

The Mech 5391

Chapter 5391 Mystery Box Mech

Ark and Benjamin gained a thorough enough understanding of the Jupiter Project and the Blood Star Mark II Project.

They became amazed at all of the amazing tech and dazzling promises. The two new designs possessed so many features that they exceeded the scope of a typical high-tier expert mech.

This was an expression of Ves' love and affection towards his family. He wanted to equip Ark and Benjamin with the best possible mechs that the Larkinson Clan could supply at this point.

All of the additional months and all of the resources committed to these two expert mech design projects would eventually pay off in spades.

A part of him couldn't wait to realize these two fantastic machines and enable his two older relatives to truly take off in their respective careers as mech pilots!

After so many years, Ves would finally be able to complete one of his long-held aspirations as a mech designer.

His father already made use of the Devil Tiger.

Once his uncle and his grandfather received their own powerful living mechs, Ves would gain a lot of satisfaction knowing that his work would be responsible for protecting and realizing the dreams of his older blood relatives!

The sense of satisfaction that he could gain from this was far greater than selling millions of mechs to random customers.

As much as he derived a sense of accomplishment from becoming a commercially successful mech designer, nothing could beat the happiness of meeting the needs of his own family members.

He understood a lot better now why Ketis cared so much about designing mechs for the Swordmaidens.

As the lengthy explanation session came to a close, General Ark asked a seemingly simple question that actually touched upon a surprisingly convoluted subject.

"Which of these expert mechs are stronger?"

Both Ves and Gloriana exchanged glances with each other.

"It is not easy for us to answer this question." Gloriana replied first. "Our approach for the Jupiter Project is based on a solid idea and vision. We have access to a large amount of current information about your piloting style and so on. You also have strong and well-defined ideas on what you seek from your expert mech and what you expect to do with it. Based on your role as a command-oriented expert pilot that prefers to lead from the front, we developed the Jupiter Project to maximize your well-known strengths to the greatest extent possible. It is a design that has relatively few mysteries. We have a high degree of confidence in the predictions that we have made about its performance."

Much of this had to do with the fact that Gloriana was in charge of this project from beginning to end. Though Ves contributed substantially to this expert mech design, he respected the voice of his wife and deferred to her whenever they disagreed on a contentious design choice.

"The Blood Star Mark II is the opposite in this regard." Ves spoke next. "Grandpa, you have retired from the battlefield for more than half a century. While we can still listen to your old war stories and access old archival footage of some of your battles, so much time has gone by that it is not a good idea to put so much weight on all of this old stuff. You have gained a fresh start, so your expert mech should take that into account and present you with a blank platform where you can formulate a new fighting style that fits your present circumstances a lot better."

Venerable Benjamin adopted an understanding expression. "Is that why my expert mech is lacking in explosive equipment?"

"Yes. We could have supplied your Blood Star Mark II with more powerful weapons like a plasma sword. I could have attempted to add more key resonating exotics to your Blood Star Mark II as well, but I think it is best to start with a strong foundation and leave a lot more room for growth and exploration. This is why Dennissium Maximum is the only powerful resonating exotic that we have added to your machine. Venerable Zimro Belson has good experiences with the ability for the Phobos to charge and amplify his weapon. It should be enough to give your expert mech a chance to inflict a strong attack without limiting the options of your mech. You can employ this resonating ability on any weapon, no matter whether it is a sword, a spear or even a shield."

Venerable Benjamin was compatible with many different resonating exotics, but Ves chose to settle for one that he had already added to the only expert stealth mech of the Larkinson Clan.

The performance of an offensive space knight was relatively balanced, with a moderate emphasis on defense.

This meant that its attack power was not exceptional if it was unable to build up momentum.

The Charged Weapon resonating ability should be enough to give the Blood Star Mark II to unleash particularly powerful blows whenever it was truly necessary.

The downside was that every attempt would impose a significant burden on his grandfather, but this was not as big of a problem in this case.

Unlike Venerable Zimro Belson who was still a low-tier expert pilot at this time, his grandfather's resonance strength had recovered to the level of a high-tier expert pilot!

There was a massive gulf in strength between the two tiers!

So long as Benjamin did not suffer from any notable problems, it shouldn't be a problem for him to unleash a dozen or so Charged Weapon attacks at a significantly greater magnitude.

The power boost would become even more exaggerated if Benjamin broke through and became an ace pilot!

"I truly cannot say with any confidence how the Blood Star Mark II will turn out." Ves admitted to his relatives. "It is practically a mystery box to me. While I have attempted to make various predictions, there are just too many points of uncertainty for me to narrow down the range of numbers. First, there is the second generation Carmine System that is doped with my own blood. Second, there is all of the new and untested hyper technology. Third, there are the added

possibilities of the Energy Weaver System. Fourth, there is grandpa's own reaction to piloting his first actual expert mech in decades. No one can predict how these variables will play out in isolation. When you combine all of these uncertain factors together, you will end up with a giant question mark. It is pointless to try to simulate or predict the holistic performance of this expert mech."

The cyborg expert mech was too innovative and experimental for its own good!

Ves did not hold back in his attempts to integrate new technologies and features into the expert mech of his grandfather.

This was one of the other reasons why he did not overload the Blood Star Mark II with any fancy weapons or modules. He had already exceeded his risk tolerance for the expert mech design project!

"My new mech can be as weak or as powerful as I want to be. Is that a good description of what you have been trying to do?" Benjamin queried.

"It is more fitting to say that the Blood Star Mark II is designed to accommodate your own needs and conditions." Gloriana replied. "The design hides a large amount of potential that can be tapped in many different ways. Depending on how you think about it and how you fight with it, the living expert mech will change and grow that will reinforce your contemporary approach towards combat."

A lot could go wrong with the Blood Star Mark II. As confident as Ves may be in his various improvements and innovations, he could never determine with complete certainty that his work would live up to its promise.

This was why the new expert mech needed to be handled with great caution at first. The Blood Star Mark II was an experimental creation that implemented a lot of ideas on where Ves should take his work going forward.

Seeing that no one had any further questions, the explanation session finally came to an end.

All that was left was to wait until they commenced the fabrication runs.

"As we have mentioned before, we will fabricate the Jupiter Project first." Ves briefly said.

"Gloriana and I will construct it with Alexa playing the role of an assistant. We are working with less people this time, but the first-class production machines here are quite impressive, so we believe we can finish this powerful expert mech in five to six days depending on whether any complications occur."

"Is there anything that we should take note of?" General Ark asked as he frowned in worry.

"Not that much aside from one matter. I am sure that you have heard that we have adopted an unusual approach towards our fabrication runs. We like to form a design network and keep it up on a continuous basis so that everyone involved in the production of a mech can share their relevant work processes and feelings directly with each other. You will have to become a part of this network as well in order to produce the strongest effect."

"Is this what you rely on to create so many masterworks?"

Gloriana ruefully shook her head. "A design network can contribute to the formation of a masterwork mech, but it is not a silver bullet. My husband and I are confident in the Jupiter Project.

Its quality, complexity and performance is unsurpassed by any other high-ranking mech that we have designed up to this point. Even if we cannot fulfill your wish right away, the second generation god body method that I have applied to your design will enable it to evolve into a masterwork mech in a relatively short amount of time."

While that may be the case, Gloriana was worried that the Red Association would refuse to grant her another masterwork certificate.

She took great pride in enriching her record with tangible accomplishments. She would definitely become upset if all of her hard work in this expert mech design project did not bestow her the payoff she desired!

"Don't worry too much about whether it will become a masterwork mech or not." Ves told his uncle. "The Jupiter Project already possesses a lot of advantages. It will become an unparalleled machine in your hands. Masterwork is icing on the cake as far as I am concerned."

"It would still be better if my new mech does not fall behind to the Mars."

It was not surprising that Ark frequently compared the Jupiter Project to Reginald's powerful ace mech.

The Mars was the strongest mech of the Warborn Mech Division and made a profound impact on all of the soldiers.

Not even an experienced and mature high-tier expert pilot such as General Ark Larkinson was immune to envy!

Patriarch Reginald Cross proudly showed off the might and strength of his Mars so often that Ark's patience had reached a limit!

If his Jupiter Project ended up as a disappointment, then his heart would definitely break!

Fortunately, Ves and Gloriana had done their best to ensure that would never happen.

Several hours passed by as the Larkinson mech designers thoroughly set up the upcoming fabrication runs.

They made sure that the superfabs and the other workshop machines were fully calibrated and ready to go. They inspected the stock of raw materials that they had prepared a long time ago. They also inspected their schedules and made sure that they had no pressing obligations for the next week.

One of the reasons why it took a little longer to set up for the fabrication run was because Ves had to dismantle the original Carmine mech that he had hastily built for his grandfather.

The Carmine System that was responsible for forming a permanent and lifelong Blood Pact between man and machine had to undergo a comprehensive upgrade.

Ves had to be extremely careful with treating the organic parts that made up the Carmine System. He could not afford to make any mistake that would cause all of this artificial tissue to perish!

Chapter 5392 Third Wheel

Gloriana along with her children knelt before a small altar that depicted the six different facets of the Superior Mother.

"Please bless my hand and grant me inspiration to create another masterwork..."

As the woman continued to pray, her children looked a bit bemused at the situation.

Marvaine scratched his head. "Mama, why do we have to pray to grandmother? She is family, right?"

"Mama is just doing this to make herself feel better." Aurelia whispered to her younger brother.

The mother in question grew annoyed and firmly patted her children on the head. "The Superior Mother is more than family. She is a Supreme, an all-powerful deity who has transcended death and all other boundaries! You should respect her divinity rather than make light of it! She is the ultimate woman and the ideal we must always strive for. We should revere her not because she is powerful, but because she embodies the ultimate form of femininity that every Hexer aspires to master."

Both Aurelia and Andraste looked impressed. Their opinions of their grandmother grew considerably as Gloriana extolled the greatness of the Superior Mother.

However, the only boy among them felt a bit out of place.

"What about me, mama?"

"Oh, sweetie." Gloriana smiled and leaned over to embrace her youngest child in a hug. "Your journey to womanhood will be longer than most. You can just listen for now. What you will learn from me shall be useful to you sooner or later."

"Okay."

As Gloriana and the kids continued to engage in Hexer cultural traditions, Ves and Alexa stood further away as they went over the timetable of the fabrication run.

Alexa Streon had joined the Larkinson Clan just after the Miracle Couple fabricated the Greenaxe and the Bloodripper. This meant that this would be the first fabrication session where she would play an integral part in the creation of a proper living expert mech!

Given her lack of experience, Ves had to make sure that his assistant became aware of how the Larkinsons approached their most important jobs. The unique and quirky methods that he developed over the course of his career deviated significantly from the norm.

"One of our most remarkable abilities is to form a design network that can unite the thoughts of every participating mech designer together." Ves explained as Blinky dove out of his head and began to project a few glowing threads. "We employ it in times when we design a mech, but it can make an even greater difference when we fabricate a machine. Words cannot describe how beneficial and magical it is to form a collective of minds that all approach the same work from multiple perspectives."

Alexa had already heard about the design network before. "Will I be able to participate in it as well?"

Her mentor hesitated for a moment before he shook his head. "No. It is not good for your development if you become exposed to too many strong influences when you are still in the early exploration stage of your career. As an Apprentice Mech Designer, you should be allowed to find your own way, instead of letting us cram our own design philosophies down your throat. In the past, every mech designer that participated in our fabrication runs was at least a Journeyman Mech Designer. There is little harm in sharing our perspectives and design approaches with them because

they already formed their own way of working with mechs. Yours is still malleable. It would be a great shame if you lose your spark of originality for no good reason."

The young Terran mech designer frowned. She had become aware that the design network was an amazing tool that granted the Larkinson mech designers a lot of advantages. It felt like a missed opportunity for her to remain closed to this seemingly magical network.

"Did you not take me on as your direct disciple? I think it would not do much harm if I became exposed to your deeper insights and thoughts towards your work."

Ves sighed. "Maybe it is the way that Master Carmin Olson barely spent any time on me, but I do not want to turn you into my clone. I value ingenuity, and I know first-hand that this is a skill that can only be developed through practice and struggle. Excessive guidance might help you form your design philosophy faster, but it will mostly end up as an extension of my own rather than a spark generated by your own imagination. While you can still branch out and develop your vision into a more unique direction, the starting point still matters a lot. This decision is better for your overall development."

As a well-educated Terran mech designer, Alexa knew that he was right. She just found it a bit frustrating to come so close to attaining one of her goals, but needed to make the final steps the hard way.

"Will I be able to observe you when you are working?" Alexa requested next as Maia appeared from her own head. "Even if I am busy with my own assignments, my companion spirit can still watch and learn on my behalf."

"Myah." The spiritual ragdoll cat floated over to Blinky and rubbed her cheek against the Star Cat.

"Mrow~" Blinky gave the younger companion spirit a few playful licks.

He considered her proposal for a moment. "Fine. Try and control yourself, though. A lot will happen during the fabrication run. With all of the E energy flying around, your young companion spirit may easily get overwhelmed."

Alexa grinned. Even though she had been a part of much more impressive mech-related jobs, working with the Larkinsons was a much more unique experience than anything else she came across in her relatively short career.

"Oh, I also need to mention two other peculiar details. First off, Blinky here will release a large amount of E energy into the workshop. He might not look like it, but he has accumulated an immense amount of it. Once he starts to bathe this entire chamber with our energies, you will feel as if my presence is everywhere. It won't be as intimate as connecting to our design network, but you will definitely enter a state of mind that is more conducive to understanding living mechs. This is also one of the reasons why it is not necessary for you to participate too actively in our fabrication run."

The young woman looked intrigued. She took a closer look at Blinky's. His purple fur openly projected his growing internal universe.

"You are full of surprises. Your tone suggests that the cost of doing this is not small. Are you willing to tell me why you are willing to release so much E energy? Are you trying to engulf the workshop with a glow?"

"Oh, it is not as expensive as you think. Don't forget that my companion spirit can devour a lot of ambient E energy in the immediate environment. I actually have a glow already, but it isn't strong in my opinion. I need Blinky's help to saturate this workshop with life energy because it will subtly bestow additional properties to all of the workshop equipment. This will make it easier to infuse life into every part I make. All of this will imbue the Jupiter Project with stronger extraordinary traits. The differences will become even more noticeable once we work on the Blood Star Mark II."

It was not easy to explain this all. Alexa would just have to witness it all happening with her own eyes.

Before he was ready to start, he just remembered that he would be employing one more method to enhance the craftsmanship of his work.

"Ah, I almost forgot to mention that I will be borrowing the help of one of my 'design spirits' for this fabrication run. Vulcan has recently matured to the point where I can borrow his insights and skill in craftsmanship more extensively than before. I will be trying this out for the first time, so do not be surprised if I appear a bit different than usual."

"Okay... I shall take that into account, sir."

Ten minutes later, the Larkinsons involved in the fabrication run all gathered together.

General Ark Larkinson looked more excited than anyone else. This was his mech that was about to be made. He was more than willing to stick around for the entire duration of the fabrication run in order to witness the birth of his future mechanical vessel every step of the way!

Grandpa Benjamin had taken the children under his wing. He and the nannies would take over the responsibility of caring for and watching over the brats while their parents were occupied for the next 6 days.

"Are you ready?"

"Let us begin!"

"Mrow!"

Blinky took action first! He began to devour a lot of E energy in the immediate environment, producing an invisible vortex that most people could only observe through their companion spirits.

Soon enough, he began to expel a large amount of spiritual energy that intrinsically belonged to Ves.

The Star Cat could not convert enough of E energy radiation to output so much life energy, so he was forced to tap into the immense reserve that was locked in his growing Blinkyverse.

Ves meanwhile removed the Hammer of Brilliance from his toolbelt and lifted it over his head in a dramatic fashion. It was as if he was attempting to call down lightning from the heavens!

"VULCAN, LEND ME YOUR CRAFTSMANSHIP!"

The roar of volcano seemed to echo throughout the life-saturated workshop as a distinctly different metal presence descended onto Ves!

The only Senior in the workshop seemed to swell in ways that the people around him could not explain.

He still carried himself as Ves, but had also gained a powerful add-on that made it seem as if there were two strong personalities occupying the same body!

Somehow, Ves and Vulcan did not conflict with each other at all. They perfectly merged with each other and formed a harmonious balance where neither of them detracted from the other.

This was a perfect union of a mech designer and a more traditional craftsman!

Once Ves got the hang of this strange form of possession, he turned towards his wife and signaled that she could proceed.

"Alexandria!"

"Maow!"

The Queen Cat did not want to let Blinky steal the show, and began to expand her own presence as she extended a powerful and intimate bond with Ves and Ark!

Ves and Gloriana already made use of a design network many times.

This time was different because Vulcan added an entire net dimension to a design network that was normally composed of two active participants.

Vulcan may be modeled after a humanoid, but he was a pure design spirit who operated in a completely different way than corporeal life forms.

"Maaaaooow!"

"Tell Vulcan that he needs to rein himself in!" Gloriana gritted her teeth. "His thoughts are too overwhelming!"

"He is already working on it. He is not accustomed to restraining himself in this way."

Vulcan was a design spirit that was keeping track of thousands of different happenings at the same time. A lot of craftsmen and dwarves looked up to him every day that the design spirit would have gotten overwhelmed a long time ago if he did not possess the ability to split his mind into many parallel tracks.

It was completely excessive to expose the design network to all of those irrelevant thought processes. Vulcan just needed to isolate them all so that they would not get in the way of their current work.

Both Gloriana and her companion spirit looked relieved. "That is better. Let us start our work and see how this goes. I hope that involving Vulcan in our fabrication run is worth all of the additional complications."

"You don't have to worry about that, honey. He might not be a mech designer, but his insights on materials and traditional craftsmanship are impressive. He brings a whole new perspective to our production processes that will definitely add more value to our work."

Chapter 5393 The Wonders of Traditional Craftsmanship

The fabrication run began in full swing.

As the first proper attempt to produce a mech of the Hyper Generation, every participant embarked on a new experience.

Though Ves and Gloriana employed many of the same methods and approaches that they utilized before, a lot of variables were different this time. This made it so that the pair had to get accustomed to a much different situation from before.

They only used the well-equipped workshop machines of Diandi Base a few times in the past. All of the production equipment were built to Terran standards and offered superior results so long as they were skillfully used.

The materials used to fabricate the Jupiter Project were a lot different from the ones used to make their older works. Much of the resources were sourced from the Terran Alliance and offered better performance at an even greater cost.

Unlike the Greenaxe and Bloodripper that Ves and Gloriana fabricated a few months earlier, the Jupiter Project made heavy use of hyper materials from top to bottom. It was a true hyper mech, which meant that its parts needed to be fabricated in a different way!

Fortunately, the two Larkinson mech designers were skilled and knowledgeable enough in both old and new methods to adequately handle the new processes.

Their earlier projects had already given them enough experience with working with hyper materials.

Ves and Vulcan also possessed a strong feel and affinity for these materials.

It was not until this strange pairing started to handle hyper materials in reality as opposed to manipulating them in a projected design interface that they began to understand them on a deeper level.

Armed with all of these subtle new insights, they chose to deviate from the design schematics and apply minor changes on the fly because they instinctively judged that these alterations would lead to slightly better results.

The frequent adjustments could have led to greater friction and conflicts down the line if not for the design network keeping Gloriana up to date on all of these spontaneous decisions.

Though Gloriana did not entirely like it that their mech design apparently had a lot of room for improvement, she accepted the changes because it would ultimately elevate their work further.

As Blinky continued to flood the entire workshop with the energy of life and creation, the effects became more prominent than in the past.

Hyper materials naturally interacted with E energy. Even if all of the exotics integrated into the Jupiter Project consisted of sympathetic materials that were only responsive towards the light attribute, that did not mean that they completely ignored other influences.

Ves noticed that it had become noticeably easier to imbue more life into the parts fabricated in a Living Workshop environment.

If all of the materials consisted of hypers, then that could make a much greater difference!

He had a hunch that this might be a possible way for him to fabricate a fourth order living mech in the future!

Such an exceptional living mech would be the equivalent of a primordial human in the form of a mech!

Ves had to shove this interesting idea aside before it distracted him any further. He could think about future projects later.

As Ves continued to fabricate the more complicated but interesting hyper components of the high-tier expert mech, his cooperation with Vulcan became more smooth.

As an external incarnation, Vulcan did not represent another side of his personality like Blinky, but represented a more independent existence.

This meant that Ves did not and could not know what was going through Vulcan's mind unless he actively reached out. Even then, the mind of a design spirit was so overwhelming that it was impossible for Ves to internalize everything that Vulcan knew.

Just the huge amounts of knowledge related to so many different crafts would cause his brain to explode despite its continuous evolution!

All of this meant that Vulcan had accumulated a lot of useful skills, some related to mech design, that Ves could not master himself unless he took the effort to learn them by himself.

This was a waste of time as learning all of these unrelated skills took away far too much from his core profession.

He was fine letting Vulcan assist him whenever his breadth and depth of craftsmanship could play a useful role.

This was exactly the kind of situation where the design spirit could add a lot of value to his current work!

Ever since Vulcan reached the 2nd stage of the Metal God Method, he had begun to get in touch with the methods and traditions of a Divine Blacksmith.

While the Metal God Method did not incorporate the full inheritance of this extraordinary profession, just fragments of it was already enough to expand Ves' perspective on hyper technology!

Compared to mech designers who were still starting to get accustomed to hypers, traditional blacksmiths had learned to work with them for a much longer span of time!

Even if most of their work and heritage had been buried under the relentless march of time, the reintroduction of E energy to humanity finally made all of this forgotten knowledge useful again!

From what Ves could glean from Vulcan, true artifacts were almost entirely made out of so-called 'heavenly materials'.

Each one was a work of art, and it became a lot easier to create high-quality works because of their exceptional and complicated reactivity to E energy.

What separated an extraordinary artisan from a more mundane one was the ability to imbue their work with their own thoughts, emotions, ideals and more into the works that they fashioned with their own hands.

This was one of the fundamental processes of traditional craftsmanship and was common to every ancient profession at the time!

Unless they were dealing with disposable trash, ancient creation cultivators never engaged in any form of mass production.

Proper artifacts could only be made through excellence and individual expression. Each of them gained powerful properties depending on the skill and the mentality of their makers.

The highly reactive properties of hyper materials provided traditional blacksmiths and other ancient craftsmen with an expanded canvas for them to express their own skill at creation!

Ves grew more and more enamored with the theories, methods and advantages of these old traditions.

He even learned that one of methods used by traditional artisans to create high-quality works was to imbue them with life!

Many of them actually shared some of the same values and goals as Ves!

The biggest difference was that they did not have the ability to create life forms from scratch as far as he was aware of. A Divine Blacksmith may be a maestro when it came to forging swords and armor, but he was not able to make them 'alive' by himself!

This was quite problematic as practically all of their most powerful works had to possess an autonomous consciousness for multiple reasons!

A high-grade artifact actually consisted of at least dozens of different hyper materials, each of which possessed different attributes.

If these materials were just hammered together in a single product, the finished work would perform way below its actual potential as it wouldn't be able to harness the power of heaven as well as it should!

It was like producing a mechanical cat, only to forget about uploading an AI. This AI was necessary to intelligently control all of its components in an effective and cohesive manner.

If a traditional blacksmith could not bestow life to their high-end works, then they could only stick to producing cheaper and more generic products!

It just so happened that ancient creation cultivators figured out various different ways to make up for this shortcoming.

The most common solution was to use existing lives as resources!

A traditional blacksmith could use a soul extracted from a powerful organism and stuff it into his incomplete work!

So long as the soul properly merged with a sword or a suit of armor, it would evolve and maybe even sublimates into a much more impressive artifact!

Ves was both horrified and fascinated by these ancient practices.

Although most ancient crafting traditions mostly advocated for the use of souls extracted from alien beasts, it was also possible to merge an artifact with the souls of human beings!

Regardless of whether they came from humans or aliens, every soul that successfully merged with an artifact turned into a so-called 'artifact spirit'!

The benefits brought by artifact spirits sounded incredibly familiar to Ves. Not only did they make artifacts a lot more intelligent and responsive to their users, but they also increased the efficiency of every process, enabling these amazing works to unleash much greater power with much less effort!

"So that is why the Heavensword is so amazing."

Vulcan's knowledge caused him to look at this ancient relic weapon from a completely different perspective!

In the eyes of a traditional blacksmith, the Heavensword was not just a grand work that brilliantly combined a large variety of exceptional hyper materials, but also transcended the limits of lesser swords because it was driven by an exceptional artifact spirit!

In fact, given its known functions and its strong obsessions in preserving the heritage of traditional swordsmanship, Vulcan speculated that the Heavensword was actually governed by the transformed soul of a sword saint!

The sacrifice had to be voluntary in order to imbue the Heavensword with so much power and harmony. The way in which the ancient relic perfectly bestowed its wielders with the Heavensword Style meant that the artifact spirit must have mastered it during his lifetime!

It was so amazing for Ves to be able to peel back the hidden truth of the Heavensword. This old relic was one of the few powerful works that had managed to survive the unknown cataclysm that broke the Milky Way Galaxy.

The absence of the power of heaven had devastating effects on most artifacts that existed at the time.

Heavenly materials were intricately related to heavenly energy. When the latter disappeared, the former lost much of the support that made them so extraordinary!

Slowly but surely, a lot of powerful artifacts started to crumble as the long-term drought of E energy started to take its toll.

Their artifact spirits must have died out first as they were most dependent on heavenly energy to sustain themselves.

The heavenly materials started to degrade next. Once the formerly powerful works completely degenerated into a mundane product, their deaths were complete!

The Heavensword managed to avoid this fate because it possessed an internal pocket space that contained a small but complete slice of heaven.

Its ancient artifact spirit existed in a time period that preceded the rise of modern humanity, yet managed to outlast almost all of its peers due to its rare advantages!

As Ves continued to focus on his own work, he couldn't help but think how that related to his own products

How similar were his living mechs to the artifacts of the past?

When Ves put serious thought into this question, he found that there were a lot of similarities.

He could see strong relations between traditional craftsmanship and modern mech design. The former had definitely served as a predecessor to the latter! There were just too many parallels to reject this obvious connection!

The absence of artifact spirits was rather conspicuous, though. Somehow, the Progenitors of Mechs managed to make modern mech design work without relying on this macabre requirement.

How?

Ves suddenly thought about his design flame and why it existed.

He thought of all of the mechs that became more than the sum of their parts due to his design philosophy.

He thought of the Kingdom of Mechs that secretly supported the entire mech community in many different ways.

One or more of these factors played an integral part in making mechs stronger!

Creation cultivation had evolved. While the old ways weren't necessarily weaker, it was clear that modern mech design was much more suitable for modern times!

Chapter 5394 Fusion Between Modernity and Tradition

"Maow."

Gloriana briefly turned her head so that she could throw a pointed glare at Ves.

Though she did not verbalize her opinions, she clearly grew annoyed at the fact that her husband became distracted yet again!

Ves was not stupid enough to ignore his current work assignments. His attention span had grown quite expansive, so he was always able to retain enough focus on his essential tasks.

The reason why Gloriana grew irked at him was because he was putting less than two percent of himself into his job at the moment!

While he knew that his wife wanted him to get back on track, Ves had grown far too enamored with the secrets of traditional craftsmanship to put them out of his mind.

The reason why he refused to set Vulcan's unique insights aside was because he was convinced he could apply some of them to his current work!

Of course, he did not intend to do anything crazy like kill a random person and transfer his soul to the Jupiter Project.

Ves was able to make his mechs alive by himself just fine. Vulcan did not master any detailed knowledge related to the methods of creation of high-end artifacts anyway.

What actually interested Ves was the more basic theories and approaches towards creating an artifact.

Every traditional blacksmith with dreams of becoming more started their careers by developing a strong familiarity and affinity with a small variety of hyper materials.

They first started out with working with a couple of weaker hypers that they had on hand. It was best if they shared the same attributes, as the lessons they learned from one of them could also be used to figure out other similar hyper materials.

There were many different ways for traditional blacksmiths to develop a strong familiarity with a specific hyper. These secret methods and techniques were highly prized in ancient times. The most effective ones had taken shape over many generations by excellent masters of their respective crafts!

As such, these secret inheritances happened to be the most prized as they granted creation cultivators a much easier path to becoming a True God!

The scattered records of a Divine Blacksmith that Ves had exchanged during the Survivalist conference contained bits and pieces of these obscure methods.

His mother had contributed a handful of foundational tricks as well when she composed the Metal God Method.

It was a pity that Vulcan did not have access to a full and comprehensive inheritance. If he did, then he could quickly and efficiently master the use of hyper materials from low-grade to high-grade all the way until his craftsmanship approached the level of a Divine Blacksmith!

Ves yearned even more for the Divine Blacksmith Records Enlightenment Fruit.

A part of him wished that he had disregarded his other needs and plucked it from the Tree of Possibilities.

With the knowledge that he possessed today, he knew it was worth as much if not more than the 975 Ascension Points charged by the Mech Designer System!

Another part of him regretted the decision to transfer the Iron Resonant Crucifix Crown to Vulcan.

Although his incarnation could clearly make much better use of it, Ves still missed the short period of time where the symbol of authority consistently supplied 1AP to him every standard day.

Perhaps he should have waited a year or two before he allowed Vulcan to practice his new cultivation method.

He shook his head. There was no point in crying over spilled milk. If Vulcan did not practice his dearest mother's cultivation method so quickly, Ves wouldn't have been able to gain all of these insights in the dawn of the new age.

As Gloriana kept transmitting ominous warning messages to him through the design network, Ves did not dare to let his thoughts go off on so many interesting tangents.

What mattered the most at this junction was how to translate Vulcan's insights into his current work.

The dominant theme of the Jupiter Project was light. The entire mech was centered around turning it into the brightest mech on the battlefield. The brighter it became, the more power Uncle Ark could exert on the battlefield!

It was not difficult for Ves to pay more attention to the attribute of light, but he would rather focus more on life.

Fortunately, that was what Vulcan was for. As the design spirit continued to work with Ves, he began to employ simple methods to deepen his familiarity with the hyper materials that were sensitive towards the light attribute.

The gains were small but not negligible. Every time Vulcan learned a new trick or insight, he seamlessly transferred his gains to Ves, who subsequently improved the quality of his work.

Gloriana benefited as well. The design network ensured that if one of them learned anything useful, the other participants could benefit as well!

While there were still limits to transferring information over the design network, it was easy enough for Gloriana to comprehend the same insights so long as they weren't complicated.

Occasionally, Ves and Vulcan developed an opinion that conflicted with Gloriana's own perspective towards her work. She simply chose to stick to her own opinions in those cases.

Days went by as the two mech designers continued to work in harmony.

Though Gloriana occasionally took lengthy breaks in order to refresh her mind and to care for her children, Ves almost worked non-stop!

He was on a roll. Not only was he bringing one of his most powerful mechs to date into existence, he was also doing so at the same time he was starting to get immersed in the world of traditional blacksmithing!

While the process of fabricating a modern mech was completely different from forging a traditional artifact weapon, craftsmen possessed similar mentalities no matter what they specialized in making.

While Ves frequently got distracted by many whimsical ideas anyway, it did not affect his productivity nor the quality of his work.

He was the sort of mech designer who thrived when he got to play with fancy new toys, and right now the insights related to traditional blacksmithing stoked his passion like nothing else!

In the meantime, Vulcan was gradually growing more familiar with the hyper materials that all possessed a special relationship with light.

The design spirit not only learned how to preserve their properties better when they were integrated into different components, but also figured out how to optimize their interaction with E energy so that they produced less waste and conflict.

All of these improvements enabled Vulcan and by extension Ves to subtly increase the Jupiter Project's ability to harness the power of light once it was complete!

Meanwhile, Alexa and Ark entertained many different thoughts as they witnessed the expert mech being made one step at a time.

Ark had always been a soldier. He never witnessed a mech being made in front of his eyes in his life. This was a completely new experience for him, and it was a lot more special because of his strong connection to his current work!

It was incredibly wondrous for him to get a peek of all of the thoughts and ideas that Ves and Gloriana entertained about the Jupiter Project.

No spoken or written words could convey the full depth, understanding and affection that the two mech held towards the impressive high-tier expert mech.

Even though Ark did not understand much of the complicated science and jargon that the mech designers used to shape their understanding of the Jupiter Project, he could still get an overall sense of the strengths and weaknesses of many different parts.

For example, he learned that activating the Giantslayer Mode of his plasma sword had a small chance of causing it to explode in a catastrophic fashion, particularly if the weapon got damaged beforehand!

Only by advancing to the rank of ace pilot would Ark be able to mitigate or remove this potential danger.

At the very least, his strengthened intuition would be able to warn him about the threat before he made the wrong move.

Ark also learned that Ves already had an idea in mind of who they wanted to collaborate with if they needed to upgrade the Jupiter Project into an ace mech.

His nephew would most likely want to cooperate with Master Benedict Cortez of the Cross Clan.

Even though the Master did not have a lot of qualifications compared to others who had managed to realize their own design philosophies, Benedict had successfully upgraded the Mars into a powerful ace mech.

If Ves could not turn to Master Benedict, then he would try and invite one of the Terran Master Mech Designers employed by the Eden Institute of Business & Technology.

As the hours and days passed by, Ark began to feel as if he was already forming a growing connection to his mech.

The assembly phase had yet to start, but Ark felt as if parts of him started to bleed into the components as they were being made.

The design network practically granted him a first-hand feel for every single work process. His willpower spread through the invisible bonds and caused the others to constantly know what he felt and what he desired from his upcoming machine.

Ark wanted a mech that was fit for a hero and a guardian!

The choice of orienting his expert mech around light turned out to be a fitting decision. Ark fully embraced the vision and the ideal set forth by this particular design.

The only issue he had with his mech design was that he did not think it was fitting to associate it with Jupiter.

Its final name needed to be different in order to encapsulate his special feelings for his perfect vessel!

As the fabrication phase finally came to an end, Ves and Gloriana took a short break before they moved on to assembling all of the new and complicated parts.

Many of the components contained hyper materials, which meant that they had already been imbued with E energy!

This made the assembly process a little more complex as the parts all affected each other in mysterious ways whenever they came into close proximity with each other.

Fortunately, the hyper tech used in the Jupiter Project was not that complicated. There was almost no chance that any accidents might occur because the mech design did not combine a lot of different elements.

Ves mostly had to pay attention to preventing anything weird from happening when several different attributes mixed up with each other.

As the powerful expert command mech slowly started to take on its final shape, E energies attributed towards light, metal, life and water already started to swirl through the incomplete mech frame.

The artifact mech was slowly coming to life.

Though Ves had made sure that it did not birth an independent personality, he was sure that the empty shell would become so strong at the start that Ark would immediately be able to channel more power through his new machine!

"Impressive." Alexa Streon couldn't help but voice her appreciation as she assisted on the side.

She was mainly tasked with inspecting the parts for any defects or other deviations.

She regretted the fact that she could not play a more integral role in the creation of an expert mech that was obviously shaping to become a lot more exceptional than any other mech she had made in her life!

By the time Ves entered the cockpit of the nearly completed mech, he added the final touch to the Jupiter Project.

Ves smiled as he floated out the cockpit.

The energy silhouette of a large dwarf-like form surrounded his form, giving off the impression as if he had been possessed by a god all this time!

After a few moments of staring, Ves slowly withdrew a tiny and delicate hammer from his toolbelt.

He floated closer to the chest of his newly completed machine and struck his tiny hammer against the surface of his completed work!

TING-

A single, clear melodious tone harmonized throughout the entire mech frame!

As the sound mysteriously resonated throughout the complicated mechanical structure of the powerful machine, the mech frame gradually acquired more depth and charm.

Gloriana broke out in smiles as she recognized that she had managed to meet her goal for this exhausting design project!

"Masterwork!"

Chapter 5395 Mundane Accomplishment

The Jupiter Project was done.

The long-awaited high-tier expert mech had finally taken on a concrete form.

Not only that, but it had become so magnificent that it had become a masterwork mech in an organic fashion!

Ves did not even have to draw out his pouch of gems from his inner pocket. His mood had remained so high during the fabrication run that he knew that he had become inspired.

Coming into touch with the theoretical framework of traditional craftsmanship and applying a part of its extraordinary methods onto the Jupiter Project had proven to be a fruitful exercise!

He learned so much by combining aspects of this ancient legacy to a completely modern craft.

Ves managed to derive so many useful insights from Vulcan's knowledge reserve. He could spot the parallels between the old and new. He could also discern a lot of differences and formulate well-reasoned theories why the Progenitors of Mechs had deliberately discarded old traditions.

He also became enlightened to how the environment shaped the dominant professions.

Traditional blacksmithing reached its peak during a time when humanity lived in an environment that was rich with the power of heaven.

Many cultivators sought to become a True God, and one of the most effective shortcuts to becoming one was to acquire the best and most exquisite artifacts possible!

Artifact cultivation became so desirable that Divine Blacksmiths commanded a huge amount of respect. They were True Gods that could not only empower their peers, but elevate others to immortality with their transcendent works!

In order to make stronger and more transcendent works, traditional artisans constantly sought to delve into the secrets of heavenly materials and derive higher truths from their associated elements.

Just as qi cultivators sought to attain godhood by developing their artistic conceptions beyond a limit, creation cultivators sought to attain godhood by exploring the properties of powerful energies through the act of creation!

Ves made a profound realization as he fabricated the Jupiter Project not just as a mech, but also as an artifact.

All roads led to the same destination.

Mech design rose up in an age where the Milky Way had long turned into an energy desert. The profession made many compromises in order to survive and thrive in an environment where the only available source of E energy were sentient lives.

Even though the rules and methods had changed considerably from the past, mech design still remained a form of creation cultivation as its practitioners sought to transcend into modern godhood through similar methods.

The difficulty of becoming a Star Designer was undoubtedly greater than any of the creation professions of the past.

The absence of the power of heaven compelled mech designers to derive the energies they needed to fuel their cultivation by making an impact on human society.

The more human lives they influenced through their works, the more feedback mech designers harvested through their mysterious design seeds.

Ves was pretty sure that mech designers could not become traditional blacksmiths and vice versa.

Although they shared a lot of overlapping concepts, their mentalities and approaches diverged too much from each other.

That said, the knowledge and methods of traditional blacksmiths were not useless to mech designers, especially in the Age of Dawn.

The reintroduction of E energy radiation and hyper materials to human society had caused the secrets of traditional craftsmanship to become relevant again.

It was a pity that much of it remained out of reach to most mech designers. Those without access to ancient legacies could only explore the possibilities of hyper technology from scratch.

While this was not necessarily bad as all of these brilliant minds could study the new phenomena from a fresher and less biased perspective, their progress would definitely be slow!

Ves on the other hand happened to have access to an incarnation that was partially following the path of a traditional craftsman.

This rare circumstance effectively enabled Ves to understand and even practice some of the methods of an ancient blacksmith with the help of Vulcan!

When Ves fabricated the Jupiter Project, he not only treated it as a mech design, but also an artifact that gained extraordinary power by harnessing extraordinary energies.

Although he did not do a perfect job in either areas, he managed to do a good enough job as both a mech designer and a traditional blacksmith to turn his new expert mech into a machine of greater value.

It did not surprise Ves nor Vulcan at all that the Jupiter Project turned into a masterwork mech.

Even as Gloriana continued to express her surprise and delight at the masterwork transformation taking place in front of her eyes, her husband studied their latest work with a more measured expression.

Now that Vulcan had engaged in a form of creation cultivation, Ves had become more capable and versatile than ever.

Teaming up with Vulcan produced such a strong synergy that it would have been a travesty if Ves hadn't been able to improve his work up to this point!

Combined with the fact that Ves had earnestly invested a lot of time and effort into the expert mech design project that was meant to empower his uncle, the probability that it would become a masterwork mech was too high this time!

Ves had a powerful feeling that he had finally managed to pass the threshold where he was truly beginning to master the art of fabricating masterwork mechs.

Even without Vulcan, just the methods and insights he gained from his external incarnation expanded his knowledge base and his toolbox to such an extent that he had managed to establish a firm grip on the second rung of Senfovon's Ladder of Craftsmanship!

While this did not mean he could fabricate a masterwork mech in every fabrication run, he knew that as long as he could exert enough control over a sufficient amount of variables, the chances of making another masterwork mech would be close to too percent!

Unfortunately, this did not quite apply to the Blood Star Mark II Project. There was so much chaos and uncertainty in its design that Ves could not exert sufficient control over its variables.

However, so long as Ves designed a more proper mech that possessed enough novelty and artistry to stoke his passion, he was bound to add another masterwork certificate to his name!

Ves should have felt incredibly pleased at the fact that he had improved his craftsmanship to this extent, but he did not feel as accomplished as he should.

Part of it was because he had only managed to gain all of his latest insights by borrowing the help of Vulcan.

Even if Vulcan was ultimately connected to himself, Ves did not quite feel that he worked for all of these gains. It came too easily because he took advantage of certain loopholes.

Another part of it was because he already made so many masterwork mechs that he hardly derived any particular satisfaction from them anymore.

His sights had already shifted to a greater state of creation. The third rung of the Ladder of Craftsmanship beckoned to him. The sight of all of those god mechs demonstrating their transcendent performance in front of red humanity had been seared into Ves' mind.

Those grand works represented far more than excellent craftsmanship. Their exquisite design and construction produced an extraordinary result that caused the god mechs to more easily surpass their physical limits and amplify the reality-defying willpower of their god pilots!

Ves no longer felt as arrogant as before. His sense of accomplishment dimmed by a large extent when he compared his recently completed machine to the likes of the Geneforger and the Ragnarok.

Those god mechs embodied the true pinnacle of mech design up to this point!

No better mech had been brought to life as far as Ves aware of. He would not be able to feel satisfied with his current level of craftsmanship so long as he was still too far away from fabricating mechs at this level!

Still, even if Ves no longer felt that the Jupiter Project deserved so much emphasis, it was still one of his best works to date.

The powerful high-tier expert mech was certainly his most powerful one given that it incorporated the latest technologies of the Hyper Generation!

The white-coated mech with the head of a lion already exuded a soft glow of light as if it was a machine carved by a divinity.

The prominent third eye surrounded by a hexagon on the forehead made it clear that the Jupiter Project was yet another brilliant collaboration work of the Miracle Couple.

As the masterwork expert mech continued to show off its magnificence in quiet solitude, Ves already began to look forward to seeing it activate for the first time.

The Jupiter Project would definitely look a lot more impressive once its lights turned on and its projected cape extended from its back!

"Amazing." A new voice gently broke the relative silence in the mech workshop. "You have outdone yourselves, Larkinsons."

It did not surprise Ves at all that Jovy Armalon had somehow managed to enter the locked underground hall without warning.

The fact that the RA Senior easily overcame the active space suppressors and anti-teleportation field did not generate any surprise.

All Ves thought was that since Jovy got here so quickly, it wouldn't take much time for the Red Association to complete the evaluation and award another set of masterwork certificates.

Ves even bet that the mechers aboard the Bluejay Fleet had been monitoring the entire fabrication run from the beginning!

Fortunately, Ves did not expose any of his truly unreasonable secrets such as Lucky's gems.

As Gloriana gradually withdrew from her obsessively focused state, she regained her composure and turned to her husband.

Though she was convinced that she had made an extensive contribution to the Jupiter Project's transformation into a masterwork mech, she acknowledged that Ves had done much of the heavy lifting this time.

"Vulcan..."

Ves quickly raised his hand. "We'H talk later, honey. Let us focus on wrapping up this project first. Ark."

"Y-Yes?"

For the first time in a long time, General Ark Larkinson had almost lost his strong and majestic voice.

The sight of seeing his beautiful mech take shape had taken his breath away!

He felt a strong yearning to hop into the cockpit and interface with his new machine. Every fiber of being told him to ignore everything else and take possession of his powerful new mechanical body that he had been dreaming about for so many years!

It took a huge amount of willpower for Ark to maintain his discipline and suppress his overwhelming desires.

No matter what, Ark was a soldier, not a beast! There was a time and place for everything, and it shouldn't take much time for him to pilot his supreme new expert mech. He could wait a few hours.

Ves could sense the inner turmoil radiating from his uncle.

"Relax. You will get your chance soon enough. Before we clean up this workshop and transfer your new expert mech to a testing site, we should settle on a name that befits this great machine. Do you have any suggestions?"

General Ark looked up at his tall, white machine that faintly looked as if it was made out of light that had taken on a physical form!

His gaze rose up until it settled on the majestic lion's head that looked as if it was exquisitely carved out of the most sublime piece of marble in the cosmos.

Ark briefly had the illusion that his destined expert mech was calling at him. It uttered a loud and guttural lion's roar that completely engulfed his body to the point where it was on the verge of getting shook apart!

A name escaped from his throat.

"The Lionheart."

The name was like the final piece of the puzzle. It completed the expert mech and finalized its identity as Ark's perfect vessel!

Chapter 5396 Smooth Activation

The Red Association sure worked efficiently.

With Jovy Armalon taking charge of the evaluation process, he guaranteed that the Red Association would award Ves and Gloriana their latest masterwork certificates before the end of the day.

"As one of the first masterwork versions of a hyper mech, your Lionheart is of slightly greater interest to our researchers than before." Jovy explained to Ves as a team of researchers diligently scanned the expert mech from top to bottom. "We are especially impressed by how well your new expert mech is able to combine a large quantity of hyper materials in a favorable arrangement. The fact that it can passively attract and sustain a larger concentration of light-attributed E energy is rare and slightly novel. You have certainly taught me a few lessons on how to better utilize the properties of hyper materials."

Ves smiled at Jovy. "I am glad to be of service. How many MTA merits can we expect this time?"

"Well, given the slightly high research value of an early masterwork mech of the Hyper Generation, I can award you and your wife with 500,000 MTA merits each. Miss Alexa Streon-Larkinson has not significantly contributed to this effort, so she is ineligible for any reward. These are the rules."

The former Terran mech designer did not look upset at all. "I accept this verdict. I have already gained far more out of this than I could have hoped for by witnessing the birth of a masterwork mech with my own eyes."

Earning 500,000 MTA merits was pocket change to Ves. He was already accustomed to earning hundreds of millions of MTA merits after defeating powerful alien fleets.

His wife could probably exchange for a nice product with her own share, though.

Once Jovy and his team had completed all of the necessary steps, they bid the Larkinsons goodbye and teleported back to their fleet in orbit.

This was just a small interlude as far as Ves was concerned.

He was much more interested in seeing the newly completed Lionheart in action!

Even though he had been up for 6 whole days, Ves still felt as energized as ever.

There was no way he was willing to take a break when he could be observing the Lionheart in action for the first time!

"Let us prepare for the inaugural testing session." Ves commanded. "Alexa, please head over to the testing grounds first. Check whether it is fully stocked and prepared to test the various functions of the Lionheart according to our predetermined plan."

The young woman obediently nodded. "Acknowledged."

"Oh, you should also send a reminder to Saintess Ulrika Vraken to be present at the appointed time. I think it should be safe enough to give the Lionheart an opportunity to exercise its brand-new capabilities against an excellent sparring partner."

"Will do, sir."

Another hour went by until everyone had moved to the testing facility.

Since the Lionheart was a machine designed to act as a public symbol of power and hope, there was no compelling need to keep its performance confidential.

General Ark would be employing this powerful new expert mech against the native aliens soon enough. It was much more important to understand its basic performance and determine if anything was out of place.

Of course, the chance that the Lionheart needed any adjustments was low. It would not have turned into a masterwork mech if it was riddled with serious flaws.

At this time, Ves and the others were about to enter a control tower.

Before he moved inside, he turned around and called out his children.

"Come on, kids! Leave the Lionheart alone so that Ark can finally explore its capabilities."

"Okay, papa!"

Aurelia, Andraste and Marvaine had been circling around the new expert mech ever since they caught sight of the machine.

In their childish eyes, the Lionheart looked and felt as impressive as the mechs piloted by the protagonists of popular action dramas!

The expert mech looked so valiant and heroic that they grew delighted at the thought that their clan had gained a powerful hero!

The children did not want to leave the side of this attractive mech so soon. Eventually, Lucky and Clixie had to nudge them away from the Lionheart.

"Meow meow."

"Miaow!"

When everyone entered the top floor of the control tower, the three Larkinson mech designers had already set up their control stations.

Venerable Benjamin Larkinson watched on with great anticipation even as he kept the children company.

"Will your mech be as strong as the Lionheart?"

"I do not know, Andraste. I do not particularly care if my mech ends up weaker. My time to shine on the battlefield has passed. It is up to the younger generations to lead red humanity in the current day and age. I am content to dedicate my remaining service to protecting our family. That includes cute little munchkins like yourself!"

"Hihihihi!"

A few minutes passed. Once the final preparations fell into place, Ves transmitted a long-awaited instruction to the cockpit of the Lionheart.

"You can start now, Ark. I have one more piece of advice for you. Your Lionheart may be a powerful living mech, but because it is a second skin mech, it has a large void. I expressly designed

your machine in a way that enables you to employ your companion spirit to good effect. You should make use of Noah to strengthen your control over your mech."

"I shall take that into account."

Ark had been holding himself back long enough. Now that he received the permission he had been waiting for, he activated his Lionheart and began to interface with his surprisingly deep machine.

From the outside, the Lionheart started to glow brighter as various different sources of light came online.

Not only did the Lionheart begin to activate the various light fixtures spread across the surface of its powerful frame, but the expert mech also started to resonate with Ark's strong willpower!

As a high-tier expert pilot who had hit a bottleneck a long time ago, General Ark's force of will was not as weak and trivial as the last few Larkinson expert pilots that recently received their mechs.

A bright and strong resonance shield surrounded the Lionheart right away!

Even though this was his first time interfacing with the Lionheart, his extensive skill and experience enabled him to master his own machine fairly quickly!

Of course, it helped a lot that General Ark had already spent months on reading the constantly expanding manual for his future expert mech. He possessed a good grasp of the many different functions and controls that could help him dominate the battlefield in the coming years!

When the bright and shining expert mech finally completed its first and most important startup sequence, all of the parameters remained in good condition.

"The Lionheart's systems are all green. No major errors or anomalies have been detected up to this point." Alexa reported from her own station.

Ves nodded. He did not pay too much attention to his own console. He was much more interested in observing the Lionheart directly with his own senses.

"What is Ark's current resonance strength?"

"His resonance strength... has already increased to 65.2 laves! That is close to the ceiling of 67 laves!"

Ves already expected that Ark would experience an exhilarating boost of strength now that he was piloting the mech of his dreams.

"How much volatility is the resonance meter showing?"

"General Ark's resonance strength has remained fairly stable up until this point."

That meant that Ark was excited, but not to the point of breaking through on the spot.

This was an expected outcome. Not everyone could be like Patriarch Reginald Cross who was so driven by his strong emotions that he managed to break through with ease once he became satisfied!

"Let us proceed with the basic movement tests. Let us verify how maneuverable, agile and precise your expert mech can be under your control."

The Lionheart began to walk and move its arms in many different ways. As an expert command mech, the new machine did not display too much excellence in these aspects.

Ves grew mildly impressed at his uncle's excellent control. The highly experienced expert pilot not only performed powerful movements, but also controlled the mech frame so precisely that he could stop a punch just a few centimeters before they struck a wall!

"Alright, now that we have gotten the basic mobility and defense tests out of the way, let us proceed with exploring the offensive capabilities of your new machine. We shall start with the integrated luminar crystal weapons. We will soon deploy swarms of disposable bots. Try and shoot them at the lowest settings first and gradually ramp up their power."

"Roger that. My weapon systems are armed and ready."

Numerous small ports slid open, revealing small but still fairly powerful integrated luminar crystal cannons.

They soon fired white beams of light that were not quite lasers, but more exotic and mysterious.

Regardless, each of these beams unflinchingly burned through the relatively weak bots with excellent precision!

Even the more resilient and expensive bots got felled with ease as the casual firepower of the Lionheart proved too much for their ordinary defenses!

Ves mildly grinned at the sight.

The fourth-generation luminar crystal cannons were not only transphasic, but also equipped with newly developed bright light beam attack phase crystals!

These attack phase crystals were all blended with light-attributed hyper materials, causing them to convert electrical energy into considerably more potent energy beams that possessed numerous advantages!

General Ark already discovered one of the benefits to the fourth generation luminar crystal weapons when he resonated with the brand-new weapon system.

His eyes lit up as he discovered that he could resonate with them a lot more extensively than he anticipated!

"Noah. Let us see what you can do with these interesting energy weapons."

"Rwoar."

An impressive looking spiritual white lion emerged from his head. The majestic animal phased through the mech and began to occupy one of the cutting-edge luminar crystal cannons.

Now that Ark established a more direct connection with this particular weapon, its damage output instantly skyrocketed!

Salvo after salvo, the damage dealt by the weapon system that Ark resonated with the most exceeded all of the others!

Even when Ark resonated with all of the luminar crystal cannons at his disposal, they could only penetrate strong armor up to a certain depth.

Just like his nephew had said, Noah's presence seemed to fill up a certain amount of empty space in his Lionheart that enabled him to draw upon the untapped potential of his expert mech!

The Lionheart glowed brighter and brighter as Ark became more fascinated by the enormous power at his disposal!

More expensive targets appeared on the grounds. These targets were not only protected by energy shields, but also consisted of strong and thick alloys that equated to several meters of alien battleship hull plating.

Without the support of true resonance, the Lionheart's ranged output struggled to penetrate through all of this protection.

However, once General Ark seriously resonated with luminar crystal cannons, the bright light beams glowed a lot brighter and penetrated the defenses with much greater effectiveness!

Though the strongest attacks still failed to delight Ves or Ark, they both knew that the current conditions were not ideal.

General Ark and his Lionheart derived a lot of power from leading a large troop!

By themselves, the expert pilot and his expert mech could not make use of this advantage, so it was not surprising that its fantastic fourth generation luminar crystal cannons could not melt through the targets with ease.

Ves was still satisfied with the base performance of his latest tech. The bright light beam attack phase crystal exhibited a noticeably greater amplification effect when empowered by true resonance.

As long as Ark grew stronger, his luminar crystal weapons would become a lot more threatening!

It was not impossible for this high-end weapon suite to breach through the defenses of formidable alien battleships in a single salvo!

Chapter 5397 Shining Light

After the Lionheart exercised its integrated luminar crystal cannons for the first time, it proceeded to hack and stab at the resilient bots with its melee weapons.

It spent the most time exploring the power of its transphasic hyper spear.

Due to the fact that the expensive spear was largely integrated with water hypers, Ark quickly discovered that it had become remarkably more effective at overcoming transphasic defenses.

The tip of the spear easily penetrated through a transphasic energy shield as if the latter was a water curtain.

The spear also managed to cut through transphasic armor plating with greater ease.

While it did not penetrate all of the phasewater-reinforced matter like a hot knife through butter, the spear's performance exceeded that of a non-hyper weapon!

Naturally, the new weapon performed a lot more effectively when Ark resonated with his weapon.

When Noah temporarily merged with the spear, every thrust of this empowered weapon struck like the lunges of a predator beast!

"Rwoar!"

Noah's roars regularly spread from the grounds as the vigorous white expert mech deftly maneuvered around the battlefield while spearing through one bot after another!

"Okay, we have seen enough." Ves transmitted to Ark. "You can stow away your spear for the time being. Before we move on to the true exercise, let us briefly test the performance of your Cleansing Light. Just activate it at its lowest combat setting and strike a few bots with it. Make sure to resonate with it to prevent it from breaking down too quickly."

"Roger."

Ark grinned as his expert mech did as instructed.

Once the Lionheart held the hilt of its most powerful weapon, a bright and powerful plasma blade extended from the emitters!

The temperature rapidly rose up as the highly potent energy blade generated a huge amount of heat!

Empowered by resonance, the Cleaning Light not only burned hotter, but also emitted a lot of light, so much so that it could actually blind ordinary people up close!

The power of this high-tech plasma sword was clearly on another level. General Ark clearly felt that he could not fully control its immense potency.

If he ever tried to push the limits of this overpowering weapon, there was a realistic chance that it might blow up all at once!

"Don't get distracted, Ark! Test it out quickly before the heat begins to melt its most vulnerable components!"

The Lionheart resumed its movements and quickly swung its white-hot energy blade onto a handful of resilient targets.

The plasma blade uttered powerful roaring noises as its potent resonance-empowered energies melted through transphasic energy shields and first-class alloys with surprising ease!

General Ark grew ecstatic when he observed how the Cleansing Light easily cut through defenses that had posed a greater hindrance to the other weapons of his Lionheart.

"Finishing weapon, indeed."

It was a pity that he could only test this weapon in an isolated facility. He could not draw out the greater potential of the Lionheart at all because there were troops for him to command at this time!

The only way he could perform at his absolute best was when he returned to the Warborn and led them in a battle against a serious alien warfleet.

Until that happened, General Ark would not be able to discover how strong he had become now that he had obtained the mech of his dreams.

Once the Lionheart shut off the Cleansing Light and gave its heated components a chance to cool down, a second mech appeared in the distance.

"As promised, you can spar against the Macharia Excelsia for the remainder of the session." Ves transmitted to his uncle. "It is best to conduct this test at a more distant field where nothing important is around for you to accidentally destroy."

Ark had been waiting for this moment. All of the basic tests had given him a better grasp of his new expert mech, but now was the time for him to integrate it all into a new and cohesive approach towards combat!

"I am moving out." He spoke.

The Lionheart began to blast away. The air roared around the high-tier expert mech as its powerful flight system propelled it forward with great momentum.

While the Lionheart failed to match the speed of a genuine ace mech, its mobility under atmospheric conditions was quite respectable.

Once both machines reached the designated area, the two machines hovered in front of each other as if they had entered a classic standoff.

Before the two exchanged blows with each other, their pilots tested each other's mettle with their willpower.

The Saint Kingdom extending from the Macharia Excelsia tried to envelop the Lionheart and suppress its light, but the new expert mech stubbornly held its own with the help of its powerful resonance shield!

"Your will is solid, but you are still plagued by lingering doubts." Saintess Ulrika Vraken remarked.

Ark smiled back as he issued his response. "The only doubts on my mind are related to how much more powerful I have become now that I have obtained my new mech. I probably won't be able to put all of my doubts to rest today, but I hope you can help me clear at least a few of them today."

The Hexer ace pilot responded by retracting and reducing her Saint Kingdom until it emulated a more primitive resonance shield.

There were only a few circumstances where a high-tier expert mech could actually put up a good fight against an ace mech.

This was not one of them. The Macharia Excelsia and its pilot needed to restrain themselves by a large extent in order to serve as a fruitful sparring partner.

Ark did not feel ashamed or diminished by this. There were plenty of people who were stronger and weaker than him. What mattered the most to him was that he was able to maintain his progress to the end.

The two pilots did not exchange any unnecessary words. The Lionheart began to shine brighter as Ark noticeably became more excited now that he was able to fight against an actual opponent!

The maw of the lion head opened up and began to release a loud and thundering roar that could burst the ear drums of any baseline human in the vicinity!

"Here I come!"

The Lionheart started off the practice duel by firing a full salvo of bright light beams at the Macharia Excelsia!

Though the ace mech had jerked to the side in order to evade the attack, Saintess Ulrika Vraken tried her best to simulate the performance of a high-tier expert pilot, so she was not able to react fast enough to evade all of the attacks.

Her eyes briefly widened when she felt her simulated resonance shield taking more substantial hits than she anticipated.

Those strange energy beams countered her true resonance in a way that she never experienced from any other expert mechs.

The Lionheart continued to unleash beam after beam as it attempted to circle around the Macharia Excelsia.

However, the Hexer-developed machine was primarily a rifleman mech, so it was easily capable of retaliating against the much newer mech.

The Macharia Excelsia drew out its Hexfire rifle and began to wear down the Lionheart's resonance shield with rapid positron beam attacks!

While none of the attacks inflicted heavy damage due to Ulrika's deliberate attempts to tone down her performance, the pressure they exerted was not light!

Not only was incredibly innervating to get attacked by constant and unrelenting positron beams, but each attack carried the power of erosion.

This was Saintess Ulrika Vraken's favored strategy!

Her threat was not acute, but so long as she continued to launch her attacks, she could fell any target with enough time!

General Ark understood quite well that he stood no chance in a contest of firepower.

He still persisted because he wanted to know how much he could close the gap with his modern machine.

"I AM THE LIGHTBRINGER!"

"RWOOOAAAR!"

The Lionheart began to shine brighter and brighter as all sources of lights became amplified!

Not only was Ark resonating with the integrated luminar crystal cannons to an even greater extent with the help of his companion spirit, but he was also resonating with the only key resonating material of his expert mech!

The Lumosium that Ves had expertly applied throughout the structure of the Lionheart caused the powerful machine to become a greater source of light.

It was as if the high-tier expert mech turned into a star!

Not only that, but resonating with Lumosium also caused the properties of all of these bright lights to take on more mysterious properties.

Somehow, all of the strong lights caused the Lionheart's various parts and systems to perform at even higher levels than before!

That was not all. The light-attributed hypers integrated into the mech frame surged with greater power as well, causing the Lionheart to put up an even better fight against its current adversary.

The momentum of the Lionheart surged as the mech moved faster in the air while continuously striking the Macharia Excelsia with blinding beams of empowered light!

If the Macharia Excelsia was a real high-tier expert mech, then its resonance shield would have started to drain at a concerning rate at this moment!

That was not enough for the Lionheart. The mech continued to fire its integrated luminar crystal cannons, but also began to charge forward with its spear!

For a brief moment of time, it looked as if a meteorite was about to crash onto the Macharia Excelsia!

While the ace mech could have withstood this attack without moving, Saintess Ulrika chose to evade while at the same time triggering the extension of a sharp bayonet from the muzzle of her Hexfire rifle.

The Macharia Excelsia's primary means of fighting up close was by drawing out its plasma blade, but that was far too excessive for the current situation.

Despite sticking to its rifle, the ace mech still managed to deflect the incoming spear charge just enough to prevent any further damage!

Ark did not take this failure to heart. His expert mech circled around and approached the Macharia Excelsia at a more controlled pace so that it could engage in a more intensive spar!

For a time, loud collision noises thundered across the empty terrain as the spear and the bayoneted rifle frequently collided against each other.

The Lionheart started to gain ground. General Ark was highly skilled in the use of many common weapons. He had a special affection for the spear and was able to express his combat ability to a much greater extent!

The new expert mech completely blew the old Travon Exine out of the water!

As decent as the expert mech developed by the Garleners may be, it had not been designed with anything close to the love, passion or funding that Ves and Gloriana invested in the Lionheart.

Ark could feel the difference on a much more intimate level because he was able to interface with his new machine on a surprisingly deep level. As a second skin mech, the boundaries between Ark and the Lionheart had already blurred. The highly satisfied pilot took more and more comfort with the massively improved features of his powerful new machine.

Crack!

The simulated resonance shield of his opponent started to crack as it endured one empowered spear strike too many!

Although the transphasic hyper spear was not the best tool to wear down a resonance shield, the Lionheart was largely configured as a hybrid mech.

This meant that while Lionheart was able to strike with its spear, its integrated luminar crystal cannons continued to put a lot of pressure against the Hexer mech whenever they had a clear line of fire!

The Lionheart had drained a fair amount of energy and accumulated a substantial amount of heat, but the modern expert mech was so powerful that it was not yet close to reaching its limits!

"It is quite impressive that the Lionheart is able to overwhelm a 'high-tier expert mech' to this extent." Ves remarked. "This is not even its strongest form."

Gloriana did not take this result too seriously. "This is only valid in the case where the Lionheart duels against an expert ranged mech of the Phasewater Generation. If Saintess Ulrika is able to simulate an expert mech that is equipped with more up to date technologies, then your uncle would have taken more minutes to wear down his opponent to this extent."

That did not diminish Ves' excitement too much.

At this point, the Lionheart unleashed a powerful roar whenever its spear struck the rifle or the armor of its adversary!

While none of the powerful blows could overcome the much more effective willpower reinforcement of an ace pilot, General Ark still gained a lot of satisfaction from experiencing all of the physical feedback of his successful attacks!

He was confident that the Lionheart in its current state could easily outfight several Larkinson expert mechs at the same time!

Once Ark had his fill of thrusting his expert mech's spear, the Lionheart retreated for a bit and slowly set aside its spear.

The bright and shining expert mech took out its plasma sword and activated it yet again.

"Be careful, Saintess Ulrika!"

"It is not my turn to be concerned." The Hexer ace pilot retorted.

Just to be sure, Saintess Ulrika brought back her Saint Kingdom and made sure it adequately surrounded her Macharia Excelsia.

Once both sides were ready, the Lionheart blazed forward like a comet and attempted to slash towards the Macharia Excelsia.

A bright flash of light struck the ace mech's restrained Saint Kingdom and actually caused it to endure a lot of strain due to the potency of the attack!

Not only had the Lionheart employed its most powerful weapon, but the massive amount of light generated by the active plasma blade synergized with the active Lightbringer effect.

This additional synergy amplified the Lionheart's performance even further!

The bright star that was hovering low to the ground continued to circle around the defending ace mech.

Every second or so, the Lionheart struck forward with another plasma sword attack!

With every attack, the Macharia Excelsia's Saint Kingdom continually experienced great strain!

Although it was difficult for Ves and Gloriana to measure how much damage was being dealt, Ves loosely estimated that every sword attack in the Lionheart's current state was significantly greater than a full-powered discharge from the Amaranto's Instrument of Doom!

The comparison did not entirely make sense as the Cleansing Light did not possess any transphasic properties.

Despite these incongruities, Ves could easily imagine the Cleansing Light overpowering much more powerful defenses in the field, especially when Ark was leading his Warborn!

Once he advanced to the rank of ace pilot and waited until his Lionheart had been upgraded to the standards of an ace mech, Ves could not imagine how much more powerful he would become!

The Lionheart at that point would easily be able to crush the Mars in its current iteration!

"We need to finish these tests as soon as possible." Ves spoke with a hint of dissatisfaction in his voice. "Ark will only be able to unleash his true might on an actual battlefield. Let us hurry up and send him back with his new machine. This practice bout is not enough to give me an impression of our latest masterwork's true potential!"

Chapter 5398 Organic Quality

General Ark Larkinson looked incredibly satisfied when he finally emerged from the cockpit of his new expert mech.

Compared to the brilliant light show that the Lionheart had produced before, the brand new expert command mech had finally entered a state of rest.

Even though Ark had withdrawn his mind and will from his fantastic new machine, the Lionheart still exhibited a few signs of activity.

As a living hyper mech that had been programmed to automatically cultivate the Lesser Larkinson Metal Guardian Mantra, the Lionheart should always be in a state of permanent cultivation.

The constant attraction of light-attributed E-energy caused the surface of the Lionheart to exude a soft white glow. It made for a good light source if nothing else.

Ark looked back at his new expert mech with clear yearning and affection. He and his Lionheart still had a lot of fight left in them. The relatively brief spar against Saintess Ulrika Vraken and her Macharia Excelsia provided a good amount of exercise, but ended far too quickly for his tastes.

He wanted to fight all day if possible!

The more practice he got in, the more extensively he would be able to master his new expert mech's strengths and weaknesses. Ark clearly comprehended that he needed a lot more intensive practice if he wanted to get accustomed to a much better expert mech.

He needed to build up the mech-specific skills and 'muscle memory' that enabled him to employ all manner of powerful moves and techniques in the heat of battle!

Ark might be able to bully weaker opponents at his current state, but he knew in his heart that he would quickly fall into a disadvantage against a stronger and more experienced enemy.

The differences in fluency and proficiency may be subtle, but they could make a substantial difference in a high-level confrontation!

As Ark thought about how much training he could squeeze into his schedule for the next half year, he finally met up with Ves and the rest.

"Your new expert mech is so cool!" Andraste squealed as she held Lucky in her arms. "It is so strong and it looks so heroic whenever it launches a big attack. Your mech is like a roaring lion that

never lets up once it goes into action. The Lionheart is definitely the most awesome mech on this planet!"

Ark directed a proud and indulgent smile at the little girl. "Let us not get ahead of ourselves. There are lots of powerful first-class multipurpose mechs on this planet that can overpower my Lionheart. Granted, it will become a lot harder for them to do so if I break through yet again, but it is taboo for mech pilots to assume that they are already the best. There are always stronger rivals and enemies in the cosmos."

"Ohh..."

Ves smiled and ruffled his second daughter's hair. "Your uncle is right. Once a mech pilot thinks that he is the strongest, there is much less pressure to seek further improvement. I have observed many mech pilots throughout my life, and it is always the ones that believe that they are too inadequate that demonstrate more progress. This is why the proportion of high-ranking mech pilots is actually the lowest among first-raters."

The situation was a lot more complex than that. The first-raters made up for this inadequacy by concentrating on training the most talented potentates that are blessed with A and B-grade genetic aptitudes.

However, it was quite remarkable how third-rate and second-rate mech pilots were able to rise from mediocrity with just a fraction of the resources enjoyed by their more superior counterparts.

In any case, the previous testing session confirmed that the Lionheart precisely met all of Ark's demands.

Aside from a few shortcomings that were difficult to remedy, the new masterwork expert mech was fully capable of accompanying Ark in the foreseeable future!

Ark and the mech designers exchanged a few words about the Lionheart's performance.

Even though the Lionheart was a fantastic mech, there were still areas that could use a few tweaks in order to complement its pilot to a greater extent.

"The Cleansing Light's emitters have sustained serious damage." Gloriana pointedly noted to Ark. "You became so engrossed in your spar against Saintess Ulrika that you failed to control the heat output of your plasma sword. We will have to replace the damaged components with fresher ones in order to restore the condition of your weapon again."

"My apologies. I let my joy get the better of me. I have repressed my desires for a new mech for such a long time that I could not hold back anymore."

Ves did not think it was a big deal. "It is okay. We managed to gather more comprehensive data on the performance of your plasma sword. Whenever you are locked in a challenging situation, don't hold back. I would rather see you coming back with your Cleansing Light in a mess than see you harmed in any way."

"There is no cause for concern. I know my way around a battlefield."

The first expert mech design project of the new generation had formally come to an end after this day.

Once the mech designers handled all of the remaining affairs, they took a well-deserved break for a time.

With Ark and Benjamin visiting Diandi Base, there were plenty of opportunities to enjoy a bit of quality family time.

Once the Larkinsons had recovered from their previous exertions, they gathered together at the mech workshop a few days later.

One of the reasons why Ves and Gloriana decided not to start their next fabrication run so quickly was because they wanted to digest the gains from making their latest masterwork mech.

Both of them had gained a huge amount of insights during the last fabrication run.

Whether it was all of the hands-on experience with handling hyper materials or exposure to the ancient methods related to making better artifacts, the Miracle Couple had definitely improved substantially compared to before!

This was why they gained significantly greater confidence in their ability to complete the next fabrication run.

The Blood Star Mark II Project was not as easy and straightforward as the last project.

Not only was it partially organic in nature, it was also based on an existing Carmine mech.

Ves could disassemble the Blood Star Mark II to an extent, but he could not 'destroy' it in its totality!

In fact, upgrading the organic parts of the Carmine System was a huge ordeal as these fleshy bits still had to remain connected to the rest of the mech frame in a fashion.

It was incredibly troublesome to upgrade this kind of mech, but Ves did so without hesitation because his grandfather maintained an active Blood Pact with this humble machine!

Gloriana went off to pray to the Superior Mother yet again at this time.

Ves did not even know why his wife bothered with it. He was pretty sure that his mother did not get involved from beginning to end. The only benefit Gloriana received from this ritual was that she self-hypnotized herself into thinking that she carried the blessing of a Supreme.

Oh well. It was fine as long as she could produce a better result.

Venerable Benjamin Larkinson stared wistfully at the partially disassembled Carmine mech that he had been piloting in the last few months.

Due to the need to open up the mech frame so that Ves could upgrade the Carmine System in advance, the Blood Star looked like the carcass of a cyborg that had been desecrated in order to perform an occult ritual.

It was not a pleasant sight!

"Do you think you can turn my Blood Star into a masterwork mech like the Lionheart?" Benjamin asked his grandson.

Ves shrugged. "Normally, I would say yes, but your expert mech is a special case, as I am sure you already know. My craftsmanship has made a lot of strides during the last week, but the Blood Star

Mark II Project is such a mystery box that I cannot make any predictions about the outcome. I can only say that my wife and I shall do our best. It is not a disaster if your expert mech falls a little short in the end. The second generation god body solution will gradually improve its quality over time. You will also be able to spend more time rebuilding your foundation and set yourself up for success."

"I suppose that will have to do." Benjamin agreed.

As an old man that had spent decades as a crippled and retired soldier, his patience was a lot more considerable than that of his descendants. He understood the value of taking it slow and steady.

A few minutes passed by before Gloriana returned from her latest praying session. Her mood betrayed her enthusiasm.

"I am ready to begin."

"Before we start, my grandfather here has a question about your work." Ves spoke.

The old man turned to his grandson's wife. "I just wanted to ask whether your god body method can also take effect on the Carmine System. Will my Blood Star still be able to evolve into a masterwork mech if this is not the case?"

That caused Gloriana to frown. "I have been puzzling over this scenario for months. My honest answer is that my second generation god body method has yet to be applied to biomechs or any sort of organic tissue. Unlike my husband, I do not minor in biotechnology and biomech design. In order for my god body method to be effective, I need to have at least a solid idea on how these organic parts can be perfected. Suffice to say, I am unable to visualize a more perfect version of a Carmine System. I cannot apply my solution without direction. The most probable outcome is that nothing will happen, but there is a serious chance that my inappropriate actions will produce dangerous mutations. We cannot afford to make this gamble."

Though Ves liked to take a gamble every now and then, the Blood Star Mark II Project was already riddled with bets. He could not justify another action that would only raise the risk profile of this fabrication run even more!

"It will be fine." Ves tried to reassure his grandfather. "The Blood Star Mark II will be able to cultivate on its own, especially once it becomes a third order living mech. I have tweaked its cultivation method so that it will consciously try to improve the power of its blood and flesh. I think this may be a way for a cyborg mech to increase its overall quality over time."

"What if you are wrong?"

"Then I will figure out another solution. One of the downsides of biomechs is that it is much harder to turn them into masterwork mechs. Their production method contributes a lot to that. It is hard for production based on organic growth to maintain consistency at a high level. However, it is possible to turn biomechs into masterwork mechs after the fact by purposefully modifying and correcting the mature products. I can try to do this in the future once I have developed the third generation Carmine System."

Ves had already begun to think on how to improve the latest iteration of the Carmine System.

Even though Ves still needed to explore the expanded possibilities of the second generation Carmine System, all of this work would only refine its applications at best.

If Ves wanted to fulfill one of his ultimate ambitions, then he needed to refine the Carmine System even further.

He not only had to expand its power and capabilities, but also work towards making it cheaper, smaller and less dangerous!

Only when he was able to transform the Carmine System into a module that was suitable for mass production and mass adoption would he have a chance to realize his design philosophy!

This was his main goal as a Senior Mech Designer, so he would never stop working on the Carmine System in one capacity or another.

Chapter 5399 Soulbound

The fabrication run started under similar conditions as before.

"Maow!"

Alexandria appeared and formed a design network. The minds of Gloriana, Ves and Benjamin temporarily became connected to each other, causing each of them to be able to understand the others on a more intimate level.

Though a part of Ves found it a little awkward to become so intimately close with his grandfather all of a sudden, it was not a big deal.

The effectiveness of the design network largely relied on trust. Ves could hardly think of any people he trusted more. Benjamin was definitely a lot more trustworthy than his own mother!

Once the design network took shape, Ves and Blinky moved next.

Ves unveiled his glow and supercharged it with the help of Blinky's impressive ability to supply a lot of life-attributed energy.

He then proceeded to reach out to Vulcan, who partially possessed Ves' body yet again!

It was only at that point that the Miracle Couple had entered the best state that they could attain under their own power!

Though a part of Ves wanted to try and see if he could fabricate a strong enough mech without resorting to these tricks, he did not want to take the risk when it came to this important project.

The outcome of this fabrication run directly affected his grandfather's life and future!

Ves needed to take this project as seriously as possible and focus on delivering the best possible product.

He also sought to take advantage of the current circumstances to verify a few theories related to the Carmine System.

Work began right away.

Ves and Gloriana immediately began to operate the superfabs and other instruments in order to fabricate the new parts.

Alexa proceeded to disassemble the old Blood Star even further in order to prep it for a gradual replacement process.

The need to keep the Blood Star 'alive' imposed a considerable burden to the mech designers, but this was not the first time they worked around this limitation.

Venerable Benjamin in the meantime sat back and watched the younger generation at work.

Just like Ark, Benjamin came in touch with all kinds of amazing and complicated technical knowledge about his expert mech.

He was admittedly not as smart or learned as his proudest son, so Benjamin did not obsess too much over trying to understand the complicated science behind his mech.

It was enough for him to know that his grandson had done the very best he could to turn his expert mech into a suitable combat platform.

Ves and Gloriana initially did not encounter too many issues when they engaged in their work.

Unlike the Lionheart, the Blood Star Mark II was primarily designed as an offensive space knight.

Any mech that was designed with thick armor and a larger mech frame was inherently easier to design and construct. The fault tolerance of such a mech was considerably greater and there were not as many sensitive components that could produce additional complications.

There were only two different elements that the mech designers needed to be careful about.

First, the Carmine System needed to remain healthy, undamaged and connected to the mech frame.

Second, the shoulder-mounted hardpoints imposed additional requirements onto the product.

Neither of these issues were insurmountable.

Ves paid constant attention to the state of the recently upgraded Carmine System. As long as it exhibited any abnormal activity, he would receive an alert and be able to respond if necessary.

His wife mainly chose to deal with the other delicate internal systems. This included the additional energy transmission lines and other structural elements related to the shoulder-mounted weapon systems.

As they worked, Ves did not try to focus entirely on the work in front of him. He let a part of his thoughts wander in an attempt to find further inspiration.

The last fabrication run taught Ves that it was not necessary to rely on serendipity and random factors to obtain inspiration.

There were multiple ways for a mech designer to raise his mood and stoke his passion.

Ves speculated that one of the tricks that mech designers could employ to improve the quality of their output was to think about ideas that could make them excited!

There were many possible subjects that Ves could choose from that were related to the Blood Star Mark II.

For example, he could think about how the second generation Carmine System might improve the Blood Pact.

It was too difficult for Ves to make a prediction about this. Even if he formed a possible answer, there was little he could do to apply it to his current work.

What truly interested Ves at this time was the effect of his active Living Workshop on the Blood Star Mark II.

All of the new parts that were meant to replace the old ones became imbued with life.

Combined with the fact that Ves intended to turn the Blood Star Mark II into a powerful prime mech, the upgrade machine was bound to become a lot more alive than before!

This was a substantial leap. How would all of these changes and improvements affect the transformed living mech?

Would there be a mismatch between the Carmine System and all of the replacement parts?

While Ves tried to come up with answers to these interesting questions, he also made sure to keep an eye on the overall state of the current condition of the living mech.

Given how the cyborg mech had already undergone a period of growth while it had formed a permanent Blood Pact with Benjamin, Ves could not treat the machine as a collection of discreet but interconnected parts.

Instead, Ves began to see the original Blood Star as an upsized version of a human body.

Ves had the illusion that he was not trying to upgrade an old mech into a better form.

He felt as if he was operating on a genuine organic body. Every 'organ' he removed inflicted extensive damage to the rest of the organism. If he did not hurry up and compensate for all of the removed flesh and organs, the Blood Star might actually die!

Although the actual situation did not possess this dynamic, Ves couldn't help but hurry up a bit and try to prevent his grandfather's mech from suffering too many ills.

"Be patient, Blood Star. It will only be a few days. We will make sure that you will gain the power that you were always meant to wield."

From the perspective of Ves, the Blood Star was never meant to be brought to life in this fashion.

It was the equivalent of a baby that was born way too prematurely!

The reason why Ves had no choice in the matter was because he did not have much time to design a Carmine mech for his grandfather who was dying at the time.

If Ves had followed the normal design process and spent up to a year to design a proper expert mech, the only way he would have been able to interact with Benjamin was by visiting his grave!

Although Ves was not proud at his rush job, he possessed a lot of gratitude towards this humble Carmine mech.

While it may be lacking in power, sophistication and refinement, it was the mech that literally gave his grandfather a second chance at life!

When Ves thought about how his grandfather had lived his life before he formed a Blood Pact, he always found it tragic that Benjamin had lost his original passion and drive.

As a service provider, Ves felt an undeniable obligation to fulfill Benjamin's needs. Successfully doing so by supplying him with the original Blood Star was a lot more satisfying than selling millions of ordinary mechs!

The original Blood Star had saved Benjamin's life.

The next version of this Carmine mech would revive his career as a high-ranking mech pilot!

This was the only way for his grandfather to safeguard his life over the long term. So long as he managed to attain the breakthrough that he did not dare to dream about, he would be able to strengthen his body further and fight against the ravages that time left on his aging physique!

"C'mon, Blood Star. Let us work together and preserve my grandfather's vitality as much as possible."

The precarious state of his grandfather was a persistent cause for concern for Ves.

It was one of the reasons why Ves had yet to bestow a companion spirit to his grandfather. The older man's willpower had only recovered relatively recently. Who knew how much all of that progress would get lost if his spirit got operated by Blinky.

Time was running out, though. Ves did not have the strength to bestow a companion spirit to an ace pilot.

If Ves wanted to grant his grandfather the same advantages as other Larkinson expert pilots, he would have to take action while Benjamin was still a high-tier expert pilot.

It would be too late to augment his strength further once he broke through!

As Ves continued to think about the various ailments of his grandfather, he began to place more hopes on the Blood Star Mark II.

The deep integration between pilot and living mech had produced many wondrous effects that benefited them both, but most particularly Venerable Benjamin.

How extensively would the mutual exchange of blood and the magical Blood Pact be able to strengthen Benjamin even further?

The second generation Blood Pact was a modest attempt to promote these beneficial interactions, but it did not go far enough if Ves was being honest.

There had to be a lot more ways for the Blood Star Mark II to boost Benjamin's health and other aspects!

Ves just hadn't discovered and implemented them yet. While he did not have any ideas in mind, what about Vulcan?

As a design spirit who had gotten started in a more traditional form of creation cultivation, Vulcan was not unfamiliar with the concepts of bonds between user and product.

In ancient times, it was possible for artifact cultivators to form a bond between their souls and the 'souls' of high-level artifacts.

What was interesting was that it was usually possible for a cultivator to form a soul bond by dripping a drop of blood onto the artifact in question!

As long as all of the conditions were met, the artifact cultivator would become permanently bound with a weapon or another object that possessed an artifact spirit!

The benefits of these soul bonds were myriad.

The cultivator would be able to control the artifact a lot more proficiently.

The artifact would become inoperable when used by other people.

The cultivator would be able to communicate with and observe the surroundings of the artifact if the two had been separated.

Of course, soulbounds also came with downsides.

The two parties could restrict each other's growth if any of them failed to improve as quickly.

If the artifact broke or the soul bond got severed for any reason, then the artifact cultivator in question would suffer severe damage!

The stronger the artifact, the greater the harm!

The sequelae of breaking a stronger and deeper soul bond were also more severe.

The most optimistic outcome was for the cultivator to suffer serious damage to the soul.

The worst outcome was for the artifact cultivator to die outright.

When Ves briefly examined the strong and intimate Blood Pact between his grandfather and the Blood Star, it did not seem likely that this was a fairly shallow and weak bond.

The Blood Pact in its most primitive form already possessed the properties of a fairly deep and intimate soul bond!

Though the benefits of an active bond were undoubtedly greater, Ves could not get rid of the heavy consequences if anything ever happened.

Though Ves was not happy with this, he already accepted this danger as a necessary price to bestow greater power to his grandfather.

What mattered now was what Ves could do with this additional insight. Was there a way for him to upgrade the Blood Pact further based on Vulcan's knowledge?

Chapter 5400 Room for Improvement

Messing with people's souls was extremely dangerous.

The slightest mistake could easily cause them to suffer permanent personality disorders.

More serious damage could easily cause people to forget their original selves and turn into completely different people!

Ves had experimented on the spiritualities of enough test subjects to understand that he could never take this lightly.

The main reason why he dared to cut into people's spirits and bestow them with companion spirits was because his operations were relatively shallow.

Ves did not possess any further insights or understanding in the nature of the spirituality of a human being.

If he wanted to make any further progress into this highly mystical and esoteric field, then Ves would have to conduct a lot more dangerous experiments!

His most conservative estimate was that he needed to experiment on tens of thousands of individuals.

The good news was that they did not have to be humans. Ves could use the large number of prisoners of war that the Larkinson Clan currently kept in captivity on the Dragon's Den.

If that was not enough to satisfy his demand, he could always make a deal with the Terrans to supply him with more alien prisoners.

After all, the Terrans were definitely taking active part in the fighting at the frontlines. Their forces were probably able to capture large amounts of alien prisoners every day. There was no chance that they suffered a shortage in this area.

The only issue was that the Terrans must have already reserved these alien captives for their own secret experiments. It was vital for red humanity to learn more about their alien adversaries.

"Ves! Stop thinking about experimenting on aliens!" Gloriana yelled from the other side of the workshop. "You are polluting the design network with your crazy ideas again. Restrain your focus and get back to work!"

"Ah, sorry, honey!" Ves responded with an embarrassed look.

Ves pointedly ignored the scandalized look on his grandfather's face.

In any case, Gloriana was right in that Ves needed to focus on his work rather than unrelated experiments.

The subject that caused him to hold all of these thoughts was the Blood Pact that existed between his grandfather and the original Blood Star.

He did not have a clear idea of what it represented in the past, but now that Vulcan had become a proper creation cultivator, Ves figured out that the Blood Pact was a variation of a soul bond.

"If this is the case, then my grandfather has turned into a serious artifact cultivator."

This was an important distinction.

Every mech pilot could be defined as an artifact cultivator.

A pilot borrowed the strength of a mech in order to put up a better fight.

The pilot was also about to cultivate his willpower and progress as he continued to make use of a mech.

However, Ves found it surprising that the concept of a soul bond never really became widespread in the mech industry.

Despite its serious disadvantages, the benefits often made it worth it! Any mech pilot would be able to grow faster and break past their limits so long as they bonded with a strong enough mech!

"Oh, I forgot about the artifact spirit."

Modern mechs did not possess any life. The only way to bestow them with an artifact spirit was to transfer the souls of powerful life forms, but the latter did not exactly grow on trees in an energy-poor environment!

The concept of artifact spirits had become completely buried in the modern age. A lot of mech designers just made do without them, which did not affect the effectiveness of their mass production mechs, but severely constrained their ability to develop high-level mechs!

It was harder to promote the growth of expert pilots and ace pilots if their machines lacked the benefits of handy artifact spirits.

Of course, these mechs were already amazingly strong without this invisible element.

The neural interface and the man-machine connection partially compensated for this shortcoming.

So what if there was no artifact spirit?

The combination between the operating system of a machine and the mind of a human mech pilot ensured that the mech would always be expertly controlled!

The higher the rank of the pilot, the more capable he was able to assert control over the many complicated functions and systems of a mech.

A god mech did not strictly need an artifact spirit because its total merger with a god pilot meant that the latter had completely taken over this role!

If this was the case, then the mech industry had already come up with adequate substitutes for artifact spirits.

There was no need for Senior Mech Designers or Master Mech Designers to engage in a demonic ritual that extracted the soul of a powerful prisoner and transferred it to their own works!

However, just because the mech industry made artifact spirits redundant did not mean they had become useless.

The power and utility of his living mechs made that clear!

Ves believed so much in the value of making his mechs alive that he could not accept any notion that they were better off if they were lifeless!

The Ouroboros, which was the oldest living mech in existence, was much of the reason why General Axelar Streon had become so strong among the Terrans.

This renowned first-class hero mech could even fight and control its own systems on an independent basis, and that was when it was still a second order living mech!

Ves could not wait to see how extensively it had evolved once it finally evolved into a proper third order living mech!

The real issue right now was how the concept and the existence of an artifact spirit could help Ves make the Blood Star Mark II stronger.

It was not necessary for him to do anything special in this regard. Ves knew that as long as he did his work as expected, he and his wife would be able to assemble a good enough expert mech that would serve Venerable Benjamin well for the coming years.

However, Ves felt that this ordinary attitude would not give him the means to upgrade the Blood Star Mark II into a masterwork mech.

He did not have a clear idea of this beforehand, but now that he had begun this upgrade effort, he understood more clearly that he would probably miss this chance of fulfilling this small goal.

The main reason why he did not feel as confident was because of the limitations related to the Carmine System!

The inability to perfect the organic components of the Carmine System would cause a small but significant aspect of the Blood Star Mark II to fall behind.

It was like working under a handicap. Ves and Gloriana would have to raise the quality of the remaining mechanical parts a lot more if they wanted to overcome this unchangeable deficiency!

"Is it truly unchangeable, though?"

Ves did not have the time or the expertise to perfect the organic structure of the Carmine System.

However, he could work on other aspects of this crucial element. What if he could upgrade the spiritual foundation or the Blood Pact of the Blood Star Mark II?

Previous fabrication runs had proven that substantial improvements in the spiritual design of a mech could substantially boost its overall quality!

It was not easy for Ves to improve the spiritual foundation of a mech. He had already done what he could during the design phase.

This caused Ves to focus on the Blood Pact itself.

While Ves had designed the Carmine System to work in specific ways, he did not directly design or create the Blood Pact.

The intimate soul bond only came to life after a mech pilot successfully interfaced with a Carmine mech.

He had done his best to specify the parameters of the Blood Pact, but it was ultimately the mech and mech pilot that created one that suited their own conditions.

"If this is the case, then there should be room for improvement."

The problem was that Ves did not exactly excel in this field. Permanent soul bonds were not related to any of his core fields.

That did not stop him from trying, though.

Hours passed by as he and his wife continued to produce part after part.

Alexa diligently collected the newly fabricated components and scanned them to make sure they passed the quality standards.

Venerable Benjamin remained engrossed by the effort put into upgrading his Carmine mech.

Though Ves made sure to allocate a sufficient amount of attention to his fabrication work, he and Vulcan continued to brainstorm about ways to upgrade the Blood Pact.

None of their ideas were viable, but that did not stop Ves from growing more excited!

He knew that even if he wasn't able to figure out a practical solution during this fabrication session, he had gained a firm direction for future research!

Perhaps this goal was the seed that might lead Ves into developing the third generation of his Carmine System!

That already made all of this effort worth it. Ves did not intend to give up that easily, though.

"There is still enough time for me to come up with a good idea."

Multiple days went by as Ves and Gloriana continued their work.

Due to the fact that this was an upgrade project on an existing living mech, they occasionally had to bring the parts that they had made and assemble them into the partially stripped down frame of the Blood Star.

Piece by piece, the inadequate standard mech slowly acquired much better and more comprehensive parts.

The additions of transphasic components, hyper components and resonating exotics massively boosted the value of the Blood Star over time!

Its theoretical performance and its potential increased so much that the living mech was undergoing a gradual metamorphosis!

The gulf between a relatively poor and shabby second-class standard mech and an excellent quasi-first-class transphasic hyper expert mech was so vast that the Blood Star Mark II essentially went through a rebirth!

Both Benjamin and his battle partner rejoiced in this massive upgrade!

In fact, given how closely the Blood Star Mark II was so closely bound to Venerable Benjamin in spirit, the massive upgrades to the Carmine mech partially became mirrored by the old man's body!

Ves couldn't help but stop his work for a moment and focus on his grandfather.

"Benjamin?"

"Yes, grandson?"

"You are looking awfully spry for an old man."

Due to Alexandria's design network, Benjamin knew exactly what Ves had in mind when he issued this remark.

"I do not have a good grasp on the condition of my body, but I think I have recovered enough to run an additional lap around the walls of Diandi Base."

That was a serious improvement in Benjamin's fitness!

What was important was that the upgrade process was not even over yet! The Blood Star was about to become a lot stronger once its armor system became complete!

Ves shifted his gaze from his grandfather and the Blood Star Mark II several times.

He gained a greater understanding of what it meant for an artifact cultivator to form a soul bond with a fairly strong artifact.

He also gained more crucial insight on the nature of the Mech Body Merger Process.

With the understanding that he possessed today, the first phase and possibly second phase of the Mech Body Merger Process attempted to produce similar results!

The existence of Carmine mechs granted mech pilots the option to experience these dangerous and consequential phases far in advance!

"If a Blood Pact is able to replicate at least part of the traits of an operation union and maybe a domain field union, then what if I can make it go all the way?"

Who said that mech pilots could only start the Mech Body Merger Process when they had evolved into peak ace pilots?

Who said that the four phases of the Mech Body Merger Process had to be completed in a limited timespan in order to stave off death?

Who said that there were no alternative ways to complete an operation union and a domain field union?

Ves became overtaken by excitement as he questioned all of these assumptions.

He strongly suspected that he could break these rules and make his grandfather a lot stronger so long as he managed to improve the Blood Pact!

"I just need to figure out a solution!"