

The Mech 5131

Chapter 5131 Klaus Robar-Fulton

Klaus Robar-Fulton floated out of the pristine white transit shuttle after it had reached its stop and took a moment to take in the view of the city.

Sandan looked vibrant as the local star rose up from the horizon and illuminated its rays over the planet of New Constantinople VIII.

As the founding colony of the planet, the Devos Ancient Clan had invested a lot to build up the city's infrastructure and facilities.

The modern Terran architecture made this expansive settlement look a bit too new for Klaus to get accustomed to. The original intention was to turn Sandan into a beacon of civilization.

That policy changed after the Great Severing took place.

Now that humanity lost access to a huge amount of support from the Milky Way, everyone living in human-occupied space had to make peace with the fact that the aliens might come for them all one day!

While Sandan still featured a dizzying amount of delicate and highly artful structures, the defense forces became more and more visible with each passing day.

Construction bots erected turrets as quickly as the available supply of raw materials remained sufficient.

Powerful first-class mechs patrolled the streets and the skies with greater frequency.

Entire construction crews had been contracted to erect additional bases and supply depots.

The vision for Sandan had completely changed. It was no longer supposed to be a paradise away from the Greater Terran United Confederation where many of its residents emigrated from in recent years.

It was slowly transforming into a fortress before everyone's eyes. The fresh new paradise that people yearned to settle in so that they could climb up the ladder and become the new movers and shakers in a society that had yet to be carved out was becoming an increasingly more distant dream.

Klaus found this to be profoundly sad and ironic.

Just like every other Terran on the planet, he never signed up for this kind of life.

If his father hadn't gone into debt back in the old galaxy and been offered a way to redeem himself by accepting a long-term work assignment in the new frontier, Klaus would have still remained safe in the highly protected territories of the Terran Confederation.

That part of his life was gone forever now. The fourth year mech design student had little choice but to accept this new reality.

Klaus let out a sigh and floated down onto the ground. Hundreds of other students arriving from afar did likewise.

No matter whether the students came from distinguished clans and resided in private villas or rented more modestly furnished apartments built in neighboring towns like himself, each of them had to go through the security checkpoints situated at the main gates.

The Eden Institute of Business & Technology instituted this policy just before the start of this semester. It was yet another sign that the Age of Mechs had passed for the people who ended up stuck in the Red Ocean.

Klaus walked through the corridor while a dizzying amount of scanners verified his identity and checked for any dangerous contraband.

As a civilian from the Terran Confederation, Klaus was unable to afford the luxurious internal weapon modules that merited greater attention from the security guards.

Once he got through, he began to follow the crowd and walk towards the center.

The large auditorium had opened its gates once again. Thousands of students and staff members poured in because they all grew curious about the opening lecture of a newly hired professor.

Klaus didn't know what to make of this absurd circumstance. He thought that this treatment was only reserved for the most honored and accomplished Master Mech Designers and business magnates that decided to hold a guest lecture.

He did not understand why the Eden Institute granted the best possible treatment to a young second-rater who held no status within Terran space.

Certainly, this young professor did have a number of impressive accomplishments to his name.

Klaus did not consider himself to be a Terran who automatically looked down on second-raters as subhumans, but that did not mean he was able to treat them on the same level as himself.

Terrans were the original humans. Each of them were born at a much higher level than any second-rater. The augmentations that they received along with their much more advanced schooling propelled each of them into geniuses in their own right!

The only reason why Klaus did not feel he was remarkable was because he was surrounded by people who received the same treatment or better.

He swept his gaze around and spotted many groups of students who possessed a more obvious bearing of superiority and class. Their smart clothing looked more refined in all of the little details that were difficult to replicate with cheaper tech.

These were the true princes and princesses of Terra. Their higher stations granted them access to the best gene optimization treatments and implants.

Whereas Klaus had to struggle a lot in order to memorize and comprehend an astonishing amount of learning material, these highborn scions could easily absorb twice as much knowledge in the same amount of time!

Klaus deeply envied the descendants of wealthy clans and families, but he had lived in this society long enough to know that Terran society was deeply stratified.

A relatively ordinary citizen that belonged in a lower layer had to work extremely hard just to obtain a chance to be promoted to a higher layer.

Meanwhile, the better-dressed students merely had to go on autopilot and follow the meticulous plans of their families in order to maintain their higher stations!

Though Klaus was aware that the people born at the upper layers actually had to endure a lot of pressure and expectations from birth, they at least did not have to study well into the night just to keep up with all of his classes!

"There you are, Klaus." A female voice sounded from behind.

"Good morning, Polina." He greeted as a student wearing a more distinguished and colorful outfit walked up to his side.

"Are you eager to attend the first classes of our superstar of a professor?"

"I don't know. I am entertaining an increasing amount of misgivings, especially now that this opening lecture has turned into a campus-wide event."

"How so? If the institute is willing to put so much of their credibility and reputation at stake for Professor Larkinson, then he is most definitely legit. The descriptions in his colorful record are not fabrications."

Klaus maintained a skeptical impression. "I am not questioning the professor's record. I just hope he holds more normal classes so that I can pass his courses without complications. I am starting to regret signing up for all three of the ones that he is offering for this semester. I should have known better than to apply for them thinking that a second-class mech designer won't maintain the same academic standards as our regular professors. The course materials hardly include any textbooks or academic articles! If our grades are based on his subjective opinions, who knows what it will take to obtain his approval."

His friend did not look as concerned. Polina pretty much rolled her eyes when he heard what he was worrying about.

"Let us reserve our judgment until we have actually attended his classes. He may be young and inexperienced, but he is a genuine Senior Mech Designer. Second-rater or not, personalities like him should have high standards for themselves."

The pair of fourth-year students passed through another security checkpoint before they entered the main hall of the auditorium.

The entire space was distinctly divided into two sections for this occasion.

250 of the best seats at the center were reserved to the students that signed up for the Frontier Wisdom class.

The tens of thousands of other seats that were located elsewhere were reserved for the other guests that were curious or wanted to have a bit of fun.

Klaus politely greeted the acquaintances that he had grown familiar with throughout his studies.

A lot of Terrans studied mech design at the Eden Institute, and they attended the same set of mandatory courses. Klaus had personally worked together with over a hundred of them on different group projects.

He found it difficult to build any close friendships with most of them. He was actually quite smart as well as hard-working, or else he wouldn't have been able to get into the Eden Institute, but there had been times where his fellow mech design students scoffed at his slow progress.

His lack of augmentations held him back from earning greater respect from his classmates!

Polina did not share the same problem. She smiled and chatted with a few Terrans that she hung out with on a more regular basis.

Her status as a foreign exchange student did not bother her at all. Despite originating from another first-rate state, she demonstrated a greater amount of intelligence and learning capabilities.

As a recognized genius, she not only received a scholarship that funded her tuition while she attended the Eden Institute, but she also received a grant that allowed her to pay for a more extensive suite of augmentations!

Even though her augmentations still couldn't compare to the improvements of the more highborn students, Polina Devonshire occasionally managed to rank in the top 10 in almost every course she attended!

Klaus knew that his friend already received a flood of numerous promising job propositions from different companies and organizations. Their paths would most certainly diverge once they graduated from the Eden Institute.

Fortunately, they still had to go through several semesters before they would go their separate ways.

"Have you settled on your specialization yet?" Polina casually asked as the two of them took their seats.

"I haven't made up my mind yet." Klaus replied. "I am thinking about specializing in sensor systems because not many other students want to specialize in a field that is not as glamorous. I don't think many of them realize the importance of proper scouting and surveying. Our society has a constant demand for high-quality resources, but searching for them is a difficult and time-consuming task. I won't be lacking for job opportunities if I can assist in the design of mechs that are used to search for exotics as well as these new-fangled hypers."

His classmate and friend respected his choice. "Your plan is good. I think you should go for it. The sooner you lock in your choice, the sooner you can work towards acquiring the minimum competences that are required to get hired by a company that is in this business." Klaus nodded. "I know. I have already signed up for a few introductory courses. What about you, Polina? You previously talked about going all-in on specializing in transphasic shield systems. Did the department approve of your course applications?"

The woman smiled. "I had to attend a few meetings in order to persuade the administrators that I have what it takes to study phasewater theory as well as more advanced energy shield systems. They eventually allowed me to attend all of the courses once I showed that I wasn't biting more than I could chew. The only condition is that I have to earn an excellent grade in all of those classes in order to keep up this heavy study load in the next semesters."

Transphasic technology was the rising trend in the mech industry and many other industries for that matter. Anyone who got in early and mastered this complicated new branch of technology would definitely become a highly desirable professional!

Klaus truly admired Polina for daring to take on so many difficult courses in a single semester. He understood his own limitations well enough that he could not possibly do the same.

Though he was happy for her own ability to pursue a greater ambition, he felt increasingly more inadequate about his own situation.

He did not care about sensor systems to be honest. It did not excite him all that much. His dreams were far greater than that. He wanted to design awesome and richly featured combat mechs for a living!

Unfortunately, that future would never come to pass. There were far more qualified and resourceful mech students around him. In an age and dwarf galaxy where materials were becoming more scarce and expensive, the privilege of designing serious first-class multipurpose mechs was only reserved for the very few!

A mediocre mech design student like Klaus himself had no chance to enter this exclusive club. His skills and talent were simply not up to par.

Chapter 5132 Dynamic Entry

Klaus and Polina actually arrived 40 minutes early. No one wanted to arrive too late and make a bad impression in front of so many important professors and school officials.

When Klaus briefly turned his head around and looked up, he could see a growing gathering of mech designers and other distinguished teachers sitting at the most elevated seats at the back.

They did not attend in order to upstage or replace the new professor today, so there was no need for them to make themselves more visible at the front.

Not everyone hired to teach at the Eden Institute decided to attend, though.

There were plenty of academics that thought that there was no added value to hearing out what a second-rater had to say. The tech they utilized and the knowledge they mastered diverged so much that they practically existed in two different societies. They might not look down on this young and talented Senior Mech Designer, but that did not mean they could accept the notion that he was their peer.

Klaus inwardly shook his head at this phenomenon. He felt an odd connection to this mysterious Professor Larkinson. The treatment they received from many Terrans was far too similar for his liking.

"Look over there, Klaus." Polina's elbow bumped at his side. "It turns out that Gabriel Sekkar enrolled for this course as well. I did not expect this monster to agree to attend a remote class taught by second-rate professor."

Gabriel attracted more than a few glances. Even though he was only a second year student, he had already become a minor celebrity at the Eden Institute!

If Polina Devonshire could be regarded as a clever scholarship student, Gabriel Sekkar was an all-out savant!

As the designated heir of the Sekkar Clan, Gabriel received an extravagant suite of augmentations that did not fall behind the suites granted to the scions of the ancient clans.

Though it was a bit surprising that Gabriel did not attend one of the more prestigious universities in the Red Ocean, he firmly established himself as a leader in his year due to two strong reasons.

First, he almost always earned excellent grades in every course.

Second, he pursued a double degree in both business and mech design!

His study load was even greater than that of Polina, and he had to become proficient in many more disciplines than the other students.

The fact that he could not only keep up with all of his courses, but stand out among his classmates was a testament to his upbringing and potential!

"I am glad I am not in the same year as him." Polina frankly said as she watched the slightly younger double degree student take his seat among his own acquaintances. "It will be difficult to live with the fact of getting upstaged by a student who is enrolled in at least twice as many courses."

As the minutes passed by, the auditorium increasingly filled up. Most people did not know what to expect from this lecture, but that did not stop them from talking and speculating.

Soon, the noise levels automatically started to dim. The hyped lecture was apparently about to begin if the invisible sound suppressors had come online.

The lights started to dim as well. The only location that remained slightly better lit was the 250 seats that were occupied by the students who enrolled in the Frontier Wisdom course.

Before the professor made his appearance in front of much of the student body of the Eden Institute, a smartly dressed young woman floated up to the central podium.

"Good morning, everybody." The woman spoke in a confident but measured cadence. "Whether you are Terrans or guests from afar, we welcome you to this inaugural class of a course that has never been taught before in any institution. Before we begin, I would like to request your patience and understanding for any unexpected difficulties or complications that might arise over the course of Professor Larkinson's upcoming lecture. He has found himself in the middle of an ongoing battle against one of the many alien fleets that have been raiding the outer colonies of the human race."

The announcement provoked a reaction from the crowd. Everyone already heard rumors about it at least, but Klaus and many other students thought that they were just exaggerations meant to hype up this event.

Even though this odd professor had a reputation for living a little too close to the edge, Klaus found it hard to believe that the Eden Institute would actually try to engineer a situation that put one of their professors at mortal risk while performing his teaching obligations!

The entire situation sounded so crazy and illegal that Klaus had automatically dismissed the stories.

The young woman who turned out to be a teaching assistant continued to address the massive audience without showing any sign of concern or nervousness.

"As this course is not as rigid and reliant on textbook learning as others, interaction is essential. Professor Larkinson is not opposed to answering your doubts so long as they are relevant to your studies and do not reach too deeply into confidential or proprietary subject matters. Each student enrolled in this course is permitted to ask questions so long as they do so at the appropriate occasions. In order to keep this lecture organized, we will not extend this opportunity to the remaining guests in this hall. If you truly wish for the professor to answer your inquiries, you can transmit them to his school account, where I will curate them and pass them along if I deem them worthy enough."

As the teaching assistant continued to announce a few more rules, she soon retreated out of sight, leaving the stage empty.

Klaus looked a little thoughtful at this time. Though the young woman spoke like a civilian and possessed the look and bearing of one, he couldn't help but get the feeling that she was more than what was obvious on the surface.

Most of his other classmates did not look like they shared the same suspicions. Even if they did, they knew better than to express their true feelings.

"What are you thinking about?" Polina whispered.

"It is nothing." The young man shook his head. "I hope our professor won't suffer an accident in the middle of his lecture. I am counting on him to earn a decent amount of course credits to pass this semester."

After a short delay, the auditorium finally established a remote connection to a distant starship located in a completely different star system and zone.

Unlike the stereotypical lecture halls or practical workshop environments that remote professors often used as their backdrop, the new professor decided to hold his class in a completely different environment!

The projected area consisted of a large section of a starship bridge. Dozens of men and women wearing uniform red hazard suits were working hard to keep track of a lot of important developments as they sat behind their consoles and work stations.

Overlooking all of them was an imposing armored figure seated on an elevated throne.

There was no doubt that this central figure was in charge of everything. The man possessed the undeniable demeanor of a leader and not a gentle one either. The way he absorbed the information around him and issued short but effective instructions showed that he was not only confident in his judgment, but knew how to maintain control over his subordinates.

This was the man that was supposed to hold a remote lecture in front of a massive audience!

How could he possibly be a serious teacher? Klaus did not doubt Professor Larkinson's identity as a Senior Mech Designer, but this was not the time for him to push his boundaries as a pioneer.

"He looks like a warlord rather than a mech designer." He couldn't help but comment.

Polina smiled. "If you find yourself in the middle of an ongoing battle like him, you would probably want to clad yourself in the best armor that you can obtain."

One of the reasons why the mech design students became so mesmerized by the sight of the professor was his equipment.

While the bridge of this unknown capital ship did not look all that impressive by Terran standards, anyone who worked with tech could easily tell that the man's armor was anything but ordinary!

Klaus couldn't recognize the materials at all, but he could tell that the suit of combat armor had been crafted to an exquisite standard!

Not only that, it also possessed other qualities that he couldn't identify but somehow made it a lot more exceptional.

It not only looked strong and sturdy enough to protect its wearer without faltering, but also possessed a lot of personal charm that anyone with fabrication and craftsmanship skills could appreciate.

This piece of equipment alone was enough to prove that Professor Larkinson had the qualifications to teach Advanced Mech Fabrication!

As Klaus and many other students took in the atypical sight, an ongoing battle continued to progress on the other side.

"Hull breach at section D12-34! The yurzen destroyers are doing their best to compound the damage."

"How long does it take to reactivate the nearest transphasic shield generator?!"

"The engineers report that it will take at least 35 seconds, sir!"

"Bunker A91 has been breached! The Transcendent Punisher housed within has sustained serious damage and lost over half of its cannons. Its pilot is still able to fight and has expressed the determination to continue fighting with his damaged mech."

"The Promethea is being targeted by Stingray 2 again! The transphasic energy shield that is covering her is experiencing greater strain."

"Request Saintess Ulrika to bring her Macharia Excelsia to cover for the Promethea. The latter cannot remain under heavy suppression!"

For a moment, Klaus and many other students questioned whether the school had made a mistake. Did they connect to the wrong teacher by mistake? Had they inadvertently projected a military officer who was supposed to pass on his wisdom to a class of mech cadets?

The Eden Institute would never make such a stupid mistake. The face of the leading figure in red truly matched the image of Professor Ves Larkinson.

None of the Terrans expected their professor to be anything like this. Those who doubted the teaching qualifications of this second-rater did not exactly set aside their well-reasoned concerns, but right now their minds had all short-circuited due to being greeted to an actual battlefield environment.

Even though everyone in the auditorium still remained completely safe in the middle of the New Constantiple System, all of the students as well as many professors were able to experience the pressure and the constant threat of death faced by the people on the other side of the remote connection!

The man seated on the elevated command throne finally took a break from directing his subordinates to address his new 'audience'.

"Hello, Terrans." The man's unhelmeted face smiled in 'their' direction. "This remote class is turning out to be a little rougher than I anticipated. The alien warships that we have provoked into pursuing my factory ship hate us so much that they are doing the utmost to take down my ship. Don't worry. I am still capable of performing my obligations to you. These aliens won't take down my mechs and ship that easily."

Nobody knew whether to take this young professor at his word at the moment.

"Anyway, let's get on to business, shall we? Let me begin this lecture by asking you all a question. Now that red humanity is cut off from human civilization back in the Milky Way, we are heavily outnumbered and outgunned by the native aliens that hate our guts. It is clear that we are in for hard times. The aliens who are assaulting our border territories at the moment are just a prelude of what is to come. My first question to you is as follows: how do we get out of this mess?"

That... was a difficult one to answer.

Chapter 5133 Professor Larkinson's First Lesson

The new professor did not begin his class by holding a lengthy lecture.

Instead, he chose to start with an open-ended question. This was an interesting way to set the tone of this event. It indicated that he was likely to employ this approach many times throughout this course.

The students of the Eden Institute were not timid or slow in thought. They were all incredibly smart and at least somewhat talented in their own ways.

Over half of the enrolled students already raised their arms within seconds. Klaus did not follow suit as he lacked the confidence to come up with a good answer himself.

A situation like this was tailor-made for students to leave an excellent and highly memorable first impression.

Due to the nature of this class, a clever student could not only make himself look good in front of his professor, but also all of the people that had come as well!

As Professor Larkinson momentarily issued a few instructions to his crew, he turned his attention back to all of the raised hands.

"Miss Rosario Chaisit." He called out as he accessed an information screen that was not visible to everyone else. "You reacted the fastest and raised your arm before your fellow students. I am curious to hear your thoughts. What must we do to save red humanity from extinction?"

Klaus did not recognize the female student, but his augmented vision informed him that she was a fourth-year business student. Just like Polina, Rosario came from another first-rate state and attended the Eden Institute on exchange.

Despite becoming the center of attention to many of the students of the institute, Rosario completely managed to maintain her composure as she stood up while the spotlight settled onto her location.

"There are many measures that red humans can take in order to prevent the aliens from making us extinct. I am of the personal belief that we cannot rely on the Red Two alone to defend us anymore.

The mechers and the fleeters are not numerous enough to resist the hostile aliens. They will need the help of the people who they previously tried to control and contain because of ill-founded fears. This is not permissible anymore when we need to mobilize our entire population."

The professor in armor expressed more curiosity for Rosario's thoughts. "Continue."

"The Terran Alliance, the Red Ocean Union and the Rubarthan Pact must fully regain the rights that the Big Two has originally taken away from us. Not only that, we must cooperate more closely with each other. So long as we are beset by too many threatening aliens, we must set aside our disagreements and work alongside each other in order to increase our utilization of resources and forces. If we must, we can go back to fighting for the future of red humanity once we have lifted our existential crisis, but not before."

That was a simple but well-reasoned answer. Many students looked impressed at her answer, though more than a few of them had likely formed the same arguments themselves.

Klaus wished he was in Rosario's position right now. He would have been able to make an excellent impression in front of his peers and professors, which could help him out in many different ways.

Professor Larkinson did not look as approving as the others, though.

"Your answer is highly logical. In an ideal circumstance, it is highly likely that this will actually happen. However, I do not believe you have traveled all that much. If you have met with many different people from many different states and all walks of life, you would have never settled with such a naive answer."

To her credit, Rosario did not look ashamed, defiant or admonished. She presented herself as a serious student that was genuinely interested in this debate.

"Red humanity is in a direr state than ever, professor." She persisted and stuck to her own stance. "I am cognizant that it is nearly impossible for Terrans to form a sincere cooperative relationship with the Rubarthans, but when both of their futures are at stake, their leaders should be able to recognize that survival comes before their feelings and principles. If they can form a coalition and pressure the Red Two into retracting their centuries-old taboos on warships and weapons of mass destruction, we will be able to fight back against the invading aliens much more effectively than if we continue to rely on our mechs alone!"

The Terrans possessed long-standing grievances with the mechers and fleeters for taking away their toys and castrating their old and once-powerful state.

It was clear to everyone that once the Red Two restored the right to employ warships and weapons of mass destruction to the states, the latter would never agree to relinquish them once the existential crisis had passed!

The Terrans hoped to be able to rise again and prevent the Red Association and the Red Fleet from riding on top of their heads like they did in the past!

While the Red Two should definitely be aware of their true motivations, what else could the mechers and fleeters do when they were stuck in a losing war?

The fact that the Red Fleet introduced the Warship Quota Program was already a tacit sign that the fleeters were beginning to recognize the harsh reality!

Nonetheless, the professor still did not share the same opinion.

"I may be wrong in this as nothing is ever set in stone, but I believe your read on the situation is wrong." Professor Larkinson replied in a tone that exuded a strong sense of authority and confidence. "People are inherently selfish. Those in power are more so than others. The mechers and the fleeters have occupied a leading position over human civilization for over four centuries. They will never go against their self-interest and grant the means to enable Terrans like you to make a comeback. They know that once they give you a chance, they might win the war against the aliens, but they will subsequently lose their dominance over red humanity's space. The reduction in resources, authority and legitimacy will result in so many losses that their future may very well come to an end. Do you actually think they will be resigned to such an outcome?"

Rosario frowned at this time. "How can they be so unwise and shortsighted to reject greater cooperation?"

"By resorting to a different solution. Can any of you answer my original question with an answer that falls much more in line with the priorities of the Red Two as opposed to the Terran Alliance?"

A lot of arms lifted in the air. The quantity was less than before, but there were still enough clever and confident students who thought they could make a good impression at this time.

The professor did not pick out a student immediately. He had momentarily turned back to manage the ongoing combat situation.

"-we are trying our best to permanently disable the alien warships that are pursuing us, but none of our tactics are working. Each time we come closer to breaching the defenses of a yurzen destroyer or light cruiser, the ship drops from formation and retreats well in advance in order to buy time to restore their shield integrity. Only coordinated alpha strikes from the Macharia Excelsia and other mechs has enabled us to inflict permanent damage, but the yurzens are too careful to expose their vessels for too long. Only the Everchanger is dealing effective damage by bypassing their defenses entirely."

"Then direct the Everchanger to snipe the crew and officers of those annoying ships!"

"That would be unwise, sir. The Everchanger is the only mech that is keeping Stingray 2 at bay. The puelmers are afraid of his damage output, so their homeship has been hovering just outside of the effective range of the pistol. Venerable Joshua has been in action long enough that he has become more exhausted. He is not in a condition to obtain Ylvaine's guidance at this time."

"Joshua is an expert pilot, not a baby who needs hand-holding all of the time! Tell him to stop being an infantile and kill more aliens by aiming his weapon the old-fashioned way! If he is incapable of undertaking this responsibility, then tell him to toss the Gray Lotus over to the Amaranto!"

The people in the auditorium grew more curious at what they were able to interpret. Did Professor Larkinson actually master a method to launch effective attacks that could bypass the infamous transphasic energy shields employed by alien ships?

Some of the projected feeds near the professor's command throne showed many different mechs in action. The green one happened to be firing a small pistol at a distant puelmer homeship.

The expert mech, which Klaus identified as a masterwork, truly appeared to single-handedly deter the technologically advanced puelmers!

Professor Larkinson finally turned back to his remote audience. He assumed a pleasant demeanor again that looked appropriate in the classroom but seemed wholly out of place on a turbulent battlefield!

"Mr. Ryan Shuku, please share your thoughts with everyone."

There was hardly anyone seated in the auditorium who did not know his name. The third-year mech design student was known to be clever and insightful in his studies, but the main reason why he was so well-known was because he was a member of the Shuku Ancient Clan!

Sure, he may be just a branch member who did not hold a high status in his ancient clan, but that still put him ahead of almost every other student!

The man rose up and spoke in a timbred voice that was precisely calibrated to maximize his persuasiveness and trustworthiness.

"Red humanity suffers from too many disadvantages in relation to the Red Cabal and its affiliated aliens. We are heavily outnumbered. We are lacking in high-grade resources. We are suffering from a heavy shortage of phasewater. We are in control over a small portion of the most remote star systems of the Red Ocean. These circumstances will not make the Red Two inclined to grant us greater permissions. The construction of warships is too resource intensive. Even if we are allowed to construct them in larger numbers, all we will do is deprive the Red Two from the essential raw materials they need to reinforce their depleting warfleets. This is why the mechers and the fleeters will never truly be sincere about giving us back our warships."

Professor Larkinson smiled a little wider. "That is a good explanation that refutes Miss Chaisit's answer. You still need to present your own proposed solution, though."

The young scion immediately obliged.

"The Red Two will try to solve the threat of extinction by relying on themselves. They have too many disadvantages compared to the aliens, but the only one that they can assuredly count on is their superior technology. They have not only mastered entire libraries of high technologies, but they also employ some of the most brilliant human researchers and developers, of which the Polymath stands out in particular. Exotic radiation and its many effects on the Red Ocean amplifies this strategy. With the Star Designers taking the lead, the mechers and the fleeters will seek to accelerate their technological progression and work to invent a large amount of new innovations that can turn the tide against the aliens. This is the only viable approach for the Red Two to win the war against the aliens and keep the rest of us in check."

"Good answer." The professor in armor complemented. "Your words reveal a more realistic understanding of how the mechers and the fleeters actually think. Tech superiority has always been their greatest reliance, and they will count on it again to overcome this latest crisis. However, what if they are wrong? What would happen if the Red Two made the wrong bet?"

Ryan Shuku responded with an ominous answer. "We will all perish."

Ves grinned. "Correct. This is my first lesson on Frontier Wisdom to you all. We live in a society filled with selfish individuals. You cannot expect them to act on your interests when that will put theirs at stake. Leave your high-minded rationale and ideals behind. From the moment you have stepped out of the familiar environment of the Greater Terran United Confederation, you have entered a dwarf galaxy that is aptly described as a frontier. No matter which zone you are located in, there is no order that can protect you from every threat. It may look as if we are in completely different circumstances right now, but your first requirement is to recognize that you are just as likely to lose your life as myself. If you cannot recognize this reality, then you are in denial!"

The students were all shocked at his brutal description of their supposed reality. Klaus could not wrap his mind around the young professor's argument at first, but the more he thought about it, the harder it was for him to convince himself that he was in a much safer place.

After all, if the aliens actually managed to gain the upper hand in this great war, the Terran Alliance would get overrun sooner or later!

Chapter 5134 Professor Larkinson's Second Lesson

The large audience of Terrans and foreign guests became completely enraptured by the unconventional class held by Professor Larkinson!

Though the lessons he taught up until now were rather subjective and should have provoked a greater debate, the entire crowd had fallen into the rhythm of the man who dared to hold a remote class while the ship he resided upon was being pummeled by a bunch of relentless alien warships!

The man on the other side of the communication channel did not hide the dire situation he was in. The projected feed displayed additional screens which displayed an overview of the surrounding battlefield.

They also highlighted particularly notable subjects, such as the ace rifleman mech that fired unusually effective penetrating shots, or the expert hero mech that launched strangely ominous gray energy beams that caused the puelmer homeship to maintain a more respectful distance from the factory ship.

It was clear that the status quo did not favor the adventurous professor and his subordinates. Though the witnesses understood little how a single factory ship got embroiled in a fight against a small swarm of deadly alien vessels, the collective firepower of all of those ships were straining the Spirit of Bentheim's defenses!

If not for the fact that the Macharia Excelsia often moved over to the most beleaguered areas and utilized its powerful Saint Kingdom to drain much of the power of the incoming warship cannon attacks, the factory ship would have been in a much direr state at this time!

Even so, there were limits to how many angles the Macharia Excelsia could cover. Its Saint Kingdom could not possibly envelop an entire capital that stretched on for 2.5 kilometers!

The once-majestic prow that displayed a golden cat head had become scarred and dented after enduring dozens of attacks. More and more hull breaches across the length of the entire vessel occurred over time as the alien warships cleverly focused their firepower onto specific sections in order to breach the strained transphasic shields.

The students and professors who sat in an auditorium all felt grateful that they were not physically present aboard the flagship under fire.

They might not be able to hold their composure as well as the daring young professor!

Many of the Terrans developed an inexplicable respect towards this odd and unconventional second-class Senior Mech Designer.

While there was no denying that Professor Larkinson was a second-rater with space peasant origins, this was a man who demonstrated as much courage as a professional soldier!

Not only that, but the way he took charge of his clan and the excellence of his second-class mechs and mech pilots were obvious proof of his competence as a pioneer!

Most of the students who enrolled in the Frontier Wisdom course did not hold any doubts over whether it was worthwhile for them to take lessons from this mech designer.

Even the most stuck up and elite students began to accept that this second-rater could teach them insights and wisdom that they could never obtain from their professors or their family tutors!

As Ves Larkinson understandably shifted his attention away from the remote class in order to direct his subordinates during the running battle, the students softly exchanged their opinions with each other.

"His personality is interesting." Polina Devonshire whispered to Klaus sitting next to her. "I am looking more and more forward with what he has to say in his next classes. I hope he will be able to make it out of this battle alive, though. His ship is far sturdier than a typical second-class capital ship, but her power supply can't keep up with the demands of all of those energy shields. What if the aliens actually succeed in taking him down?"

Klaus looked doubtful as he watched the professor continue to act in a confident and commanding fashion.

"A self-made mech designer such as him shouldn't make such a mistake. He puts a lot of trust in his own work. The fact that he is placing his life on the line is a clear sign of that. Look at how those mechs are all excellent in their own ways. They might not possess the versatility of the first-class multipurpose mechs that we are used to, but their ability to damage warships is far beyond what typical second-class machines should be able to accomplish."

The bunker mechs were unnaturally accurate and hit really hard. Though it became apparent later on that all of these heavy artillery mechs benefited from the support of an unseen expert command mech, it was still a testament to their design that their performance could be elevated to this degree.

The unique and colorful expert mechs were even more fascinating. The expert rifleman mech that was able to make enemy ships retreat by setting them on fire attracted the most attention at this time as not even typical first-class mechs could accomplish this feat!

There were many other details about the mechs designed by Professor Larkinson that merited greater attention. The more attentive audience members could faintly perceive the strange auras of these quirky mechs across the live feeds. They did not know what made them so remarkable, but they yearned to take a closer look.

The more practical-leaning mech designers also developed a lot of appreciation for the masterwork mechs in action.

The fact that they were expert mechs that Professor Larkinson fabricated back when he was a Journeyman made them especially notable!

A lot of different students who had the opportunity to sign up for his Advanced Mech Fabrication course but decided to look elsewhere due to his poor background and nonexistent teaching experience all regretted their decisions.

If they knew that his masterwork mechs were so exquisite and full of charm while they were fully engaged in combat, they might have been able to learn a few tricks from the professor so that they could produce similar works!

Professor Larkinson finally resumed his lecture after making sure his ship wouldn't fall apart in an instant. Though the state of his ship and forces did not look good, they had already been fighting for a while. This battle should not end too quickly as long as no one made a serious error.

"Where was I? Ah, I remember. I talked about how each of us are in peril. From my perspective, it doesn't matter whether you are situated in a border colony or residing in the heart of Bridgehead One. Red humanity is surrounded by hostile alien threats. So long as our adversaries manage to break our defensive lines and shatter our main forces, all of us shall perish, no matter whether you are a Terran citizen or a third-class colonist. The aliens don't care about our states, our allegiances, our political opinions or our wealth. Our greatest foes only distinguish us by how much effort it takes to defeat us, that is all. The sooner you recognize that the aliens have put a gun on each of your heads, the sooner you recognize the reality of what it means to live in a frontier environment."

Just as he was about to address his next point, a student raised her arm.

Professor Larkinson gestured with his hand. "Miss Selene Di Ventura, what is it that you wish to ask?"

According to the student list that he studied a few days ago, the fifth-year business student was a civilian who also happened to be the daughter of a small logistics and transportation company.

Ves did not underestimate the status of such a figure at all. Anyone who was able to run any transportation company within the Terran Alliance had to be talented and well-connected.

Otherwise, it would have been too easy for other parties to snatch the transportation vessels that were in high demand!

The young woman who already possessed the bearing of a clever and thoughtful businesswoman smoothly rose to her feet.

"Professor, shouldn't your earlier description lead to greater cooperation within our society? If the aliens are truly capable of threatening all of us without exception, is that not an impetus for the Terran Alliance, the Rubarthan Pact as well as the Red Two to set aside their differences and cooperate more extensively with each other? While I agree that investing in newer and better technologies can offer us salvation, it takes years if not decades to build a tech lead that is commanding enough to turn the tide against our common enemies. Building a more unified military alliance takes a lot less time and can go into effect in a matter of months."

A lot of people nodded as they heard the business student's argument. Technological progress did not happen overnight. Even the scrappy humans from the Age of Stars had to bide their time for centuries before they mastered enough technologies to begin their legendary conquest of the Milky Way!

Novel Ves smiled back at his audience. "You make a good and logical point, but you are overlooking an issue that I have already alluded to. Let's say this integrated military alliance comes to pass. Will you allow your Terran mech units to follow the orders of a fleet admiral? Will you let Rubarthan mechs cover the evacuation route of your precious carriers? Will you agree to send a lot of forces to reinforce a strategic star system held by mechers but has turned into a meat grinder for the defenders?"

These were tricky scenarios that did not have any easy answers. Even Selene found it troublesome to offer the right answers at the moment.

However, she was a well-trained and highly augmented business student. She was able to move quickly on her feet.

"We can implement organizational rules and controls to ensure the military alliance will not treat any of its members unfairly. It is also not necessary for different forces to fight alongside each other. The main goal of the alliance is to make sure that red humanity presents a unified front with no gaps in our defensive lines."

Though her answer made sense, the professor shook his head in disapproval.

"I know a thing or two about alliances." He spoke. "A true military alliance is one that is based on trust. For example, the alliance partners that have been fighting alongside my clan for years are all brothers-in-arms who I can trust to cover my back without question. They have done far more than say platitudes. They backed up their claims and promises with deeds. Many soldiers have died in order to support us in real battle. Can you truly imagine a future where Terrans, Rubarthans, mechers and fleeters can join hands on the same battlefield and be willing to make actual sacrifices to defend their allies?"

No serious Terran could think this way. Even Selene could not bring herself to contradict the long-standing grievances between her people and that of the other human superpowers.

"It... will take great leadership and diplomacy to forge such an alliance." The young woman said.

Ves actually chuckled at this. "Dreams are cheap. You can come up with any idea you want, but if it is not sufficiently grounded in actual realism, then you will only be deluding yourself. Don't get me wrong, Miss Di Ventura. I am not necessarily objecting to your idea. I am just questioning its practicality. You see, the one factor that many people rely upon but is in particularly short supply is trust."

"Trust?"

"Correct. This is my second lesson to you all. Trust is one of the scarcest resources in the frontier. No one can fully trust anyone. I have already explained a part of the reason why that is so. Everyone is inherently selfish. If they can get away with backstabbing you, they will do so if the rewards exceed any possible repercussions that they may suffer. While it is a lot harder to get away with misdeeds in the well-regulated territories of the Milky Way, it is entirely different in the frontier."

The professor waved his arm around him as if to emphasize the ongoing the battle taking place around his ship.

"No one will go out of the way to save you or fall on your behalf if you end up in a disadvantageous situation. Do you know why? They are too busy trying to save themselves and take care of their own interests. This doesn't only count for external parties such as the Red Two, but also for internal parties such as your own government or even your own family organizations. If any of you think you can rely on your clan or company to do their best to save your hides when you are in danger, then you are a complete and utter fool!"

That provoked a reaction from many students. Many of them happen to be dependents of powerful organizations. To hear a professor put their background and relationships into question in such a blunt fashion was a controversial move to say the least!

Chapter 5135 Professor Larkinson's Third Lesson

Despite the transition to the Age of Dawn, it was still hard for most Terrans to feel too much urgency in their own situations.

Sure, the Devos Ancient Clan invested more in the defense of the New Constantinople System by building more overt defensive facilities across the planet, but much of this ongoing war preparation effort did not make the students feel overly threatened.

They were all highly skilled and highly educated talents. No matter whether they possessed civilian or clan backgrounds, each of them had already risen above the vast majority of ordinary colonists by virtue of getting accepted in a good educational institution.

In a society where the learning capabilities and the teaching effectiveness of an entire society was incredibly developed, the difficulty of getting into a serious university was exceedingly high!

If the Eden Institute of Business & Technology did not raise its educational standards to such a ridiculously high level, then pretty much any average Terran high school graduate would have been able to get accepted!

This was obviously not conducive to selecting the most competent and capable elites to form the next generation of leaders and other figures that could prop up the Terran Alliance.

It was due to their recognition of their own elevated status that the students all possessed the confidence that they would be able to get to safety before the 'common people'.

Even if a large fleet of alien warships appeared in the New Constantinople System without warning all of a sudden, the students and the professors of the Eden Institute should be among the first batches to get evacuated from the danger region!

What Ves tried to do was to pop this illusionary bubble. He wanted them to recognize that their importance might not be as great as they assumed.

Whether it was true or not, it was always a good idea for people to start thinking more proactively about their own agency rather than put their blind trust on their respective organizations!

"I rebelled against my own family." Ves plainly stated even as his ship was continuing to endure attacks from all sides. "I would have done decently if I just did what my family told me, but I would have never been able to uplift myself and my clan to this height in record time if I allowed myself to

be constrained by people whose interests are too far apart from mine and does not sufficiently support my endeavors. While I am not saying that you should learn from my example, my message to you all is that you should not put blind trust in the institutions that you depend upon. Each of them are fallible in their own ways. The best way to ensure that your own interests are being met is to build a group or organization that answers to you. That is what I have done."

The Terrans did not appear so receptive to his latest point.

Few if any of the people in the audience seriously entertained the idea of breaking off from the families or organizations that raised them and granted them so many conveniences in their lives.

Almost no one was able to attain success in the Terran Confederation by relying on themselves. Some form of backing was always essential for anyone to get ahead in a society that was far too intricately intertwined with ancient and highly established power blocs.

Ves understood this dynamic well enough. It was not his intention to make enemies with a lot of powerful Terran family organizations by turning their descendants into rebels.

He just wanted to shake up their mentalities and question whether it was in their best interest to remain on autopilot. It was not necessarily wrong for them to dedicate their lives to serving other people and organizations. Loyalty was a virtue and family was important.

What he did have a problem with was people who mindlessly allowed themselves to get exploited without receiving their due in return. Ves had already witnessed far too many individuals get screwed by the selfish or foolish decisions made by the leaders they trusted far too much.

After a brief moment, Ves moved on with his lecture.

"I won't go any further on this specific topic for today. It deserves a more in-depth discussion. Let's get back to the heart of this course. The Eden Institute agreed to let me teach you Frontier Wisdom because it recognizes that it is useful for you to learn to be more proactive in an age where a lot of new possibilities have opened up and where your safety can no longer be guaranteed as before. My course is particularly relevant to students who aspire to become a pioneer like myself and take their fates in their own hands."

The majority of students who enrolled in this course had no plans at all to become a pioneer and subject themselves to the risk of death like this daredevil of a professor!

After all, they were all studying to become mech designers or business executives. Once they graduated, they would go on to work in well-protected design labs or office buildings that were ideally far away from any battlefields.

Not everyone was necessarily like this. There were always dreamers among them who yearned for a better future than the trajectories they were supposed to follow.

The new professor had made a sufficiently powerful impression on at least a few students for them to consider this more dangerous but exciting alternative.

"At the start of this class, I mentioned the dire state of red humanity in the new frontier." Ves spoke. "My course is not designed to solve all of these difficult high-level problems. It is centered around

helping you navigate this dangerous frontier environment. In order to do that, we must begin with a basic model that ties all of my lessons together."

A new projection appeared that displayed numerous different keywords that all related to each other in one fashion or another. Each concept conveyed a lot of advantages and could form the basis of power of any organization.

Ves swept his hand towards the theoretical model.

"This is my third and final lesson for this session. Every actor in the frontier is stuck in a struggle for resources. Whether it is an individual mech designer like myself or a large colonial superstate like your Terran Alliance, we are all reliant on resources to build up our forces and increase our odds of survival. Even the aliens who occupy most of the Red Ocean are short on certain resources that can further their military advantage. One defining feature about the frontier is that while there is a persistent shortage of many resources, there are greater opportunities to obtain them on both an individual and collective basis."

One of the keywords lit up at this time.

"Manpower is one of the greatest shortcomings of red humanity. The aliens have many more bodies that can mine resources, produce goods, conduct research and crew their warships. While I am reasonably confident that we possess an advantage in top-level leader figures such as god pilots and Star Designers, it is physically impossible for us to negate this enormous disparity in numbers."

Another keyword lit up next.

"Territory is a clear basis of power, wealth, and other resources. Without territory, there is not enough room for people to live on. Without territory, we cannot support so many industries needed to produce our war machines. Without territory, we cannot harvest enough raw materials to raise new fleets and armies. The aliens hold an overwhelming advantage in this aspect as well, so we must cherish what little we have in our hands."

A third keyword started to glow.

"As I have said before, raw materials are needed to produce the assets we need to resist the alien onslaught. In addition, we need resources to develop our colonies and fuel our economies. On a more individual level, resources such as phasewater can help us get ahead of our rivals and enable us to challenge stronger enemies."

Professor Ves started to grin. "Phasewater is the most emblematic raw material in the new frontier. It is a resource that can strengthen and empower almost anything. It plays an essential role in fortifying defenses against alien aggressors. You can never have too much of it. A big reason why I have personally led numerous expeditions into the deeper parts of the frontier is because I have been able to harvest hundreds of kilograms of phasewater. Each time I obtain another cache of it, I can readily use them to fortify my starships and upgrade my mechs without worrying about running out of it anytime soon. Doesn't that sound nice to you all? Do you think that you can obtain so much phasewater by yourselves?"

A lot of students shook their heads. They may be Terrans, but even they could only dream of getting their hands on more than a couple of grams of phasewater!

"He is right." Polina Devonshire whispered to Klaus. "I have yet to truly begin my studies in phasewater theory and transphasic energy shields, but Master Laila Devos already told me that I will need access to significant amounts of phasewater to make future progress. I won't be able to conduct advanced research or develop new transphasic products if I don't have actual phasewater to work with. If I can't prove to my employers that I can attain good results in my work, it will be hard for me to obtain the resources I need to further my understanding of phasewater technology."

Klaus did not dare to think so far. "Phasewater is too expensive to make it accessible to us. The professor is right in this regard."

As the students all thought about the difficulty of gaining access to this all-important resource, Ves continued to hammer his point.

"Don't you think it is odd that a second-rater like myself is swimming with phasewater while most of you will be lucky to ever get your hands on a couple of drops? The reason why you can never get enough phasewater to support your own design or business ventures is because there are far too many powerful organizations and state institutions that have a need for this strategic resource as well. Those who hold greater power and closer access to phasewater will prioritize their own interests over yours without exception. This is the downside of being at the bottom of the totem pole. It will never be your turn to work with significant amounts of phasewater if you continue to follow the rules of your society. If you don't go out of your way to grab it yourself, then you deserve to have nothing to do with this scarce resource!"

His words struck a serious blow to the confidence of many students. More than a few of them aspired to work with transphasic technologies, but they were so expensive and high-end that the more established players in the mech industry and many other sectors already laid claim to every existing supply!

Under normal circumstances, it might take an aspiring transphasic system specialist such as Polina several decades to become qualified to lead her own phasewater-oriented projects.

It was not entirely certain whether that would happen at all due to the rapid changes taking place in red humanity's society.

Without access to sufficient quantities of phasewater, most mech designers would never have an opportunity to ride this trend and stand out among their rivals.

This was why several ambitious students started to reconsider the matter of becoming a pioneer.

Even if they had no intentions of accompanying expeditionary fleets into dangerous regions, it might still be profitable to fund their establishments and make subordinates work on their behalf!

More and more Terrans started to get around to the eccentric professor's viewpoint.

There were too few resources to satisfy everyone.

It was not a good idea to passively stand by and wait for stuff to trickle in. That would only maintain the status quo at best, but it would never allow them to get ahead and advance their greater interests!

There were many ways to address this inadequacy, and becoming a pioneer was just one of many possible solutions.

Nonetheless, more and more students started to appreciate those who have invested heavily into their pioneering organizations and got rewarded for their efforts.

Even though a lot of pioneers failed and suffered heavy losses as a consequence, those who succeeded such as their new professor had been able to make meteoric progress!

Chapter 5136 The Struggle For Resources

Ves glanced at the time. He knew he had to wrap up his lecture soon.

This was not necessarily because he was close to reaching the end of the time block for this lecture. He still had a lot of time to spare to hold a question and answer session after he wrapped up his presentation.

He already dropped enough bombshells for today.

He presented so many subversive ideas to these sheltered Terran students that they needed time to process his words before he could address any other related subject matters.

However, the more acute reason why he was eager to bring his inaugural lecture to a close was because the status quo on the battlefield was on the verge of breaking!

Although both sides managed to inflict serious damage on each other's starships, the enemy held a more decisive advantage due to their superior mobility characteristics.

Each time his mechs invested a lot of effort into breaking the defenses of an alien ship, the vessel in question would quickly retreat and pull away at a speed that the Spirit of Bentheim could not match!

This scumbag-like behavior frustrated Ves and the Larkinsons to no end because the alien vessels would always be able to restore their transphasic energy shields in peace before returning into battle again!

Only three yurzen destroyers had been forced to make a permanent exit in the running battle. They had opted to get closer in order to bring their shorter ranged armaments to bear, but that granted the Macharia Excelsia better opportunities to strike them with repeated heavy piercing blows!

The remaining alien vessels had learned their lesson from this incident and maintained a healthy distance from the human starship. This conservative approach drastically extended the duration of the ongoing pursuit, but it was the best way to preserve their numbers while guaranteeing victory over the long term.

The aliens bet that their persistent attacks would slowly grind down the defenses of the Spirit of Bentheim. From the way this lengthy fight had progressed so far, their gambit was about to pay off unless the Golden Skullers took action to turn the tides!

Ves proceeded to finish his current story.

"There are two more 'resources' that merit greater attention." He told his remote audience. "As mentioned before, technology, or rather knowledge, is our greatest advantage over the aliens. It can act as a powerful force multiplier that will enable us to defeat hundreds of alien warships with much less troops on our side. The battle that I am currently invested in is a typical example of that. Better tech can allow us to use much less resources to defeat many more numerous opponents."

He was right in a sense. Even if he also enjoyed an advantage in superior high-level manpower, the Spirit of Bentheim and her contingent of mechs clearly used up a lot less materials than their current adversaries!

The disparity in mass and volume could have become even greater if the professor employed proper first-class mechs and starships!

"Technology is one great advantage that we can leverage against our alien opposition." Ves spoke with a smirk. "The other is a powerful resource that few people know how to tap into. Our relative proximity to Messier 87 has given us access to exotic radiation. While I can't say anything about R particle radiation, we humans already possess a head-start in knowing how to leverage E energy radiation. It shares a complex relationship with mechs as well as other disciplines that are a bit more obscure. Let me ask you another question. Compared to the other resources that I have mentioned, what is the greatest advantage of E energy radiation?"

A fourth of the students who enrolled in the course raised their hands. Klaus did likewise at this time.

However, he did not get picked this time.

Professor Larkinson looked at another fourth-year student with greater interest. "I can sense you have a special relationship with E energy radiation, Mr. Sebastian Elkmar. Why don't you share your insight about this phenomenon with everyone."

Klaus knew his classmate fairly well. Sebastian was a member of the Elkmar Ancient Clan. He used to be a rather typical highborn Terran, but he has changed a lot since he returned after the start of the latest semester.

His entire vibe had undergone a huge change and his personality became different as well.

As Sebastian steadily stood up, he supplied a brief but correct answer. "E energy radiation is abundantly available. It can be accessed in any part of the Red Ocean. It can freely be drawn upon without paying any cost aside from depriving it from other nearby users. Its supply is virtually endless."

Ves nodded in agreement. "Correct. E energy radiation is almost the opposite of phasewater in that sense. It is a strategic resource that can act as an incredibly powerful force multiplier. However, the main limitation that prevents most of us from tapping into its potential is lack of technology rather than extreme scarcity of supply. We are literally being flooded by it day and night, but almost all of it is going to waste because too few people know what to do with all of this stuff."

This was true. Klaus and many of his classmates had yet to take any classes related to this new phenomenon because it was just too new!

Their professors were all working hard to figure out its properties and how to apply it in their existing works.

All of this took time, so the students had to wait at least a semester before the Eden Institute would be able to introduce courses on this new type of energy!

Sebastian Elkmar decided to ask a question this time.

"E energy radiation is widely available, but also challenging to control. How do you propose we make use of this resource, professor?"

Ves grinned once again. "There are many possible answers. Let me give you one that aligns most closely with my passion and my principles. E energy radiation is the most generous gift to the common folk because anyone can theoretically draw upon its power. As a mech designer, I am working hard to design mechs and other inventive solutions that can enable our population to make use of E energy radiation. Most people may be individually weak and not all that competent in this practice, but their power can reach frightening proportions once they form a collective. Let me give you a practical example of how clever usage of this resource can grant us an immense advantage in our ongoing war against the aliens."

He turned around and opened a few communication channels.

"Let's proceed with the next step of the plan."

"Acknowledged."

Although the current state of the Spirit of Bentheim looked dire, Ves did not enter this battle without preparing a few extra cards.

Part of the reasons why he did not use them sooner was because the purpose of this operation was to keep Stingray 2 and a significant chunk of yurzen starships away from the main alien raiding fleet.

If the Spirit of Bentheim did not show enough vulnerabilities to give the aliens enough hope of taking her down, the enemy vessels might turn back prematurely.

This was no longer a concern. When Ves switched his gaze to another projected feed, he could see that the main expeditionary fleet was finally about to close in and surround the original ambush site.

Stingray 1 and all of the heavier and less mobile yurzen warships would soon get attacked by a vastly superior allied mech force!

Even if Stingray 2 and her entourage of lighter yurzen warships turned back on this instant, it would be too late for them to make a difference!

As soon as Ves issued the command that many of his men were waiting for, a major event set in motion in a completely different zone.

Back in the Hex Federation, billions of Hexer colonists gathered together into organized groups and began to kneel in unison in front of projections of the ongoing battle.

The live feeds that were broadcasted throughout all of the settlements of the Hex Federation all centered around the Macharia Excelsia!

Right now, almost every single male and female Hexer prostrated and began to pray for victory for one of their ace pilots!

"ALL HAIL SAINTESS ULRIKA VRAKEN!"

"ALL HAIL THE PROTECTOR OF THE HEX FEDERATION!"

"ALL HAIL THE BLESSED CHAMPION OF THE SUPERIOR MOTHER!"

The rituals and prayers were not entirely consistent, but the massed prayer activity across an entire colonial state was so enormous in scope that the Hexers actually managed to induce a vague and mysterious reaction!

As Saintess Ulrika Vraken fought hard to deplete the transphasic energy shields of the enemy vessels, she began to feel a surge of power.

Her eyes widened a bit as she noticed that her exhaustion no longer dragged her down as much as before.

As the power surge continued to affect her in unknown ways, she felt that she had barely managed to tap into a pool of energy that was just begging to get used!

The problem was that Ulrika did not feel she was capable or suited to tap into this enormous well of energy.

As she tried to tap into this friendly but highly uncontrollable energy, her eyes began to glow like a goddess!

She experienced an enormous degree of strain that was so overwhelmingly powerful that she could feel something inside begin to break!

It was dangerous for her to remain in contact with the power of the collective hopes and prayers of the Hexer people for long!

Ulrika gritted her teeth and utilized her supremely strong willpower to forcefully endure the pain and concentrate on forming multiple firing solutions against the enemy ships that had no clue what was coming.

The ace pilot had been exchanging fire with them for several hours. She had long grown familiar with the movement patterns of each individual vessel. It took far less effort to prepare her firing solutions than at the beginning of the fight!

The Phase King also took action at this time. He invested all of his effort into amplifying the transphasic properties of the Macharia Excelsia's mech rifle to an even greater extent than before.

Once Ulrika was ready, she chose to pull the trigger of her supercharged Hexfire rifle not once, but six times in rapid succession!

"HEXERS SHALL REIGN SUPREME!"

Six bright explosions took place as the overcharged energy beams not only punched straight through the struggling transphasic energy shields of the targeted yurzen light cruisers, but also bore straight through their hulls and destroyed so many compartments and essential ship systems that the alien vessels got crippled at once!

The amount of operational alien vessels that were in the process of besieging the Spirit of Bentheim had dropped to just 12 all of a sudden!

This was not all. The plan prepared by the Golden Skullers included more than just the Hexers.

While Saintess Ulrika Vraken and her Macharia Excelsia demolished the yurzens, Ves had already shifted his attention towards Stingray 2.

He had long built up a lot of animosity towards this fiendishly advanced alien warship.

"Stark! Amaranto!"

"We are ready and waiting."

When Ves formed a connection with his most accurate long-ranged masterwork mech once again, he quietly transferred Blinky to the other side.

"Mrow!"

The mysterious gem set on the forehead of the Star Cat began to glow as the companion spirit tapped into Ves' accumulated Worclaw energy!

Though Ves still knew far too little about the nature of this foreign energy type, that did not stop him from using it to his own advantage.

Venerable Stark and the Amaranto were already somewhat acquainted with this extremely potent and violent type of energy.

They proficiently charged up the Instrument of Vengeance and channeled as much true resonance to it as possible!

Not only that, but the Illustrious One also came down and tried to bless the prime luminar crystal rifle as much as he could!

The energy vortex around the Amaranto grew larger and more active as the masterwork expert mech attempted to pile up as much energy in the supercharged attack as possible no matter the kind!

Once the weapon had reached its ultimate limit, Venerable Stark steadily pulled the trigger of her weapon as she had already formed her own firing solution.

"It's over." Stark whispered with absolute certainty in her voice.

A bright energy beam that looked and felt a lot different from the most recent volley of attacks surged out of the muzzle of the Instrument of Vengeance with fatal power.

The beam quickly zipped across space before anyone could blink their eyes and followed an arching trajectory before they collided against the multi-layered transphasic energy shields of Stingray 2!

Due to enduring a large quantity of attacks in the preceding hours, the defenses of the puelmer heavy cruiser were no longer in their prime condition.

Nonetheless, the intelligent aliens made sure to maintain a sufficient buffer in order to cope with any surprises.

Yet for all of their calculations, none of the puelmers expected the Amaranto to fire a shot empowered by a completely foreign energy type that was never included in their databases!

The power of this empowered composite energy beam attack was so great that it not only punched through all of the energy shield layers, but also struck a portion of the main thrusters of the enemy vessel before burrowing deeper inside the hull!

Due to the arcing trajectory of the energy beam, the strike damaged so many important ship systems that the vessel suddenly suffered a serious loss of firepower, defenses and mobility.

Although Stingray 2 still retained a part of her fighting capabilities, the sudden drop in comprehensive performance caused the alien ship to become heavily disadvantaged all of a sudden!

Meanwhile, everyone who witnessed all of this taking place from the auditorium of the Eden Institute became shocked at what had just occurred!

The Terrans had never witnessed such an unexpected turn of events in an ongoing battle!

Once Ves took in the outcome of these latest gambits, he smiled in satisfaction and turned towards his audience.

"That is how you beat the aliens. If you want to learn how to design mechs that can potentially produce comparable results, then I invite you to enroll in one of my other courses. Any questions?"

Chapter 5137 Blasting Lances

The aliens locked in a struggle against the Spirit of Bentheim received a massive blow that shocked them to the core!

The unexpectedly powerful outbursts from both the Macharia Excelsia and the Amaranto crushed their confidence and shocked them into retreat!

None of the humans knew whether any ranking alien commander issued a general retreat or whether the individual aliens spontaneously chose to pull back.

Whatever the case, as soon as 6 yurzen light cruisers and one crucial puelmer heavy cruiser sustained heavy damage from machines that were only a fraction of their size, the remaining n yurzen warships split up from each other and ran the hell away from the scary human capital ship!

Given how much of a scare all of those fleeing yurzens received, they might not stop warping away like their lives depended upon it until they finally exited the Corellix System entirely!

"Don't bother with chasing or eliminating the fleeing yurzen warships. The remaining destroyers and light cruisers are too fast for us to catch up to them." General Verle spoke over the command net. "Venerable Joshua, move out and neutralize the threat posed by Stingray 2 as best as possible. Prevent the ship from moving and disable her gun batteries with as minimal damage as possible. We will soon send out shuttles filled with small-scale bots to secure the interior."

"Roger that. I'm on my way!" Joshua reported as the Everchanger rocketed away from the scarred but indomitable Spirit of Bentheim.

"Venerable Brutus, Venerable Isobel, I need the two of you to move out and do the same for the six yurzen light cruisers struck by the Macharia Excelsia. Each of them have sustained heavy damage, but some of their gun batteries and other important modules are still working. Once you have taken care of them, we will dispatch boarding troops to clean up any remaining resistance inside the vessels and take them over if possible."

"Understood."

The Star Dancer Mark II and the Promethea both split up and confidently set out to disable the gun batteries and other threatening features from the crippled vessels.

Venerable Brutus Wodin had only played a relatively minor role in the battle so far, so he and his expert mech were still in good condition to handle the more intact and troublesome alien vessels.

Venerable Isobel Kotin and the Promethea had expended a lot more effort throughout the lengthy engagement, but it hardly mattered now that the tide had turned.

Exhausted or not, the Promethea was exceptionally suited to fight warships, especially now that the crippled vessels lost their transphasic energy shield coverage!

"Venerable Stark, please keep watch and remain vigilant for any ambushes and surprise attacks that may occur. The most notable threats that may emerge are the sudden launch of superweapons from a hidden archship or activation of exotic high technology from Stingray 2. We have deployed additional listening devices to increase our detection rate, but stay sharp."

"Acknowledged." The expert pilot spoke.

"Saintess Ulrika, please report your condition. Are you still in good fighting condition?"

A weary and pained female voice spoke back. "That... took more out of me than I expected. I can still fight if I have to, but I can't exert more than 20 percent of my peak ability at this time. I cannot even maintain my Saint Kingdom anymore."

General Verle frowned, though he had already been warned that this might happen.

"What is your estimate on your recuperation time?"

"Weeks. Maybe a month. I can't give you a more precise estimate."

"Understood. If possible, please remain visible and present a strong posture to anyone who may be watching. Even if our adversaries have guessed that you have lost most of your combat effectiveness, we still need to deter them as much as possible."

"I will do my best, but I won't be able to do the best possible job without an active Saint Kingdom."

While the expert mechs moved into action, the Spirit of Bentheim did not remain idle. The ship turned around and approached within 30 kilometers of Stingray 2 before deploying her Gravity Net.

This essentially prevented the damaged puelmer heavy cruiser from reengaging a warp drive or activating any other alien device that relied on spatial warping!

The battle on this side of the Corellix System had essentially come to an end. There was no chance for the crippled warships to make a comeback. The Golden Skull Alliance had built up a lot of proficiency on how to safely secure and capture damaged alien vessels, so unless the aliens blew up their own vessels somehow, there was little chance that any complications might occur."

The Transcendent Punishers all remained on standby while the expert mechs all undertook their own respective tasks.

The Larkinsons directed special attention towards Stingray 2. Venerable Joshua carefully disabled the gun batteries that were largely unable to track or threaten his expert mech.

At the same time, the Everchanger switched his design spirit to Lufa and amplified his glow to envelop the entire crippled and immobilized alien vessel.

The trapped puelmer crew members were probably unreconciled at their imminent defeat. They could be trying to overload their power reactors, arm any possible anti-matter bombs that the vessel might be carrying, wipe all of the data in their alien computer systems or try to board their escape vehicles.

Whatever the case, under the calming influence of the Angel of Tranquility, it became a lot harder for the defeated puellers to summon the desire to offer any further resistance!

Seeing that the situation on this side of the battlefield was under control, Ves relaxed and started to shift his attention to the much larger scale battle taking place close to the original ambush site.

The rest of the expeditionary fleet had begun its assault on the partially crippled Stingray 1 and the diminished yurzen raiding fleet.

The absence of a fair amount of destroyers and light cruisers did not seem to reduce the firepower of the main alien fleet too much, but the consequences were actually a lot more serious for the aliens in this confrontation.

This was because the smaller and faster warships were actually a lot more suitable to repel small craft!

The lack of a hefty amount of smaller and faster-firing gun batteries made it so that the tens of thousands of mechs approaching from a distance sustained a lot less interception fire than normal.

Although the remaining warships still possessed plenty of guns that could eliminate a mech with a single direct hit, the mech forces of the Golden Skull Alliance had scattered their units like usual to reduce the loss rate.

Having drawn a lot of lessons from their previous assault against the wheednar raiding fleet, the mech forces entered the fray with additional adaptations compared to last time.

For example, the mechs leading the charge this time consisted of lancer mechs that carried special armaments this time.

The familiar Transcendent Chargers flew alongside the Redlances that debuted in battle for the first time.

Regardless of their model, both groups of mechs were equipped with the specially developed transphasic blast lances at this time!

The Larkinson Clan invested 5 grams of phasewater in each of these special lances. Although Dulo Voiken and the Design Department held high expectations for this specialized shield-breaking weapon, it still remained uncertain whether they were worth the expense.

Compared to the Transcendent Chargers, the new Redlances held their transphasic blast weapons with greater confidence.

Their design spirits were entirely different!

While the Transcendent Chargers were more suitable to be deployed against mechs due to their greater precision, the Redlances were expressly designed to counter shielded warships due to receiving the support of the Phase King!

The Redlances soon overtook the other lancer mechs with the help of their more modern and powerful flight systems.

As the dozens of recently fabricated lancer mechs flew closer, they attracted more attention from the aliens. Stingray 1's impressively accurate secondary laser cannon batteries managed to down

seven Redlances alone before these new mechs had any opportunity to complete a single charge in their short lifetimes!

Fortunately, the quantity of mechs barreling forth was so exaggerated that the puelmer heavy cruiser spread its firepower and focused on eliminating other mechs as well.

This gave the remaining Redlances a good opportunity to close in on a large yurzen warship at an oblique angle and drive their exaggeratingly long blast lances into a segmented energy shield!

As the Redlances moved close enough, their sturdy lances collided against the energy shields with considerable force before unleashing transphasic directional explosions just an instant later!

As the segmented shield suffered a rapid succession of serious blows, the Redlances turned away and barely managed to prevent themselves from colliding against the energy shields with their frames.

After suffering several dozen transphasic explosions, the heavily abused segmented energy shield momentarily collapsed!

A momentary gap had emerged!

Before the alien vessel could attempt to close it by shifting another segment in its place, a handful of charging Redlances and Transcendent Chargers managed to pass through the main defensive layer of the yurzen warship!

"We're inside!"

"Let's wreck these gun batteries!"

Even though only a small amount of mechs got through, they enjoyed near-absolute superiority in the current situation!

Most of the large and powerful gun batteries were rendered completely defenseless as they were physically unable to track or angle their muzzles towards the fast-moving mechs.

The lancer mechs employed multiple lances to wreck the most threatening gun batteries before using a shorter and handier spear to destroy the remaining gun batteries!

Though the unprepared yurzens quickly tried to relieve their mech infestation by calling back a couple of squadrons of starfighters, they were unable to move past the entanglement of hundreds of other mechs that were eager to cut them down!

Elsewhere, the Golden Skullers intended to neutralize the threat posed by Stingray 1 as much as possible.

They already had a fairly good estimation of how powerful she was by studying the performance of Stingray 2.

While the ships possessed many individual differences, they both boasted a respectable amount of secondary laser cannon batteries that were good at taking out lots of mechs with precise but overwhelmingly powerful shots!

A lot of ranged mechs had already begun to open fire on Stingray 1, but the multi-layered transphasic energy shields of the puelmer homeship resisted the relatively weak attacks with remarkable efficiency.

The only standard mechs that were able to deal more effective damage against this vessel were the Nullifiers, but once Stingray 1 expressly concentrated her fire against the elite Battle Crier mechs, the transphasic rifleman mechs quickly started to drop!

The Nullifier Battalion hastily aborted its attack and pulled back before it lost too many of its elite mechs and mech pilots.

"Leave Stingray 1 to our ace mechs. The Jedda Sandivar and the Royal Jeem are enough to contain this puelmer warship."

This was true to an extent. Without the support of the Macharia Excelsia's firepower, it would take a much longer time to exhaust Stingray 1's defenses. The puelmers would have plenty of time to employ all sorts of dangerous countermeasures over the course of this fight!

This was why a certain expert pilot decided to step forward and propose an alternative solution.

"Leave Stingray 1 up to me!" Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson spoke. "I can take her down myself! I just need to make my Dark Zephyr bypass the enemy ship's energy shields."

"Are you being serious, Venerable Tusa?! Your expert mech did not receive any recent upgrades that suggests that it has gained this capability."

"That's because it's not necessary. I can do it myself. Believe in me! It won't take long to see whether I'm right or wrong. I am already closing in on Stingray 1!"

As the Dark Zephyr danced around the laser beams that sought to intercept the elusive expert light skirmisher, Tusa actually could not guarantee that he would be able to do what he claimed.

Nonetheless, the expert pilot boldly charged forward as he was determined to succeed this time!

Chapter 5138 Freedom Fighter

Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson resonated with his Dark Zephyr to the utmost as he concentrated on how to overcome his latest challenge.

The expert pilot had been searching for a way to make himself more relevant in battles against warships for a long time.

No matter whether the Dark Zephyr received his long-awaited upgrade or not, a light skirmisher simply did not possess the hard power needed to effectively breach the ubiquitous transphasic energy shields that so many alien warships possessed!

Any other mech at the same level could do a much better job than a machine that primarily wielded a pair of short weapons.

Although Tusa knew that he could make his expert mech a little more suitable for the job by switching to a heavier and more powerful weapon loadout, he instinctively resisted such a shift.

This was not because he disliked making greater contributions for the clan. He just felt that he would be turning his back on his true self if he diverged from the archetype of a light skirmisher.

Expert pilots needed to stay true to themselves. This was why Tusa opted to focus on learning how to defeat alien warships in his own way as opposed to resorting to other solutions that were much less perfect.

The Shadow Dance that he had been obsessed with as of late offered a small amount of hope of being able to bypass the shields.

As long as a practitioner completely immersed himself into shadow, he could theoretically become as insubstantial as one!

However, turning into a literal shadow was far easier said than done. It demanded a lot of training as well as a lot of comprehension of the nature of shadow.

Tusa had thought long and hard about embracing the power of shadow even further in order to gain the qualifications to pull off the most advanced techniques of the Shadow Dance.

However, his latest sparring session against Ketis ultimately caused him to reevaluate his fighting style and his approach towards combat.

The enlightenment fruit gifted by Ves had opened Tusa's perspective on how he could utilize his power a lot better.

However, Ketis was right that the foreign knowledge had also led him to turn away from his original fighting style and methods.

Expert pilots needed to stay true to themselves.

Tusa had often heard this adage from the advice given by older high-ranking pilots, but he had somehow overlooked it in his greed for power.

"No more."

He acknowledged that the shadows had become a part of his life, but that did not mean it represented his best and strongest aspects.

He had always yearned to be free and move without any constraint. During some of his live practice sessions with the Dark Zephyr, he often liked to fly around at high speed until his expert mech started to run low on energy.

Even though he did not get that much done during these extended flight sessions, Tusa still experienced a lot of peace and enjoyment in these times.

"YOU HAVE MADE THE RIGHT DECISION, TUSA." The Dark Zephyr spoke as the expert light skirmisher continued to close in on Stingray 1. "YOU ARE NOTICEABLY MORE PASSIONATE WHEN YOU ARE TRYING SO HARD TO EMBRACE THE SHADOWS."

"I would have thought you would have liked that more considering your name."

"I DID NOT CHOOSE THIS NAME."

The Dark Zephyr had grown alongside Tusa for years. The machine fed off him and evolved to complement his pilot even better than before.

Although the mech recently acquired a touch of the element of shadow, he still retained much of his original character.

Now that Tusa fully returned to his original self, he felt that he was able to resonate with his expert mech considerably better than before.

This encouraged him to commit to this action even more!

As the Dark Zephyr rapidly tried to close in on his target, Stingray 1 already became embroiled in a dance with the Jedda Sandivar.

The ace light skirmisher of the Adelaide Third Fleet had caught up to the maneuvering puelmer heavy cruiser a lot faster than any other machine!

Saint Marissa Lewandowski had already activated her smokey domain field, which readily engulfed the entire alien vessel and drastically reduced her ability to shoot down mechs!

Although the puelmer warship oddly managed to continue with shooting down mechs by relying on targeting data collected through other means, the Jedda Sandivar still played an extensive role in reducing the threat posed by this technologically advanced vessel!

Venerable Tusa was able to charge forward with greater confidence for that reason. Whatever attacks the debilitated warship launched at his Dark Zephyr did not even come close to striking his machine.

As his expert light skirmisher continued to advance, Tusa tried his best to succeed with his next move.

He took a huge risk by deciding to charge towards the enemy vessel at a steep angle!

This not only increased the chance of a painful and damaging collision, but also made it a lot harder to split away at the last second.

Tusa intentionally wanted to corner himself in order to make sure he fully committed to this course of action!

The risk of causing his Dark Zephyr to collide almost straight onto a solid transphasic energy shield like a giant projectile was not light, but it was the only way he could think of to squeeze out the utmost of his potential!

Even though the yurzen raiding fleet had become a lot less dangerous and threatening now that the Spirit of Bentheim had drawn away Stingray 2 and a bunch of lighter alien warships, pilots such as Tusa still had ways to raise the stakes and press themselves to their limits!

"Come on, Blackwing! Let's do this together!"

"Chip chip!"

Tusa's avian companion spirit emerged from his head and began to inhabit the Dark Zephyr's flight system.

This caused the expert mech to move a little more vigorously than before!

"Trisk! Work with me on this. Let's show our entire clan that fast and light mechs can beat these alien warships as well!" "Chirrup!"

One of the two design spirits of the Dark Zephyr began to actively channel a greater proportion of her power into the expert mech.

This not only helped Tusa enter into the right mindset, but also caused the expert mech to move as if it had lost a bit of mass!

With the help of these additional spirits, Tusa and the Dark Zephyr fell into sync and unified their thoughts on only a single purpose.

They wanted to get past the powerful energy barriers that Stingray 1 relied upon to resist all of the attacks that kept the human mechs at bay!

Tusa's willful actions attracted a lot of concern from other Larkinsons, but the expert pilot ignored all incoming transmissions.

He was determined to prove his worth and capabilities!

Just because the much more powerful Saint Marissa Lewandowski and her blazingly fast Jedda Sandivar were incapable of bypassing Stingray 1's energy shields did not necessarily mean that he was subject to the same restrictions.

As the Dark Zephyr was on the verge of colliding against the outermost layer of transphasic energy shields, Tusa came to a sudden realization.

"Freedom has no limits!"

Shortly after that, the expert mech plunged into the Jedda Sandivar's obscuring Saint Kingdom and disappeared from everyone's sight!

Only Saint Marissa Lewandowski knew what happened to the incoming expert light skirmisher. She stayed silent for a few seconds before she took the initiative to withdraw a part of the insubstantial smoke that blocked everyone's vision.

Her ace mech tipped the veil just enough to reveal that Stingray 1 remained in the same condition as before.

The Dark Zephyr had not affected the multi-layered transphasic energy shields in the slightest!

"Where's Tusa? Where is his expert mech?!"

It took only a short time later for the Dark Zephyr to reappear in everyone's sight.

Much to the surprise of many skeptical and doubtful observers, the Dark Zephyr actually appeared on the other side of the energy shields!

The expert light skirmisher did not exhibit any sign that it had smashed through any strong barriers. Its frame remained completely untouched by any collisions or other adverse consequences.

"Tusa... succeeded! He actually did it! He somehow phased through not one, but several transphasic energy shields!"

As the Larkinsons and their allies were just beginning to register the magnitude of Venerable Tusa's accomplishment, the expert pilot himself was trying his best to recover from his earlier exertion while preventing the puelmer homeship's tertiary gun batteries from swatting down his machine.

Despite his worsened condition, joy and jubilation welled up inside his heart.

"We did it, partner! We actually did it! We leapt past all of those energy shields!"

"WE DID. I KNEW WE COULD DO IT. YOU JUST HAD TO FOLLOW YOUR HEART."

Most people thought that the Dark Zephyr had essentially phased through the energy shields similar to how Lucky phased through a wall.

Only Tusa and his partners knew that this was not quite accurate.

He did not pull off a spatial technique per se. He did not borrow any help from the Phase King, but instead aligned himself to Trisk.

As a design spirit, Trisk never attracted as much attention as her more high-profile peers such as Lufa and Helena.

However, Ves originally birthed her out of the spiritual remains of the Inexorable One!

These extraordinary ancient alien roots granted Trisk certain qualities that elevated her own domain and specialties.

It was through Trisk that Tusa was able to deepen his insights on the power of freedom and gain the additional support he needed to perform a true leap through space.

Although Tusa was not a scientist, from his perspective his Dark Zephyr had somehow ignored every wall, barrier or obstacle that could inhibit his passage and went through like they did not exist!

This was a greater form of movement that was not reliant on spatial manipulation or the power of phasewater.

It was a pure expression of transcendent freedom that momentarily liberated Tusa and the Dark Zephyr from any chains that anchored him from not just the material realm, but all of the other realms, which was why not even transphasic barriers could play a useful role!

"STOP BASKING IN YOUR GLORY AND GET TO WORK, TUSA!"

"Ah, yes. I'm on it!" Venerable Tusa quickly shook his head and began to take advantage of his highly advantageous position.

Just like any other warship, Stingray 1 possessed little means to repel small craft that had come close enough to stand on her hull.

The only gun turrets that could reasonably threaten the Dark Zephyr were the tertiary gun batteries, but they were so weak and inadequate that the expert light skirmisher could easily resist any attack that he was unable to avoid for whatever reason!

Instead of trying to knife down all of the gun batteries one by one, the expert mech pulled out the transphasic grenades stored in his bandoliers and started to toss them across the surface of the hull!

Multiple explosions occurred on several sides as the Dark Zephyr's explosive arsenal disabled or heavily damaged dozens of deadly gun batteries!

The expert light skirmisher soon held a pair of knives before beginning to savage the gun turrets that had survived his initial attack.

The unfortunate puelmer vessel launched highly agile missiles and employed several other solutions to shake the Dark Zephyr away, but none of these measures succeeded in taking down an expert light skirmisher that was too fast and too close to properly target!

"Hahaha!" Venerable Tusa laughed with glee as his machine destroyed one important ship module after another. "This is how a light mech should fight! A light skirmisher like mine should be busy with targeting alien warships where they are weak. There's no need for me to waste my power on destroying those annoyingly tough shields!"

Tusa felt as if he had undergone a rebirth. Shadows no longer clouded his will any longer. He had managed to embrace his freedom once again!

Chapter 5139 End Of Class

The outcome of the main battle against Stingray 1 and her remaining yurzens escorts was never in doubt.

Once the aliens took the bait and split up their warships in order to chase after the Spirit of Bentheim, the ships left behind did not have the numbers to resist several mech divisions as well as two ace mechs.

However, the losses were still bound to be serious, especially if the technologically advanced puelmer heavy cruiser was given a chance to fire her gun batteries for an extended period of time.

Her weapon systems were a lot more accurate and precise than the warship armaments of other races!

The planners and officers of the Golden Skull Alliance already budgeted for all of the casualties inflicted by the puelmer homeship.

Just because the Phobos managed to cripple her warp drives did not mean her other systems dropped in performance.

So long as her shield generators and gun batteries remained intact, she could still function as a relatively mobile gun platform that could resist a lot of attacks while dishing out a lot of punishment in return!

While the expert mechs and ace mechs of the Golden Skull Alliance could easily evade or resist these powerful attacks, the same could not be said for all of the other mech units!

It therefore came as a pleasant surprise to everyone that Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson overcame the alien homeship's powerful barriers far sooner than projected!

No one cared that the Dark Zephyr's success could not be replicated by any other machine.

So long as just a single mech managed to get this close to the hull of an alien ship, the latter had already been checkmated!

It just took a decent amount of time and effort for the expert light skirmisher to thoroughly disable Stingray 1's gun batteries, thrusters, and any shield generators that the mech could reach without inflicting excessive damage to the valuable prize.

In any case, now that the Dark Zephyr was in the process of crippling Stingray 1 with impunity, the remaining mech pilots could breathe much easier now that the greatest threat had been taken off the board!

"Damnit, the yurzens are making a run for it! They've completely given up any pretense of defending Stingray 1! They are already splitting off in different directions while activating their warp drives!"

"Stop them as much as possible! Forget about chasing after the larger and more well-defended yurzen warships. It takes too much effort for most of our mechs to overcome their defenses. The Penitent Sisters and Glory Seekers must launch their battle formations as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the remaining units should focus their attacks on the smaller vessels!"

The yurzens still had too many ships for the mech forces to immobilize all of them. The mechs of the expeditionary fleet could inflict a lot of damage if they concentrated their firepower, but that still left many alien ships free to warp out of range and make their way out of the Corellix System without suffering any further damage!

Although the expeditionary fleet could still pursue a handful fleeing alien ships by sending superdrive-equipped carriers after them, there were too few of the latter to make this worthwhile.

No matter what, alien warships were still highly capable of beating up starships with their formidable primary gun batteries!

The cleanup continued after the outcome of the battle was decided a lot sooner than everyone expected.

The Jemma Sandivar and the Royal Jeem contributed significantly to the capture of several fleeing warships. Since the two ace mechs were no longer needed to contain Stingray 1, they fully unleashed their superior might against the inferior yurzen warships that showed far too little will to fight!

Back at the Spirit of Bentheim, Ves smiled a little brighter when he saw that the main enemy raiding fleet had fallen apart.

Though he felt a little annoyed that the yurzens showed a lot less spine than the wheednars, Stingray 1 at least fell into the hands of the Golden Skull Alliance. The value of this single sub-capital ship far exceeded that of a dozen yurzen warships!

Ves no longer needed to pay attention to the situation in the field anymore. He could devote most of his attention to answering the questions of the students who attended his first lecture.

Of course, the question and answer session was restricted to the 250 students who actually enrolled for his Frontier Wisdom course. If he had to answer the questions of the tens of thousands of other students, he would probably remain stuck here all day!

One of the students sitting in the auditorium of the Eden Institute rose up after Ves granted her permission to speak.

"Can I ask why you have placed yourself in personal peril when it is not entirely necessary for a mech designer to accompany a ship entering into lethal combat? What is your rationale? Do you place so much importance into building up an image of a warlord? Do you recommend that other pioneers learn from your example?"

Ves smiled back at his remote audience. "There are many reasons why I chose to lead from the front. Frankly speaking, none of you will fully be able to understand the benefits of doing so unless you put yourself in the same position. I have reserved a greater discussion on proper risk management in a future lecture. I can promise you that you will fully be able to understand my reasoning by then. Before any of you form any misunderstandings, I do not want all of you to board

a ship and head straight into the deep frontier. This is a lifestyle and a vocation that is only reserved for a small minority of individuals who are deeply unsatisfied with their existing circumstances and are willing to resort to desperate measures to jump out of their cages."

That was far too little information to satisfy the people who wanted to know the answer, but Ves was not willing to give out any spoilers for any future lesson content.

A certain student looked a lot more eager to ask his question than his other peers. He was practically hopping on his seat while stretching his arm out as far as possible!

Ves inwardly grinned at the sight and decided to indulge the fellow. "Mr. Klaus Robar-Fulton, what is it you would like to ask?"

Though the student was filled with excitement, he still knew how to present himself with decorum like a proper Terran.

"Professor Larkinson, we have all seen a small amount of your impressive works in action. How much do your mechs and expert mechs depend on your Class IX design philosophy and excellent craftsmanship to exceed the performance of other comparable second-class mechs?"

Ves chuckled a bit. "I see that you have enrolled in my other two courses as well. You should be able to obtain a complete answer once you have finished them. In short, all of the mechs you have seen aside from the ace mech are largely powerful due to the extensive growth they have experienced. Just like their pilots, these machines have served for years and survived numerous battles. The qualities that I have endowed them with has enabled them to grow independently and alongside their pilots, thereby causing them to evolve in ways that make them more effective in future engagements. I know this might sound crazy to most of you, but that is the nature of a Class IX design philosophy."

"Will we be able to learn enough about your design philosophy to design a similar mech that can grow like your work?" Klaus quickly asked a second question.

"That is a complicated question." Ves replied. "I have yet to realize my design philosophy, so it is a lot harder for me to pass on my teachings than is the case with your other professors. Designing a living mech is not a requirement to pass my course. Otherwise its title wouldn't have included 'Introduction to'. However, in my experiences with sharing my design philosophies with my collaborators, it is certainly possible for students such as yourself to design a basic mech that is 'alive' in a certain sense of the word. You do not need to adopt my design philosophy to make that happen. You can remain committed to your own chosen specializations. You only have to keep an open mind towards my teachings."

Klaus looked satisfied with the answers and sat down again. He actually wanted to ask a lot more questions based on his observations of the previous battle, but he knew that he would have to wait until his next classes had begun before he could obtain more answers.

Although the Terran student had no idea whether he was even suited to design mechs like the ones he had witnessed earlier, he could not deny his attraction towards them. Second-class mechs or not, their handsome appearances and their notably high effectiveness in combat appealed to him as an aspiring mech designer!

Compared to dedicating his career to a more boring and mundane specialization like sensor systems, he felt obviously more attracted to designing mechs that were not only a lot better put together, but could also grow more powerful by themselves!

The professor might not have elaborated on it, but Klaus was still clever enough to figure out that a key advantage to designing a self-growing mech was that its performance could match that of much more expensive products over time!

This was a pretty cheap way to increase the competitiveness of his own products. Sure, the part about needing years of growth in order to make his mechs powerful enough to put up a good fight against other industry-standard products was a pretty big downside, but it offered him an opportunity to occupy a niche in the lower end of the Terran Alliance's mech market!

Of course, before he could start a viable mech business based on self-evolving mechs, he first needed to raise the capital and build up the connections needed to make that happen.

Professor Larkinson already selected another student.

"Mr. Ryan Shuku, what is your question?"

The scion of an ancient clan rose up and spoke up in a dignified manner.

"The mechs that you have demonstrated to us display combat capabilities that are far in excess to what their apparent designs and construction are presumably able to produce. I understand that your unconventional design philosophy plays a large role in that, but it is clear that additional variables have also affected their damage output. How replicable are they and will you teach the skills needed to impart these strengths in our own works?"

Ves felt pleased that he had managed to arouse the interest of a more important Terran student.

Although he was committed to treating his students fairly, he could not overlook the prominent status of a member of an ancient clan.

As long as he was able to form an amicable relationship with such students, Ves could easily take advantage of these connections once he was ready to be promoted to a first-class mech designer!

Possibilities like these were part of the reason why he worked so hard to obtain a teaching position in a first-class university.

"A lot of the more notable properties displayed by my mechs indeed go far beyond just living mechs. I cannot elaborate on them further because they are part of my proprietary trade secrets. There are even aspects of my work that I cannot openly divulge because the Red Two prefer not to spread certain pieces of information. Knowledge is power. A university is normally a place where it is shared freely, but not all of it can be shared without consequences. I can tell you that I have learned a lot of forbidden knowledge throughout my expeditions. This is a partial answer why I am so eager to go on expeditions. The frontier holds many secrets, and as long as you are able to stumble upon them yourself, no one can keep it away from your hands."

Chapter 5140 Pedagogic Mindset

The Battle of Corellix came to a fairly satisfying conclusion.

Stingray 1 and Stingray 2 both fell into the hands of the Golden Skull Alliance while remaining mostly intact.

Around 2 yurzen battleships, 17 yurzen cruisers and 12 yurzen destroyers turned into prizes as well, though their conditions were so mixed that a few vessels were literally on the verge of falling apart!

Aside from that, the expeditionary fleet also gained access to a decent amount of additional wreckage, although it would be a lot more troublesome to extract value from these broken pieces.

The battleships burned by the Promethea particularly had to be discounted due to how much her domineering flames had burned so much tech and valuable materials!

Nonetheless, any salvage was worth money no matter how much its condition had degraded. There was always a market for large quantities of metals in a society that was chronically short on materials to further its vital military and industrial buildup.

One of the more pleasant bonuses of this operation was the unexpected discovery and capture of a damaged but still-operational archeship.

The Diligent Ovenbird had already scooped up the ship that Lucky single-handedly secured in one of her warm 'ovens'.

The biggest fly in the ointment was the fact that a lot of yurzen warships managed to escape the range of all of the mechs and warped away like no tomorrow!

The expeditionary fleet did not possess the capabilities to chase after all of these fleeing alien vessels, especially when they split in dozens of different directions as they made their way out of the Corellix System.

The Golden Skull Alliance could do little to these cowardly aliens aside from adopting a defensive posture to protect all of the captured prize ships and salvageable debris.

After all, the alien warships could easily regroup and turn around again as soon as the expeditionary fleet became vulnerable again!

Ves knew that the Battle of Corellix still produced far better results than typical engagements against alien fleets.

Most pioneering forces had to invest a huge amount of effort to even force an alien fleet into battle.

Even then, without implementing thorough means to limit the operation of enemy warp drives, the aliens always had the option of beating a quick retreat from the moment they started to enter into a losing position!

All of this highlighted the importance of adopting warp drives or superdrives. Without more ships like the Spirit of Bentheim that could at least keep up with some of the alien ships in warp, it would always be difficult for human forces to force their adversaries into standing battles!

He could worry about these issues later.

While the expeditionary fleet had already started to undertake search, rescue and capture operations, Ves continued to communicate with the Terrans that were situated far away from the battlefield.

His explosive inaugural lecture had finally come to an end.

Many eager, excited and inspired students steadily filed out of the auditorium and discussed what they witnessed during the battle.

Ves felt quite satisfied at the outcome of this highly publicized lecture. He had basically managed to meet all of the goals that he strived for when he dared to do this in the middle of a dangerous engagement.

Hardly any Terrans looked down on him as a second-rater anymore. While the class difference could not be erased, the first thoughts that came to mind when they thought about 'Professor Larkinson' was that he was a courageous warlord who dared to fight against alien warships at close range!

In a society that heavily revered heroes and successful leaders, Ves had ensured that he would always stand out among the other professors in a positive fashion!

He managed to win over the respect of most of his students. Even if he did not hold another lecture during a serious battle in the future, this memorable event would always form a part of his constantly expanding myth!

After the conclusion of his first question-and-answer session, the projection of Ves moved backstage where he met with a satisfied dean.

"Excellent job, Professor Larkinson. You have made a better impression than I anticipated." Master Laila Devos spoke with a smile. "I expected you to employ your typical evocative presentation approach that you have demonstrated in your prior public appearances, but your ability to connect with our Terran students is remarkable."

Ves mostly shrugged. "I am sure those young professionals are all capable of speaking just as well in public. I mainly relied on two factors to compensate for my shortcomings. First, I prepared for this occasion well in advance, taking special care to learn what my students are like and what subjects might hold their interest. Second, I exploited the battle on my end to turn this lecture into a unique and unheard of spectacle. If I did not go through such extremes to capture the respect and imagination of my students, I probably don't deserve to speak in front of most of your student body."

The Terran Master Mech Designer's demeanor turned more serious.

"You have a sober perspective on your position. That is good. I feared that you may have developed an inflated opinion of yourself after holding just a single class. Effective teachers have no need to rely on stagecraft to convey their lessons to their pupils. Their theories, their stories and the manner in which they communicate their wisdom are the criteria that truly matters in our teaching profession."

He nodded in agreement. "Don't worry. I do not plan to do anything exciting for my next lessons. I actually have to teach a lot about mech design in my other two courses, and I can't do so when my ship is under heavy fire. I only really needed to do this once. I am well aware that the vast majority of Terrans are not suited for the active life that I have chosen for myself."

The expression of Master Devos grew sterner at the mention of the possible example that he had set for the student body.

"This is one of the subjects that I need to discuss with you. Many of our best and most prized students are members of prominent clans, families and other long-standing organizations. Each of their heritages and traditions go back for centuries or millennia. One of the many reasons why they have lasted to the present day is how they have carefully planned the educations and careers of their

descendants. As a professor of the Eden Institute of Business & Technology, it is your responsibility to teach the knowledge set in the curriculum of your courses. It is not your responsibility to be their parent or career advisor. We especially do not want to hear you encourage our students to rebel against their own clans and set off into the deep frontier in a misguided attempt to make their lives more meaningful."

He could tell that Master Devos was truly upset about this issue. Ves admitted to himself that it might not have been politically correct for him to subtly instigate rebellion in a culture that placed an extremely high importance in respecting long-standing traditions and conforming to the established hierarchy of Terran society.

"I will pay more attention in this area." He promised to his direct superior. "I already planned to add more nuance on this subject in a future lecture. It is almost impossible for individuals to become a pioneer and build up an entire fleet by themselves. They will most certainly need a lot of backing to acquire the mechs, starships, personnel, funding and other necessities to explore the frontier. I cannot avoid this subject matter entirely, though. My Frontier Wisdom course is primarily aimed at students that intend to work in this dangerous sphere in one capacity or another."

The older mech designer accepted this response.

παΠδσNovel "There is indeed a place in our institute for a course such as yours. That said, please transmit your lesson plans for your upcoming lecture of this course to my address. I am not doubting you, but I must exercise due diligence to ensure your intentions align with ours. We have already started to receive complaints from concerned clans about your more problematic messages."

That sounded dangerous to Ves. A lot of Terran clans held a lot of power, wealth and influence. He did not want to add another bunch of powerful enemies to his list!

"Am I in trouble, Master Devos?"

"No. We are well-equipped to handle the complaints ourselves. We are fulfilling our responsibility as your employer. This is how it works. We hired you to become our professor because we want you to share your message to our students. If you ever say anything that is controversial, the principal fault lies with us because we have selected you in the first place."

"I... see."

"We still have limits, mind you. If your speeches diverge completely from the curriculum and the regulations that we have set, it is you who will be at fault. Our institution will not shield a professor who deliberately tarnishes our reputation, do you understand?"

The Eden Institute wouldn't hesitate to sacrifice Ves if he put his foot in his mouth and stirred up too much trouble!

All of this sounded fair to him. He held no resentment towards the school for setting a limit to their tolerance. Professors were never supposed to act like egotistical problem children.

"I promise that I will be on my best behavior." Ves responded and bowed.

"Good. Let us move on to a more pleasant topic." The Master began to smile again. "The demand to attend your courses has skyrocketed after you have concluded your lecture. We are receiving

thousands of requests to reopen the enrollment window for not just your Frontier Wisdom course, but also your other two ones. As the man in charge of all three of them, I will leave the decision up to you. Are you willing to make a late adjustment and expand the size of your classes?"

This was a difficult issue for Ves to decide upon. He would love to come into contact with more students in a semester. The more Terrans he taught, the more extensively he could build his network in the Terran Alliance!

However, Ves did not allow his initial success in his teaching career to give him any delusions about his actual teaching ability.

He had no idea how many students he could effectively handle in any of his classes.

His workload would also increase a lot if he had to become responsible for double, triple or quadruple the amount of brats who signed up for his courses!

"Let's keep the current numbers for now." Ves decided. "As you have already said before, rules are rules. Those students already had their chance and wasted it. The fact that they have missed the enrollment window is a consequence of their own lack of judgment and analytical ability. If they are still interested in my courses, they can always try to sign up for them before the start of the next semester."

"Well said, Professor Larkinson. You are already starting to apply a pedagogic approach to your decision-making. Everything we do in our institute is for the purpose of preparing the next generation of mech designers, businessmen and other professionals to adequately assume the burden of progressing our civilization. This has become an even more acute priority now that we have completely lost the ability to transfer fresh personnel from the Milky Way Galaxy."

Master Laila Devos expressed a consistent concern for the future of red humanity.

As an educator, she was very cognizant of how much of a difference she could make in the transformation of the naive young adults of today into the visionary leaders of human society of tomorrow!

Ves couldn't help but become affected by the Master Mech Designer's earnest goals and aspirations. Teaching was a noble profession. He felt honored for being given the opportunity to correctly shape the minds of so many young students!