

## **The Mech 5561**

Chapter 5561 Untapped Potential

It took a moment for the audience to realize what had happened.

The Fey Fianna lost against the Montebras!

This almost broke their cognition.

After all, the Fey Fianna had continually produced one success after another. The drone mechs exhibited so much strength and versatility that they looked as if they could defeat any adversary!

For them to lose against a pair of lancer mechs was... perplexing.

"The Montebras are so cool!"

The audience clapped and cheered in order to express their appreciation for the winner of the second challenge match.

Even though the Montebras exhibited major flaws and shortcomings, they didn't seem to matter as the mechs managed to defeat the Fey Fiannas for the first time!

The sole mech that still remained operational looked like it was close to collapsing. The damaged machine was in a deplorable state, and the uncontrolled discharges of electricity obviously did not do its longevity any favors.

Nonetheless, the lightning warrior looked incredibly dashing to many mech pilots. This kind of all-or-nothing lancer mech satisfied one of the most primal needs of humans.

As an army of bots and other facilities started to clear the arena ground of any wrecks and debris, Ves had eventually come around to the fact that his works had failed for the first time since their reveal.

The Fey Fiannas had lost the halo of invincibility that graced them before. Ves was sure that this defeat would have considerable implications to the popularity and sales pattern of his mech model.

Fortunately, the Fey Fiannas managed to leave a good impression during this match. Ves had no doubt that they could have won this match so long as the other Fey Fianna managed to surface the charge attack as well. The additional machine could have bought more time for the fey to finish off both enemy mechs.

Alas, it was not to be. The Montebras had won the second challenge match fair and square.

Once the RA supervisors officially recorded this result, Ves let out a deep breath.

He did not like to lose, but he could accept this outcome. Fey Fiannas did not lose in an ugly fashion. They showed a portion of their strength and clearly would have been able to resolve the threat posed by lancer mechs of another make.

Many people recognized that the Fey Fiannas did not lose because they were too weak, but because the Montebras were too strong and perverted!

Ves couldn't help but develop a greater interest in the tech that made it so special.

"The TEMP mechanism is a fantastic piece of work." He complimented her work. "What stage of development has it reached? It is clearly not a finished product, but how soon will we start to see it on the battlefield?"

"The implementation is still too rough. The power is satisfactory, but the practicality is not close to reaching the requirements that I have set. I estimate that it will take at least a year before I can reduce the load on the mech and make it safe enough for specialized use cases." Master Ginevra Hubert-Colmain candidly replied. "I need to experiment with different alloys and hyperts to better control and contain the uncontrolled electrical discharges. The only materials that are able to do so are prohibitively expensive."

Seeing that Master Ginevra was willing to explain her work, Ves did not let this opportunity go to waste.

"I see. What sort of purpose do you have in mind for the Turbo-ElectroMagnetic Pairing mechanism? Mech-on-mech combat has entered into a decline, so the demand for such a powerful function is not great at the moment."

Master Ginevra crossed her arms. "Master Aulus Kreshnik who came before is not wrong in his assumptions. The native aliens are in the process of developing more extensive countermeasures against human mechs. Our enemies are increasingly coming to the realization that it is detrimental for mechs to be able to fly around the battlefield without any hindrance. Not only are the aliens beginning to equip their warships with larger quantities of small-caliber rapid-fire gun batteries, but they are in the process of developing increasingly more effective starfighters and phasefighters."

Clearly, both of these Master Mech Designers had access to a high-level intelligence channel that informed them of this trend.

That meant that Ves had to take it seriously as well.

Ves understood why Master Ginevra went through the trouble of developing such a strange electromagnetic attraction mechanism.

"Are mechs like the Montebra designed to prevent alien phasefighters from using their superior mobility to prevent interception?"

"That is partially the goal." Master Ginevra confirmed. "The Montebra is a tech demo. The TEMP mechanism doesn't have to be paired with a lancer mech per se. It can be fitted to a space knight as well. I am still considering whether to complete the development of the Montebra or shelve the design in order to revise the TEMP mechanism. The concept that I have envisioned at an earlier stage has proven to be too fragile to endure the excessive load."

That sounded wasteful to Ves. He could not really bear the fact that the Fey Fianna lost to a mech that was not even a serious product.

It became clear that Master Ginevra did not issue her challenge because she wanted to market an upcoming product like Master Kreshnik had done.

Her motivations went much deeper than that. Though Ves was not able to guess all of her goals, he believed that she mainly wanted to increase her profile, attract more publicity to her mech consulting bureau and her work and attract potential collaborators who could assist in her research efforts.

That last part was especially important. Master Mech Designers increasingly had to work with other peers in order to fulfill more ambitious goals. A mech designer who previously held a lower profile like Master Ginevra needed to show her strength in a more public setting in order to get taken more seriously by her peers.

Ves was sure that numerous Master Mech Designers became so attracted by her TEMP mechanism that they were planning to make contact with her in the coming days and weeks!

He knew this because he was entertaining the same idea!

Compared to all of the other mech designers who were sitting far away, Ves happened to be floating next to the female Master in question.

"The Montebra has great potential." Ves honestly conveyed his interest and appreciation for the model that had defeated his Fey Fianna. "Sure, it is still rough around the edges, but I believe that it can become an incredibly effective combatant, not just against small craft, but also against starships."

His words aroused Master Ginevra's interest.

"Please elaborate, professor."

Ves waved his hand and projected an image of the Redlance.

"Lancer mechs are not useless against starships. One of our exclusive mech designs makes use of transphasic blast lances to inflict heavy damage against powerful transphasic energy shields."

He waved his hand again, which caused the projection to show an image of the Stormblade Samurai.

"We have worked with offensive electricity-based tech as well. The Stormblade Samurai designed by one of our mech designers makes use of a much tamer and less destructive form of electrical charge to destabilize energy shields at a faster rate."

"What are you working towards, professor?"

"While we are not familiar with your experimental tech, we have worked on mech designs that share a number of commonalities with your Montebra design. We have even fielded the mechs of our making in battle, allowing us to prove a lot of theories and gather a lot of useful data. What I am trying to say is that we can work together to turn the Montebra into a competitive lancer mech that can serve an incredibly useful function on the battlefields of the present age."

It became abundantly clear that Ves wanted to get involved in the continued development of the Montebra.

Though Master Ginevra already anticipated that other mech designers wanted to work with her, she did not expect that Ves himself would express such an intention.

The Montebra defeated the Fey Fianna in a high-profile challenge match!

A more petty mech designer would have developed a lot of resentment towards the Montebra and its mech designer for causing the Fey Fianna to fall off its pedestal.

Ves was different. He saw so much untapped potential in the unfinished Montebra design that he couldn't help but try and see if he could get a piece of the action!

When Master Ginevra discerned that Ves was being utterly serious about participating in the development of the Montebra, she had to know more.

"I did not anticipate that you would develop such an interest in the Montebra. You state that it has a large amount of untapped potential, which means that you believe that you have the ability to apply major improvements to my work. Can you explain how you would elevate the Montebra design?"

Ves smiled. He had been waiting for this answer.

"When the Montebra converged a lot of metal E energy into electric E energy, the mech actually squandered most of the power of the latter. Much of the reason why your lancer mech is shocking its own internals to such an extent is due to the uncontrolled amplification of all of that excess electric E energy. It is obvious that your design is unable to tame this exotic energy."

"That is correct." The older woman confirmed. "As I have explained before, the design budget is limiting my ability to develop an effective solution. I require the services of an expert in materials science to develop new alloys that can better control the violent electric discharges while also remaining reasonably affordable. It may not be possible to develop a material that satisfies both requirements, so the future of the Montebra design is still in question."

Even though it sounded as if Master Ginevra did not really value her lancer mech design all that much, how could a serious mech designer discard her work so easily?

No authentic mech designer would feel happy about throwing away a mech design that had consumed months of earnest design work!

Ves claimed to offer a way for the Master Mech Designer to 'save' her mech design.

Even if she was skeptical about his proposal, she owed it to the Montebra to consider it properly.

"What are your solutions?"

"The short answer is E-technology." Ves immediately replied. "If you haven't noticed already, this happens to be one of my strengths. Have you witnessed how my Fey Fiannas are able to harness the power of E energy radiation? They aren't able to absorb as much raw E energy as their own work, but because they are alive, they can utilize the E energy much more effectively. In other words, E-technology allows my living mechs to go beyond the limitations set by hyper technology."

"How does that benefit the Montebra design?" Master Ginevra critically asked. "Your descriptions are too abstract. Be more concrete."

"Sure. The greatest advantage of what I have just told you is that all of these extra capabilities do not require the use of expensive materials or even more expensive components. Most forms of E-technology are intangible, so they do not increase the production cost of a mech at all. I bet you that I can make the Montebra a lot safer and less self-destructive if you give me an opportunity to integrate my own design philosophy in your work."

This caused the older woman to pause for a time. She would never believe these claims if they came from any other Senior Mech Designer, but Ves happened to be a tier 3 galactic citizen.

He had made it much further than herself! Master Ginevra had only managed to reach tier 7 after working for a much longer period of time.

"This is not the time and place to discuss business." She eventually said. "You should complete your remaining challenge matches. Once your schedule is clear, we can meet again and discuss the possibility of further collaboration. Is that acceptable to you, Professor Larkinson?"

"That sounds great! I will make sure to prepare a more detailed proposal for our next meeting. I truly believe that I can transform the Montebra into a true lighting warrior."

Chapter 5562 Oclis Zemo

Ves was not sure whether he could persuade Master Ginevra to collaborate with him and convert the Montebra into a powerful living mech.

He could not hide his clear desire towards TEMP mechanism and all of the other tech related to Master Ginevra's incredibly useful specialization.

Exotic Energy Conversion was too useful to a mech designer like Ves!

Ever since mech designers started to play around with hyper mechs, many of them faced the same limitation that limited the power of their works.

They were unable to absorb enough E energy from the environment!

The medium-energy environment of the Red Ocean restricted the potential of hyper technology and E-technology.

Compared to the much more saturated environment of Messier 87, the circumstances in the new frontier were highly unfavorable!

This meant that mechs could never harness the power of heaven to the same extent as equivalent machines in the much larger supermassive galaxy.

If Ves wanted to break past the limitation set by the environment, then he had to get his hands on tech that could convert other forms of power into E energy.

Ves recognized that Master Ginevra Hubert-Colmain just happened to be one of the mech designers who could break this limitation!

If she had developed tech that could convert electrical energy to E energy, that meant that any hyper mech could receive a powerful performance boost that could make a crucial difference in battle!

The Montebra was the best example of that. Its powerful TEMP mechanism could not have become so powerful or gained such a useful function if the mech was not able to produce an absurd amount of energy.

He believed that there was clear and obvious synergy between his work and that of Master Ginevra.

The older Master Mech Designer had the capacity to produce large amounts of E energy, while Ves was confident that he could channel all of that power into effective results.

However, nothing was certain. Ves could only wait until he could discuss the Montebra and its powerful technologies at a later time.

Once Master Ginevra Hubert-Colmain exited the arena, the third challenge match commenced after a brief delay.

Master Acze Redmond issued a challenge on behalf of Fusion Arms, a middling mech company that was headquartered in the Magair Middle Zone.

The man definitely possessed a good understanding of living mechs as he was based in a zone where the Hexers occupied a significant chunk of territory.

The older man pushed forth a striker mech called the Oclis Zemo to earn fame and steal a bit of the hype accrued by the Fey Fianna.

His motivations were much simpler than the ones of his predecessor.

When Ves shook hands with Master Redmond, he did not gain a particularly good impression of the older fellow.

Master Aulaus Kreshnik was a powerful Rubarthan mech designer who came down to the middle zones in order to make a new start and successfully take over Pritchard & Terse.

Master Ginevra Hubert-Colmain sought to increase her profile and find collaborations who could help her complete her difficult research projects.

As for the third challenger, Master Redmond simply wanted to save on marketing costs by leeching off the fame of a tier 3 galactic citizen.

Though the mech designer was a bit boring, his striker mech possessed a few interesting traits.

The Oclis Zemo looked like a typical striker mech at first. It was covered with fairly thick armor and did not excel at mobility.

This was normally a huge disadvantage in a duel against a more agile ranged mech.

One of the common characteristics of striker mechs was that their weapons possessed limited range.

When they were armed with flamethrowers, then their attack range was hardly better than melee mechs.

Their ability to attack distant targets improved remarkably when they were armed with shotguns that were configured for longer ranges, but they could never get close to a rifleman mech in terms of range and precision.

There were also more exotic weapon types that striker mechs could make use of to fulfill their area denial roles, but most of them defaulted to using flamethrowers and shotguns

The Oclis Zemo happened to be one of the few exceptions that eschewed these obvious weapon systems.

Instead of using a shotgun that would likely not be able to pose a significant threat against the Fey Fianna in this challenge match, the striker mech instead armed itself with two rotary cannons.

Yes, multi-barreled machine guns.

The striker mech had to carry a sizable backpack module in order to carry all of the ammunition needed to feed the twin monsters!

Master Acze Redmond designed the Oclis Zemo with abnormally thick and sturdy arms. They were able to hold and brace the rotary cannons in a stable enough manner to control their recoil.

Even so, the caliber of the rotary cannons were a bit too large for a mech of this size.

The power of the two rotary cannons was undeniable. Any mech would not feel good if it was attacked by twin streams of lots of kinetic rounds.

However, that shouldn't be enough to defeat the Fey Fianna. The unusual striker mech definitely possessed another secret that was responsible for giving it the edge it needed to win the third challenge match.

Ves already had a strong suspicion of what that secret may be. Hyper technology had the ability to transform the capabilities of any existing tech. "Can you tell me what the intent is behind the Oclis Zemo?" Ves asked.

"I initially designed the mech as a point defense platform for vulnerable starships." Master Acze Redmond replied. "Unlike proper warships, most human starships are not allowed to mount any weapon systems, including point defense guns. The Oclis Zemo is designed as a relatively expedient solution to this problem. It can not only intercept missiles, but also small craft."

Ves nodded in understanding. "I see. What sort of advantage does it possess that will persuade potential customers to opt for your product over the competition?"

"You will bear witness to it soon enough, professor. My Oclis Zemo may not be as complex as the previous challenge mechs, but it is solidly designed and built to complete its mission."

Their mechs had entered the main arena by this time.

Unlike the previous challenge matches, this one turned into a duel.

Only a single Fey Fianna and a single Oclis Zemo squared off against each other.

This caused the scale of the impending fight to become a lot smaller. Less mechs translated into less complications.

Ves could not say for sure which side benefited more from having less mechs in the field. He could easily come up with arguments that could favor one mech or the other.

This time, the Fey Fianna that had been selected to fight against the striker mech possessed a loadout that consisted of two luminar crystal cannon fey and energy shield fey.

The balanced loadout granted the Fey Fianna with decent defenses but not that much of a punch.

The danger in using this loadout was that it might not be able to resist the continuous attacks of the two rotary cannons long enough for its offensive fey to breach the defenses of the Oclis Zemo.

However, Ves was pretty confident in his work. The luminar crystal cannon fey had proven their competence several times. They could always break down the defenses of a target as long as they were allowed to fire their weapons long enough.

The key was how the Fey Fianna intended to approach this tricky fight and how quickly the fey could crumble the defenses of the Oclis Zemo.

The countdown started.

After a minute had passed, the two mechs immediately exploded into action!

The Oclis Zemo did not do anything fancy. It simply braced itself onto the arena floor and began to open fire right away!

RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!

The firing rate of the rotary cannons was so high that the two weapons produced loud whines that seemed to overpower every other noise in the arena!

Bright tracer rounds allowed the observers to clearly track their blazingly fast trajectories as they crossed the length of the arena and struck the Fey Fianna's energy shield.

The energy shield shook and flared immediately as it came under heavy strain.

There was no way that it could last too long under all of this concentrated fire.

The two energy shield fey soon flew closer in order to relieve the main body and resist a part of the attacks.

Just like in the first match, it became clear that the Larkinson mech pilot intended to rotate the energy shields in order to give them time to recharge when they weren't subjected to heavy pressure.

While the energy shields were able to resist the damage of a single small round fairly well, the insanely high firing rates of the two rotary cannons more than compensated for this shortcoming!

The result was that the Fey Fianna would not be able to shelter behind its energy shields for long.

It had to go on the attack!

The main body's luminar crystal rifle and the two luminar crystal cannon fey had already begun to do so. Familiar fire laser beams streaked across the distance and struck the energy shield of the striker mech.

As a fairly large and hefty mech, the Oclis Zemo was equipped with a rather strong energy shield.

The fire-attributed attacks had a reduced effect on the striker mech as the machine was mostly integrated with earth hyper metals.

The strong earth element not only enabled the Oclis Zemo to add additional force and impact to its rapid-fire ballistic attacks, but also strengthened its defenses against fire and most energy-based attacks!

However, the concentration of earth-attributed E energy around the Oclis Zemo was not as high as the Nelerat Mark I during the first challenge match.

The Oclis Zemo did not carry around a lot of spare armor plating that had been augmented with a lot of earth hyper materials!

As such, the striker mech was unable to reduce the damage of the incoming attacks by a large extent. The constant fire energy beams steadily wore away the earth energy shield.

Unfortunately, the situation did not look too optimistic for the Fey Fianna. It clearly had a lot more staying power, but what mattered the most was that the Oclis Zemo had more than enough firepower to shred the drone mech and its fey in a relatively short amount of time!

If the Fey Fianna wanted to win, it had to take the initiative!

It was not enough to perform evasive maneuvers in order to make it more difficult for the Oclis Zemo to keep training its weapons onto the drone mech.

The mech was designed to intercept missiles and fast-moving small craft. It was able to consistently land its shots with the help of the rapid-fire nature of its rotary cannons.

This was the main reason why the Oclis Zemo was equipped with this weapon system as opposed to a more traditional gauss weapon!

The Fey Fianna could only try to close the distance and make use of superior maneuvering to complicate the aim of the Oclis Zemo.

This presented quite an interesting change. During the previous challenge matches, it had been the opposing mechs that charged towards the Fey Fianna.

The fact that the Fey Fianna had to make a proactive move meant that the mech was most definitely in hot water!

As the main body advanced, its fey continued to stick close. The mech pilot had thought about splitting up its fey into two groups and command them to advance separately, but that would just turn them into easy targets against the deadly firepower of the Oclis Zemo.

It was much better to keep them all close and rely on the shared defenses of the energy shields as much as possible!

"Those energy shields aren't going to last long."

The Fey Fianna had only managed to make it past the halfway point, but the three energy shields at its disposal were already on the verge of breaking! Though the Oclis Zemo had to fire its rotary cannons so quickly that their barrels already started to heat up, it was worth it so long as the striker mech could quickly shred a few fey apart!

## Chapter 5563 The Resurgence of Physical Projectile Weapons

The Oclis Zemo was an unusual second-class mech.

Back when Ves was still a humble third-class mech designer, he regularly came in touch with ballistic weapons.

In a society where laser beam weapons and many more advanced weapon technologies became available, the demand for the most basic ballistic weapons had never faded.

This was because more advanced weapon systems usually imposed greater requirements. These could range from needing to master more advanced knowledge, the use of higher grades of materials and the necessity of having access to a much stronger power source.

It was human nature to chase after the most expensive and powerful toys, but not everyone had the opportunity or the capital to handle them. In a cosmos where scarcity was a universal phenomenon, the ordinary masses could only dream of piloting the most advanced mechs or wielding the most destructive weapons.

Ballistic weapons as well as certain types of artillery weapons were extremely common in battles between small and unsophisticated forces.

Even the weakest and most destitute alien races had little choice but to resort to more primitive weapon systems to defend their homes!

Based on firing lots of simple chemically propelled bullets or shells, ballistic weapons had many compelling advances. They were cheap, low-tech, did not expend a lot of energy on use, easy to mass produce and actually quite versatile.

However, their disadvantages were also clear. They were heavy, cumbersome, took up a lot of capacity and needed to reserve even more space for ammunition!

When it came to mechs and starships, space always came at a premium. All of the space occupied by the propellant needed to launch bullets at distant targets was so wasteful thaty this was the primary reason why most ballistic weapons fell out of favor in second-class and third-class combat.

Ballistic weapons also had another major shortcoming.

Compared to gauss weapons that relied on generating a lot of electromagnetic force to propel solid alloy rounds with much greater power, most conventional ballistic weapons were unable to generate high enough muzzle velocities to guarantee accurate fire in space combat.

Energy beam weapons were much superior in this regard!

This was why the Oclis Zemo seemed like an oddball to many of the people viewing the third challenge match.

Ballistic weapons were not the only kind of armaments that could produce rapid-fire damage output. Specialized laser cannons and hybrid energy pulse cannons could be used for intercepting missiles just as well.

The latter two weapon systems were also a lot more accurate at longer ranges!

The reason why the Oclis Zemo was classified as a striker mech rather than a special sub-type of rifleman mech was because its rotary cannons were too inaccurate at longer ranges!

In space combat where the distances between enemies could easily range from tens to hundreds of kilometers, the muzzle velocities of most ballistic weapons were so slow that it was impossible for them to hit anything aside from large stationary objects such as space stations.

The Oclis Zemo's effective range was too limited.

Yet so long as people could look beyond this shortcoming, the Oclis Zemo possessed certain advantages that made it a lot more compelling than normal.

Its twin rotary cannons not only fired quickly, but also struck with great force. Every bullet was impregnated with a small quantity of cheap, low-grade earth hyper material.

This was the kind of material that could easily be dug out of a random planet or asteroid after a casual search.

Though the properties of this hyper material was nothing special, a solid hyper round was always able to carry a lot of E energy than an insubstantial energy beam!

Solid projectiles were also able to contain E energy in a more concentrated and directed fashion, enabling them to produce more powerful and sophisticated effects!

During the Phasewater Generation, the general consensus of the mech industry was that energy weapons possessed a decisive advantage.

The existence and the effects of phasewater was powerful, but the exotic itself was too scarce to be squandered on consumable goods such as projectiles.

Firing a transphasic rotary cannon that was fed by actual transphasic bullets was no different from throwing away a huge fortune!

Though energy weapons could not produce such a powerful transphasic effect, they were much more sustainable as they did not throw out any actual phasewater.

The Hyper Generation suddenly reversed this trend.

Phasewater still remained as scarce and prohibitively expensive as ever, but the same was not the case for all of the new hyper materials that emerged!

Higher grades of hyper materials were still relatively scarce due to how troublesome it was to produce them, but lower grades of hyper materials had become incredibly common nowadays!

That made the latter incredibly suitable to be used for consumable products such as ammunition.

Master Acze Redmond practically designed the Oclis Zemo since the start of the Hyper Generation by relying on this exact premise!

"Ballistic weapons are making a comeback in second-class combat." The Master Mech Designer boldly stated to Ves as the match continued to unfold. "Do you hear all of that noise? People will begin to encounter it much more often. There are far more low-grade hyper materials in the Red Ocean than we can ever use up. We can integrate all kinds of them into our projectiles to improve the physical damage output of our mechs. Energy weapons simply cannot compare."

The Hyper Generation was like a dream come true for Master Redmond. He happened to specialize in the development of rapid-fire weapons, but such weapons never really gained enough traction in the past.

In the previous age, mech-on-mech combat often centered around penetrating armor. It was much easier for single heavy attacks to punch through layers of armor than a stream of smaller projectiles.

While this reality hadn't changed, the introduction of hyper technology could transform every existing tech!

Master Redmond gained a lot more confidence in his specialization due to the natural synergies between hyper technology and physical weapon systems.

This became evident by how the Fey Fianna was struggling to maintain its energy shields in the face of the Oclis Zemo's excessive firepower!

The rotary cannons continually spat out earth hyper bullets that stressed out the water energy shields of the main body as well as the two defensive fey at an alarming rate.

The Fey Fianna hadn't even managed to reach the other side of the mech arena, but already it was on the verge of relying on its adaptive modular armor system to withstand the storm of bullets!

The fact that a weapon system that people previously regarded as weak and primitive could deplete the energy shields of the Fey Fianna and its accompanying fey so quickly caused many observers to change their minds about ballistic weapons!

"Have ballistic weapons become so good all of a sudden?"

"I wonder how much a magazine costs. If it is not too expensive, then it is more than worth it to pay this much money to wear down the defenses of our enemies at a faster pace. I do not know of any energy weapon at the same price range that can produce results as quickly!"

"Where can I buy the Oclis Zemo? A mech this good is a great deterrent against mechs and alien starfighters so long as they enter its effective range."

More and more people became impressed by the enhanced impact damage of the earth bullets.

If weapons such as the rotary cannons continued to perform well in other situations, then it was conceivable that much of the mech industry might choose to exchange their energy weapons for physical weapons!

Ves did not entirely embrace the hype. As the leading developer of luminar crystal weapons, he had long developed a preference for energy weapons.

He did not want to see his products losing value just because they were equipped with luminar crystal weapons!

"I don't agree with your premise, Master Redmond." Ves asserted his own position. "Your ballistic weapons are strong, but there are many ways to leverage E energy. Physical projectile weapons currently enjoy a head start because it is much simpler to enhance their firepower with hyper materials. Energy weapons are momentarily behind because it is clear that we need to develop a more sophisticated solution, but I have no doubt that the latter will catch up in time."

"It is good for you to feel confident, but the development of hyper ballistic weapons is not stagnating at all." The older mech designer gently admonished Ves. "I am in contact with numerous like-minded mech designers such as myself. Each of us recognizes that we have a golden opportunity. Only by setting aside our rivalries, sharing our research and collaborating together can we change outdated biases and preferences of the customer base!"

That was a considerable undertaking! Ves became impressed by Master Redmond for the first time. The man was truly passionate about the superiority of hyper ballistic weapons.

It was a pity that Ves did not quite agree with the other mech designer.

Ves did not like ballistic weapons because they imposed too many burdens on a fleet-based mech force.

The ammunition needed to supply thousands of ballistic rifleman mechs was astronomical!

All of that would inevitably occupy a large amount of cargo space aboard starships.

Producing them in larger numbers was also troublesome. Even with a fully-fledged factory ship such as the Spirit of Bentheim, the Larkinson would still be unable to produce the right bullets if it was lacking in many types of raw materials.

Ves much preferred to work with energy weapons because many of them only needed to be equipped with energy cells to keep them fed.

This imposed a significantly lower logistical burden to forces such as the Larkinson Army. Expended energy cells could easily be recharged through any means in many different circumstances, so they were much more suitable for longer missions and deep expeditions.

It was a pity that all of the logistical advantages that Ves valued so much did not translate into greater combat power.

This was why the Fey Fianna looked like it was becoming increasingly more suppressed by the Oclis Zemo!

Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang!

Once the last water energy shield succumbed from the twin barrages of the rotary cannons, the earth bullets started to hammer the exteriors of the two depleted energy shield fey at a blazingly fast rate!

Already, dozens of modular armor plating rapidly deformed at the same time. Each modular armor plate was not that thick and tough to begin with. Though they were able to bounce individual earth bullets with relative ease, once they started to get pummeled by a hundred projectiles or more, it became impossible for them to retain their integrity!

Clink-clink-clink-clink.

Broken plate after broken plate continually separated from the Fey Fianna and fell onto the arena ground in a distressing fashion.

More and more modular armor plates emerged from less critical or exposed sections of the main body and its fey, but the replacements wore down so quickly from all of the physical attacks that a new batch of replacement plates had to come in and take their place!

In contrast to powerful rotary cannons, the three luminar crystal weapons of the Fey Fianna only managed to break the striker mech's earth energy shield after expending a lot of effort.

Even then, the armor of the Oclis Zemo was so good that they easily resisted dozens of fire energy beam strikes while only incurring shallow damage to its thick frontal armor!

It was unreasonable to expect that the Fey Fianna could breach the defenses of such a mech by relying on its luminar crystal weapons.

However, the Larkinson mech pilot decided to shift his target from the torso of the enemy mech to its rotary cannons!

Several salvos of precise fire laser beams struck the twin weapon systems of the Oclis Zemo!

The resilience of the rotary cannon was quite high. Master Redmond was not stupid and made sure to construct the big and powerful weapons out of sturdier and more damage-resistant materials.

As such, the laser beams only inflicted minor exterior damage up to this point!

"This is not enough."

Chapter 5564 Rapid Fire

The match between the Fey Fianna and the Oclis Zemo could be seen as a struggle between two different weapon philosophies.

The Oclis Zemo clearly sought to lead a resurgence in the use of ballistic weapons in the Hyper Generation. The striker mech did so in the most visually stimulating fashion possible by continually firing twin streams of impactful earth bullets from its rotary cannons.

There was no way that the machine could sustain this excessive rate of fire, but it did not have to! So long as it was able to take down a single opponent, its mission would be complete!

This was why the striker mech did everything possible to demolish its opponent as quickly as possible. It did not hesitate to rotate its heavy guns faster in order to spit out its bullets at a faster rate.

The rotary cannons would almost certainly have to be scrapped or undergo a complete rebuild after this match, but who cared? The benefits from winning this match was far greater than destroying a few measly weapons!

Under the heavy firepower of the Oclis Zemo, the Fey Fianna did not fare well at all. The constant bombardment of earth bullets impacted dozens of armor plates so quickly that the adaptive modular armor plating system became overwhelmed by how many of them needed to be replaced.

The excessively high firing rate of the twin rotary cannons also caused numerous bullets to squeeze into the weak points that briefly became exposed when the replacement armor plating failed to arrive in time.

This caused the energy shield fey to malfunction!

Its flight began to falter while its energy shield generator completely lost the ability to restore its charge.

Numerous other systems began to falter in quick succession as the initial failures caused the mech to become much more vulnerable to follow-up attacks.

RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!

Under the withering fire of two ruthless rotary cannons, the energy shield fey became so overwhelmed that it began to falter and drop from the air just a few seconds after it had suffered internal damage!

This was the most frightening aspect about rapid-fire weapons. Their lethality against softer and weaker internal components was unparalleled. So long as they could bypass all of the protective layers of a target, they could quickly wreak havoc inside!

The premature collapse of one of the energy shield fey caused the second one to withstand a huge amount of stress!

The only saving grace was that the remaining modular armor plating of the downed fey could still be leveraged to increase the damage buffer of the remaining elements, but only to a small extent.

As the distance between the two mechs continued to decrease, the accuracy and the hit rates of the rotary cannons improved by a significant extent.

This not only caused the fey that was trying to block as many bullets as possible to deplete its defenses faster, but also caused it to suffer more internal damage as the adaptive modular armor system simply couldn't keep up with the accelerated accumulation of damage!

Boom!

An internal explosion caused the energy shield fey to lose power and drop to the arena ground as well!

Many people's hearts became chilled. The energy shield fey might not be as tough as an actual mech, but their defenses were quite formidable for their size.

The use of a water energy shield and modular armor plating could keep them alive for a long time so long as the enemy did not employ any overwhelming attacks.

Unfortunately, it just so happened that the Fey Fianna matched up against one of its worst nightmares!

Kinetic weapons were fantastic at delivering burst damage, and it was clear that the extreme firepower of the Oclis Zemo most definitely had the capability to overwhelm the defenses of the Fey Fianna!

This reflected a crucial difference in fighting tempo.

The Fey Fianna's configuration was clearly suited to slower and more drawn-out battles. It might not be the best at battles of attrition, but it was no slouch in them either.

The Oclis Zemo on the other hand relied much more on performing extremely well in the brief moments that counted.

Since its initial purpose was to serve as a point defense unit for starships, it had to be able to spit out as many damaging rounds as possible in order to successfully intercept rapid missiles and shells in great numbers!

Such firepower happened to work just as well on all kinds of spurs, including the fey which were even larger and easier to hit due to their greater scale!

The downing of two energy shield fey was bad news to the Fey Fianna. It only had a pair of luminar crystal cannon fey left, and their internals were even more fragile as they were never designed to serve as damage sponges.

It would hurt the Fey Fianna a lot if it lost its two offensive fey, but it was still better to sacrifice them than to lose the main body!

More modular armor plating came loose from the latest wreck and desperately sought to block as many bullets as possible.

At this moment, the main purpose of the fey and all of the modular armor plates was to buy time for the main body to close the distance to the Eclis Zemo!

So long as the drone mech itself was able to get close enough to its adversary, the situation would completely change!

The opponent knew this as well, so the Eclis Zemo went all-out in order to shred the remaining fey and finally the drone mech itself before they could ever get close enough!

"This is getting exciting!"

"How many rounds has the Eclis Zemo fired at this time? 10,000? 100,000?"

"I bet it is over a million!"

"What?! How can anyone afford such a consumption? An entire mech company of these machines could bankrupt an entire mercenary outfit!"

"I don't think the rounds are as expensive as you think. They look powerful, but it is mainly because of the hyper tech stuff. Mechs that can do this kind of damage have become much cheaper in the latest mech generation."

The Fey Fianna entered into an exceptionally dangerous state. Once it had lost its remaining two fey, it would have no choice but to withstand the firepower of the Eclis Zemo by itself. Its lack of hard defenses meant that it would likely be unable to last much longer than its fey, especially now that the range had shrunk to such an extent!

Yet all of the attacks launched by the luminar crystal weapons were not in vain.

Even though the Eclis Zemo was so well-armored that it could resist a lot of energy attacks without suffering any critical damage, the Fey Fianna had purposefully concentrated all of its energy attacks onto one of the rotary cannons of its adversary.

The spinning barrels already started to glow red-hot after firing so many bullets, but the fire laser beams striking its tough and armored exterior caused the weapon chassis to heat up even further!

Even though Master Redmond had designed the rotary cannons to withstand a lot of stresses, they weren't being used in a proper manner this time.

The excessively high firing rate had already caused them to push their limits. Now that one of the cannons received a lot of excess thermal energy from an outside source, the weapon suddenly made an awful noise!

Kraak!

The rotary cannon jammed!

This was not supposed to happen!

The abrupt loss of firepower disrupted the rhythm of the Eclis Zemo.

Even though the mech possessed the means to unjam and restore the operation of its weapons to an extent, all of that took precious time.

This was time that the Eclis Zemo lacked!

The pressure exerted by the striker mech was no longer as overwhelming as before.

The adaptive modular armor system of the Fey Fianna no longer became as harried as before as the modular armor plates of the remaining two fey did not collapse as quickly as before.

This made all of the difference as the entire armor system was much more able to rotate the armor plating without exposing any flaws or weak points!

Of course, that still did not remove the threat posed by the striker mech. Too many modular armor plates had already been pounded into scrap by all of the earlier barrages. The Fey Fianna needed to finish this match quickly before it lost all of its remaining usable protection!

Fortunately, the Fey Fianna had crossed the entire length of the arena. Now that it had come close enough, the harried drone mech intended to take revenge on the striker mech!

"Fix bayonet!"

The Fey Fianna no longer fired its luminar crystal rifle, but instead took the time to attach a bayonet to its barrel.

The two luminar crystal fey continued to concentrate their fire onto the remaining rotary cannon, though it looked like it might take a few moments to induce a malfunction on this weapon as well.

As the Fey Fianna began to initiate a controlled charge against the Eclis Zemo, everyone wondered whether the striker mech would have any means to fend off this close assault.

Striker mechs were generally at their most dangerous when they fought at close range!

The Eclis Zemo did not disappoint in this regard. While one of its arms continued to fire its remaining rotary cannon, the other arm had dropped the malfunctioned weapon and drew out a heavy mace that was saturated with earth energy!

Anyone who looked at it could easily imagine that the Fey Fianna would get crushed upon impact.

However, the Fey Fianna remained undeterred. It showed no intention to avoid contact and continued to charge forth while its two offensive fey continued to bombard the remaining rotary cannon with fire laser beam attacks.

Yet just as the Fey Fianna was about to drive its bayonet through the Eclis Zemo, it utilized its high maneuverability to change course at the last second and cause the striker mech's mace attack to miss!

As the Fey Fianna flew to the other side of the Eclis Zemo, it quickly spun around and began to fire its luminar crystal rifle at the rear of the striker mech!

Its luminar crystal cannon fey had broken off from the main body and began to fire at the striker mech while circling around it like annoying flies.

None of the energy beam attacks managed to break past the Eclis Zemo's formidable armor as of yet, but the striker mech was under a huge amount of pressure at the moment!

It was at this moment that the striker mech's lack of mobility became a fatal hindrance.

The Eclis Zemo was too slow and cumbersome to catch up to the swift and agile fey and drone mech. Its mace became completely useless if the enemy did not take the initiative to fight up close.

The remaining rotary cannon may pose a huge threat to the Fey Fianna, but the problem was that the Eclis Zemo was unable to track any of the three fast-moving threats with its muzzle!

This was especially the case when the Fey Fianna and its two fey were circling around the striker mech. The changes in firing angles were so great that the rotary cannon behaved in a similar fashion to the main gun battery of a battleship.

The weapon was so big and heavy that it was not able to track fast-moving targets around its position!

Of the thousands of bullets that the rotary cannon fired during this frustrating interval, only a few dozen managed to hit the fey.

This was far from enough to take them down!

In the end, the mech pilot of the Eclis Zemo helplessly admitted defeat when the constant energy beam attacks finally caused its remaining primary weapon to malfunction as well.

"The Fey Fianna has won the third challenge match!"

The LMC's latest product line had restored some of its reputation!

Chapter 5565 Master Xieliq Quan

The third challenge match was certainly a close shave.

If not for the fact that the Eclis Zemo was an atypical striker mech that turned out to be really bad at fending off threats at close range, the Fey Fianna might not have been able to secure its second victory of the day.

"Good match." Ves smiled as he exuded evident relief from the favorable outcome of this match. "If the rotary cannons of your mech did not jam so quickly, perhaps my Fey Fianna might not have succeeded in securing this victory."

"There is no need to belittle your work, Professor Larkinson. Your Fey Fianna model deserves all of the praise that it has received over the last two days. It is an honor for you to grant my Eclis Zemo a chance to test its fighting ability against your work."

Master Acze Redmond did not sound upset about the loss of his work at all. Though he did not manage to burnish his new mech model with a win against a powerful mech, its performance during most of the fight was good enough to impress many people.

No one thought that the Eclis Zemo was weak for using 'primitive' and 'outdated' ballistic weapon systems anymore.

Though the rotary cannons exhibited numerous obvious shortcomings, they were exceptionally powerful at intercepting lots of ordnance and small craft at a certain range!

There were numerous cases where such a striker mech could play a useful role.

The mech also had another advantage. Despite being armed with two large firearms, the Eclis Zemo was relatively easy to pilot. Mech pilots with lower aptitudes should easily be able to make themselves useful after they had gotten used to the striker mech.

One Eclis Zemo might not present a significant threat, but what about a dozen of them? What about a hundred of them? The suppression they could exert was not small!

Ves had certainly learned a few more lessons from this match. He became awfully disappointed at the Fey Fianna's poor showing against the Eclis Zemo. His work was unable to last long against the firepower of a pair of low-tech hyper weapons.

If this was the case, then enemies who wanted to make targeted measures against the Fey Fianna would just have to bring a lot more rapid-fire weapons in order to torment his mechs!

Ves already started to think about how he could plug the weaknesses revealed in this challenge match. He was rather grateful for Master Redmond's challenge.

If the man had not taken the initiative to send out his Eclis Zemo, then Ves wouldn't have learned about this major shortcoming so soon.

The most expedient way to solve this problem was to design a new defensive fey. It had to be made out of thicker and more durable armor plating in order to efficiently block and deflect all of the incoming small caliber projectiles.

The armor system didn't even have to be modular. So long as the defensive fey was able to block rapid-fire attacks effectively enough, Ves did not have any other demands.

If the Fey Fianna that fought this challenge match had access to this specialized defensive fey, then it would have never reached such a distressing state!

Ves chatted a bit more with Master Redmond.

Unlike his previous contact with Master Ginevra Hubert-Colmain, Ves had no interest in seeking greater collaboration with Master Redmond.

The man's design philosophy was too mediocre and his works did not really match Ves' tastes.

Though Ves did not look down on physical projectile weapons at all, he would much rather equip his mechs with energy weapons and more specifically luminar crystal weapons.

The Eclis Zemo did not hold any attraction to him either. There were bunker mechs that could do the same job and more. The striker mech did not actually reveal any groundbreaking tech that attracted his notice like the TEMP mechanism of the Montebra model.

Fortunately, Master Redmond did not really have any deeper intentions towards Ves either. The man simply wanted to earn a wave of publicity for his latest commercial product. He had definitely achieved his goal given how many people were watching the challenge matches.

The older man soon bid farewell to Ves.

"It is an honor to meet with you and challenge one of your works." Master Redmond spoke. "The fact that a Senior Mech Designer can already defeat Masters such as myself is a testament to your remarkable design ability. I will not insult your competence by giving you well-meaning advice. You are capable enough to find your own way around mech design. I look forward to seeing how you will transform the mech industry once you realize your design philosophy. It is bound to be special considering how many amazing traits are associated with your living mechs."

With that, the third challenger of the day departed from the arena.

The fourth and last challenger arrived ten minutes later.

This was the final and possibly the most anticipated match of the day.

Unlike the previous matches, this time another variant of the Fey Fianna was scheduled to make an appearance!

The Elite Edition of the Fey Fianna looked as if it existed on another level compared to all of the mechs that came before.

The quasi-first-class transphasic hyper mech contained so much advanced tech and valuable materials that it could probably crush ten Standard Fey Fiannas without any significant damage!

So long as it was piloted by a professional drone mech pilot that could keep up with the Elite Edition's strong parameters, the powerful transphasic mech might even be able to win a match against a proper first-class mech!

Of course, the Fey Fianna barely had the qualifications to win against a bottom-tier first-class mech, but that was already amazing enough!

The crowd all exhibited a lot more anticipation and excitement than before.

They all wanted to see the stronger version of the Fey Fianna demonstrate its comprehensive combat power.

The Elite Edition barely showed off its capabilities during the presentation yesterday. People simply did not have a clear idea of how strong it may be. A single fight would definitely give all of these folk a more intuitive and visceral understanding of its combat power!

"This mech costs at least too MTA credits to buy."

"100 MTA credits?! I can buy an entire mech company with that much cash."

"The Elite Edition isn't designed for mech pilots like us. It is meant for groups that can easily spend these kinds of sums without pausing to consider their budgets."

"So expensive..."

"At least it is much cheaper than a genuine first-class mech."

The Elite Fey Fianna was like a defective toy from the perspective of the Terrans and the other first-raters.

However, it held a completely different meaning to second-raters!

Its offensive and defensive properties had received an insane boost. Even its mobility experienced notable improvements that enabled it to reposition itself considerably faster than before.

It had become well-known that the Elite Edition of the Fey Fianna was almost as good as the Larkinson Edition, though whether this was actually true remained to be seen.

Not everyone placed their bets on the Elite Fey Fianna.

There were also people who believed that the opponent for this final match had a better chance of winning!

This was because the quasi-first-class hero mech was designed by a renowned and well-known mech designer in the mech community!

Master Xieliq Quan was a 300-year old second-class Master Mech Designer that had already built up a strong presence in the Krakatoa Middle Zone.

As the founder and chief designer of OCT Mechs & Heavy Industry, the man sat at the top of a large industrial empire that not only developed a strong foundation in the Red Ocean, but used to be even bigger back in the Milky Way!

Even if the Great Severing had caused serious losses to Master Quan, his foundation in the new frontier remained strong enough for him to maintain most of his existing product lines in the transition to the current age!

When Ves received a challenge from a representative of this highly reputable figure yesterday, he almost couldn't believe that a mech designer of this stature would condescend to playing this game.

Xieliq Quan may be a Master Mech Designer like the ones that came before, but he was considerably older and more accomplished than his lesser peers!

Such a figure could easily attract all of the publicity he wanted to draw attention to his latest product releases. There was no reason for him to take advantage of the Fey Fianna's product reveal in order to publicize his latest product.

There had to be a deeper motive behind this intriguing challenge.

This was why Ves decided to accept it despite the lack of clarification. A respected mech designer and researcher such as Master Quan was worth meeting in person.

Soon enough, the old man made an appearance.

Different from the previous challengers, the 300-year old Master Mech Designer adorned himself in a bizarre outfit made out of fluid metallic components. They resembled archemetal, but did not look as refined.

It definitely conveyed an exotic vibe that could only be described as alien.

"It is an honor to meet with you, Master Quan. You are carrying interesting tech."

"Meow."

Even Lucky woke up from his nap in order to take a few sniffs of the exotic tech that the latest challenger was carrying.

Master Quan smelled funny to the gem cat.

The elderly mech designer took no notice of Lucky. He approached and shook hands with Ves.

"Thank you. It is a recent gift from afar. I have yet to fully decipher its exotic tech."

"Please forgive me for asking this, but... why did you take the initiative to issue a challenge to my work?"

"I needed to take a look at the mech designer who had 'dealings' with the Polymath." Master Quan straightforwardly answered. "I have met Her Excellency numerous times before. She is a frightening Star Designer for her age. I imagine that you are the only person of your generation that has managed to earn her 'respect'."

There was no way to hide these words from the RA and many other people who possessed the tech to eavesdrop on this conversation.

What Master Quan was alluding to was far too sensitive to be disseminated to the public!

While most high-level insiders already learned that the Polymath had made massive missteps during the Survivalist conference, most people still had no clue about these dirty affairs. They still looked up to her as one of the greatest heroes of their race!

Ves awkwardly coughed. "I barely know her at all. I only met her a few times, and I don't imagine that I will meet with her again anytime soon. This day should be about my latest product line. I am sure you have witnessed the previous challenge matches. Do you have any feedback on the Fey Fianna that you would like to share?"

The old Master was not in a hurry to respond. The man calmly thought while their mechs had begun to enter the arena grounds.

"Your drone mechs are technologically superior compared to most of the products on the market for the time being. Whether they can maintain their superiority over the next four years is questionable.

Do not underestimate the mech industry. There are many research institutions that are in the process of developing much more revolutionary hyper tech. You have yet to come in touch with any of them because the powerful tech is almost exclusively reserved for high-level private forces and elite military units. All of these innovations will only enter the market once the secrecy of the new hyper tech can no longer be maintained."

Ves nodded in understanding. "I am not conceited enough to think I can out-innovate the entire mech industry. I have always guessed that a lot of amazing stuff is in development behind closed doors, but it is nice to receive confirmation. Does the work that you have brought today happen to contain any of this super-secret tech?"

"As a matter of fact, it does. I believe you will be quite surprised by my work."

#### Chapter 5566 Molecular Disintegration Technology

Ves sensed an odd vibe from Master Xieliq Quan.

From his odd choice of clothing to name dropping the Polymath, it became clear that this old and respected Master Mech Designer came with a different purpose in mind.

Master Quan did not share his goal right away. He seemed content to take his time and keep Ves guessing.

Suffice to say, Ves found this game to be tiresome. He had many thoughts and ideas in his mind. He did not look forward to adding another complication to his life.

It did not look like he could avoid another messy entanglement, though. Master Quan was not the sort of person that Ves could dismiss so easily.

Even though the man was 'only' a tier 5 galactic citizen, the man had many many contributions over the centuries. The research he completed might not be instant game changers, but he was part of the backbone that allowed mechs to prosper at a steady and persistent rate since the start of the Age of Mechs.

There were times where Ves felt as if he was a fraud who did not deserve all of the praise and recognition bestowed by others. He knew quite well that he did not entirely develop his design solutions by relying on his own efforts. The Mech Designer System played an indispensable role in helping him complete feats that were unattainable through other means.

The mechers didn't seem to care about all that. The Polymath had been able to climb her way to the top of the Association in record time by making use of her own fragment of the Metal Scroll.

This reflected the focus on results among the people of the Mech Trade Association and later the Red Association.

No matter what sort of means had been used to produce a research result, it held value so long as it was useful!

While that made Ves feel less guilty about himself, he always held the thought that he was inherently inferior to mech designers who earned their status through more honest means.

Master Quan's research contributions along with his more advanced age made Ves adopt a humble and respectful attitude in front of the man.

The old man in question clearly sensed this shift in attitude.

Xieliq Quan did not come here to speak with a meek and subservient mech designer. He raised his hand in a casual gesture.

"Come now, Professor Larkinson. There is no need for you to show so much deference to me. Let me give you a lesson. I may be a Master, but society divides people by strength and contributions. You have managed to work your way to a much higher position by relying on both. There is more to human civilization than mechs. Once you become accustomed to your new station in life, you will find that simple Master Mech Designers such as myself are not always deserving of greater respect."

Though Ves found it hard to treat Master Quan as an ordinary individual, he relaxed a bit after receiving this well-meaning advice.

"I guess you are right. It is just that it is still customary for a more junior mech designer to show deference to a more senior one. You have contributed to the mech community for many years. You paved the way for younger generations such as myself to enter a prosperous sector. I am also impressed by your design philosophy. I do not have the pleasure to study or make use of your design applications myself, but I have heard good stories about your work."

When Ves looked up Master Quan on the galactic net the day before, he found out that the older man specialized in an unusual and highly exotic weapon system.

According to his record, he possessed a Class II design philosophy that was simply labeled as Molecular Disintegration.

This was a scary word.

It evoked images of people and objects disintegrating into dust or elemental particles.

This was because any device that could induce molecular disintegration had the power to break even the hardest and toughest armor system!

What surprised Ves the most was that a design philosophy like Molecular Disintegration should have been so high-end that it should only be present in first-class mechs.

However, the reality was that Master Xieliq Quan remained a second-class mech designer who never sought to implement his work in more sophisticated products.

There was one strong reason why the first-raters weren't so eager to adopt his work.

Molecular disintegration was derived from alien technology.

Though Master Quan had managed to reverse engineer many weird alien principles, only 80 percent of molecular disintegration technology could be reproduced through conventional human means.

The remaining 20 percent was still reliant on alien scientific principles and production methods, which not only made it harder to construct and repair this kind of tech, but also prevented too many people from trusting the strange devices.

It did not help that molecular disintegration weapons had a reputation for being just as dangerous to their wielders as their targets!

Though most accidents happened during the first century of Master Quan's career, the stigma surrounding his exceedingly dangerous tech never faded.

The most common molecular disintegration weapons equipped by his mechs were short-range burst weapons that could instantly disintegrate a large chunk of solid matter in a small cone in front.

It was perfect for breaching fortifications and drilling through exceedingly hard ground!

Any mech that happened to be in range of a molecular disintegrator could collapse in an instant if the exotic weapon was activated at full power!

Unfortunately, the cumbersome weapon system came with plenty of downsides. It was relatively large, heavy and inefficient. A molecular disintegrator also happened to be completely ineffective against energy shields.

All of these demerits were not enough to hold this tech back. There were always ways to mitigate or circumvent these issues.

The real reason why molecular disintegrators never caught on was because the more powerful they became, the greater the chance of a backlash!

If a molecular disintegrator was equipped by a first-class mech, then the weapon had a significant chance of exploding or malfunctioning to the point where it disintegrated everything in the vicinity without any distinction!

It was only when these weapon systems were being used at lower power settings that the chance of accidents could be minimized.

All of this had long put Master Quan into a quandary. The man had remained stuck as a second-class mech designer, unable to solve the fundamental technical problems that caused his signature tech to remain so unreliable.

If Master Quan was able to solve this major shortcoming, then he would not only be able to unleash the true power of molecular disintegration technology, but also make a much greater contribution to the mech community!

Perhaps this breakthrough might be substantial enough to make him eligible to advance to Star Designer!

However, the greater the dream, the more illusionary it became.

Master Quan had struggled to find a breakthrough for many decades, yet he never managed to crack the final secrets to the alien tech that he had dedicated his life to perfecting.

The most he was able to do was to derive adjacent research applications that enabled him to make minor contributions at a consistent rate.

He was a typical example of how perilous it was for a mech designer to indulge too much in alien technology.

A small commotion spread from the millions of people who had been looking forward to witnessing the final and arguably most exciting match.

This was because they had a good opportunity to admire the two powerful mechs that were about to duel against each other!

The Elite Edition of the Fey Fianna needed no introduction. The transphasic hyper drone mech had already made an appearance yesterday. Even though it had only demonstrated a part of its amazing defensive capabilities, its other functions most certainly should not be weak!

What most people did not realize was that the Elite Fey Fianna that had entered the main arena happened to be piloted by the best drone mech specialist that the Larkinson Clan could muster on short notice.

The Larkinson mech pilot controlled the individual fey with much more control and direction than the other mech pilots!

Not only that, but the pilot also happened to develop a great affinity with the Fey Fianna. He was able to cooperate with the living spirits and even learn a few useful tricks from them that allowed him to get one step ahead of his peers when it came to utilizing the potential of his powerful mech.

However, all of these advantages might not be enough to defeat a quasi-first-class transphasic hyper mech that was loaded with exotic and advanced technologies!

"So that is the Dustweaver."

The hero mech did not look as gleaming or heroic as most machines of this archetype.

It instead conveyed the image of a desert ranger that had spent so much time in harsh and hot terrain that its exterior had faded to a rusty mixture of green and brown.

The Dustweaver was packed with sophisticated equipment and modules. Its most ostentatious weapon was its medium-range molecular disintegrator. It was a rather heavy and cumbersome weapon, but nobody who knew about it could deny its lethality, especially when Master Quan had worked hard to improve the effective range of his signature weapon system for a long time.

This did not come without a cost. According to the galactic net, a molecular disintegrator of this type could only be fired a dozen or so times in succession before all of the excessive strain caused it to break down.

However, the effect of each activation was sufficiently devastating enough that it was often worth the price!

Aside from that, the Dustweaver also wielded a strange warhammer that contained a lot of obvious technological components.

This was Master Xieliq Quan's recently developed transphasic oscillator hammer.

It was basically a hammer that could shake itself and the fabric of space at a high frequency upon impact. This effect induced a huge amount of strain on transphasic energy shields, causing them to deplete much faster after getting hit by this advanced weapon.

The combination of a molecular disintegrator and a transphasic oscillator hammer turned the Dustweaver into a deadly machine at close range!

Ves did not think that the Elite Fey Fianna had much of a chance of winning the final challenge match if the Dustweaver could catch up to the drone mech.

Aside from these external armaments, the Dustweaver also possessed the ability to attack at range with the help of a pair of shoulder-mounted transphasic hyper positron beam guns.

They looked fairly small, compact and easy to detach when necessary. Their damage output probably wasn't high, but they should serve adequately as a means to apply ranged pressure.

Without these positron beam weapons, the Dustweaver had no chance of wearing down its adversary at longer ranges!

This was not the extent of the Dustweaver's loadout. Ves was sure that it contained numerous advanced modules that possessed a multitude of useful functions.

He was also sure that its power reactor must be particularly powerful in order to support so many energy-draining functions.

Even so, Ves did not think that the Dustweaver could fight at a high intensity for long. Its frame was too thin to fit too many energy cells.

The upcoming match was bound to be short but explosive. Victory or defeat could be decided within the first few minutes.

"Are you confident in your work?"

"I am." Master Quan replied with clear confidence in his tone. "Do not judge the Dustweaver based on my past works. The Hyper Generation has given me a range of new options that addresses many of the flaws that used to hinder my mech designs. This is the first public showing of the tech that I have adapted to my mech designs."

Ves did not think the older man was boasting because he sensed another unusual factor about the Dustweaver.

#### Chapter 5567 Hidden Depth

The Dustweaver contained so much advanced tech that it was far outside of the scope of a commercial mech model.

Ves strongly suspected that it was either a tech demo or an experimental work. Master Quan clearly developed it in order to figure out how he could augment his mechs with hyper technology.

The old Master definitely succeeded to a large extent because the Dustweaver exuded a clear sense of threat.

Just looking at it made his Jutland organ throb, which meant that it could pose a real threat against his true body!

Though Ves was not entirely sure what made the Dustweaver so strong, he could make a guess based on the fact that it integrated a notable quantity of high-grade hyper materials.

Many of the hyper mechs that Ves had witnessed in the past relied on the classical elements to augment their performance. A clear majority of the hyper mech models released in the past few months had a clear connection with the 5 elements.

This was definitely not a coincidence. Hyper materials of the five elements could be found practically anywhere. They were also major components of E energy radiation, so hyper mechs could always attract large amounts of metal, water, fire, earth or wood energy from the environment.

Aside from the wood element that was mainly applied to biomechs, the other 4 classical elements had become so ubiquitous among currentgen mechs that a self-sustain ecosystem had formed around their usage.

The more mech designers worked with the 5 elements, the more research and knowhow they produced over the course of their work.

Much of this progress was bound to spread across human society. The Red Association also aggregated a lot of results and helped to disseminate them to the mech industry in order to speed up the collective development of hyper technology.

In the half year or so since the start of the Hyper Generation, many mech designers had already pushed the research and application of the 5 elements to a much higher level than the other E energy attributes!

This encouraged more mech designers to develop hyper mechs based around the same elements, causing the infrastructure around these products to grow even more.

It was a positive feedback loop that showed no signs of slowing down. Ves loosely estimated that at least 70 percent of all hyper products would be based around at least one of the classical elements!

The prevalence of hyper products based on water and so on made hyper mechs based on other E energy attributes stand out more.

They might not be as refined or efficient as ordinary machines, but the more exotic hyper mechs inevitably acquired abilities that significantly transformed their combat approach!

Ves had a strong suspicion that he was looking at one of these cases. He discreetly utilized Blinky's senses to determine what sort of E energy attributes that Master Quan applied to his mech design.

He sensed at least two relatively familiar attributes.

One of them reminded Ves of rot and decay. It was a force that was tied to the universal rule that nothing lasts forever and that everything eventually crumbled into dust.

The other attribute felt a lot more threatening to Ves. It was the primal force of destruction, the ability to completely break whatever it struck.

This was a powerful combination of attributes!

Though Ves had never worked with these attributes himself, he possessed enough expertise to know that it was far more difficult to control E energy attributes that were inherently more dangerous and abstract.

The destruction attribute was especially difficult to handle as it could easily destroy the mech that attempted to use this powerful energy!

However, Master Xieliq Quan just happened to possess an abundant amount of experience with dangerous and volatile tech. He was probably among the more qualified mech designers to make use of this powerful E energy attribute.

Just as its name suggested, the Dustweaver predominantly leaned towards the decay attribute, and only made minor use of the destruction attribute.

As Ves continued to discern the secrets of the Dustweaver, his behavior did not go unnoticed.

"How much have you guessed, Professor Larkinson? Are you able to simulate the Dustweaver's combat approach?"

"I think I have a decent idea of the concept behind this hero mech." Ves said with growing confidence. "At first glance, the Dustweaver looks as if it is a machine with high peak performance but low endurance. It is designed to go on the offensive and hammer its target with unrelenting aggression. Once it is able to break down the opposing energy shield, it can finish off the exposed mech by firing its molecular disintegrator. No matter how well-armored the opposing mech may be, just a few shots should be enough to break down all of the fancy armor and crumble enough internal components."

Master Quan nodded as he slipped his hands into the pockets of his metallic coat. "Your logic is sound, but the Dustweaver is not as simple as it appears on the surface. What else can my hero mech do that enables it to overcome enemies in a different manner?"

Ves narrowed his eyes as he thought about the elements that were not congruous to his earlier description.

He had a hunch that there was a deliberate reason why Master Quan chose to turn the Dustweaver into a hero mech as opposed to a hybrid mech or whatever.

Ves thought back on the hero mechs he designed in the past. The Ouroboros and the Everchanger had always been more about the guns and swords in their hands.

When Ves studied the Dustweaver from a different angle, he suddenly came up with a premise that matched all of the clues that he had gathered!

"The Dustweaver doesn't appear to be a hero mech at first because its primary armaments are primarily effective at close range." Ves spoke. "The shoulder-mounted positron guns allow it to attack at longer ranges, but they are too small and weak to defeat powerful mechs by themselves. That contradicts the inherent meaning of a hero mech, which is that it should always have an effective means to defeat enemies up close and from afar."

Master Quan looked impressed. "Spoken like a true hero mech designer. You are getting close to the truth, but there is still more to the story."

"I was getting to that, Master. What is strange about the Dustweaver is that if it wishes to overcome the defenses of its opponents as quickly as possible, it should be saturated with E energy attributes that align with this approach. Instead of doing so, you have integrated your design with a large proportion of decay-attributed hyper materials. This only makes sense if your mech is designed to wear down its adversaries over a longer stretch of time. I believe that the positron cannons or maybe even the medium-range molecular disintegrator may have a way to efficiently wear down the defenses of a mech like my Elite Fey Fianna from a comfortable distance."

This made so much more sense. The medium-range molecular disintegrator was a large tell. Master Quan could have easily equipped a more effective version of his alien-derived weapon system in his mech design if it only needed to be used at close range.

Master Quan responded with an amused expression. "Impressive! Your understanding of mechs is much deeper than the other Senior Mech Designers that I have met over my long career. To be able to decipher my Dustweaver to this extent is a testament to your love of our craft. As expected of a mech designer that had already produced a multitude of masterwork mechs at an early age."

It always felt good to be complimented, but Ves did not think he had figured everything out about the Dustweaver. He still felt that it possessed a bit more depth that added another dimension to the hero mech.

However, the match was about to start. The round of inspections took much longer due to the far greater complexity of the mechs, but once the mechers had done their jobs, the Dustweaver and the Elite Fey Fianna moved to the opposite ends of the mech arena.

As the countdown started, Master Quan approached and made an odd request.

"I have learned that you are far more physically gifted than you appear on the surface. May I have your permission to touch you? I would like to feel your skin."

That was an exceedingly weird request, but Ves did not think it was inappropriate in this situation.

A Master like Xieliq Quan possessed many connections, so it wasn't a surprise that he knew that Ves was a human phase lord.

Many people held a lot of curiosity towards phase lords among humans. What were they like? How did all of the space folding keep their true bodies in working condition? All of these questions fascinated many researchers who had developed a strong interest in this powerful native custom.

Ves simply answered by pulling up the sleeve of his outfit and offering up his arm.

They had already shook hands before, but now that Master Quan traced the length of Ves' arm with his aging fingers, the man drew a lot of conclusions from this impromptu study.

The Master Mech Designer did not even pay attention to the challenge match anymore!

As the countdown reached 30 seconds, Master Quan suddenly gripped Ves' arm with his clawed hand and actually started to communicate with Ves through a spiritual connection!

"I would appreciate it if you do not show any obvious reactions to our conversation. I have been waiting to speak to you for many months."

Ves found it difficult to maintain a cool expression.

While it was not actually difficult to communicate through spiritual means, it was definitely not a common method during the Age of Mechs!

There had to be a very deliberate reason why Master Quan chose to communicate with Ves through this fashion.

Compared to talking with their voice or transmitting signals with their cranial implants, communicating directly through a small and direct spiritual connection was a lot more secure!

Given the emphasis on forming a secure communication channel, Ves immediately suspected that Master Quan did not want the mechers or anyone else to listen to what he had to say.

"Let me reintroduce myself to you, Professor. I am not only a Master Mech Designer, but also a member of the Cosmopolitan Movement."

What?!

Ves found it incredibly difficult to suppress his shock at this revelation!

A part of him immediately wanted to call security so that they could take this human traitor into custody, but he immediately got rid of that foolish plan.

There was no way that Master Quan went through all of this effort to meet with him and reveal one of his dirtiest secrets just to offer himself up to the mechers.

Ves tried his best to control his emotions, though it was clear that the gem cat resting on his shoulder had become alerted.

"Meow." Lucky did not shift his gaze away from Master Quan.

"Explain." Ves hissed through the spiritual connection. "I am no friend of the cosmopolitans, and I do not think your group thinks favorably of me either."

The Master with a murky background released a mental sigh. "The Cosmopolitan Movement is not as monolithic as you think. It is similar to the Red Association in that it is split up into multiple cells, each of which have developed their own schools of thought. Centralization is impossible in an umbrella organization like ours as that could easily allow the mechers and the fleeters to roll every cosmopolitan up at once."

"And that matters because...?"

"Let me assure you that I am not a part of the more radical cells that are hostile to you. It may be difficult for you to believe, but there are moderate and reasonable members within our movement. Many of them are indistinguishable from the people who are part of normal society."

Ves had heard so many bad stories about the cosmopolitans that he found it difficult to imagine that these terrorists and extremists could match this description.

No one aligned with a forbidden organization like the Cosmopolitan Movement unless that person had become crazy!

Chapter 5568 Indigo Cell

Nobody in the mech arena aside from Ves and Master Quan knew that an incredibly dangerous meeting was taking place!

On the surface, the two mech designers appeared to talk about their mech designs. Ves showed a lot of interest in the Dustweaver, and Master Quan was more than happy to explain a few surface principles about his work.

The true conversation took place on a spiritual level.

What Ves just learned was so shocking that he no longer felt that the fourth challenge match was of any consequence!

He struggled to accept the fact that he had made peaceful contact with a cosmopolitan.

Though his experiences with the members of this infamous alien-loving movement were limited, he had heard plenty of stories of how these crazies handed over lots of information and technological secrets to the native aliens.

The cosmopolitans were directly responsible for making the aliens of the Red Ocean a lot stronger and more difficult to defeat!

It was difficult to calculate how much human blood the cosmopolitans had on their hands, but it was definitely a huge amount that could grow bigger with each defeat at the hands of the aliens!

Perhaps one day the Red Cabal would succeed in taking back the territories occupied by so many human colonists and pioneers.

Once that happened, the Cosmopolitan Movement had made an undeniable contribution in the extermination of red humanity!

These thoughts made it a lot more challenging for Ves to maintain his rationality. He came close to spitting the 'respected' Master in the face and calling for the mechers to arrest this hidden traitor.

However, as crazy as Master Quan may be, the man was most certainly not a fool.

Ves did not think he could gain much if he acted on his impulses.

His greatest deficiency at this moment was that he was lacking in information. He didn't know much about the cosmopolitans and had no idea why someone as important as Master Quan took such a massive risk to expose his identity to Ves at this time.

It was better to hear him out. One of the advantages of a spiritual connection was that Ves could tell with great confidence whether people were lying. This may be one of the few instances where he could gain real insider information on a secretive human organization that possessed an outsized influence in the Red Ocean.

Ves could always decide to hand Master Quan over to the mechers later.

With that sentiment in mind, Ves tried to maintain a false facade while carefully directing a part of his attention to this dangerous discussion.

"What are the differences between moderate cosmopolitans and radical cosmopolitans? No matter what means you utilize, both of your groups are traitors as far as I am concerned. All of you are so intrinsically opposed to the interests of humanity that I see no reason why I should treat you differently from the scum who openly live in alien space and advise their alien masters."

Master Quan did not exhibit any anger or any other elevated reaction at being called a traitor.

"I do not blame you for believing in the propaganda spread by the powers that be. The mechers and the fleeters have done their best to turn our entire movement and ideals into a taboo that people such as yourself cannot disassociate the word treachery from cosmopolitanism. This is a great tragedy and one that complicates many attempts at communication."

Ves was not impressed.

"The poor reception that your people have received is entirely the fault of your mad organization. Do not lay the blame on the general public whose interests are being harmed by your extreme ideals."

"Let us not go too deep into ideology at this time." Master Quan conveyed with a touch of irritation.

"It is not my intention to persuade you to accept our ideals and join our movement. Not only is it clear that we will not be able to convert you to our cause, but even if we are able to do so, it is impossible for your change of heart to remain unnoticed by the mechers that constantly keep you within their sights."

"Then why did you come and tell me all of this? What is your purpose?"

"I will need to explain to you how we are organized in the current day. Our movement has many cells. Even I do not know how many of them exist in the Red Ocean. Many cells are nearly completely independent and have developed their own rules, traditions, membership criteria and goals. We are only loosely united by the common cause of forming a peaceful and united pan-racial galactic community."

Ves mentally scoffed at that. "You guys are doing a 'good' job at fostering peace and understanding between different races. I am sure that you cosmopolitans are building up a lot of goodwill among the humans who have lost their families, their friends, their livelihoods and their homes to alien aggression that you have enabled."

"I do not deny that our approach is imperfect. Each cosmopolitan desires to guide humanity beyond its biased and backwards ethnocentrist ideology. The issue is that our cells are so isolated from each other that we employ many different strategies at the same time. Many of them tend to be violent, making it much more difficult for other cells to achieve their goals through gentler means. This is the nature of the beast."

"Since your Cosmopolitan Movement is so poorly run, why should I have anything to do with you guys?"

"Let me complete my explanation, professor. As I have mentioned earlier, I am a member of a cell that is a part of our moderate faction. The word faction may be misleading here as it is not a formal grouping or designation. Moderate cells can be further divided by their ideological distinctions. Many of us do not entirely agree on the more gentle strategies we must employ in order to bring humans together with aliens. What is important is that we never intend to harm our fellow humans, whether directly or indirectly."

"What is your stance on the radicals of your movement, then? Are the two of you enemies, or are you simply willing to go your own ways?"

"We are not friends or allies. We try not to make contact with each other at all if we can." Master Quan responded through the spiritual connection. "As shameful as it may be, our moderates are not willing to go to war against the radicals. Such a conflict will only cause us to consume each other, causing us to move further away from realizing our ultimate goal. We have decided long ago to work separately."

Ves found it ironic that a group that originated from diplomats and alien lovers couldn't even form a harmonious community within its own ranks.

How could the cosmopolitans ever hope to unite humans and many different alien races when they couldn't even reconcile their own internal differences?

The severe dysfunction that existed within their forbidden organization clearly proved that their ambition was nothing but an impossible fantasy!

"I already have a rough idea on what the radicals of your movement are doing to advance their cause, not that they are doing a good job at it." Ves conveyed. "What I don't understand is what moderates such as yourself are doing. If you people have done anything to promote the idea that humans and aliens should get along, then I have not noticed any of your efforts."

"I will not betray the trust of my cell and expose our activities. It is not necessary for you to know the specifics, professor. What I am willing to tell you is that our Indigo Cell has recently decided to enact the Cross-Species Pantheon Plan."

"The Cross-Species... Pantheon... Plan?"

"We have conducted extensive studies of many alien cultures in the Red Ocean. One of the common traits is that they share a common belief in the divinity of phase whales and phase lords. Every alien society in this dwarf galaxy is so interconnected that worshiping phase leaders as literal gods has become the glue that connections them together. As undesirable as it may sound to resort to a backwards phenomenon to tie all of these races together, we cannot argue about the results. Wars of annihilation between the local alien civilizations have become a rarity because each of them can always find common ground in their religious beliefs."

That actually sounded rather interesting. Ves would have liked to discuss this topic if he wasn't talking to an actual cosmopolitan.

"That sounds nice. How does this relate to your plan?"

"Can you not recognize how we can take advantage of his common belief? A modest amount of cosmopolitans assume that one of the reasons why the aliens are so hostile against us is because we are fighting against their gods. Operation Night Jazz has done incalculable damage against our cause by inflaming the aliens against humanity further after we have slain several of their 'gods'."

"Good."

"This is anything but a good development, Professor Larkinson!" Master Quan insisted! "Red humanity is so outnumbered by the native aliens that it is impossible for us to win the Red War by ourselves! Only by finding common ground with the aliens and making peace with the more receptive among them can we hope to save our race and turn the Red Ocean into a multi-racial paradise. It does not help that our god pilots are more prone to be regarded as unholy demons rather than gods that deserve their respect. It is nearly impossible to convince the vast majority of aliens that our god pilots and Star Designers are equivalent to their phase leaders. Our Cross-Species Pantheon Plan has never been able to launch due to this setback."

As Ves listened to the cosmopolitan words, he finally started to connect the clues together. He almost widened his eyes as he deduced the true reason why Master Quan approached him in such a risky manner!

"Are you trying to find a substitute for a god by seeking me out?! This is crazy! There is no way in hell I will play any part in your deluded scheme! It is impossible for aliens to cease their opposition to humanity because I just happen to be a 'god' in their understanding. The aliens are trying to exterminate our race due to many reasons. They want to remove an existential threat to their own civilizations. They want to take revenge for all of the native residents of the Red Ocean that our race has slaughtered. They want to take back all of the territory that we have stolen from them. These are the true reasons why we are at war. No amount of superstition can change this fundamental equation."

"You underestimate the power of belief. Faith is a powerful force to many alien races. Aside from outliers such as the puelmers, the vast majority of sentients in this dwarf galaxy are conditioned from birth to develop absolute belief in the divinity of phase lords. They are compelled to display

absolute subservience to any phase lord no matter the race. We can exploit this common rule by having you present yourself to different alien groups and convincing them to lay down their hostility against humans."

Madness. This was madness.

Though Master Quan did not present himself as an absolute nutcase like a radical cosmopolitan, he was just as crazy and delusional as far as Ves was concerned!

There was no chance that such a stupid scheme could possibly work!

Even if there was a sliver of a chance that it might actually produce the intended results, there was no way that Ves wanted to have any part of this dangerous and subversive scheme!

As the intense noises of the match playing out below continued to ring throughout the mech arena, Ves' mind had turned into a blender as he entertained many different thoughts.

There was no way he could remain calm under the circumstances!

#### Chapter 5569 Terminal Cell

Before humans invaded the Red Ocean, the dwarf galaxy enjoyed a long era of peace and stability.

The 13 major alien races of the Red Ocean had already carved out their respective territories a long time ago. Waging war on a civilization-wide scale did not make any sense because none of the races could overpower each other quickly enough to prevent others from interfering in the conflict.

Every race implicitly or explicitly maintained the status quo for that reason. This produced a relatively internal state of the multiracial galactic community where the only incidents of fighting came in the form of small controlled conflicts and lawless activities.

This galactic state happened to match the state of the Milky Way before the Age of Conquest.

The Seven Apex Races maintained a persistent balance of power and mostly remained content to rule over their own separate star empires.

Alas, the spread of the scourge known as the human race had ruined both of these idyllic states!

The upstart humans did not play by the rules. They refused to bow down to their betters and fought without even considering the option of compromise.

Humanity's favorite means of growth was by relying on stealing, cheating, robbing and deceiving anyone who wasn't a part of their own race.

In fact, humans were so outrageous that they did not even let off their own people!

To the cosmopolitans that admired the old galactic communities of the Milky Way and the Red Ocean, they lamented the fact that humans simply could not get along with the other powers of those galaxies.

How could all of these ignorant and greedy humans be blind to the magnificence of multiracial cooperation?!

How could they not yearn for the relative calm and prosperity that so many different alien races managed to produce by respecting each other's strengths and boundaries?

One of the central assumptions of the Cosmopolitan Movement was that the fault did not lie with the aliens.

It was the humans that held all of the blame for the death and destruction that their arrival had wrought onto the galaxies!

Humanity was afflicted by the curse of original sin. Many cosmopolitans believed that their own race was tainted from the onset. This was why humans never found a way to get along with their peaceful and more civilized alien neighbors.

They were no different from barbarians!

Instead of appreciating the many benefits and enrichment of becoming an equal member of a true multiracial galactic community, the human race always yearned for more.

The human race was not satisfied with rising up in the galactic stage through gentle and peaceful measures.

People wanted to attain power quickly, so they gave into their primal urges and resorted to violence to gain what they needed!

This had led to so much horror and brutality that no one could keep track of all of the war crimes anymore.

The Milky Way had already become ruined by the scourge of humanity. Many cosmopolitans had dedicated centuries of their lives to repairing the deplorable relationships between humanity and the remaining surviving alien races of the galaxy.

Suffice to say, the cosmopolitans made virtually zero progress.

As much as they believed in their enlightened cause, not even the most optimistic member of this secret society could maintain their enthusiasm after millenia had passed without any positive developments!

At best, the cosmopolitans might be able to prevent the aliens from hating the humans even more, but the efforts of all of their cells were so scattered that it was hard to determine whether they had made any difference.

"The Cosmopolitan Movement regards the Red Ocean as our second chance." Master Xieliq Quan elaborated on the motivations of his overarching organization. "We are not bogged down by millenia of continuous insults, genocides, humiliation and misplaced human superiority. Before the Age of Dawn, we had faith that the transgressions of our flawed and ugly race had not become severe enough to plunge the relationship between humans and the prevailing galactic community of the dwarf galaxy below the point of recovery."

Though Ves was still reeling from learning about the shocking plan of the Indigo Cell, he had to admit that the plan of the cosmopolitans did not sound entirely outlandish.

Compared to the countless deeds that the human race had committed in the Milky Way, its footprint in the Red Ocean was much lighter.

Humans had only conquered a relatively modest slice of the galactic rim of the Red Ocean.

Many of the natives of the Red Ocean had never even met a human, let alone suffer any damage from their arrival!

Though the Big Two had secretly built up their presence in the Red Ocean for an unknown amount of decades, the human race only truly came into prominence in the last decade.

From the perspective of galactic history, that was an exceedingly short time interval!

To the phase whales who had lived for hundreds of thousands if not millions of years, a handful of years was just a blink of an eye from their perspective.

Even if humanity had made an exceedingly poor first impression upon their arrival to the dwarf galaxy, the cosmopolitans still hoped that they could overcome this damage and move closer to the goal of allowing humans to integrate with an existing multiracial galactic community!

"Wait." Ves briefly interrupted Master Quan's eager attempt to share his organization's ideals. "Did you guys push the native aliens into triggering the Great Severing far in advance? According to common sense, there is no way the Red Cabal would resort to such an extreme measure when humanity had yet to truly ramp up its invasion of the new frontier. Did you and your crazy compatriots somehow cause us all to get cut off from the rest of humanity?"

Master Quan did not make any attempts to hide his smug and proud feelings at the mention of this dramatic turn of events.

"You are correct to assume that our movement has played an integral role in enlightening the aliens to the true threat posed by our greater civilization. Alas, our Indigo Cell does not dare to claim any credit for this fantastic initiative. The Terminal Cell is chiefly responsible for executing this particular plan. It is the only cell that has won a measure of trust from the Red Cabal. Its members remain embedded within the core of alien society to this day. It is through their unceasing diplomatic successes that red humanity has gained a chance to wake up to the truth and acknowledge the falsehood of human supremacy!"

Crazy!

This was crazy!

The Indigo Cell already sounded whacky enough, but at least it did not directly engage in any measures that led to the deaths of lots of humans.

The Terminal Cell was completely different! Ves did not need any further clues to determine that it was made up of a bunch of radicals.

These extreme cosmopolitans wanted to break the unflinching belief in human supremacy so much that they went through extreme measures to put red humanity in a dire state!

They deliberately increased the threat posed by the native aliens by arming them with superior human tech and enacting a plan to isolate red humanity!

All of that had changed the lives of human colonists in the new frontier for the worse!

Even though certain people such as Ves benefited enormously from entering a medium-energy environment, there was no doubt that the lives of the vast majority of humans had worsened after this dramatic change!

Not only did they lose contact with their family and relatives from the old galaxy, but they had to live in constant fear that the native aliens would pour into human-occupied space and reciprocate the genocides that humanity had wrought onto other races in the past!

Under the threat of these dire nightmare scenarios, no human was in the mood to think about how they merely reaped what they sowed.

Red humanity faced an existential threat! Trillions of recent arrivals were constantly on the verge of losing their homes, their livelihoods and their families because the Terminal Cell deliberately engineered this crisis situation!

When Ves was thinking about all of the harm that these radicals had wrought upon innocent humans, he developed the urge to punch the smug Master Mech Designer in the face.

He didn't even want to hold back the prodigious strength of his true body!

Even though Master Quan doubtlessly sensed Ves' rising fury towards the cosmopolitans, the older man did not take it seriously at all. Every cosmopolitan had so much hate flung in their direction that they had become immune to criticism and recriminations!

No member of their great movement was able to cling to their convictions if they actually paid attention to the ignorant opinions of the unenlightened masses.

Everyone who believed in their cause must remain unwavering in the face of hostility from their own race!

"I can understand why a child who has grown up under the auspices of the Big Two such as yourself finds it difficult to agree with our stances, but you do not have a choice." Master Quan claimed as he continued to convey his words through the spiritual connection. "Red humanity is in a much more dire state than at the start of the Age of Dawn. As I have mentioned before, Operation Night Jazz has almost ruined the original intentions of the Terminal Cell by dramatically increasing the hatred that aliens hold towards our race. Many other cells have stepped up their plans in order to mitigate the damage that the Red Two has caused by slaughtering and humiliating so many alien gods."

"And I am supposed to play an integral part of your insane scheme, is that right?" Ves skeptically responded.

"You are a much more suitable candidate than you think. You are still young, which means that you are still open to other viewpoints. Your humble origins ensure that you are not completely in lockstep with the mechers and the fleeters. Your complicated background and eventful rise has trained your flexibility and adaptability to new and unexpected situations. You also have far more contact with aliens than the average human. Many times, you confronted them in a position of weakness, which made you recognize the futility of human supremacy far in advance. Do you truly think that the Fist of Defiance's Deep Strike Plan can help red humanity grow fast enough to fight the Red Cabal to a standstill? Be honest, Professor Larkinson. What is your judgment?"

It was difficult for Ves to respond with a lie. Spiritual communication was much more direct and intimate than the alternatives.

Just as Ves was able to sense the total conviction and sincerity of Master Quan, the older mech designer should also be sharp enough to do the same.

Ves mentally sighed.

"If I am being completely honest, I think that the Deep Strike Plan is a desperation measure that has less than 10 percent chance of success. It is just that the other plans are worse in my opinion. At

least we will be able to remain true to ourselves when we fight the native aliens to the bitter end. The hope is that a change in circumstances in the coming years could dramatically shift the trend of the Red War. The greatest aspiration of this plan is that all of the pressure will lead to the rise of many new god pilots. We can defend our territories so long as long as we manage to raise enough powerhouses."

"You are praying for miracles that will not come, at least not in a high enough frequency." Master Quan retorted. "You should have voted for the Diplomacy Plan. You may not like it, but the Xenotechnician understands the threat posed by an entire galactic community. Your decision to throw your support behind one of the most impulsive and brutish god pilots has pulled us away from the brink of ultimate salvation!"

The mention of a certain Star Designer suddenly caused Ves to dig up an old suspicion.

"Wait. Is the Xenotechnician a part of the Cosmopolitan Movement?"

"...I cannot respond to your inquiry. Even if I do supply you with an answer, you will not believe it. You are still too ignorant of the realities of our flawed civilization. If you wish to become enlightened to the ultimate truths, then cooperate with our plan."

Chapter 5570 Cogito Ergo Sum

Nobody knew that Ves and Master Quan secretly engaged in a profound and shocking discussion.

They had no idea that the pair of mech designers talked about the dangerous secrets centered around the Cosmopolitan Movement because the fight taking place in the main arena attracted all of their attention!

Compared to the affordable and cost-effective mechs that fought in the previous challenge matches, the two state-of-the-art quasi-first-class mechs existed on another level!

The two machines immediately displayed their formidable prowess from the moment the countdown reached zero.

The Elite Fey Fianna immediately turned into a machine that wielded the power of both fire and water!

The space suppressor fey and the energy shield fey both stuck close to the mech. The former worked hard to attract as much water energy as possible while the latter immediately activated its transphasic energy shield while also drawing in a lot of water energy.

The main body and the two fey did not work by themselves. The dominant spirit along with the two subordinate spirits had developed a much more extensive familiarity with the water element.

The higher grades of water hyper materials integrated into mech enabled the living spirits to become exposed to the water E energy to a much greater degree.

This directly contributed to the faster and more comprehensive growth of the living mech as a whole!

Though the dominant spirits and the subordinate spirits were all driven by their own independent personalities, they were still a single whole in essence.

This meant that what one of them learned, the others learned as well!

This provided massive benefits to the Elite Fey Fianna. When three of its five spirits all channeled the power of water in unison, they were able to sync up and coordinate their efforts to produce a significantly stronger effect than what they were able to accomplish by themselves!

A glowing blue corona surrounded the exterior of the drone mech as the living machine leveraged the power of its artistic conception.

As one of the earliest copies of the Elite Edition of the Fey Fianna, the drone mech enjoyed a privileged position. It was not only among the stronger mechs of the entire line, but also received personal guidance from its progenitor!

Ves had already taken the possibility of challenges into account. He had personally guided the formation of artistic conceptions for each of the Elite Fey Fiannas.

The one that had entered the field had managed to outperform its peers due to the power of its artistic conception.

Unlike other living hyper mechs that focused their thoughts on whirlpools of water dragons, the mech in question developed a more ambitious artistic conception.

"Whoa!"

"What is that? Is that a projection?"

"It is more than that! I can feel the power of the oceans through this machine!"

The living mech tried its best to form the image of Poseidon, one of the ancient gods of the seas and the storms!

As one of the ancient human myths to survive to the present day, the name of this deity held such great meaning that it was difficult for a relatively new living mech to develop an accurate impression of this storied figure.

This was why the growing energy manifestation that appeared behind the back of the drone mech only revealed the contours as well as a few vague details.

The humanoid figure that was surrounded by mist only revealed a fraction of its majesty, but that was already enough to significantly improve the Fey Fianna's control over water E energy!

Perhaps the boost could not compare to the help that the Oceancaller provided to Ves upon use, but the strong meanings associated with Poseidon caused the Fey Fianna to entertain the illusion that it was a spiritual descendent of the mythical god!

This was clearly false and absurd, but that did not matter when it came to cultivation.

E energy was spiritually reactive. It actively responded and molded itself to the thoughts and emotions of sentient beings.

Ves learned that the stronger and more concentrated the mental activity, the more that E energy would try to turn fantasy into reality!

Under the deliberate guidance of its progenitor, the Elite Fey Fianna successfully managed to delude itself into thinking that it had become one of the inheritors of Poseidon, thereby enabling it to display a minute fraction of this ancient figure's strength!

In other words, it was a successful case of a self-fulfilling prophecy!

As stupid as it sounded, the effects were very real. As the vague and mist-obscured image of the trident-wielding god took hold, the Fey Fianna looked as if it was being possessed by Poseidon himself.

The aura of the living hyper mech evolved as the mech resisted the continuous hyper positron beam attacks launched by the Dustweaver.

The power of decay that sought to erode the water energy shield on a gradual basis found itself stymied by the sacred and inviolable nature of a myth come to life!

That was not the extent of Poseidon's power.

The resistance granted by the remarkably powerful artistic conception was so all-encompassing that it even negated a small portion of the transphasic characters of the incoming energy attacks!

The shoulder-mounted positron beam guns of the Dustweaver continued to expend energy in an effort to wear down the formidable defenses of the Elite Fey Fianna.

While the constant release of energy rays steadily damaged the integrity of the Fey Fianna's energy shield coverage, the Dustweaver's progress was far too disappointing.

Despite being piloted by a hand-picked elite mech pilot, the shoulder-mounted positron beam guns occasionally failed to hit the drone mech that had already begun to leverage its superior mobility by weaving around in the air.

It was a testament to the mech pilot and the quality of the Dustweaver that the positron beam guns achieved a hit rate of 65 percent!

The occasional misses were still highly consequential, though. They gave the much more powerful azure energy shield generators a brief moment to stabilize their conditions and restore a bit more integrity.

In fact, the Dustweaver should have been capable of wearing down even stronger defenses if it was able to leverage its decay attribute correctly.

Yet because the living hyper mech enjoyed the protection of a remarkable artistic conception, the accumulation of decay energy that was supposed to degrade the Fey Fianna's defenses over time simply couldn't find any purchase!

Real gods did not age and rot away like mortal beings.

They were immortal and eternal. Only other gods possessed the power to afflict them with maladies that could shorten their amazing longevity, but the Dustweaver definitely did not possess these qualifications.

Compared to a magnificent machine like the Elite Fey Fianna, the Dustweaver was a lifeless mortal object.

The only living spirituality that drove the quasi-first-class hero mech was its mech pilot, who was also just a mortal.

This perceived gap granted the Elite Fey Fianna an even greater boost in confidence!

Each subsequent positron beam attack that struck the azure energy shield seemed to deal a fraction less damage than before.

This subsequently increased the Fey Fianna's confidence even more, causing its azure energy shield to become even more effective at blocking incoming attacks!

It became clear to everyone that the Elite Fey Fianna immediately managed to gain the upper hand in this challenge match.

Not only did the Elite Fey Fianna produce a much more ostentatious light show, but it was clearly hammering the Dustweaver a lot harder!

In contrast to the shoulder-mounted positron beam guns, the transphasic fire hyper luminar crystal cannons mounted to the offensive fey were proper primary armaments.

These fey were not as modest as their Standard Edition counterparts. The inclusion of higher grades fire hyper materials as well as a dash of phasewater completely transformed their lethality!

Each fire laser beam that crossed the distance at the speed of light not only inflicted significant damage to the Dustweaver's own azure energy shield, but also caused the mech and the surrounding air to heat up at a faster rate.

The attribute restraint of the azure energy shield of the Dustweaver did not even play that much of a role.

This was because the subordinate spirits of the two offensive fey had joined forces to produce their own artistic conception!

Much of the living mech's focus had to be used to maintain the demanding artistic conception of Poseidon.

The luminar crystal cannon fey could only produce a more modest image of a naughty and mischievous fire elf, but that was already sufficient for their purposes.

The fire elf not only enabled the two offensive fey to attract more fire energy and shape it in a more effective manner, but also add a few frustrating characteristics to the fire laser beam attacks!

The transphasic properties of the energy beams fluctuated from time to time. They weakened in one moment, but the next ones became stronger for whatever reasons!

This randomness not only made it harder for the Dustweaver to configure its defenses properly, but also caused the water element fortifying the energy shield to become less controllable!

The fire elf attracted so much fire energy that the two offensive fey needed to be deployed further away from the main body and the two defensive fey.

If they did not maintain enough distance, then the two opposing elements would interfere with each other!

As the seconds passed by, the Dustweaver failed to improve its circumstances. Its elite mech pilot made multiple adjustments, but nothing worked.

The fact of the matter was that the Dustweaver was at a clear disadvantage when engaging the Elite Fey Fianna in ranged combat!

There was no point in maintaining distance as the positron beam attacks did not even do a good job at softening up the Fey Fianna's defenses.

Since that was the case, the Dustweaver had no choice but to get closer!

"The hero mech is finally accelerating forward!"

"It's fast!"

"Look! It is raising one of its arms. The hero mech is about to fire its exotic weapon system!"

The Elite Fey Fianna immediately became more alert when the Dustweaver started to take aim with its medium-range molecular disintegrator.

Even though it was far from reaching the most optimal range, the Dustweaver experienced so much pressure that it pulled the trigger anyway.

WOOOOOM!

A bizarre low pitch buzzing noise immediately spread throughout Phoca Arena.

The sound was so weird and disruptive that many people temporarily lost their focus.

Once they regained their wits, the audience immediately set their sights on the Elite Fey Fianna.

Different from all of the previous attacks launched by the Dustweaver, the single activation of the molecular disruptor actually produced a visible result!

"Is the modular armor plating of the fey and part of the drone mech looking a little... thinner?"

"The Dustweaver... actually managed to disintegrate the molecules that comprise the exterior of the Fey Fianna. It did so in spite of the fact that the drone mech's azure energy shield is still active."

"This is impossible! I am not an expert in molecular disintegration technology, but from what I have read about Master Quan's work, his exotic weapon systems have never demonstrated the capacity to bypass energy shields of any kind! Molecular disintegrators aren't even transphasic because their tech is incompatible with phasewater."

"Many old technologies have completely reinvented themselves since the start of the Hyper Generation. Isn't the answer obvious? The molecular disintegrator somehow managed to gain this power after being combined with hyper technology!"

This was a remarkable result! The value of a weapon that could actually bypass the protective measures of a powerful transphasic energy shield was considerable!

Even if only a small fraction of the effective attack managed to make it past the azure energy shield, its future potential was limitless.

This was already a result that could one day lead to more effective implementations that could damage and cripple alien starships more directly!

Master Quan was on the verge of making a massive contribution to the development of human technology!