaut's rear legs, causing it to slow down and falter!

The abuse it suffered from trying to forcibly change its direction along with the damage it incurred over several matches had caused a few important components to break!

Chapter 4873 Ideal Model Of A Mech Designer

As the combat phase progressed through the rounds, many people became thrilled and surprised by the performance and the designs of the mechs fighting in the arena.

It was amazing to see what mech designers managed to whip up in just 48 hours. The proportion of mech designers and mech design students within the live audience was great, so plenty of people possessed the technical background to understand how much skill, effort and vision it took to make those impressive machines!

A lot of people came in expecting to see the mechs designed by Team Larkinson to dominate the competition without breaking any sweat.

That did not happen.

Instead, they witnessed a struggle as Team Larkinson matched up against at least two championship-level rivals in the second and the fourth round.

More talents emerged who displayed enough strength and potential to challenge the infamous patriarch of the Larkinson Clan.

Miss Beatrice Hendrix and James Danilov managed to gain their own fair share of appreciation. Both of them were travelers who had arrived in the new frontier relatively recently and were obviously looking to find their footing in this new and exciting dwarf galaxy.

Savvy recruiters had already flooded their virtual mailboxes with invitations while the envoys from different government institutions waited in line to speak to them in person.

This was one of the true reasons why states were willing to hold mech design tournaments. Even if much of it was boring and relatively uninteresting to the general audience, they always managed to attract promising mech designers who promptly showcased their value and potential.

As a young but growing colonial state, Davute needed all of the excellent mech designers it could get. It would be a travesty to allow Journeymen with the potential to become Masters in the future to leave Davute and move onwards to ply their trade in other zones!

As the match between Team Larkinson and Team Danilov started off with a bang, the the crowd became roused as they understood that the mechs from both sides wouldn't be going down without a fight!

Inside one of the VIP booths, a lot of Larkinsons admired the strength of their mech designers while also opening their eyes to the strengths of others that existed outside of the clan.

"Wow! A lot of mechs are so strong!" Marvaine exclaimed as he leaned forward in his seat. "Why are other mech designers so strong? I thought papa was the strongest!"

"Ves is the strongest for his age and circumstances, but that does not mean he is good at everything." Miles Tovar responded as he assumed the role of a teacher to the children. "His foundation and technical skills are top-notch at the level of a Journeyman. However, his specialty is living mechs, which can't easily be translated into direct combat power. The mech pilots who are controlling his works in the arena are also completely new to them, so that doesn't help either. Other mech designers don't have that disadvantage. They can easily design a defensive powerhouse like the Double Up or a simple but unstoppable charging machine like the Lancernaut. Compared to the likes of the Furia, those two mechs are much simpler but also much more easy to overpower their opponents."

"Ohh..."

"He means that our papa isn't good at fighting in tournaments." Andraste clarified for her younger brother. "His mechs are much stronger when they fight for real, right? We wouldn't have beaten so many aliens if that wasn't the case!"

Miles Tovar nodded in agreement. "You are correct, young miss. Mech design tournaments are hardly the perfect means to test the strength of mech designers. In fact, no single measure is truly accurate. Your mother for example has never participated in a mech design tournament in her life, but my colleagues and I respect her and look up to her due to her unceasing effort to pursue excellence in our shared craft."

"Who is stronger, our mama or our papa?"

"Hehe, I cannot truly answer that question, young man. Many people have formed their own answers, but I implore you not to take their word for it. It is likely that they do not have nearly enough information to form a proper judgment. Mech designers are engineers, and engineers are taught to never make careless assumptions without gathering enough solid proof. The lives of hundreds, thousands or even millions of people are affected by our decisions. In that sense alone, your father is unquestionably better than virtually every Journeyman Mech Designer in this zone and perhaps this galaxy. His mech designs and his decisions have directly affected the lives of entire states and star sectors. No one in our clan has come close to your father in this aspect."

Marvained frowned, causing his face to look much more adorable!

"Doesn't that mean our papa is stronger than mama?"

"Many people think so." Miles admitted with a restrained smile. "I have worked often enough with your mother back when I was still an Apprentice. I think that many people are underestimating what she can do and what she is working on. She doesn't have the unusual advantages of her husband, so she tries her best to work harder in order to keep up with his progress. She does not gain inspiration as regularly as our patriarch, so she must spend more time in her laboratory and rely on trial and error to brute force her innovations."

All three children looked at Miles Tovar with amazement. They never heard another mech designer give so much detailed praise for their mother.

"I'm confused."

"Me too."

"No mech designer is good at everything. Didn't I tell you that? Ves is a creative engine that comes up with all kinds of dazzling and counterintuitive ideas that often work out somehow, but he has his own shortcomings. His focus is scattered and his Larkinson tendencies are a bit too strong. In my opinion, Gloriana is a much more ideal model of a mech designer. She is more focused in her work and relies much more on hard work and traditional experimentation to reach her level at her young age. To put it in another way, only one out of a million mech designers can become like your father, but one in a hundred mech designers can become like your mother. That is why I admire her and try to emulate her best practices whenever possible."

The children did not entirely understand Miles Tovar's argument, but that did not stop them from thinking a lot more highly about their mother!

Merril O'Brian decided to add her own opinion to the conversation.

"Gloriana Wodin has advanced remarkably quickly as a Journeyman Mech Designer, but it is your father who all of us have chosen to follow. He is the person who united us under his banner and he is the visionary that has led to a new galaxy and a new future. Even if Gloriana advances to Senior or Master first, we would still be more inclined to listen to your father."

"Why?"

"Because he cares." Cormaunt Hempkamp said as he decided he shouldn't be the only Journeyman in the VIP booth to remain silent. "He has built the Larkinson Clan from scratch and has continually sought to invite those of us who are lost to become a part of his growing family. Can you imagine your mother doing the same? I think not. Only your father has the right combination of ambition, passion and heart to lead the Larkinson Clan."

That explanation had a major impact on the children. Aurelia looked particularly interested as leadership had always been a special calling to her. She spent much of her time with her mother, but she couldn't help but look up to her father in the issues that mattered the most.

"What do I need to do to become a leader like my papa?" She politely asked the Journeymen. "Do I need to learn how to design mechs as well?"

The three Journeymen all exchanged glances with each other.

Merrill shook her head. "That is not necessary. In fact, it is better if you don't. Leadership is a separate discipline. There are many politicians and rulers in human space that spend all of their working hours on becoming better stewards to the people they are responsible for. Your parents are obviously preparing you to go down this path. If you choose to accept their arrangements, then I suggest you embrace your chosen vocation with the same passion and drive as your father. This is how you will be able to lead and inspire an entire group of people even better than him. Don't settle for becoming his equal. Aim to surpass him instead. You can do it as long as you dedicate yourself to this single role."

The young female Journeyman's words not only inspired Aurelia, but many other Larkinsons. They gained a greater admiration for Ves again due to his special qualities that were exceedingly rare in other people.

They did not linger too long on this topic because a drastic development had taken place in the arena!

[Team Danilov's Lancernaut has suffered serious damage! One of its rear legs has been compromised! Look at how it is urgently trying to distance itself from the Furia. The weapons mounted on the hybrid mech have actually sent the frightening centaur lancer mech running!]

[The Lancernaut is merely making a tactical retreat. It is vital to assess the damage to its rear leg and how extensively the changes impact the performance of the machine. From what I can observe, the centaur mech has suffered its first serious blow in this round. The mech has lost a considerable amount of load-bearing capacity, and its responsiveness has also dropped. The good news is that quadruped mechs can still get by with a non-working mech, which is not the case for bipedal mech. The bad news is that it is carrying around a considerable amount of deadweight.]

The downside of centaur mechs became more evident at this time. Though the damaged leg still retained at least partial functionality, the lack of support meant that the Lancernaut's formidable charging speed and fancy instant redirection mechanism had become heavily compromised!

Speed and momentum was one of the greatest sources of strength for charge-based mechs. As the Lancernaut tested its speed and balance, its pilot found that it could only run up to 80 percent as fast as before.

Going any faster was liable to cripple the damaged rear leg even further!

This did not stop the battered centaur mech from arcing around to commence another attack run.

Just as it had suffered a major blow, the Furia had suffered just as bad if not worse.

It had lost an entire arm!

Not only that, but the lance also shattered a significant portion of the shoulder and the upper torso attached to the amputated limb!

The impact it had on its balance and mobility was more severe than most people thought. The absence of a limb messed with its balance and made it considerably harder for the Furia to stay on its feet.

As far as its weapon loadout was concerned, the hybrid mech had not only lost a flamethrower, but also one of its integrated luminar crystal guns!

Even though the weapon hardpoint still looked reasonably intact, the nearby damage had cut off its power feed and dealt enough structural damage to other nearby parts that the Furia could no longer utilize it in combat.

This meant that the Furia was only down to a single flamethrower, integrated luminar crystal weapon and shotgun!

As the Lancernaut brought its lance to bear to finish the job that it had started, the Furia lifted its only intact arm and fired its shotgun as well as its integrated luminar crystal gun against the closing threat.

Though the match had only started a short time ago, it looked as if both mechs had already reached the decisive junction of this match.

Only one of the two mechs would remain intact after they collided against each other for the final time!

Chapter 4874 Missing Countermeasures

A shotgun slug impacted the damaged, burned and dented frontal armor of the Lancernaut.

Compared to how it looked at the start of the match, the centaur mech with a lance looked a lot worse than before!

Its large frame and its inability to evade ranged attacks had forced it to resist attack after attack with its armor alone.

Although the centaur mech was able to endure a lot of punishment, the Furia's previous attacks had not been completely useless.

Its frontal armor had weakened to the point where Bobby Orwell was able to inflict real damage onto the Lancernaut!

As the centaur mech swept forward with the intention of finishing off the most powerful mech fighting on behalf of Team Larkinson, its own mech pilot knew that there was no other choice but to take the attacks head-on and hope that the machine was sturdy enough to withstand the barrage!

[What a courageous mech pilot! That is exactly what we want to see from a lancer mech pilot. Just as with light skirmishers, mech pilots who have chosen to pilot lancer mechs must be ready and willing to gamble with their lives each time they deploy into battle. Their capacity to destroy the toughest and heaviest mechs is unrivaled, but the danger they incur is also formidable. The few that manage to survive the journey to godhood are all legends who can pose the greatest threat against their peers. Anyone who wants to reach this level of strength one day must possess the recklessness to pilot a machine as dangerous as a lancer mech.]

[Will the Lancernaut be able to last or not? I cannot say. It depends on the marksmanship and firepower of the Furia and its pilot. Both sides only have a single chance left to finish their opponents and advance to the next round. Let us see how this match shall end!]

The metal hooves of the Lancernaut thundered across the arena space of Spencer Hall. Many people in the audience had stood up and cheered for their favorite mechs and teams!

The distinguished mech designers and officials who had come to observe Ves Larkinson in action paid close attention to how the Furia would handle this situation. Could the hybrid mech successfully fell its opponent when it had lost an entire arm and more?

Boom!

The shotgun of the Furia fired the last slug on hand. This crucial attack almost managed to slam into one of the damaged and exposed breaches in the Lancernaut's frontal armor.

However, the pilot of the centaur mech purposefully commanded the four-legged machine to interrupt its forward motion. The Lancernaut jerked and almost fell, only to pick itself up again before it was too late!

This rapid move had altered the centaur mech's trajectory just enough to prevent the shotgun slug from slamming deep into the machine's internals.

Instead, it slammed against a thick but heavily damaged armor plate that ultimately broke under impact!

Plenty of internal components soon broke as the kinetic forces unleashed by the impact continued to run their course.

The Lancernaut slowed down to a small extent as the closest leg exhibited several problems due to this attack.

However, the mech was still cantering forward with dogged persistence!

Two of its legs no longer functioned as well as before, but that didn't seem to bother the Lancernaut all that much.

The pilot had become completely obsessed with finishing the job!

Those who were more sensitive could detect that the mech pilot had tried to channel his will and obsession onto his lancer mech. A pale form of resonance had formed between the two that seemed to cut through the air in an attempt to drive the lance as fast and deep into the center of the Furia's torso as much as possible!

"Bring it on!" Bobby Orwell hissed as his blood burned with the heat of excitement!

As its name suggested, the Furia was a hot and offensive mech. It was not never content with staying on the defense.

Though Bobby already formed a decent relationship with the Furia during the previous matches, now that the mech had lost an arm, the two had become more desperate to secure a win.

They could not afford to disappoint the maker of the Twin Souls!

Bobby started to roar for no reason aside from feeling that it would help him attune to the Furia!

This had been the right move because he could feel the line between himself and his living mech blur.

The Furia had been at the enemy as well!

With shotgun pellets and laser beams, the hybrid mech continued to fulfill its role to the best of its abilities. The Lancernaut kept getting struck again and again to the point where parts visibly broke with every strike!

Nonetheless, the Lancernaut still refused to be stopped. Its speed may have dropped to 70 percent of its peak and its ability to control its own mass and direction had worsened considerably, but as long as it could still grip a lance while running forward, the centaur mech would always remain deadly!

[The Furia has failed to take down the Lancernaut fast enough!]

As the centaur mech finally came close enough, the Furia made two surprising moves.

First, it threw its shotgun in the direction of the charging mech!

The weapon smacked almost uselessly against the charging mech, but the action itself had broken the strange state of concentration of its pilot. The disruption was not too significant, but the disrupted rhythm still caused the Lancernaut to slow down to a minute extent.

Second, the Furia threw itself to the side with such desperation that it did not even bother to maintain its balance!

Just like a goalkeeper of an ancient sport, the one-armed mech dove in the completely wrong direction to catch the 'ball', except this time intercepting it was suicide!

Crack!

"Ahhh!"

Not all of the Furia managed to come out unscathed this time.

One of the feet of the hybrid mech failed to get out of the way of the speeding machine. It cracked and broke after colliding against the front of the Lancernaut.

However, even as the Furia lost one of its feet, the centaur mech had incurred even more damage to internals due to getting 'kicked' during its failed charge!

The Lancernaut almost stumbled once again. As it continued to move forward in order to distance itself from the Furia, the centaur lancer mech lost even more mobility!

It turned out that the accidental 'kick' had caused a number of crucial parts supporting the other foreleg to malfunction.

The centaur mech was only down to a single healthy leg at this time!

The impact of all of this accumulated battle damage on the Lancernaut was not light. Whether it was the load-bearing capacity of the energy channeled to the legs, the problems afflicting the different limbs were chaotic to the point where they could not entirely coordinate with each other anymore!

As the pilot and the automated systems of the centaur mech desperately tried to compensate for these changes, the Lancernaut had slowed down to the point where it could not build up another charge for the time being!

The fallen Furia could no longer stand back up on its feet. The role played by the thick and sturdy feet of a mech was extremely crucial. The loss of one practically immobilized a mech!

This time was no different. Bobby Orwell deeply understood the pain and loss of the Furia and became even more heated.

He merely lifted the Furia to a kneeling position before opening fire with its single, intact integrated luminal crystal gun.

The laser beams it fired were weak and not that good at penetrating through armor.

However, the stationary stance of the Furia along with the heavy focus that Bobby directed towards aiming the single intact weapon left at his disposal, the laser beams struck with remarkably high accuracy!

Multiple exposed weak points at the flanks and rear got struck, causing the Lancernaut to deteriorate step by step.

Naturally, the centaur mech could not let the hybrid mech get away with shooting at its damaged frame!

The pilot of the Lancernaut evaluated the condition of the machine and promptly judged that it still had enough strength left to finish off a single crippled and immobilized mech.

The four-legged mech no longer advanced as quickly or as indubitably as before. Its damage was too great for that. Yet the way in which the centaur mech continually managed to resist so many attacks without getting crippled or shut down entirely was admirable!

With only a single energy weapon left, the chances that the Furia could finish off the Lancernaut entirely was slim!

Even so, neither Bobby Orwell nor the Furia wanted to give up. They continued to work together to strike one weak point after another.

Just as the Lancernaut half-ran and half-dragged its heavy and damaged frame closer to the Furia, the pilot considered whether it was better to impale the hybrid mech with its spear or trample over it with its hooves.

Yet before a decision could be made, a surprising element advanced towards the centaur mech from the rear!

[The Sensia has abandoned its duel against the Killer Kitty and is seeking to finish off the Lancernaut!]

[The centaur mech is desperately trying to turn around to face the light skirmisher head-on, but the Sensia has already started to circle around. Look! The turning speeds of centaur mechs are inherently bad. It is no trouble at all for the Sensia to gain an angle on its adversaries side and rear.]

[The Killer Kitty is approaching as well! Its twin laser guns are continually trying to strike the Sensia, but its attacks are not threatening enough to take down a well-designed such as the Sensia in a short amount of time.]

Lizzie Cado had sparred against the Kiler Kitty and largely dismissed the threat of the light tiger gun mech.

Its mobility was excellent and its energized armor had frustrated the Sensia's attempts to cut it open several times.

However, its offensive ability was so abysmal that ignoring it was a valid strategy.

The Sensia had been deliberately staying away from the confrontation between the larger and heavier mechs just so that it could make a sudden impact during the right time!

A lot of spectators were skeptical on whether a light skirmisher could pin down the centaur mech long enough to inflict serious damage.

Lizzie never intended for her Sensia to buzz around the Lancernaut like an annoying fly.

She had another idea in mind!

"Since you look like a horse, let me ride on your back!"

It was easy for the light mech to catch up to the partially crippled centaur mech.

It was also easy for Lizzie to take advantage of the Sensia's agile and well-designed frame to jump onto the empty back of the Lancernaut and secure its hold by using its legs to squeeze against the flank!

"What?!"

[What?!]

[This is improper!]

This was hardly the first time a humanoid mech attempted to 'ride' a centaur mech, but it was far harder to pull off in practice.

Nonetheless, the surprising maneuver had been the best way for the Sensia to get close to its new target. The Lancernaut had no means to attack enemies mounted onto its rear!

While real and properly designed centaur mechs incorporated plenty of countermeasures to prevent this from happening, the competition mech did not include any of these safeguards!

This left the Sensia completely free to cut and stab into the rear of the 'human' upper half of the Lancernaut!

The larger and heavier mech immediately faltered. Too many parts and systems malfunctioned in a short amount of time and even the arm that held the lance began to fail!

Before the pilot of the Lancernaut could make any moves to dislodge its 'rider', he had already lost control over his machine!

Once the centaur mech finally collapsed, the Sensia hopped off its back in a single agile jump.

The Lancernaut had fallen!

Chapter 4875 Single Failure

[The Lancernaut... has fallen!]

[Only the Killer Kitty is left, but how can this machine possibly win a confrontation against a light skirmisher. So far, its relatively weak laser attacks have only managed to scorch the armor of the Sensia. As long as Team Larkinson's light skirmisher catches up to Team Danilov's remaining intact machine, this match is over.]

[Please do not forget the central theme of this tournament. The mechs that each team is instructed to design and build must complement each other in battle. Team Larkinson has made a sincere attempt at doing so by making both of its mechs effective enough in combat to land the killing blows. Team Danilov on the other hand has opted to allocate the majority of its time and resources into designing the Lancernaut. Although the centaur mech has indeed lived up to its promises and crushed its opponents in the previous three rounds, it is too much to expect it to fight against two mechs at the same time.]

[I agree. Teamwork is stronger than individual excellence. Barring outliers such as high-ranking mechs, it is always better to field several weaker mechs than a single stronger one. The former may suffer more losses, but the latter is unlikely to survive the confrontation. Mech combat is as much a numbers game as it is a quality game. Mech designers cannot rashly enter a mech design tournament that is centered around teamwork and duo combat and subsequently focus on designing just a single good mech.]

Team Danilov's strategy had its limits. James Danilov and his sidekick Laurence Tsukai had both spent an inordinate amount of time on designing and building the Lancernaut.

The results of their efforts were obvious as the mech was tougher, heavier and more robust than many of the other mechs in the competition.

However, everything had a price. The frame of a centaur mech was several times larger than a medium mech, and that meant it took a lot more time to design and fabricate.

The consequence was that the two mech designers barely had any time left to fabricate a relatively weak and basic tiger gun mech!

As the only mech of Team Danilov that remained in the field, the Killer Kitty did not give up despite the fall of its 'big brother'!

Seeing that it was too difficult for the tiger mech to utilize its laser guns to land a solid hit on a fast and agile light skirmisher, the mech had decisively turned its weapons against the crippled and immobilized Furia!

Team Danilov must at least down a single opposing mech in order to be able to leave this tournament with dignity.

However, would the mech pilots fighting on behalf of Team Larkinson allow that to happen?

Absolutely not!

The Furia had already begun to fire its single remaining luminar crystal laser weapon at the distant tiger mech.

Unlike the centaur mech that had already fallen, the Killer Kitty turned out to be quite a fast and agile beast mech.

Its ability to perform lateral movements and just to the sides was much better owing to its much lighter frame. Its weapons loadout may be unimpressive, but that was also the main reason why the Killer Kitty had managed to stay out of the reach of the Sensia all of this time!

Unfortunately, its attacks were ineffective. It might be able to kill finish off the Furia if there was no interference, but the Sensia did its utmost to interfere and get in the way!

This time, another weakness of its relatively weak design became exposed.

The Killer Kitty was only able to launch attacks at targets that were almost directly in front of its facing!

Team Danilov had hastily mounted two laser guns onto the sides of its feline body in order to satisfy the 'ranged mech' requirement and called it a day.

If not for this weird tournament rule, James Danilov and Laurence Tsukai would have probably opted to settle for a more traditional tiger melee mech.

As it was, the Killer Kitty only managed to land attacks onto the Furia's kneeling frame for a short amount of time before the Sensia came close enough to force it away!

"I won't let you kill off the Furia!"

The Sensia continued to chase after the Killer Kitty while making sure that the tiger mech could never turn its guns towards the Furia for long.

While it was impossible to prevent the fast and agile tiger mech from firing its energy weapons at the Furia entirely, the hybrid mech simply hunkered down and made sure to guard its weak points as best as possible.

The match eventually came to an end after the Killer Kitty ran around and launched attacks until it had emptied its energy reserves.

The Sensia hadn't even needed to sink a single dagger into the tiger mech's frame!

[Team Larkinson has won again!]

[As expected.]

[What do you mean, 'as expected'?! The Lancernaut almost crushed the mechs of Team Larkinson! Just look at the state of the Furia! It is so badly damaged that it is doubtful whether Ves Larkinson and his partner are able to repair its leg and arm in time to fight in the next and most crucial round.]

[That is an interesting question. The delay between the rounds has shrunk considerably now. I believe that Team Larkinson only has time to repair the foot and a portion of the damaged torso. They can forget about restoring the arm. There simply isn't enough time.]

[I wonder whether the mechs of the other teams that have made it this far will be in a worse or better state.]

The commentators continued to exchange their views as the next matches of the fourth round unfolded one by one. More and more machines suffered serious damage as the design capabilities of the teams that made it this far were by no means weak!

Meanwhile, Ves and Juliet quickly raced down to the workshop to do their utmost to fix up their mechs.

They had already exchanged their plans and views in private and knew exactly how they wanted to proceed with this crucial repair job.

"Blinky!"

Mrow!

The companion spirit had rested more than enough to support its design network again.

Both Ves and Juliet entered into a familiar state of knowing and mutual understanding.

Ves automatically approached the Furia and began to operate the bots and assembly machines to rip away the ruined or heavily damaged parts that needed to be replaced.

Juliet on the other hand was closely operating the superfab in order to churn out all of the replacement parts that were necessary to restore the combat effectiveness of their hybrid mech!

Neither of the two paused or slowed down in their work. Conversation was not necessary at all in order to communicate what they wanted from each other.

This allowed them to work a lot more efficiently than normal. Tasks that normally took 10 minutes to complete could be done in 4 minutes or less due to removing so much friction!

As the first batch of replacement parts arrived, Ves immediately went to work with fixing up the legs again.

The footing of a landbound mech was the foundation of the entire machine. A bad foot could easily spell disaster as the inability to reposition rapidly or maintain its balance under difficult conditions could easily cause the Furia to trip and fall!

Ves and Juliet therefore decided to do their best to restore foot to its original form despite how much time it took to complete this job.

"Torso and arms next!"

This was a more serious and demanding job. The Lancernaut's charge had struck the shoulder that connected the arm to the torso. This caused a lot of damage onto the torso which absolutely needed to be fixed!

Ves first concentrated on restoring the functionality of the integrated luminar crystal weapon in the chest area on the affected side.

The core mechanisms of the weapon thankfully remained intact, but Ves had to rip out a lot of broken channels and circuitry and replace it with newer components.

This took a lot of time! Ves was actually feeling a lot of pressure because he was afraid he wouldn't be able to complete his repair plan in time!

Fortunately, no complications occurred. Ves not only managed to restore full functionality to the luminar crystal weapon, but also fixed a lot of structural parts that prevented this damaged section from worsening the state of the hybrid mech.

"Replacement arm left!"

There was not a lot of time left anymore, so Ves and Juliet had already agreed to take the most expedient action.

It was far too troublesome and time-consuming to restore the arm complete with a wrist-mounted flamethrower once again, so the pair of Larkinson mech designers didn't even bother with this solution.

Instead, Juliet had fabricated a large ballistic rifle that could easily be attached against the empty shoulder of the Furia!

"I guess our hybrid mech has partially degenerated into a frontline mech." Ves quipped.

This was the most efficient decision that they could make. Ballistic weapons were quite weak but they were extremely simple and low-tech. Modifying it so that it could be mounted on the side like a replacement arm was also a trivial matter to a Journeyman.

Once Juliet completed all of the fabrication tasks, she joined Ves in assembling all of the loose parts.

The final result was a Furia that had been reborn, if only reluctantly!

"What do you think, Bobby?" Ves asked the pilot who had the pleasure of piloting this uneven mech.

"I... will try to make the best of its restored capabilities." Bobby said.

"That is good to hear." Ves smiled as he patted the military mech pilot in the back. "Remember that the foot is fully restored. We put a lot of effort into ensuring that the Furia can take full advantage of its mobility. As for the new ballistic weapon hardpoint, it should allow your mech to pose a light to moderate threat towards other machines at greater distances. Try and maintain distance as the Furia's ability to fend off melee attackers has weakened considerably. This is also one of the reasons why we did not decide to mount another flamethrower or shotgun in the empty shoulder socket. The shortcomings are too great."

"Understood. Is there anything else I should know about the Furia, sir?"

"Don't ignore the connection between you and Lizzie who is piloting the Sensia. Both of you are piloting a pair of living mechs. There were moments in the previous fight where the two of you

could have cooperated better with each other. Focus on that. The two of you have yet to discover the full potential of your living machines."

That was rather vague advice. Bobby barely knew what he was dealing with and he had no clear idea on how to foster a greater connection with Lizzie.

Once the break time was over, the surviving few teams emerged once again.

Ves immediately frowned when he observed the remaining competition. "Oh. I forgot that there was 1 bye. This is awkward."

[Let me introduce the remaining teams that have preserved their chance to win the championship of the Twin Weapons Tournament.]

[Team Larkinson needs no further introductions.]

Ves smirked and briefly bowed at his audience.

[Team Clive is our ultimate hometown representative.]

A pair of mech designers who bore the emblem of the Clive Consortium on their suits greeted the public with PR-friendly smiles.

[Last but not least, Team Reemus has come out of nowhere and defied many expectations.]

The mech designers of Team Reemus were travelers who had no connection to Davute. Hardly anyone cheered for them, but plenty of people respected their accomplishments.

[Now, who among the top 3 shall be crowned the victors of this tournament?]

Since there were 3 teams left after a long day of running many different matches, there was only time to hold a single round to determine the final standings.

How would the tournament structure the final round?

Chapter 4876 Team Clive

After a long day, only three teams of mech designers had made it to the 'final' round.

Team Larkinson needed no introduction anymore. The Twin Weapons Tournament had almost been hijacked by Ves alone, and though other talented and highly capable mech designers managed to shine brightly on this stage, there was no doubt that the Larkinson Patriarch shone like the brightest star in the sky!

Team Clive was much more interesting. As its name suggested, the team consisted of a pair of Journeymen from the Clive Consortium, one of the founding organizations of Davute.

Given that the current president of the newly founded colonial federation came from the same group, the name 'Clive' was basically equivalent to royalty within its borders!

Nobody knew how many members of the Clive lineage jumped galaxies and decided to take part in the construction of a state that was partially created according to their ideas. There were Clives in practically every industry and sector of Davute, ensuring that the mother organization always kept tabs on all of the developments that took place within its borders.

The Clive Consortium was naturally large, old and powerful enough to have its own high-ranking mech designers. The pair of Journeymen that decided to compete in this particular tournament did

not appear to possess any special identities within their family group. They were typical lower to middle-ranked members among the Clives who had made a few accomplishments but had yet to merit greater attention.

Ves knew that the woman known as Jocasta Clive is the one to watch. The woman possessed a vibe that partially reminded him of Gloriana. This was a woman who thought highly of herself and had great confidence in her design philosophy and ideals.

The performance of the mechs she designed together with her partner Romulus Clive backed up her beliefs.

Team Clive designed a highly unusual but powerful pair of mechs.

The Daugen was their killer machine. While it was just a light marksman mech, its design was highly unusual for two reasons.

First, the Daugen pursued a concept of extreme firepower. It sacrificed almost everything in order to maximize its firepower. The entire mech had essentially turned into a sniping platform as it was armed with a comically powerful and oversized gauss rifle.

In order to maximize its firepower and minimize any mechanical complications, it did not carry the gauss rifle in its arms.

Instead, Jocasta and Romulus Clive had integrated it into its shoulder like a mounted weapon!

Rather than call it a marksman mech, it was more appropriate to label it as a frontline mech!

Unlike traditional frontline mechs, the Daugen did not possess much fault tolerance. The only strengthening its frame had received was solely for the purpose of being able to carry and fire the formidable weapon without getting crushed in return. Its mobility was also rather poor as it was nowhere near as fast as actual light mechs.

The Daugen also possessed one more quirk. Its huge integrated gauss rifle could fire both forwards and backwards!

It could easily switch its weapon orientation as it was mounted on a turret that could vertically rotate its muzzle by over 180 degrees.

All of this sounded weird in isolation, and plenty of people in the audience had expressed their skepticism and ridicule when they initially saw it appear in the arena during the first round.

That was until the other mech came into the picture.

The Reedan initially looked like a hefty knight mech, though one with an unusual design. It was shaped rather weird. It featured a strange depression on its back and its sides unfolded in an unusual manner.

It wasn't until the Daugen pressed its back onto the Reedan that people realized the role that the latter served!

The Reedan actually possessed the capability to integrate the Daugen onto its back!

"It's a combination mech!"

Ves was no stranger to this concept as he had witnessed it in the past. Janassa Pellier and Tifi Coslone had also introduced a pair of beast mechs in the past that could do the same, although they never caught on in the Larkinson Army as there were other mechs that could fulfill their roles just as well.

Nonetheless, combination mechs were not weak. They could produce a lot of synergy under the right circumstances, and that was exactly what happened whenever the mechs of Team Clive showcased their power!

The Reedan took care of movement and defense. It was a knight mech that completely focused on resisting ranged attacks and protecting its partner from any serious damage. It was also rather capable at fighting melee mechs at close range, though only in the right facing.

The Dagen took care of the damage. Its powerful gauss rifle was not only precise, but also extremely powerful relative to the size and mass of its frame.

Each time it fired, it propelled a piercing projectile that was formulated out of special alloys that almost never failed to punch through armor plating!

So long as the Dagen was able to land a hit on an opposing mech, the latter usually received crippling damage.

It was not unusual for the Dagen to be able to take down mechs after landing its shots just once or twice!

This was a scary combination of lethality and precision. No mech would be able to survive in the field with such a formidable sniping mech in action!

This was why all of the opposing teams prioritized the takedown of the Dagen, but how could that be accomplished so easily when it had partially merged with the frame of the Reedan?

Any mech that did not possess a sufficient amount of mobility usually got struck down in a couple of shots regardless of the range!

The only ones that stood a greater chance at surviving the deadly output of the Dagen were fast and agile light mechs.

Even then, plenty of light mechs had fallen because they only had to fail a single time in order for the Dagen's gauss rifle to amputate their limbs or destroy a quarter of their torsos!

Ves and Juliet exchanged deep and troubling glances when they thought about how their Twin Souls might fare against the mechs of Team Clive.

While Ves could already judge from the designs of the Dagen and the Reedan that neither of their two designers were as good as him, they were still extremely solid mech designers!

Jocasta Clive was 51 years old while Romulus Clive was 43 years old. Both of them received solid educations, guidance from Seniors and Masters and designed mechs for various subsidiaries and divisions of the Clive Consortium. Their work experience surpassed that of the mech designers of Team Larkinson while their talents weren't bad.

Even if they lacked an independent streak that could stimulate them into designing more radical and creative mechs, they could gain access to plenty of high tech as well as alien tech due to their family names alone.

"You know, I think Jocasta Clive should be an attractive recruitment candidate for you." Juliet quietly said as the panel of commentators rehashed all of the highlights that took place during the previous rounds. "She is a Journeyman Mech Designer with high potential and a useful specialty. Haven't you always complained about lacking a dedicated ranged weapon expert that could help our clan enhance its ranged firepower?"

"That is true, Juliet, but we're not that desperate..."

"Jocasta Clive can complement our weapons loadout and reduce our dependence on luminar crystal weapons. She has developed her own set of proprietary ballistic and gauss tech that give her own kinetic firearms the ability to penetrate through armor. I can bet you that she also has a headstart on working with transphasic kinetic weapon systems due to her family background."

He threw a deep glance in the direction of the two Clive mech designers. He did not have a good feeling about attempting to bring them into his clan.

"No. The Clive Consortium probably wants them to stay and integrate into the local mech industry. The group has invested massively in Jocasta and Romulus. The Clives don't want to let them go so easily. Besides, if we recruit one or two of them into our clan, I will have to worry about their loyalties. They're not like the other Journeymen we have recruited in the past. Their mentors have remained in the old galaxy and cannot exert that much influence. It will be different for Jocasta Clive as the presence of her original family organization is strong in the new frontier."

Juliet did not accept this argument. "You agreed to hire Miles Tovar along with a handful of his cousins. You even elevated him to a lead designer and allowed him to take charge of his own mech design projects."

Ves dismissively waved his hand. "That is a different case and you know it. The Tovar Family of the Bright Family used to be a big deal for me, but nowadays my clan easily crush them if we wish. The power relationship between the Tovars and the Larkinsons has changed drastically over the years. I am certain I don't have to be afraid that Miles Tovar will ever turn his back on us and favor his old family."

"What about Sara and Dulo Voiken?"

"Both of them have an ideological conflict with Master Barnard Solas Voiken. This is not a trivial issue for them. Sara and Dulo don't want to remain stuck in an overly rigid and conservative family structure. My clan has offered them much greater freedom, autonomy and responsibility than the Voiken Family, so it would be foolish for them to risk all of that by violating their oaths."

"I see..."

"It's all about interests, Juliet." Ves clarified to her. "As long as Jocasta Clive is out of step with the Clive Consortium, I would be glad to give her an alternative. If the Larkinsons are a bigger deal than the Clives in the Red Ocean, then we can also trust Jocasta Clive to remain honest while she has joined our clan. Since Jocasta has met neither of these conditions, I do not think it is wise to invite her to work in our Design Department."

"What if she takes the initiative to join our clan, Ves? Have you ever thought about that? The Clive Consortium has a vested interest in our cooperation. It shouldn't be unusual if they attempt to send their own people to us, whether openly or overtly."

It was not simply to reject such a 'gift' from the Clive Consortium, but Ves did not care.

"I will turn her and any other member of the Clive Consortium away." Ves said as he crossed his arms. "I have already explained to everyone that I don't intend to increase our entanglement with the Colonial Federation of Davute any further. If any group of Larkinsons want to play nice with Clives, then we can let our Davute Branch manage this issue. It will be up to Ark and Raymond to decide whether they want to induct Jocasta Clive as a branch member of our clan."

"You would allow that to happen?"

Ves shrugged. "I can't really be bothered to control the recruitment practices of our side branches. So long as the applicant is able to meet the requirements and pass the loyalty test, then there shouldn't be much harm. However, don't forget that the requirements to become a member of the main branch of our clan are much stricter. Someone like Jocasta Clive won't be able to get onboard our fleet and work in our Design Department. She would have to sincerely distance herself from the Clive Consortium, and I guess that is impossible for a mech designer with her life trajectory."

He knew her type. Jocasta Clive did not look like a mech designer who was content to play second fiddle and subordinate herself to others.

Oh well. There were plenty of other Journeymen for him to recruit in Davute. He much preferred to work with travelers and tourists who did not possess any existing attachments.

Chapter 4877 Team Reemus

After the announcers finished their effort to recap the fights that led to this point, they finally went on to business and revealed their arrangements for the final match.

[Out of the 71 teams that have presented their mechs and allowed them to fight each other over the course of several rounds, only 3 remain standing. The works of Team Larkinson and Team Clive have both been tested over the course of four grueling rounds. Team Reemus on the other hand has been fortunate enough to skip the fourth round due to lacking an opponent during the random matching process, though its mech designers did not receive as much time to repair their mechs as a consequence.]

Despite the fact that Team Reemus was able to pass through the fourth round without a fight, it still had the capital to be strong.

Eric Reemus, a 71 year old Journeyman, clearly led the team. He was one of the many travelers who had come to Davute in order to make his name in the tournaments.

His partner Yzard Holliston was less remarkable, but he was a long-time friend and collaborator of Eric Reemus. The two worked well together as evidenced by the quality of their works.

Both of them happened to be beast mech designers. The combination of their mechs was a little unusual, but seemed to work out well against the opponents they faced before.

The simply named T1 was a light tiger mech that stood out for its light construction and high offensive power.

The T1 was difficult to defend against due to the natural advantages afforded by its tiger form and its left paw that was able to deploy plasma claws!

Although the T1 undoubtedly had low endurance due to its excessively high energy consumption, it could tear apart any mech with the help of its plasma claws.

Eric Reemus must have mastered melee plasma weapon technology to a high degree if he was able to reproduce a simplified version out of low-quality materials.

It wasn't the T1 that caused the opponents of Team Reemus a lot of grief.

It was the S1 that was primarily designed by Yzard Holliston that generated a lot of alarm!

The S1 was a heavy artillery spider mech that featured a simple but considerably massive design.

As its name suggested, it featured eight thick and sturdy legs that provided unparalleled stability and footing for the upper body.

The S1 mounted multiple simple but powerful kinetic cannons that could fire a large amount of rounds in multiple different directions!

It was clearly a ranged mech that was designed to stand in place and throw out as many projectiles in the vague direction of the enemy!

Unlike the aforementioned Dagen, the S1's guns weren't particularly powerful or precise, but the heavy artillery spider mech made up for it with sheer volume of fire!

Slower and more armored mechs could not withstand its firepower for long. No matter how much protection a defensive mech carried, it would never be able to resist the attacks forever!

The S1 did not have to worry about running out of ammunition anytime soon. Its large frame provided plenty of capacity for reloads. The matches often ran out long before the heavy mech expended all of its rounds!

The spider mech did have its shortcomings, though. Its defenses were not as tough as that of an actual doom crawler, and its movement speed was terrible.

It had already taken a lot of time and effort to design the basic structure of the S1 and mount all of its formidable weapon systems onto its frame. If Team Reemus had more time, then its mech designers would have definitely mounted it with thicker and stronger armor!

In any case, it did not seem to matter all that much. No other mech in the competition fielded any mechs that possessed nearly as much ranged attack power as the S1!

Even the Dagen designed by Team Clive would probably struggle to disable all of the weapon systems of the heavy artillery spider mech before it got blasted into pieces!

The only viable way to disable the S1's weapons systems and eliminate it entirely was to send in a melee mech that could tear it down while evading its weapon arcs.

Of course, the T1 always stood ready to punish those that tried to get close!

All in all, Ves did not think that Team Reemus reached the fifth and final round without merit. The T1 and the S1 had always been able to demolish their opponents in quick order due to their overwhelmingly high attack strength.

Ves actually had a headache when he considered how well his Twin Souls could fight against these terrible beast mechs.

The Sensia had managed to take out the Lancernaut after jumping onto its equine back, but that was when the latter did not have an effective helper by its side. The Killer Kitty was a joke of a light mech and played no role aside from annoying mechs with its weak laser weapons.

The works of Team Reemus were much more threatening because both mechs could effectively back each other up.

No matter whether the Twin Souls focused on the T1 or the S1, one or the other would always do their best to prevent themselves from getting defeated in detail!

However, before he thought about what sort of confrontation was about to ensue, he first needed to know the details of the final round. The rulebook had accounted for the possibility of uneven teams at this stage, but it was a big mess as far as he was concerned.

[Now let us get back to the main event. Only three teams stand tall at this time. Since we cannot resolve the winner of this tournament by holding a straightforward match between two teams, we must consider an alternative means to decide the championship. Team Larkinson, Team Clive and Team Reemus are allowed to vote on a choice on how to structure the last round of the combat phase of this competition. This is a rare privilege and one that might add extra spice to the final match!]

Ves frowned for a moment. He did not like what he heard. As far as he was concerned, the tournament should have structured its admission process to ensure that only two teams would be left in the final round. Ending up with 3 teams instead of 2 made this process far more complicated than usual.

Then again, that wouldn't be as fun. The rules of the tournaments were set up in a way to force the participating Journeyman Mech Designers to contort their designs in order to meet unusual demands.

All of this gave him the impression that a bunch of Masters working for the Davute University of Technology got bored and wanted to break their monotony by setting up an unusual ruleset.

[All three teams are allowed to vote on a favorite option. Allow us to present the methods in which they can determine the winner among themselves. First, is any team willing to withdraw at this stage and claim third place without any suspense?]

Ves looked around for a moment before he realized he probably needed to provide an answer. He took a single step forward.

"No."

Jocasta Clive did the same.

"No."

Eric Reemus looked just as combative as the rest.

"No."

[That is clear. Then I shall proceed with presenting the following options. The three teams can choose to resolve it by running a gauntlet. Their competition mechs must each fight against a continuous stream of automated battle bots that slowly seek to overwhelm them. The rankings will be determined by how long they have managed to survive.]

That was a rather destructive way to determine the winner of this tournament. It was a completely different experience and not every mech was designed to fight against a mob of battle bots.

[The next alternative is to hold a free-for-all where the competition mechs of all three teams are placed in the arena at once. There are no additional rules, so this match is bound to be chaotic. The rankings are determined by the times their mechs remain operational in the field. The last mech standing is the ultimate winner.]

This was the most straightforward means of determining the winner. From the reaction of the crowd, this was a particularly favored option for the audience!

[The last choice we can present to you is to hold a split round robin. What makes it special is that we shall split up the mechs from each team and have them fight separately against other single mechs. The final round will therefore be decided in three separate matches. The matching process will be completely randomized in order to ensure fairness. The rankings will be determined by the time it took for the mechs to win their matches.]

Ves did not like this one at all. His Sensia and Furia were designed to fight together. Their teamwork had been improving slightly with every passing round and it would be a shame for them to get pulled apart.

[Now, make your choice, teams. Announce your decision!]

Before Ves could step up, Jocasta Clive spoke up first!

"Team Clive chooses the free-for-all!"

That did not surprise Ves too much as Daugen and the Reedan were not suited for mass destruction. They also wouldn't fare well in the split round robins as their dependence on teamwork was even greater.

"Team Reemus chooses the gauntlet!"

A heavy artillery spider mech that almost matched the configuration of a doom crawler would definitely feel at home in a gauntlet! The S1 would probably be able to smash a large amount of battle bots for a long time as it was the most suited for mass destruction among the six surviving mechs!

Everyone's attention turned towards Ves. He had the privilege of casting the deciding vote.

None of the three options appealed to him that much to be honest. If he wanted to generate more chaos, he could vote in favor of the split round robin.

If that happened, the tournament organizers would decide the format by rolling a virtual dice.

This was anything but desirable as Ves would lose complete control over the format of the final round.

He decided to stop keeping everyone in suspense.

"I choose... the free-for-all!"

Much of the crowd cheered as this option was bound to please the crowd!

[Free-for-all it is! All six mechs will be put in the arena at once. The fighting will not stop until two teams have been eliminated.]

Ves briefly looked in the direction of the other two teams. Jocasta Clive nodded at him with respect while Eric Reemus did not look particularly pleased.

Team Reemus had too much of an advantage in the gauntlet. Why should Ves give his competitor a golden opportunity to win this tournament? Casting his vote for the free-for-all ensured that his own team would have a realistic shot at winning this contest!

The only downside was that Ves probably had no chance of recruiting Eric Reemus and Yzard Holliston anymore.

This was not a big loss as Ves was not too keen in hiring beast mech designers at this stage.

The Power Pair were already capable of designing most of the beast mechs that his clan would need in the short and medium term.

A few minutes passed by as all six mechs entered the arena.

The Sensia.

The Furia.

The Dagen.

The Reedan.

The T1.

The S1.

Out of all of the mechs designed over the course of the previous two days, these ones had managed to defeat all of their opposition to this point.

As the countdown started, all six mechs were already eying their opponents.

[Start!]

As soon as the starting signal had been triggered, the mechs of Team Larkinson and Team Clive immediately turned to the S1.

The pilots of both teams did not have to communicate with each other to agree on a common goal.

No matter what, the S1 had to be taken out as soon as possible!

Chapter 4878 Free-For-All

When the free-for-all began, the mechs of Team Larkinson and Team Clive tacitly ignored each other.

This was not to say they had become friends all of a sudden. The overarching reason why the Twin Souls and the mechs designed by the Clives chose to combine forces was because there was a greater threat in the arena!

[The mechs are off to an explosive start!]

[Uh-oh. It appears that Team Reemus is in danger. This free-for-all has immediately turned into a 4-on-2 fight from the moment the match commenced. If this tentative cooperation holds, then the mechs designed by Mr. Eric Reemus and Mr. Yzard Holliston will be the first ones to get knocked out of the competition!]

[I can't blame the colluding teams. The S1 that belongs to Team Reemus is too powerful for its own good. It is an artillery beast mech that possesses far too many guns and too little protection. It is the most high-priority target that needs to be eliminated with haste in order to limit the mass destruction it can inflict onto other mechs.]

The logic of targeting the S1 was clear. Team Larkinson and Team Clive did not gang up on Team Reemus because the latter consisted of a pair of foreign mech designers who had no existing ties to Davute.

Their identities played no role as the actual people piloting the competition mechs were all Davutan soldiers to begin with. These pilots were all professional enough to leave irrelevant matters aside and focus solely on representing the interests of the mech designers who entrusted their works to them. It would damage the credibility of the Davute University of Technology and the colonial federation as a whole if the insiders deliberately targeted the outsiders.

In fact, the people involved in the Twin Weapons Tournament did not particularly mind if a group of foreign tourists ended up winning the championship. Real mech designers only discriminated by ability, not their origins or other circumstances.

Right now, the S1 was in a lot of trouble!

At first, the ranged mechs of the opposing teams opened fire at the large and slow-moving target.

The Furia unleashed a salvo of laser beams and shotgun slugs at the S1 as it zigzagged its way forward. The Sensia had already run ahead in order to circle around the S1 and approach it from another angle.

The Dagen on the other hand opened fire with its powerful integrated gauss rifle. Each shot unleashed by this powerful weapon pierced through the thick armor that protected the S1's structure with relative ease!

The constant attacks immediately debilitated the S1 and prevented it from firing back as effectively as before!

[Oh, look at the S1! It is not going to allow itself to get beaten without a cost. It has turned all of its guns towards the mechs of Team Clive and has begun to pound the combination between the Dagen and the Reedan.]

[The S1 has no other choice. It can attempt to target the Furia and the Sensia designed by Team Larkinson, but the two machines are relatively fast and agile. It will take too much time for the S1's output to eliminate the hybrid mech and light skirmisher. On the other hand, the Dagen and the

Reedan are highly immobile once they have combined forces. There is nothing an artillery mech loves to attack more than a large and relatively slow-moving target.]

Jocasta Clive and Romulus Clive had chosen to base the strategy of their mechs on defense and firepower instead of mobility. This had worked out well for them in the previous rounds, but a mech like the S1 directly countered their approach!

As such, the mech designers who wanted to knock out the S1 most of all was Team Clive!

There was no way the combination between a knight mech and a marksman mech could withstand the bombardment for long!

While the assault on the S1 continued, everyone seemed to have forgotten about the T1.

The light tiger mech that possessed deadly plasma claws completely gave up any attempt to protect its fellow beast mech and ran all the way to the corner of the arena!

It looked as if the little kitty had become scared of all of the explosions and loud noises and wanted to run as far away as possible!

If it weren't for the fact that the energy shields that contained the fight within the arena were too strong, the T1 probably would have scratched its claws against the barrier in order to create even more distance between itself and the main fight!

Of course, its pathetic move was not as cowardly as it seemed. The more discerning people among the crowd guessed that Team Reemus might still have a chance of winning the tournament.

Even if the S1 got knocked out early, so long as Team Larkinson and Team Clive turned their weapons against each other, the T1 still had a chance of having the last laugh!

There was no way that the mech pilots of Team Larkinson and Team Clive were ignorant of this possibility. How could they fight against each other when they constantly had to watch their backs against the surprise offenses of the T1?

This was why the Sensia stayed away from the S1 and instead pursued the T1 for the time being. The light skirmisher did not show any fear towards the light tiger mech. The former chased the latter around the entire periphery of the arena field!

Meanwhile, the fight against the S1 turned a little weird after a few dozen or so seconds had passed.

The marksman mech mounted on the back of the knight mech steadily dismantled the S1 from a comfortable distance. Each attack launched by its gauss rifle knocked out a weapon system, a leg or other important internals.

At the same time, the S1 displayed a remarkable degree of redundancy and resilience. Even if it wasn't able to resist the penetrating kinetic rounds as effectively as it wished, its constant kinetic bombardment exacted a huge toll on the Reedan's defenses!

The physical shield that the Reedan relied upon to block the majority of incoming damage was looking increasingly more cracked, broken and deformed.

Even if a single attack from the S1 was not that strong, the sheer volume of fire quickly pressured the Reedan to the point where it would be forced to throw away the remnants of its physical shield in less than a minute!

Even the Dagen couldn't fully escape all of the damage despite the fact that it was hiding most of its silhouette behind the Reedan. A few lucky hits had almost managed to strike its extremely important gauss rifle.

Nothing could afford to happen to this weapon! It was pretty much the only reliable means for Team Clive to defeat its opponents and win the finals!

As the S1 and the Dagen-Reedan combination continued to destroy each other in a destructive firefight, the Furia gradually slowed down its attacks until it had silenced its weapons entirely!

Bobby Orwell recognized that it may be better to let the mechs from the two sides dismantle each other.

The S1 already looked in bad shape due to its inability to properly resist or evade the incoming attacks. Its downfall was already set in stone.

In contrast, the Dagen and the Reedan would still be difficult to deal with because the ranged mech was just too deadly against other mechs!

The Furia therefore diverted from its original trajectory and conscientiously moved away while continuing to perform evasive maneuvers.

[Oh! What is this? The Furia has decided to allow Team Clive to finish off the S1 alone!]

[Why should Team Larkinson do Team Clive a favor? The Furia's ammunition and energy reserves are limited. It is better off saving its firepower for later. So long as the Dagen and the Reedan remain easy targets, the S1 will not turn its guns against the Sensia and the Furia.]

When Ves threw a glance towards the mech designers of Team Clive, he could see that Jocasta Clive had become a lot more upset!

The Larkinson mechs had left the Clive mechs to fend for themselves!

If it wasn't for the fact that the identities of Jocasta and Romulus Clive were a bit troublesome, Ves would have burst out in laughter by this time!

"Well, that's what you will get for going for a free-for-all." He smugly said.

Even though the Dagen and the Reedan were left to fend for themselves, they still possessed the upper hand in this ruinous firefight.

The Reedan lost its physical shield a while ago and had to rely on its armor alone to resist further attacks.

Fortunately, the defensive mech's construction was impressively solid. Romulus Clive was an accomplished defensive specialist who was roughly on par with Sara Voiken.

With the cover of the Reedan, the Dagen had managed to knock out another kinetic cannon, which meant that the S1 only had two more intact weapons left to pound its targets!

Just as the Daugen-Reedan combination was about to neutralize the S1 one way or another, its mech pilots received a sudden alert!

[What?! The Sensia has stopped fighting against the T1. The two light mechs have circled towards the rear of the Daugen-Reedan before they have subsequently changed their course to the combination mech!]

[Team Clive is in trouble now! It appears that Team Larkinson has entered into a different tacit cooperation with Team Reemus!]

[How devious! Who could have seen this development coming?!]

The Daugen and the Reedan had been designed to fight against two opposing mechs at most.

They had never been designed to fend off three mechs at once, especially when they were approaching from different directions!

The combination mech was not completely helpless, though. The Daugen was able to pull out an additional submachine gun and use it to spray the approaching light mechs with a torrent of rounds.

The Reedan also tried to turn around in order to use its sword to fend off at least one of the light mechs.

However, the Sensia and the T1 seemingly turned into bosom buddies overnight and cleverly approached the combination mech with a pincer movement before pouncing at the same time!

The Sensia angled itself away from the Reedan's sword and mercilessly utilized its twin daggers to strike anything sensitive within its attack range.

The T1 meanwhile activated its incredibly draining plasma claws without hesitation and almost managed to eliminate the Daugen with a single searing strike!

It only took four more plasma claw attacks for the T1 to destroy the Daugen's crucial gauss rifle and take down the ranged mech entirely!

The Reedan meanwhile succumbed from a combination of the S1's lessened artillery salvos and the Sensia's flanking attacks.

[Team Clive... is out! The Daugen and the Reedan are the first two mechs in the arena to lose their combat effectiveness. The final rank of this team is third place!]

Just when everyone thought that Team Reemus would get knocked out of place first, it turned out that Team Clive got eliminated first! This was an absolutely shocking turn of events, especially since it happened to the mech designers of the Clive Consortium of all people!

[The final remaining teams in contention have already begun their final confrontation! With no more distractions left in the field, the mechs built by Team Larkinson and Team Reemus have immediately ceased any tacit cooperation that existed between them. Only one side can remain standing!]

This was not an even confrontation. The T1 only incurred light damage so far after getting hit by the Daugen's submachine gun, but the S1 was in terrible shape!

When the Furia approached the S1 from the rear, the latter was only down to two intact kinetic cannons, both of which were oriented in the wrong direction!

The Larkinson hybrid mech only needed less than thirty seconds to finish off the defanged heavy artillery spider mech.

Team Reemus was down to a single mech! The T1 needed to put up a heroic performance if it wanted to defeat the Sensia and the Furia!

Chapter 4879 Foresight

Few people expected this to happen.

Team Clive bowed out first.

Only the mechs of Team Larkinson and Team Reemus remained in the field, but the ones belonging to the latter were in a considerably worse shape!

The S1 no longer looked like the large and proud heavy artillery spider mech like before. The Daugen's piercing gauss rifle had torn through most of its external structure and destroyed almost all of its cannons and much of its legs.

It hardly took any effort for the Furia to finish the job and remove the S1 from the board!

The only hope for Team Reemus to win first place was for a miracle to occur. Unless the T1 was able to avoid the Furia's firepower and outfight the Sensia in melee combat, the light tiger mech was unlikely to attain an improbable victory!

The events in the arena occurred exactly as predicted. Neither the Furia nor the Sensia had expended too much resources in the previous fight, so they were able to gang up on the T1 without any issue.

The only variable that could ruin Team Larkinson's chances of winning the match was if the T1's incredibly powerful plasma claws somehow managed to cripple either of the Twin Souls in a single hit!

Sergeant Bobby Orwell and Sergeant Lizzie Cado of the Federal Military of Davute were both aware of this danger. It took no time at all for them to adopt the right strategy and try to focus on containing the T1.

There was no need for the Sensia and the Furia to take excessive risks and fight the T1 up close where it was most effective.

The Sensia cleverly circled around and constantly threatened to savage the T1's flanks and rear.

Whenever the T1 turned around in order to chase after the annoying light skirmisher, the Sensia promptly avoided a confrontation and ran away!

The Furia in the meantime tried its best to rely on its flamethrowers and its shotgun to wear down the T1's thin and relatively light armor.

These striker mech armaments might experience difficulties in trying to take down a large and sturdy machine like the Lancernaut, but they were more than adequate enough to strip the armor of a light mech and inflict torture on its internals!

The only real way the T1 could make up for its disadvantage in numbers was to charge at the Furia and savage the hybrid mech with its plasma claws.

However, the T1 never got the chance to get close throughout the remainder of the free-for-all match. The Furia was not a slow mech by any means and could run away fast enough to give the Sensia time to catch up and attack the opposing light mech's rear.

Aside from that, the Furia's armaments became a lot deadlier at close range. Its flamethrowers were no joke and had no trouble with cooking the T1 despite the latter's best efforts at evasion!

As soon as the flames and shotgun pellets finally wore out the T1 to the point where it collapsed onto the floor, the first and second-place winners had been decided.

The crowd erupted in cheers!

"Yay! We won!" Marvaine clapped as he hopped in his seat!

"I knew our papa would beat everyone. I just knew it." Andraste smirked as if she hadn't doubted for a single second.

"Meow!"

"Miaow miaow!"

The Larkinsons who watched the Twin Weapons Tournament from beginning to end felt both elated and relieved that their patriarch managed to win first place.

Aurelia looked happy as well, but she also grew confused at the numerous twists and turns that took place over the course of the free-for-all match.

"Why did Team Clive end up in third place?" She asked. "How did Team Reemus manage to stay in the arena longer? Shouldn't Team Clive and Team Reemus focus on eliminating their strongest competitor first?"

"It is not that difficult to figure out, dear." Merrill O'Brian replied to the young lady. "First, let us consider the mechs as a whole. The S1 heavy artillery spider mech is the singular most powerful threat in the field. It possesses the greatest mass and the greatest firepower out of all of the other mechs. At the same time, its mobility is low and its ability to defend itself is not that great. The Daugen and the Reedan whose combination is extremely susceptible against massed attacks really have no choice but to eliminate it first. They could not afford to waste their time on attacking the mechs of your father's team from the start."

"Okay. I understand that. Team Reemus also has no choice but to prioritize the Daugen first due to its superior firepower against slow-moving mechs."

"That is correct." Merrill affirmed. "The Sensia and the Furia simply weren't threatening enough in comparison. It also wasn't worthwhile to attack them because they're too fast and elusive to go down quickly. This caused them to be ignored most of the time. This is actually the reason why Team Larkinson's chances of winning have doubled if not tripled. Everyone who is able to think far enough has already made this conclusion as soon as the exchange of fire began."

"Truly?!" Aurelia looked surprised.

The recently promoted Journeyman Mech Designer smiled. "The mech pilots fighting on behalf of Team Reemus and Team Clive are not shortsighted. They likely understood that focusing their attacks on each other would likely allow Team Larkinson to have the last laugh, but they had no

other choice. The mech pilots of the S1 and the T1 figured out sooner that their chances of winning first place had dropped to almost zero. Rather than trying to win the ultimate bet, they stepped back and recognized that it was better to compete for second place. That was the maximum achievable result that they could aim for. This was why they wordlessly decided to do Team Larkinson a favor and eliminate the mechs of Team Clive."

"Ohhh..."

"When the S1 was almost on the verge of getting destroyed, the mech pilots of Team Reemus sided with Team Larkinson for a simple reason. The relatively sturdy but slow-moving Daugen-Reedan combination is much easier to eliminate than the much more mobile Furia and Sensia. Again, the Reemus mech pilots had made a cost-benefit analysis that told them that their chances of winning second place is much higher if they did not bother to waste their firepower on trying to take down the pair of mechs that are harder to target."

Marvaine paid attention to this conversation as well. He became fascinated by how the Twin Souls were able to escape being targeted by both sides for the same reason.

"Is it more important for mechs to be fast than to be tough?"

"Not always, little cutie." Merrill smiled indulgently at him. "It depends on the battlefield and the opposition. No single answer is always correct. The mech industry clearly produces both light mechs and heavy mechs. That means that both of them are useful. You just need to deploy them in situations where they can maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. The larger and more massive mechs have performed well in this tournament. Team Clive and Team Reemus wouldn't have made it to the top 3 otherwise. I do not think it is a coincidence that Team Larkinson has taken first place."

The final match generated a lot of discussion, both among the Larkinsons and among a larger audience.

There were plenty of people that thought that the mechs of Team Larkinson had slid into first place without putting as much effort into the fight. It was basically a case of Team Clive and Team Reemus beating each other up first before the Larkinson mechs rolled in to mop up the remnants!

The commentators had a different opinion, though.

[The mech designers of Team Clive and Team Reemus have reaped the consequences of their design choices, for both good and ill. Both of them have decided to base their strategy on maximizing the firepower of their mechs at the cost of sacrificing their mobility. This has served them well in the previous rounds as they relied on brute force to defeat their opposition. It did not work out for them in the fifth and final round, though. Mechs that lack mobility are often targeted first. The teams should know this fundamental truth.]

[The foresight displayed by these mech designers still has room for improvement. They knew that 71 teams of mech designers had entered this competition from the beginning. If anyone charts out the single-elimination bracket, they would understand that they would finally end in a situation where only 3 teams are left. There are a number of possibilities on how the final match would be structured, and a free-for-all was a distinct possibility. It may be possible that Team Reemus took

this into account and voted on holding a gauntlet, but I truly expected better from Jocasta Clive and her partner. What did they expect to happen if the six surviving mechs entered the arena at once?]

The commentators continued to prattle on even as the closing ceremony commenced.

Ves did not have much interest in what happened next. He tuned out the spectacle as he had been through this song and dance multiple times already.

He didn't even care about the prize that he had managed to secure!

Compared to the powerful MTA-affiliated organizations in Chance Bay, the Davute University of Technology was smaller and poorer. It was impossible for the educational institution to award Ves with a starship or a few kilograms of phasewater!

The only prize that mattered was to earn more bragging rights and enrich his record. Winning first place in any legitimate mech design tournament was rare. Many Masters weren't even able to boast of winning any tournament when they were at this rank and age bracket.

In short, winning the Twin Weapons Tournament significantly raised their credibility among their peers!

How could Ves be dissatisfied with this result? He would face a lot less doubts about his design ability in the future.

All of those doubters that thought that he did not deserve to receive so much special treatment from the colonial government had much less ground to stand upon.

In contrast, people such as President Yenames Clive and other like-minded people had much more faith that Ves would be able to give Davute a substantial advantage in the upcoming war.

It would be even better for his reputation if Ves was able to win a few more mech design tournaments, but they did not happen often enough.

This was the final day of the founding ceremony. The Larkinson Clan already participated in plenty of tournaments.

While the Larkinsons managed to win a few of them and bring a lot of glory to the clan, the time for festivities had passed. Davute had already exhausted a lot of resources to hold all of these events and wouldn't be starting anything similar anytime soon.

Ves actually had no interest in taking part in any public pageantries. He had already fulfilled his main objectives. He knew where he stood in his mech design career and he possessed a clear understanding of his strength relative to other colleagues in the industry.

He even managed to meet plenty of interesting recruitment prospects, though he was not quite sure about their willingness to join their clan.

Ves looked for Beatrice Hendrix but couldn't find her among the competitors who decided to stick around.

Hopefully, he'd be able to meet her once again so that he could have another chance at luring her into his clan. He had a feeling that he managed to spark enough interest, but that lone wasn't enough to secure the allegiance of a proud and confident mech designer.

The Design Department desperately needed another defensive specialist. There were few mech designers who were more suitable to plug this gap than Beatrice Hendrix. Her specialty in adaptive modular armor systems presented lots of new possibilities that would certainly complement a lot of Larkinson mechs.

Chapter 4880 Not Present

As the Twin Weapons Tournament started to wrap up, the mech designers of the top 3 team all received invitations to go on stage. They all made sure to maintain their decorum and bow in front of the crowd.

The people who visited Spencer Hall in person all clapped in appreciation for the teams that made it all the way to the final round.

Sure, Team Larkinson may have impressed many of them due to the convincing but also thrilling victories against other strong opponents, but Team Clive and Team Reemus also managed to win a lot of hearts.

There were a lot of impressive Journeymen in Davute!

Perhaps not all of them would stick around in the state, but those that did may eventually become the next generation of Master Mech Designers that might lead the colonial state towards a better future.

All in all, a lot of people felt good about the event. It truly brought a lot of Davutans together and gave them greater confidence in their state's ability to overcome future difficulties.

In the end, Master Mergard Elroy appeared on the stage once again. He stood in front of the mech designers of the final three teams and held a closing speech.

"I sincerely hope that each of you have come away from the last three days with a new and different appreciation for mechs." The teacher at the DUT began. "The works we make are often regarded in isolation. This is a mistake. We humans are far too numerous to deploy our mechs one by one and rely on individual supremacy to defeat our opponents. We are nothing like the phase whales who possess the size and strength to take on entire armies by themselves. We are forced to rely on making the most out of our numbers to win our battles, and I hope this tournament has taught you that this is a blessing, not a curse."

He spoke these words towards the students of the DUT that occupied a significant proportion of the seats as well as the rest of his audience. Even in a festive event like this, Master Elroy couldn't get rid of his persona as a teacher and an educator!

"I hope that each of you, especially those who are deeply intertwined in the mech industry, come away from our tournament with a greater appreciation for the restrictions and limitations of mechs. The rules we have set may seem arbitrary and unfair to you all, but let me remind you that combat outside of competitive venues is never equitable. Your enemies will not wait until you are able to match their numbers and they will not have any qualms about relying on superior tech and materials to increase their superiority on the battlefield. Each of you must take these differences into account when you design or pilot mechs, especially in the near future."

The upcoming conflict between Davute and Karlach was set in stone. There was no way to prevent it from breaking out anymore. The bad blood had run too deep for that. Davute had no way of letting Karlach off, and Karlach could not rein in the ambitions of conquest of its own stakeholders.

Neither side intended to pursue peace until they had gobbled up their most immediate regional rival!

Master Elroy briefly turned around and swept his gaze towards the six mech designers of Team Larkinson, Team Reemus and Team Clive. He showed genuine appreciation for them all. There was a clear expectation in his eyes as he looked forward to what the younger generation could accomplish in the future.

"Among our mech designer community, many people have different opinions of what Journeyman Mech Designers actually are. Many veterans in our industry regard them as upgraded Apprentice Mech Designers who still have a long way to go before they mature. Others look up to them and believe that they have already ascended the mundane and have become stars of their own. Neither of these descriptions are completely correct, but they are not completely inaccurate. As with many subjects, the truth lies in between. In these three eventual days, we have all seen Journeymen who lean in one end of the spectrum or the other."

Master Elroy turned towards the mech designers behind him once again and addressed them directly.

"All six of you have shown that you have already stepped beyond the basic principles of mech design and created your own. That is a crucial step in your professional journey and shows that you have already explored plenty of possible paths, either mentally or physically. However, no matter how far you have already gone, I hope that you will not lose your immaturity that allows you to gaze at mechs and our reality with fresh and curious eyes. A lack of wonder will spell the death of progress. Never stop exploring and never stop experimenting."

Ves and all of the others nodded seriously at this piece of advice.

To be honest, Ves already figured out these lessons on his own. Numerous people had already given him similar advice, but he appreciated these words nonetheless. They provided confirmation to the theory on what mech designers should do to advance further. He possessed a little more certainty on what he should do to finally become a Senior Mech Designer.

The older Master Mech Designer continued to hold a speech that was half a lecture and half an inspirational speech.

Regardless of whether he was speaking to a mech insider or a layman, both types of people gained a lot from Master Elroy's sage words and advice.

Soon enough, the man clapped his palms one more time and spread his arms.

"Thank you for witnessing this wonderful show! The Davute University of Technology is happy to have provided a stage for talented and skilled mech designers such as Patriarch Ves Larkinson, Madame Jocasta Clive and Mr. Eric Reemus to showcase their design ability to each of you. Please be assured that they have attained their respective rankings according to the rules and the standard conventions set by the Mech Trade Association. Our institution will most certainly organize further

mech design tournaments in the future, and we will once again formulate different rulesets in order to encourage every mech designer to adapt their works according to the circumstances. For Davute!"

"FOR DAVUTE!" Many people answered back!

An afterparty took place once Spencer Hall emptied out. The DUT invited the participating mech designers to a luxurious club that was situated within its campus.

Not many mech designers accepted the invitation, but those that did most certainly had similar intentions in mind.

This was the last time that their group would be able to meet and talk to each other without needing to make an appointment through their personal assistants.

Ves held a glass of wine in his hand while he tried his best to look for Beatrice Hendrix.

"She's not here." Juliet said as she took a sip of her own glass of wine. "I wouldn't be here either if I lost during the second round of a mech design tournament. This is a deeply embarrassing result no matter the caliber of opponent she matched up against. I think that a mech designer who is accustomed to success such as her will not easily be able to reconcile with the outcome."

"That... is a shame." Ves sighed. "Do you think she is still open to joining our clan?"

"I cannot say. She has reasons to join us and reasons to stay away from us. It all depends on what she values more."

"What is your guess? Tell me honestly."

Juliet did not immediately issue a reply but paused for a few seconds in order to collect her thoughts.

"I think the main issue is a matter of pride. You are an independent mech designer who built up your own organization, so you should know the value of being your own boss. The greater the ability, the more it is desirable to retain control over your work and circumstances. Beatrice gives the impression that she is a woman accustomed to controlling her own work and schedule. She should definitely be reluctant to let go of that and submit to your rules and accept your orders. I think she will be much more open to working in our Design Department if you grant her equal status."

Ves immediately frowned. "That is unacceptable. You know that. I may be willing to delegate a lot of stuff to trusted and capable subordinates, but the fact remains that they still answer to me. It is completely backwards if I have to cater to their needs as if I am their servant. There is a price for all of the tech, phasewater and other goodies that my clan and I have painstakingly earned through our operations."

"Then maybe it is better if you give up on any idea of recruiting her." Juliet advised him. "She is clearly not flexible enough to take a step back while you are too insistent on maintaining ultimate control over your clan. There is no viable middle ground between your respective positions. You are better off looking elsewhere."

"...Maybe you are right. I can still foresee one more way I can convince Beatrice Hendrix to work in my Design Department."

"And that is...?"

"It is much easier for me to command Journeymen if I am a Senior." Ves answered with a smirk.

The rank difference was the easiest and most reliable means to convert lots of mech designers into obedient minions.

Ves only had to take a single look at the hundreds of Apprentices that toiled away in his many design teams.

Even though he and his clan did not provide the assistant mech designers with too much attention, the Apprentice Mech Designers still worked hard in order to complete their tedious design tasks!

It was not that difficult for Ves to hire a bunch of Apprentices or Journeymen, but what he sought was talent instead of foot-draggers.

"Patriarch Larkinson." A cultured and dignified female voice sounded.

"Ah. Madame Clive. It is a pleasure to speak to you in person." Ves replied as soon as he turned around and recognized the voice.

Jocasta Clive had somehow managed to find the time to change into a dark and multilayered evening dress. It glittered under the soft light of the lounge and slightly flattered her figure while also making her look more classy than when she wore a suit during the tournament.

"I must admit that I did not think much of your mechs when they initially entered the arena." The member of the Clive Consortium spoke. "I still am not entirely convinced that their combat value is sufficient enough. It is much more difficult to predict who will win in a match between your team and mine alone."

"That might have very well happened if there was an even sum of participating teams. That did not happen this time. Even if it did, I still have faith in my Twin Souls. They hadn't been able to showcase their greatest advantages properly during the free-for-all. The mechs of your team were already locked in a mutual death spiral with the mechs of Team Reemus."

The mention of this dark horse that managed to snatch their way to second place caused Jocasta Clive to twitch in irritation.

It appeared that she had either received inadequate training with regards to controlling her expressions, or thought that she did not need to bother with hiding her true thoughts!

"Mr. Eric Reemus is... a good Journeyman Mech Designer, but he is ultimately a transient visitor to our colonial state. He and his partner are not locals who have committed to facilitating the growth of Davute. I am at least content that you have been able to deny Team Reemus the opportunity to win first place. Davutans must look out for each other, especially when we are already under attack by the nefarious forces of Karlach."

"..."