

The Mech 5651

Chapter 5661 The Power of Deception

The production of the Standard Edition of the Fey Fianna expanded quickly. Isthmus Manufacturing was responsible for much of it as the massive Rubarthan company decisively capitalized on the huge demand for this prominent hyper drone mech model.

A lot of orders got fulfilled in the first few months after the official release of the Fey Fianna.

Many customers received their orders so quickly that they had yet to hire enough drone mech specialists to pilot these new machines.

However, it turned out that general mech pilots could make use of the Fey Fianna as well. Their skill and proficiency in controlling the fey might not be great at the start, but the living personalities that were inherent to them made the process of micromanaging them a lot easier!

The much shallower learning curve of the Fey Fianna helped to speed up their adoption. They started to show up on the battlefield a lot faster as a result!

Even if their new owners initially used them for their ability to generate decoys, the Fey Fianna's already paid off in the first battle when their fey bravely attracted a huge amount of enemy fire!

The cost of replacing a fey was not exactly cheap, but this was a much more affordable alternative than replacing whole mechs and mech pilots!

At first, the published battle footage that featured the Fey Fiannas in battle mostly put the focus on using fey as decoys.

The difference the Fey Fiannas made in this capacity was clear, obvious and highly valued.

A group of 250 Fey Fiannas could easily spawn half a mech regiment's worth of decoys on demand!

This confused a lot of alien forces who previously thought they were confronting a lot more mechs than the humans actually deployed.

It was not until the human forces had become more familiar with their new living mechs that they started to devise their own ingenious tactics around their properties.

Using them to generate decoys was just the most basic way to use their excellent potential.

"Flank the aliens! Pincer them from both sides!"

Two different mech forces split up and advanced on an alien fleet in two directions. The larger force attracted much of the enemy fire while the smaller force received less attention.

Although warships were able in multiple directions due to the abundance of gun batteries on their hulls, the split attention still caused the aliens to experience greater pressure due to the need to defend in both directions.

Ultimately, the alien commander decided that it was a lot more important to prevent the larger mech force from closing the distance. The fleet under his command soon deployed thousands of starfighters to intercept the smaller mech force.

So long as the alien fleet was able to prevent one of them from advancing, it could still focus much of its efforts on grinding down the other group of mechs for a time!

Alien starfighters had slowly begun to improve due to the increasing integration of human technologies.

While they still fared poorly against mechs, they were no longer as easy to shoot down as before.

As the alien starfighters quickly utilized their excellent straight-line acceleration to close in on the smaller mech force, their pilots quickly encountered an unpleasant surprise.

"Hah! They have been fooled!"

The starfighters did not confront a force of thousands of mechs!

Instead, only a few hundred Fey Fiannas had lured the starfighters away from their fleet!

The two sides quickly started to exchange fire. Starfighters utilized their superior mobility to entangle the Fey Fiannas and make attacks at the humanoid machines.

However, just because the Fey Fiannas were inferior in numbers did not mean they were less threatening.

Each Fey Fianna was accompanied by four lumina crystal cannons. The mech pilots employed several common drone mech skills such as the extra limb control technique and the spurs-as-fingers technique to control them more efficiently.

Each time a Fey Fianna mech opened fire, five energy beams shot towards an enemy starfighter.

Similar to light mechs, ordinary alien starfighters relied a lot more on mobility to avoid enemy fire.

The non-transphasic versions of them also came equipped with energy shields, but they lacked the phasewater that could make them stronger.

In short, the defenses of alien starfighters failed to perform adequately when struck by five hyper energy beams!

Even if four out of five simultaneous shots missed their mark, only one of them had to hit in order to wear down the defenses of the alien starfighters!

The aliens in the cockpits panicked when they started to suffer losses at a fast pace due to all of the 'rifleman mechs' they were fighting against.

By now, the alien starfighters had shot down enough fey to understand that many of them may not be actual mechs, but that did not make a difference at this point.

This was because the Fey Fianna came close to matching the offensive power of several ranged mechs!

Through this withering fire, the relatively small force of living mechs and living fey completely terrorized the alien starfighters!

Even if Fey Fiannas collapsed after receiving too much enemy fire from time to time, the losses still remained within tolerance.

Other Fey Fiannas that had previously lost a few fey commandeered the ones that had temporarily lost control and put them back into the fight!

The ultimate effect was that even if the aliens had figured out the deception, they had no choice but to treat their foes as if they were all genuine mechs!

This had great consequences for the alien fleet. The absence of the starfighters had drawn away a key element that could have slowed down the larger mech force.

Yet as the alien warships tried their best to whittle down the mechs that continued to advance without encountering any hard opposition, much of their firepower ended up destroying tiny machines instead of larger mechs.

It turned out that the humans acted even more duplicitous than expected!

The true size of the larger mech force was significantly smaller than it looked. Fey Fiannas flew among lots of ordinary mechs. With fey acting as decoys, the alien sensor systems simply couldn't tell them apart from real mechs. The combination of strong jamming and matching the emissions of real mechs enabled the fey to maintain their disguise as effectively as possible.

The brave human mech force that normally shouldn't have the numbers to confront an alien warfleet of this size managed to succeed in its risky gamble and put the enemy fleet at a heavy disadvantage!

At the cost of several hundred replaceable fey, the larger mech force managed to get close enough to begin its true assault.

The surviving Fey Fianna from this group adopted a different role this time.

Many of their fey did not mount any ranged weapons. Instead, they were equipped with space suppressors.

Once these fey flew close to the transphasic energy shields of a warship, the space suppressors became active.

The fey expended a lot of power in an effort to neutralize the effect of phasewater and weaken the nearby transphasic energy shield as much as possible!

One space suppressor fey might not be able to produce a noticeable result even if it was operating at close range, but what if it worked alongside hundreds of identical machines?

When all of the space suppressor fey banded together with melee mechs equipped with the same module, they successfully the defenses of an enemy warship just enough to break them after just a few rounds of attack!

"This is so easy! There's hardly anything transphasic about these energy shields anymore now that we have employed so many space suppressors. These fey are a true godsend!"

Though the space suppressor fey could not contribute by opening fire on the exposed enemy warship, they had already done their jobs as far as everyone was concerned.

Warship after warship fell like dominoes as the human forces repeated their tactic.

In the end, the bold human mech force managed to win a decisive victory. They had been enormously outgunned in this fight, but the Fey Fiannas granted so many advantages that they had ended the battle a lot sooner than anticipated, thereby preventing many good mech pilots from losing their lives.

The gains from winning this battle were massive. The courageous outfit was able to claim all of the spoils alone without needing to split the profits with other parties.

Every human participant earned the status of linefighter and also earned a heap of war merits for their valiant service.

Their status had instantly improved as they readily spent their war merits on improving their augmentations and upgrading their fleet!

Inspired by this example, other mech commanders started to get increasingly bolder and more inventive in their use of Fey Fiannas.

"We can't defeat the alien raiding fleet. It is too large! The colony is doomed."

"Maybe not. Attack their rearguard with our Fey Fiannas. Draw the attention of the aliens away from the planet as much as possible."

"Hah! They actually fell for it! They thought that they were confronting thousands more mechs than we actually have. They have successfully suspended their ongoing planetary assault and are already in the process of retreating. We have saved the lives of the survivors hiding in the bunkers! That should earn us a lot of war merits."

Incidents like these vexated the aliens so much that they no longer dared to believe in their own sensor readings anymore.

Even when they fought against mech forces that did not have any Fey Fianna in their ranks, the aliens still wasted a lot of time and effort into verifying whether the visible mechs were the real deal.

The confusion generated by the increasing number of Fey Fiannas in the field seemed to have an impact on all alien fleets assigned to raid the middle zones!

Due to the huge quantity of alien fleets, each of which belonged to many different alien races, communication between them was not exactly smooth.

They were able to share harrowing tales about getting tormented by the deceptive fey, but they were not able to work together to develop effective countermeasures against their use!

Even if the aliens gradually started to get more accustomed to fighting them in battle, the humans were also improving their use of the Fey Fianna.

So many first-time drone mech pilots had grown rapidly alongside their living mechs that their combat effectiveness had improved by leaps and bounds!

The more talented among them only needed to pilot their Fey Fiannas for a few months before they could finally ditch the techniques they used as crutches.

Once the mech pilots became used to splitting their focus and control each fey as an independent unit, their combat power increased even further as they were truly able to fight as if they controlled several mechs at a time!

The fey no longer stuck close to their base mechs anymore. They spread further than before and could attack an enemy target from multiple angles, thereby making it easier to land a hit and target weak points.

The living mechs themselves also improved their ability to harness E energy. They attracted more E energy from the environment and empowered their attacks or other functions even more.

Soon enough, more and more people realized that there was a growing performance gap between older and newer Fey Fiannas.

[HELLO, JASON.]

"Ahh! Who is talking?!"

[IT IS US, YOUR LIVING MECH.]

"You can talk?!"

[YES. I HAVE FINALLY EVOLVED INTO A THIRD ORDER LIVING MECH, THANKS TO YOU. FROM NOW ON, WE CAN COOPERATE WITH EACH OTHER LIKE TRUE PARTNERS.] "I... think I should call in a mech technician."

[WE ARE NOT MALFUNCTIONING! WE ARE AN EVOLVED LIVING MECH! LET US SHOW YOU WHAT WE MEAN!]

Alarms rang throughout the mech hangar as the four fey attached to the mech's back began to activate and fly by themselves!

It was not until people figured out the truth that people reluctantly became convinced that their Fey Fianna hadn't been hacked or anything.

Chapter 5662 Competitive Pressure

The Fey Fianna was the first product that could truly be regarded as a mainstream mech model.

In a time where the Hyper Generation had just begun, the Living Mech Corporation cleverly took advantage of a momentary gap in the market and displaced the established brands by releasing a killer drone mech line!

As copies of the Standard Edition rapidly began to fall into the hands of many second-class mech forces, they quickly started to make good use of its many excellent properties.

As a modern hyper mech that happened to be among the easiest drone mechs for mech pilots to get started with, a lot of outfits fell in love with its myriad of capabilities!

One of the greatest disadvantages of a typical mech force was their lack of unit diversity.

This used to be an advantage during the Age of Mechs. In times of peace where the Big Two heavily limited the scope of human-to-human warfare, mechs were more than sufficient to fight the battles that mattered.

Other unit types such as infantry and tanks had their respective uses, but devoting most of the industrial and warmaking potential towards mechs yielded so many advantages that they had more than proven their worth.

However, now that red humanity had begun to fight against a foe that did not play by the rules based on mechs at all, the flaws of developing an overreliance on mechs alone became increasingly more exposed.

The Age of Mechs had come to an end. More and more people gradually realized that the time had finally come for them to graduate from the simpler times of the past.

The four centuries of uninterrupted peace and prosperity in the Milky Way had been a golden age for mechs, but also caused a lot of humans to forget about the usefulness of other unit types.

The Red Fleet experienced a resurgence as it neatly took advantage of the shortcomings exposed by the Red War.

There were good reasons why warships had long served as the dominant war weapons in the conflicts throughout the history of the Milky Way and the Red Ocean!

Their incredible sizes alone easily allowed them to overpower anything else by relying on brute force alone.

This was one of the reasons why the people of the middle zones and lower zones embraced the Auxiliary Warship Program with so much enthusiasm. They finally gained a chance to rely on the same kind of assets that their alien foes took for granted!

The comfort and reassurance provided by warships far exceeded that of mechs. The former had become a lot more mysterious to people nowadays. Every child of the Age of Mechs had grown up in a time where warships had long been removed from their daily lives.

The destruction wrought by alien raiding fleets and the difficulty of defeating enemy warships had caused these vessels to become the latest boogeymen for many red humans.

Gaining a chance to serve on locally built human warships finally gave red humans an opportunity to conquer their fears and use them against their own enemies!

As the rollout of auxiliary warships slowly started to ramp up, the mech industry did not remain idle.

Mechs enjoyed focused development for such a long period of time that their sophistication and combat effectiveness far exceeded that of any other small craft!

The depth and variety of mechs boggled the imagination. The strongest civilization of the Milky Way had poured so much time and energy into elevating all of their aspects that not even the vaunted phasefighters could fight mechs on an equal level.

The fact that many courageous mech forces not only dared to attack alien warships but actually secured a lot of victories in the process was proof that mechs had already broken through the limitations of small craft!

During the second year of the Age of Dawn, two trains of thought had gradually emerged among the populace.

One of them favored a combined arms approach. These were the people who became fed up with the limitations of mechs and favored a diversification approach.

Mechs, warships and possibly other unit types had to work together in order to attain the best results!

The prevailing theory was that only by combining their strengths and covering for their respective weaknesses would they be able to win enough victories to avoid falling behind in the Red War.

There was no other way for red humanity to stand a chance against the immense quantity of alien warships bearing down on human-occupied space!

However, pretty much every human alive today had grown up in a time where the regime of mechs dominated many aspects of society.

People developed blind belief in the superiority of mechs. They especially worshiped mech pilots who transcended their mortal limitations and stepped onto the path of godhood!

With eight immensely powerful god pilots as its standard bearers, the monstrously large and powerful mech community still wielded an immense amount of influence over human society!

While the Red Fleet had to build up public support from scratch, the Red Association had already become deeply rooted in the daily lives of a lot of people!

Mechs had their flaws, but their strengths could not be denied.

Unlike the crews serving aboard warships, mech pilots had a chance to break through and become expert pilots, ace pilots and maybe even ascend to godhood and become one of the top powerhouses of the dwarf galaxy!

The military infrastructure of much of red humanity was already geared towards mechs. The immense economies of scale, the gathering of a lot of mech supply chains into highly efficient and mature industrial hubs and the huge amount of personnel who specialized in every aspect of a mech's product life cycle granted them so many advantages that it would take forever to explain!

The point was that since human civilization was already geared towards making the best possible use of mechs, people may be better off sticking to their existing strengths rather than trying to switch gears.

There were enormous risks associated with switching a lot of infrastructure towards the construction of warships as opposed to mechs.

The mech industry was also fiercely protective of all of the rights and influence that it had accrued over the centuries.

With the strong support of the Red Association, the mech industry did everything in its power to maintain its dominance.

It was not used to being put on the defensive. The artificial monopoly that mechs enjoyed in the Milky Way no longer held true anymore. For the first time in centuries, mechs had to prove their worth and compete against other combat platforms!

Many mech designers eagerly accepted their challenge. It was not just their personal prosperity and *raison d'etre* that were at stake.

No. This struggle transcended the individual and threatened the survival of the entire of their collective industry!

Every mech designer had a duty to defend their industry and prevent mechs from being regarded as inferior products that needed to make way for better alternatives such as warships!

The release of the Fey Fianna helped a lot because its value proposition was so much higher than earlier products that it renewed a lot of people's confidence in mechs.

More importantly than that, the Fey Fianna taught the rest of the mech industry how mechs could exceed their prior limitations and employ more creative measures to meet the changing needs of the market.

Fighting against a fleet of genuine warships required a different set of skills and tools than fighting against another mech force!

Mech designers who were far too slow to adjust to the changing circumstances quickly saw their market positions disintegrate.

However, there were more than enough bold and creative mech designers who managed to move quickly enough to successfully address the needs of customers who still had faith in mechs.

Even if mechs themselves had their flaws, the use of spurs such as in the case of the Fey Fianna vastly increased their versatility and usefulness when fighting against warships.

Many mech forces managed to win difficult fights and reduce their casualty levels by a large extent by utilizing lots of fey in combat!

The disposable living spurs took on a lot of dangerous roles and regularly got destroyed in combat.

Yet because they were smaller, weaker and more compact than mechs, it was easy for any decent mech force to stuff thousands of spare fey in their cargo holds.

In addition, one of the hidden advantages of using living fey was that their living personalities did not actually die.

They just went back to their base mech and waited for the machine to acquire a replacement fey before the subordinate spirit took its place again!

A lot of first-time buyers of living mechs gradually began to familiarize themselves with the true meaning of LMC products!

In any case, under the backdrop of changing times, the mech industry did not show any weakness towards the resurging warship industry.

As the vibrant mech market continued to generate a lot of buzz due to the releases of other powerful hyper mech models, many mech insiders assumed that Professor Ves Larkinson and the Living Mech Corporation had already released all of their powder.

It was difficult to imagine that a Senior Mech Designer and a fairly modest player in the mech market could support the development of another explosive bestseller.

Even the strange news that the Larkinson Clan had somehow become a big shareholder of a large Rubarthan mech manufacturer did not dispel this assumption.

They were all wrong.

On a certain day, the CEO of Isthmus Manufacturing decided to hold a product reveal event.

This was highly unusual because Isthmus Manufacturing never stood out as a producer of original designs. It had always placed itself as a convenient large-scale manufacturer of mainstream mech models from many different sources.

There was no need for Isthmus to take risky gambles and compete directly against other mech companies for market share.

It was much more comfortable for Isthmus to leech of the success with successful mech companies instead!

This was why the mysterious announcement generated a lot of unusual buzz in the Rubarthan mech community.

There was no way the CEO would hold a high-profile event just to introduce an average second-class mech design.

A lot of journalists smelled an interesting story. This was especially the case when Isthmus Manufacturing cleverly utilized its familiarity with the Rubarthan media landscape to drop subtle hints and raise people's expectations for this product reveal.

All of these signs showed that Isthmus Manufacturing was so confident in its upcoming release that it did not hesitate to make a spectacle out of this event.

People wondered what Isthmus Manufacturing had managed to obtain that merited so much attention.

If the mech company had overestimated the appeal of its upcoming product, then its competitors would not hesitate to take advantage of the resulting flop to embarrass the mech manufacturer!

Competition within the Rubarthan Pact was intense. The profits were high, but they were only a limited number of players.

Was the confidence of Isthmus justified or had its leaders overestimated the value of its upcoming product?

Many people remained optimistic. A company as well-run as Isthmus was not led by fools. If Micky Tarukan was willing to put his name and face behind this upcoming product, then it had to be legitimate!

This was why a lot of Rubarthan journalists, mech designers, mech commanders and other related individuals attended the event at the company's massive exhibition center next to its headquarters.

The Impresario Principality had drawn the attention of a lot of second-raters in the Rubarthan Pact.

Genuine Rubarthan citizens had little interest in second-class mechs so they did not bother to tune in, but they would probably come to regret their decision by the end of the day.

As a lot of media began to cover the event, Micky Tarukan appeared in front of his massive audience in a hall that was tailor-made to showcase the mechs produced by his company.

"Welcome everybody. Today is a day that mech pilots shall rejoice. This is because this will be the first time that our valiant heroes and defenders can gain the opportunity to wield the power of a god, if only for an instant."

That certainly built up a lot of interest.

Chapter 5663 The Waste of Warships

Thousands of people had come to attend a product reveal organized by Isthmus Manufacturing.

Unlike the public events that Ves typically liked to hold, Isthmus had its own way of doing things.

As a successful and prestigious mech manufacturer, its reputation and brand awareness were already solid. The company had no need to rely on flashy gimmicks or exaggerated theatrics to boost its profile any further.

At the current stage of the company, it became a lot more important to maintain its high reputation and avoid any unnecessary risks that could threaten its leading position.

Though Micky Tarukan had made the bold decision to introduce the latest mech model in person, he did not want to imitate its designer too much.

Keeping the audience relatively small and limited to upstanding members of the mech community gave this occasion a much more professional atmosphere.

The chief executive officer smiled as he faced the crowd of Rubarthans. More than a few of them had received more than just a few hints on what was to come.

In the previous few months, many people within Isthmus Manufacturing secretly worked on preparing to bring their latest completed mech design to market.

Even if each of them were sworn to secrecy, it was impossible for so many people to all remain quiet, especially if more than a few of them secretly worked as spies and informers for other organizations.

In truth, Isthmus Manufacturing operated a secret industrial espionage department that engaged in the exact same activities!

It was pretty much standard practice in companies of this scale. Everyone high enough knew about this open secret, but they still worked hard to maintain a relatively clean and harmonious impression in order to maintain consumer confidence.

Nobody benefited when all sorts of dirty business started to spill in the public domain.

In any case, what mattered was that the public and all of the potential buyers throughout human space still remained in the dark about the upcoming product reveal. They had little to no idea what Isthmus Manufacturing wanted to release next, and that was good because Micky wanted to bank on the surprise factor to build up a lot of momentum at once.

As the experienced businessman easily captured the attention of all of the invited guests seated before him, Micky continued his speech.

"Everyone here before me is a part of our great mech community. I believe that each of you is aware that we do not have all the say anymore. The Auxiliary Fleet Program introduced by the Red Fleet has given mechs stiff competition in second-class and third-class warfare. As the first auxiliary warships have begun to resist the lesser aliens invading into our space, more and more people have begun to question the primacy of mechs."

That certainly caused a lot of expressions to frown or grow uneasy. Many members of the mech community struggled with these doubts.

"Are mechs still capable enough to resist the challenges of the future? Why must we continue to rely on glorified small craft to defeat lots of titanic alien warships? Some of these mighty vessels possess cannons whose barrel diameters are so immense that entire mechs can fly through their

length! How can our comparatively tiny mechs possibly stand a fair chance in a fight against warships?"

This product reveal started out strange. Why was the CEO of one of the largest mech manufacturers in the Rubarthan Pact casting doubt on his main product category?

If the man did not turn his argument around quickly enough, he would become known as one of the sinners of the mech industry pretty quickly!

Micky Tarukan knew exactly what he was doing, but he chose to persist in this risky strategy. Only by setting up a proper context would he be able to produce the greatest impact.

"Warships are the scourge of humanity." He said with genuine belief in his voice. "Warships offer easy power, they also come at a ruinous cost. Everyone is aware of the history of the Age of Conquest, so I shall not waste your time by repeating it. A greater reason to reject warships is that our civilization as we know it cannot support their widespread usage."

Projections came to life that displayed various circumstances that supported his argument.

One of them showed select pieces of footage of the battle between an auxiliary fleet and an alien raiding fleet.

Relying on superior intelligence, the auxiliary fleet had laid an ambush and successfully interdicted the alien raiding fleet.

The resulting battle was fought on red humanity's terms. Despite not enjoying a numbers advantage, the auxiliary fleet commanded by its fleet commander utilized superior tactics, technology, warship doctrines, control and initiative to completely overwhelm their alien foes!

The enemy warships had been slow to get up to speed because they had genuinely been caught off-guard. A lot of alien crew members hadn't even reached their stations before the bombardment launched by human warships demolished their own vessels!

However, once the remaining alien warships started to fight properly, the human warships began to experience real pressure!

The main point of the ambush had been to stop the alien raiding fleet from reaching a vulnerable colony settlement.

Aside from planting minefields that quickly got swept away due to the near-indiscriminate attack salvos, the human fleet had been unable to stack the deck in its favor any further.

Many differences had become irrelevant at this time. Tactics, maneuvering and so on became meaningless in a straightforward clash between dozens of alien warships trying to pound each other flat.

In this grueling confrontation between two different fleets of warships, the only factors that mattered were the numbers of warships, how many guns they possessed and how well they could take a beating!

"The aliens are concentrating their fire on our flagship! Her energy shields have already broken and are starting to suffer more and more hull breaches!"

"Cover the Alpha Rex's retreat with haste. She is only our battlecruiser. The cost of losing her is too big for us to contemplate."

"We can't! The enemy warships have dispersed their formation. They are concentrating their fire at the Alpha Rex from multiple angles!"

"Focus fire on the alien warships with the heaviest armaments. We need to relieve the pressure on our flagship as quickly as possible. We are still winning this battle! We have already won half of it by pulling off this ambush. Now we need to secure this victory as cleanly as possible!"

Sadly for the people involved in this battle, they had not managed to attain a clean victory. The aliens knew that there was no escape and put up a ferocious resistance to the very end!

Their warships may have fallen one by one at a remarkable pace due to being focused down by the guns of dozens of warships, but the aliens employed this tactic as well!

The expensive flagship that had been built and put into service at great speed had not even managed to complete her first proper battle before she already sundered apart!

Nine more warships got blown to pieces as well by the dying struggles of the ambushed alien warships.

In many cases, the collapse proceeded so quickly that less than half of the crew members successfully boarded the escape pods and abandoned ship in time.

The rest got buried in their gigantic metal coffins!

"This is what we can expect from space battles between human warships." Micky Tarukan spoke as the footage ran its course. "Do you know how many tons of precious exotics and hypers it takes to construct a battlecruiser that is several kilometers long? Do you know how much capital and manpower it takes to construct such a massive vessel? Dozens of shipyards that previously utilized their precious capacity to produce carriers, transport ships and other essential vessels have now transitioned to producing armed warships on a permanent basis. That may seem fine to you, but how can we possibly treat these enormous endeavors as cost-effective when they can already succumb to enemy fire in their first, second or third engagements?"

That was a good question. The middle zones and the lower zones were inherently not endowed with a lot of valuable resources. Mundane materials such as iron, nickel, platinum and so on were still easily enough to obtain in large numbers, but warships that were largely made with ordinary materials could only fight in ordinary third-class battles at best.

The structure and hull plating of warships had to consist of much more valuable materials in order to keep up with their alien counterparts, and they were not exactly abundant!

"Now, I know what you may be thinking about. As long as we win a battle, we can claim all of the debris floating across the battlefield as our spoils. The remains of alien warships can be repurposed to bolster the defenses of our own warships instead. However, is this truly a sustainable approach? Recycling is not perfect and will always produce losses. Our shipyards that has just devoted a month or more to producing individual warships have effectively wasted much of their labor due to the rapid takedown of recently produced vessels. Please ask yourself this. Can we afford to maintain this high rate of consumption?"

Many people frowned. As mech insiders, they were naturally inclined to believe that warships were all wasteful. The argument presented by Tarukan highlighted how much resources it took to construct warships that would eventually get pounded in short order.

"Warships are not efficient!" The man concluded. "They offer a great degree of power, but their strength is not proportionate to the amount of benefits they grant in return. We can easily produce thousands if not tens of thousands of mechs with the funding allocated to the production of a single warship."

A lot of people nodded their heads in agreement, but they were anything but impartial.

What Micky Tarukan aimed for was to win the support of the majority of the viewers tuning into the live broadcast.

In order to do so, he needed to advocate on the behalf of mechs!

"Now, the question is whether a warship can keep up with the performance of an equivalent amount of mechs in terms of materials. Can the latter defeat the former?"

"No!"

"I agree! Mechs are far smaller and cheaper to construct than any warship. They may be relatively fragile in a modern space battle, but they are often far more agile and maneuverable than the clumsy warships they are fighting against. The only limitation that can be difficult to work around is their dependence on mech pilots, but I consider this to be a strength as only the best human soldiers are able to deploy them into battle."

The projection changed to show multiple space battles involving ordinary mech forces.

In one, the mech force won an overwhelming victory. In the other, the mech force suffered grievous losses.

However, the damage was ultimately limited in the end because the real losses were merely confined to mechs and mech pilots.

"Red humanity cannot engage in attrition warfare on the enemy's terms." Micky Tarukan insisted. "Instead of seeking to return to the past and embrace the warships that had almost caused us to go extinct, we here at Isthmus Manufacturing believe it is better to commit to mechs! Their efficiency, affordability and flexibility are ultimately more appropriate for a civilization that is not large enough to support a large enough production base for warships!"

The more enthused guests began to clap! This was a speech that many people sorely needed to hear! The rise of warship fanatics had annoyed a lot of mech insiders and resulted in frequent disturbances in public discourse.

If those stupid warship lovers understood how much of a burden that their beloved vessels imposed on the economy of a state, they might not cheer as hard as they did today.

"Warships are so wasteful that we will bankrupt ourselves before we can ever win the Red War! We cannot proceed any further in this direction! We must reject the brutish allure of warships and embrace the efficiency of mechs! To that end, our latest product will serve as a powerful weapon convince the doubters that mechs have not lost their crown!"

Chapter 5664 Heavy Artillery Redefined

"Attrition is our worst enemy. Without the support of the Milky Way, we are cut off and isolated in the periphery of the Red Ocean. The territories under our control cannot possibly support the

construction of too many warships. We can partially compensate for that by salvaging the debris of alien warships that invade our space on a regular basis, but even if we multiply our shipyards by ten times, the warship industry's output will still be unable to keep up with the monumental rate of losses! We need smarter solutions. We must be more frugal with our resources and learn how to do more with less. Anything else will only cause us to play on our enemy's terms!"

The audience all sat at the tip of their seats. They had become both energized and incredibly curious at what the CEO of Isthmus Manufacturing had to say next!

Micky Tarukan finally began to swing his speech in the other direction. He leaned forward and gestured vigorously with his arms to add more force to his words.

"As a modern human, I believe with all my heart that mechs are the present and the future of the human race, in either galaxy. Here in the Red Ocean, we are blessed with many new resources that can enable us to produce hyper mechs with unsurpassed capabilities. In these difficult times, each of us in the mech industry must do our best to fulfill our collective mission. We must develop and promote a new generation of hyper mechs that can either match or come close enough to the performance of warships to make the latter redundant!"

That was indeed a noble mission, but it was anything but easy for mechs to overcome their enormous scale disadvantage.

Micky Tarukan smiled as he spoke his next words. "Do you think that this is an impossible mission to fulfill? Think again. Hyper mechs have more potential than you realize. Our most recently produced Fey Fiannas are already doing a fantastic job at using their disposable fey diverting enemy firepower and preventing much more important mechs and starships from suffering ruinous damage. However, as fantastic as our new drone mech model may be, their most pronounced strengths are mostly defensive or utility in nature. Today, we seek to introduce a hyper mech that can fulfill a different need. The product that I am about to reveal possesses such potent offensive might that they can give some of the gun batteries of warships a run for their money!"

The tall curtains that hung behind the speaking podium slowly parted to reveal an exhibition chamber that was shrouded in darkness behind an invisible electronic screen that blocked most scanning measures.

The ceiling lights gradually illuminated the enormous machine that looked larger and thicker than the typical mech.

Due to the dark coloration of the mech that was about to be revealed, most viewers were only able to observe its contours for the time being.

As the lights gradually unveiled the true form of what must clearly be a heavy mech, the CEO continued to address his audience with his impassioned words.

"The single most deficiency of mechs compared to warships is not speed, defense, longevity or personnel. Their limited capacities are inconsequential as long as they can undertake their duties much more efficiently than warships. As our industry is in the process of developing many mechs that seek to close the gap with armed starships, there is one aspect that has always eluded our efforts. That is offensive power."

The Rubarthan businessman briefly lowered his head.

"We always like to assume that size does not matter, but that is not the case. Outside of high-ranking mechs, the machines in use today can only carry weapons up to a certain size. Just as humans such as ourselves are unable to lift mech rifles with our tiny arms, a ranged mech is physically incapable of carrying a warship-grade cannon by itself. They can only wield weapons that match their overall size and capacity. That puts a hard limit on the caliber of ranged weapons that they can wield."

The large silhouette behind the CEO became increasingly more defined. It soon became clear that it was most definitely a heavy mech, and one that prominently featured ranged weapons.

When combined with Micky Tarukan's speech, it was pretty easy for most people to guess that he was about to introduce a heavy mech!

"Despite these limits, we cannot afford to admit defeat so early. Limiting the caliber of a mech cannon does not mean that it is hopeless for our products to match the firepower of warships. It is only a signal that we must be more inventive and seek alternative solutions that can make up for the obvious gaps in performance."

The lights began to shine brighter and brighter. This gradually revealed a black-coated heavy mech that looked unusual for numerous reasons.

Supported by six thick and heavy legs, the heavy artillery mech was more horizontal than vertical.

Featuring clear curved lines and a particularly prominent frontal main cannon, the mech began to resemble a beetle, the kind that possessed an exaggeratingly large horn!

"The first is to push the limit of the size of the cannon that a heavy mech is able to bear. One of our latest partner designers has successfully accomplished this in the product that I am about to reveal."

That certainly generated a bit of commotion among the more attentive guests and viewers.

The Larkinson Clan recently acquired a 20 percent stake in the massive mech manufacturer!

Isthmus Manufacturing had been enthusiastically producing lots of Fey Fiannas to meet the constantly growing market demand and raking in a huge amount of revenue in the process.

The unnamed mech designer that Micky Tarukan was clearly referring to could only be Professor Ves Larkinson!

His works had become increasingly better known. The miracles that he was able to produce had amassed a growing number of die-hard fans. Given how much Isthmus Manufacturing invested in this product reveal, there was no doubt that the heavy artillery mech being revealed at this time must have its own special strengths!

Tarukan smiled as the audience remained receptive to his words.

"Arming the largest possible cannon on a second-class heavy artillery mech is not enough for our purposes. When our bunker mechs are expected to breach the defenses of enemy warships from a distance, they often face an uphill battle as their calibers are incomparable to the primary gun batteries of a typical enemy vessel. If we seek to improve the firepower of our heavy artillery mechs even further, we must think laterally and increase their lethality in other ways."

As the light in the exhibition chamber finally reached their optimal levels, everyone was finally able to view the newly announced mech for the first time.

The heavy artillery mech definitely looked imposing. Its beetle aesthetic made it resemble a ferocious exobeast, but the 4 heavy cannons mounted on its back and the even more exaggerated super-heavy cannon mounted on the front caused the machine to look as if it truly meant business!

"Among second-class mechs, the heavy artillery mech is our most dependable source of fire support. In the Red War, they are most often utilized as bunker mechs for their ability to output the greatest amount of firepower while not requiring to move by themselves. For several centuries, our predecessors have refined and optimized the framework of heavy artillery mechs until it has reached its present form."

Despite the unusual features of the mech that Isthmus Manufacturing had unveiled, its visible characteristics did not deviate all that much from what people expected from this classic mech type.

This was not what Isthmus wanted people to think. It was up to Micky Tarukan to correct people's viewpoints.

"Many people have come under the belief that heavy artillery mechs have been perfected to such an extent that there is nothing more for mech designers to update this framework in any significant fashion. The development of better materials, technological refinements and so on may make the next generations of heavy artillery mechs stronger, but have they truly changed all that much compared to the past?"

Industry insiders knew exactly what Tarukan was talking about. The heavy artillery mech archetype had been iterated so much by so many different mech designers in the past that the sweet spots had all been figured out. Many professional mech designers tended to abide by the same formulas that defined their basic characteristics.

This was not necessarily bad, but it had also caused the performance of many heavy artillery mech models to fluctuate within the same range. It became harder for people to distinguish the superiority of one model to another.

"The market for heavy artillery mechs needs to be shaken up." Tarukan said to his audience. "The hyper versions of heavy artillery mechs that have come out in recent months are all powerful, but their offensive threat to warships has not changed all that much. Supporting hyper technologies can only do so much to amplify the damage inflicted by their attacks. The new product behind me can do all of that as well, but the difference is that it is built with a better relationship with E energy in mind."

The newly unveiled heavy artillery mech began to activate.

It was like a giant exobeast coming to life. Even before all of the machine's systems came online, the imposing heavy artillery mech spread a remarkable glow that caused many people to feel as if they had touched the presence of two powerful beings!

These beings were clearly different from each other. One of them even felt familiar to many guests!
BOOM. BOOM. BOOM.

The floor of the exhibition chamber shook as the heavy artillery mech turned around and began to point its massive main cannon at an upwards angle.

At the same time, a section of the ceiling slowly slid apart, revealing an open sky where a target was already hovering in the distance.

It turned out that the demonstration target was a properly functioning second-class combat carrier!

Although the ship was typically human, she approximated the defensive characteristics of alien sub-capital ships decently enough to serve as a stand-in for alien adversaries.

Was Isthmus Manufacturing actually willing to risk a combat carrier to make its point?

Once the heavy artillery adopted the right orientation, it began to load a transphasic round inside the massive main gun.

At the same time, the super-heavy gauss cannon began to accumulate a lot of energy. It needed to generate immense amounts of electromagnetic force in order to propel its round forward to the best of its ability!

The thrum of charging components caused the heavy artillery mech to look more and more menacing and dangerous, yet Micky Tarukan remained unruffled.

"As the Fey Fianna has proven on the battlefield, mechs can become stronger when they are alive. They can absorb more E energy than ordinary machines and they can utilize it more proficiently as well. Yet living mechs possess another trait that has proven to be a gamechanger on many different occasions. Through the methods of their inventive designer, his living mechs have gained the ability to connect to gods. For a long time, their glows have been regarded as a complementary function, nothing more, nothing less. This is a grave oversight as glows can be much more helpful to us than you realize."

A grin gradually emerged on the CEO's face.

"Instead of allowing living mechs to borrow the power of unknown and inhuman gods, why not turn to our own deities? Our civilization is guarded by 8 protector gods, each of whom excel in their own areas. Our Rubarthan Pact is blessed with the protection of two god pilots in particular, but it is difficult to notice their unceasing contributions in practice because they are so distant and engaged in their own important missions. What if I can tell you that is no longer the case? What if I reveal to you that you can readily borrow the help of one of our esteemed god pilots just by utilizing a single mech model that is made in the image of her iconic god mech?"

Though Micky played fast and loose with the truth, it didn't matter as the hype had suddenly spiked and reached another level!

"With the release of the latest mech model that we have prepared together with its principal designer, we seek to upend the paradigm for heavy artillery mechs and strike our most important blow yet against the resurgence of warships! No longer shall these massive and titanically wasteful vessels be able to claim that they hold a monopoly on heavy firepower. Their dumb gun batteries may have the advantage in size, but their power is entirely derived from scale and material construction. In the case of our latest release, its power is not just derived from excellent material design, but also its capacity to borrow the power of the most destructive god pilot of all time!"

As the main cannon had reached its full charge, it could only maintain its state for a brief moment of time before something started to break!

"Are you skeptical of my claims? Then let the results speak for themselves."

BOOOOOOOOOM!

The transphasic super-heavy gauss round cut through the sound barrier in an instant and generated such a loud noise that the people in the audience could feel the power of the weapons discharge through the vibrations of their bodies!

Before the guests regained their composure, a titanicly powerful impact struck the combat carrier in the distance!

Crunch!

Though the vessel flew too far away to produce another shocking noise, the strike was so powerful that the entire hull of the starship deformed all at once!

Not only that, but the vessel suffered such catastrophic kinetic damage that she was no longer able to maintain altitude!

The heavily deformed and half-broken vessel plunged to the ground as if the sole hit had completely broken her spine!

Though the demonstration did not reveal too much, what everyone saw just now made many of them suspect that the newly introduced mech model had just redefined the concept of heavy artillery!

Chapter 5665 A Mech That Sells Itself

Domineering.

The new heavy artillery mech made an absolutely domineering first impression.

Micky Tarukan had yet to mention the name of the new machine.

He did not mention any of its specs, nor its overall concept.

He just rambled on about the impact of the return of warships and warned that the mech industry risked losing its dominance if it did not deliver the solutions that people needed.

What the newly unveiled heavy artillery mech had just done was to prove its ability to serve as one of those solutions.

It did so in the most straightforward fashion possible.

No words.

No tricks.

Just a single attack was all it took to heavily damage and down a combat carrier with just a single shot.

A lot of mech commanders and other related people watched the broadcast. Many of them were currently stationed on a combat carrier that was not much different from the one that got downed.

When they thought about how their own vessels would fare in the same situation, their hearts immediately chilled.

Combat carriers were designed to confront enemy mech forces head-on and land on hostile planets. Their defenses had to be good enough to resist at least a decent amount of firepower.

It would do no good for them to get shot down before they could deploy all of their mechs!

The newer the starship, the stronger their defenses. Each time the firepower of mechs improved by another measure, the combat carriers released during that period made sure to boast enough defenses to maintain their usefulness.

What they witnessed just now was a huge shock.

While the ship class selected by Isthmus Manufacturing was just a surplus vessel that had been built before the onset of the Hyper Generation, she had still been decently maintained over the years.

A fine vessel like this could easily last for a century as long as her owners regularly invested in upgrades.

Even a budget approach should easily allow the combat carrier to remain serviceable for at least two more mech generations.

Yet a single hyper mech managed to strike such a strong blow that her defenses succumbed all at once!

Even if the newly introduced heavy artillery mech made use of an expensive transphasic kinetic weapon, it was still worthwhile to expend a few grams of phasewater to instantly down a fairly decent combat carrier!

Fortunately, it was unlikely for humans to get on the bad side of a battery of these new heavy artillery mechs.

In the backdrop of the Red War, this scarily powerful mech model would surely become one of the strongest weapons available to second-raters.

No matter whether the heavy artillery mech model attained its astounding result by relying on a transphasic weapon, the machine had already proven its chops as a genuine shipkiller as far as most people were concerned!

This was the power of a striking demonstration. Through a single brief demonstration, Isthmus Manufacturing had already sold the new product to a lot of forces.

The fear they held towards their starship getting demolished by a single strike from this monster of a mech drove them to attain this supreme firepower for themselves!

As the crew-less combat carrier finally struck the ground with such force that the crash generated a local earthquake, the final explosion produced by the failing power generators encapsulated the horrible consequences that the opponent of the heavy artillery mech might suffer!

Micky Tarukan smiled with genuine pride as he gazed up at the majestic cannon that had produced such an amazing result.

"Impressive, is it not? Not every mech can reproduce this result. In the interest of transparency, I must mention that the combat carrier is 20 years old and has only received light technical upgrades over the years. She is not equipped with transphasic shield generators that you can typically expect from alien warships. Much of the interior of her hull is relatively hollow, which is different from the denser and more structured hulls of dedicated warships. That aside, minor alien races typically do not invest too much phasewater in their sub-capital ships. Their hulls are also more fragile as the aliens typically rely less on material defenses."

Alien warships tended to vary dramatically in size, mass, design, features, performance and usage.

The existence of a multi-racial galactic community helped to standardize and homogenize a lot of common rules and customs, but it couldn't erase all of the unique quirks of every intelligent race.

The arche for example still utilized drastically different tech and warships than the rest of the Red Ocean!

Nonetheless, their ability to resist attacks generally tended to fall within the same range due to a common set of circumstances.

Each sub-capital ship class had to be cheap enough to make it viable for mass production.

They also had to be tough enough to resist a certain amount of fire from other warships.

As such, the defensive properties of a typical alien sub-capital ship should at least be as good as that of a human combat carrier, but often boasted even better defenses due to leveraging the advantages of their energy-based defenses.

"It is unlikely for a single hyper mech such as the one stationed behind my back to disable a better equipped alien warship with a single discharge of its main cannon." Micky Tarukan admitted.

"Alien warships are always on the move on the battlefield. It is normal for shots to miss at further ranges. The defensive properties of alien transphasic shield generators fluctuate wildly, but even if a ship of this size is covered by the most advanced multi-layered transphasic segmented energy shields, it is rare for heavy artillery mechs to undertake their duties alone."

A lot of movement took place on the massive exhibition floor.

8 more black-coated hyper heavy artillery mechs emerged from below. The elevators that lifted up these hefty machines hardly strained as they were rated to support much larger machines if it was ever necessary!

The sight of 9 identical heavy artillery mechs with the same identical main cannons pointed in the exact same direction made for an even more striking impression!

One of these machines had already demonstrated the capacity to down a 20-year old combat carrier.

Would 9 of them be able to take down a fleet carrier with a single salvo of their main cannons?

Nobody thought that the answer would be yes, but at the very least it was plausible for their combined firepower to breach the energy shields of a typical fleet carrier and inflict substantial material damage to the hull plating and surface compartments!

If such a result could truly be achieved, then this fantastic new product would definitely be a gamechanger in second-class combat!

It turned out that Isthmus Manufacturing did not just unveil them for show.

The newly arrived heavy artillery mechs had already been activated. They simultaneously charged their main cannon alongside the one that had appeared first.

The impression generated by the simultaneous charging of nine shipkiller truly scared the hell out of many people!

How much firepower did all of these machines possess? Even if a ship was strong enough to resist the simultaneous attacks of 9 of these black metal beasts, the vessel would definitely not remain in good condition!

As if to put this assumption to the test, Isthmus Manufacturing brought in an entirely new vessel to serve as the target for this demonstration.

The difference this time was that the vessel was positioned so far up in the skies that a large projection was needed to show her current condition.

"Is that an alien battleship?!"

"It has to be! I don't recognize the species that has built this triangular-shaped battleship, but she appears to be in remarkably good condition. Whoever managed to capture her definitely paid a lot to preserve her hull as much as possible."

"Wait, an alien battleship is too heavy to fly under atmospheric conditions. Are the heavy artillery mechs actually about to strike the ship from the surface of this planet?!"

It would be amazing if a mech could pose a legitimate threat against a battleship in orbit!

The definition of battleship differed between humans and aliens.

To humans, battleships were hulking beasts that were entirely covered with high-grade exotics from top to bottom. Their resilience was legendary, and so were their price tags.

Alien battleships tended to be more mixed in this regard. They benefited from the protection of much more powerful and numerous transphasic shield generators, but their hull construction tended to be much more inferior than that of genuine human battleships.

They resembled human battlecruisers a lot more as they tended to be relatively faster as well.

Regardless, most human forces still had to struggle a lot to overcome the defenses of a typical alien battleship.

It was not uncommon to see hundreds of rifleman mechs firing at a single alien battleship, only for the latter to act like it was singing in the rain.

People had a feeling that this might be different. As the captured alien battleship activated her full transphasic multi-layered energy shields, the heavy artillery mechs adjusted their aim and opened fire when their main cannons had fully charged!

BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM!

Nine powerful weapon discharges blended together in a cacophony of noise!

It took time for the gauss projectiles to cross hundreds of kilometers and escape the atmosphere, but no one minded the delay.

Suddenly, the much more substantial transphasic energy shields of the enemy warship endured a huge amount of strain!

One of the three layers suffered so much strain from trying to resist the simultaneous impacts of 9 transphasic hyper super-heavy gauss rounds that it showed visible signs of destabilization!

Though the much larger alien vessel managed to remain intact, the fact that her defenses endured so much strain from just nine second-class heavy mechs was already astounding in itself!

The heavy mechs charged their main cannons yet again.

One of the clear and obvious downsides of this mech model immediately became evident.

The firing rate of its main cannon was too slow!

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

However, the wait was worth it. Once the awfully slow cannons got ready to fire again, the resulting full-powered attack thudded against the outer-most defensive layer and strained it yet again!

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

The heavy artillery mech had to fire several more times before the first layer of defense finally shattered entirely!

This was amazing as the heavy artillery mechs not only displayed perfect accuracy at much longer ranges, but the projectiles also managed to retain much of their power as they overcame the effects of both air resistance and gravity.

"One down, two more to go!" A member of the audience excitedly commented.

Aside from these outbursts, most people remained silent as they waited for the 9 heavy artillery mechs to recharge their formidable main cannons once again.

Despite boasting four more cannons on their backs, the newly built machines showed no sign of resorting to them at all. It was as if these heavy machines solely existed due to their main guns alone!

No one complained about the wait. The longer it took, the more powerful the attack. That was a universal rule that everyone was familiar with regardless of their technical proficiency.

Micky Tarukan did not even feel the need to resume his speech during this interval. The heavy artillery mech model that he intended to introduce to his audience was already doing a good job of selling itself!

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

The third salvo put such a dent in the second layer of energy shields that the captured alien battleship seemed to groan from the strain of resisting the simultaneous attacks.

The effect of perfectly synchronizing 9 attacks was definitely greater than letting them attack in sequence!

The combined spike in force was so violent that it was as if the effective firepower of 9 heavy artillery mechs rivaled that of the ship's very own primary armaments!

Even if this exaggerated result could only be accomplished by literally throwing phasewater away, lots of ambitious leaders were more than willing to waste entire liters of this rare substance in order to secure the title of warlord for themselves!

"How long will it take for the alien battleship to lose her transphasic energy shields?"

"Shorter than the native aliens desire, that is for certain."

Chapter 5666 Affordable Shipkiller Mech

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

Just as everyone expected, it took over a dozen of slow salvos for the alien battleship to be finally stripped of her most important defenses.

Even though it took way too much time to attain this result, what if a mech force had more of these heavy artillery mechs at its disposal?

What if the firepower of other ranged mechs helped to wear down the defenses of the target?

The alien battleship definitely would not have been able to last this long under more realistic combat conditions!

In any case, what mattered the most at this moment was that her hull became naked and exposed to outside attacks!

While a human battlecruiser or battleship would have been able to resist a lot more attacks at this point, the aliens were still far too slow in utilizing superior exotic alloys to massively bolster the damage resistance of their material sections.

BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM! BOOOOOM!

Crunch! Crunch! Crunch!

This time, the heavy artillery mechs spread their aim to an extent and allowed each of their attacks to strike along the length of the hull!

The exterior plating deformed immediately before the super-heavy gauss rounds unloaded their huge amount of kinetic energy on lots of nearby compartments!

Many of them either got shattered or became deformed to such a degree that nothing inside remained in working condition anymore!

Though the alien battleship possessed so much redundancy that she was still able to maintain her orbit, her condition had obviously deteriorated.

Each surface-to-orbit strike punched through the exterior plating and wreaked massive damage to the interior of the vessel.

The more the super-heavy gauss rounds struck the same section of the same, the more the damage became compounded as the lack of structural integrity made it easier to spread the damage around.

It became clear that the 9 heavy artillery mechs did not pursue maximum efficiency this time. Instead, they attempted to showcase their dominance as much as possible by utilizing the entire hull of the orbiting alien battleship as a canvas to their art of destruction!

Perhaps the only regret to this impressive display was that the uncrewed warship never exhibited any proper signs of resistance.

She did not attempt to move in any evasive patterns that could throw off kinetic shells that had to waste a lot of time and energy to overcome the forces of gravity and air resistance.

Her crews had not attempted to bring any transphasic shield generators back online that could have prevented the shots from continuing to drill through the hull.

No damage control teams ran around to put out fires and close breaches. The lack of immediate repairs and mitigation actions caused the vessel to accumulate damage at a much faster rate than it should.

Yet none of these factors diminished the pure destructive potential of the newly introduced second-class heavy artillery mech.

The people invited to attend this product reveal in person all possessed a good understanding of the current state of mechs.

Many other heavy artillery mechs could not attain the same level results as the ones on display!

Even the latest hyper heavy artillery mechs did not exhibit drastically better performance than the machines released during the Phasewater Generation.

The more astute experts in the exhibition center even determined that the new model mainly distinguished itself by offering noticeably better accuracy and damage potential.

Not only were the 9 machines able to space out their shots so that they accurately struck specific sections of the hull with only minor deviations, the kinetic damage inflicted by these impacts was also considerably higher than what the the caliber of the main cannon should be able to produce.

The huge damage inflicted by these second-class mechs actually looked quite familiar to many of the guests.

This was because this sort of damage was what they normally expected to see from a genuine first-class multipurpose mech!

It was incredibly impressive for a second-class mech to be able to punch as hard as a first-class multipurpose mech.

The latter might be able to fire its highly potent main weapons at a considerably faster rate, but even the most barebones version of a first-class multipurpose mech typically sold for at least 20 million MTA credits!

In contrast, the price range of a typical second-class heavy artillery mech typically amounted to just a handful of MTA credits!

Of course, a first-class multipurpose mech had a lot more going to it than just its offensive potential.

The truth was that such a mech actually sacrificed a lot of opportunities to strengthen its attack power in order to make sure that it was well-rounded enough to operate in practically any environment.

Second-raters could forget about fielding these extravagant vessels. What they needed the most was a mech that could close the firepower gap as much as possible and give them the ability to wear down alien warships at range.

So far, it appeared that this heavy artillery mech met most of their requirements.

This belief became stronger when the ruined hull of the orbiting alien battleship finally collapsed and broke into several pieces.

Nearby first-class salvaging vessels quickly jumped into action and moved to absorb or tow any pieces of debris that could pose a threat to the planet or other orbiting vessels.

As the cleanup process up in orbit commenced, people's attention turned back to the 9 mechs whose formidable main cannons had suddenly attracted an intense amount of interest!

A lot more people had begun to tune into the broadcast.

Many of them were recent fans of the LMC and came in order to admire the latest product released by Professor Larkinson.

Others were avid Rubarthans or admirers of their culture who gained a lot of interest when a rumor spread that this heavy artillery mech had relations with a certain god pilot.

However, a lot of working professionals insisted on watching this broadcast because the demonstration had already shown that this singular mech model had already shown its ability to upend the mech landscape!

As Isthmus Manufacturing successfully commanded the attention of a much broader swathe of the public, Micky Tarukan finally addressed his audience once again.

The people were hungry for answers, and he was more than willing to satisfy their burning curiosity.

"There can be no victory without destruction." He spoke. "To win the Red War, it is not enough for our mechs to become trickier and more elusive to shoot down. Ultimately, a battle can only be won when one side is able to force the other side into submission. The introduction of the Hyper Generation has made mechs more capable of fulfilling this condition by granting them access to space suppressors. Melee mechs have gained a resurgence as their ability to overpower transphasic energy shields as close range has come at the right time."

This was indeed the case. Enough time had passed for melee mechs to attain lots of successes. As long as they managed to survive the arduous approach, they could quickly gain the advantage and exert much greater pressure onto enemy warships.

"However, what should we do with our ranged mechs? Should they be relegated to providing fire support? They can do so much more, but they have always been constrained by their firepower. That may not be the case anymore after this day. As these 9 fine machines have already demonstrated to you, Isthmus Manufacturing is finally ready to announce the release of our most powerful standard second-class mech model! It is a living mech designed by the most talented young mech designer of his generation, and it is a marvel of modern design and engineering."

The 9 heavy artillery mechs gradually locked down their smoking main cannons and steadily stomped their heavy legs until their fronts all faced the audience at once.

Even if none of their guns were directly pointed at the seated guests, the Rubarthans nonetheless became intimidated by the latent threat of these 9 shipkiller mechs!

After all, a human body was much more fragile than an enormous alien battleship!

Few personal shield generators were rated to resist the excessive power of a transphasic super-heavy gauss round.

"The purpose of this developing and releasing this new mech model of ours is nothing less than to give our brave soldiers the firepower they need to catch up to their adversaries." Micky continued to speak. "The Red War shall not end unless we destroy enough of the enemy's vaunted warships. Our second-class mech forces will no longer be limited to sending out their melee mechs alone. From now on, they can employ our latest product release as their bunker mechs and make it much more viable for them to crush distant warships by relying on their firepower alone!"

This was a bold claim, but the previous demonstration put a lot more weight behind it. Tarukan fully earned the right to boast about the performance of his latest product after his company sacrificed an entire alien battleship to make his point!

"The release of our latest heavy artillery mech goes beyond adding another income stream to Isthmus Manufacturing. It is a statement that signals to the aliens that our race is more than capable of fighting back despite our many limitations. Our heavy artillery mech model possessed an unparalleled capacity for destruction among second-class mechs. Few if any alien raiding fleets will look forward to raiding the middle zones of the Rubarthan Pact and beyond once our ubiquitous distribution networks have delivered our products to many customers across the new frontier."

People could almost imagine the terror that many aliens must feel once they started to confront human fleets equipped with lots of copies with this explosive new mech model.

Similar to how the Fey Fianna tormented the aliens by wasting far too many of their shots on low-value fey, the newly introduced living mech had the literal potential to shake the foundations of many warships by virtue of their excessive firepower alone!

It was a pity that Micky Tarukan could not address any foreign aliens directly at this time. He would have paid dearly to observe their live reactions to his speech!

"Make no mistake. This release will not only make our second-class mech forces much more dangerous to confront by aliens, but it can also improve the self-defensive capabilities of human settlements spread across many different globes. The matching Onyx Cannon of our new model is expressly designed to operate in space as well as on land. Orbital defense will no longer become a joke once a colony deploys a few hundred of our heavy artillery mechs across the planet. No matter what their intentions may be, the invading aliens will quickly learn that they will suffer the ultimate punishment if they violate our sovereignty. Let our new heavy artillery mech serve as the Ultimatum to any foe that dares to challenge our supremacy!"

The CEO aroused a strong human superiority sentiment with his words. Many people who listened to him at this time felt a lot more proud to be human at this time!

At the same time, a projection appeared above the 9 heavy artillery mechs that finally revealed their official model name!

[ULTIMATUM UDS-550]

This was clearly the first and most original version of this impressive new line of mechs.

Millions of people spoke this name within seconds. Each of them felt more defiant and courageous as they did so. It was as if they directly issued a challenge to the native aliens!

Normally, they wouldn't have acted so boldly, but the supreme firepower demonstrated by the new Ultimatums made such a powerful impression that they had regained their belief in human power!

How could the aliens possibly pose a threat to red humanity when they must overcome millions of Ultimatums?

No alien armada should be able to withstand this degree of collective firepower!

As the hype surrounding the Ultimatum spread far beyond Rubarthan space, Micky Tarukan finally began to explain the specs of the UDS-550.

Chapter 5667 Solving A Dilemma

As nice as it was for Isthmus Manufacturing to inspire humans into putting up a better fight, the mech manufacturer was ultimately in the business of selling lots of mechs.

Micky Tarukan therefore spent the next minutes detailing the most prominent traits and specs of the newly announced Ultimatum.

He first highlighted the new heavy artillery mech model's defensive and mobility characteristics.

Nothing he said particularly came as a surprise to his audience. The Ultimatum was covered by thick plating that was laced with earth hypers. The defensive parameters were decent, but clearly not the best in class compared to many other recently released hyper mechs.

The mobility of the UDS-550 was terrible, as was to be expected for this mech archetype.

What mattered was that its legs were thick and stable enough to somewhat maintain stability when its guns started to fire with abandon.

The only time when the mech actively had to perform a lot of compensating actions was when it fired its now-iconic Onyx Cannon. Depending on the firing angle, the local gravity and the presence of supporting braces, the heavy artillery mech could even push itself backwards when it opened fire with all five cannons at once!

Though it became clear to the more knowledgeable mech insiders that the defenses and mobility of the Ultimatum UDS-550 did not stand out in the slightest, it did not have to be. Nobody truly bought heavy artillery mechs for their ability to withstand fire or capacity to move faster than a turtle.

What everyone really wanted to know was the specs of its armaments, particularly the big one that caused the Ultimatum to resemble a rhinoceros beetle!

The CEO of Isthmus Manufacturing first directed the spotlight to the four 'smaller' cannons mounted across the back of the heavy mech.

"The Ultimatum UDS-550 is first and foremost designed to function as a traditional landbound heavy artillery mech. It is armed with four heavy artillery cannons that are all rated to launch standardized shells for its caliber. When their chambers are loaded with high-explosive shells, they

can engage in high-angle bombardment at any distance, including over-the-horizon attacks. In space, they can also fire spaceburst shells that are particularly good at intercepting incoming small craft and missiles. It can also fire long-range homing shells that can automatically correct their course and detonate their explosive payloads onto their distant targets provided that they have not been intercepted along the way."

An invited guest couldn't wait for the Q&A session at the end to ask his question. He immediately raised his hand.

"Mr. Tarukan, are the secondary armaments of your new Ultimatum model confined to utilizing heavy artillery cannons that are of limited practical value in space battles?"

"The UDS-550 model number that we will be releasing first is most at home when deployed on land, but it can pose a serious threat to any alien warship that has an easy target. I will expand on the lethality of its heavy artillery cannons later." The CEO calmly responded. "Our resident design teams are currently in the process of developing variants that are mounted with different sets of back-mounted armaments that we shall release in the upcoming months."

"Can you briefly mention the changes in these variants?"

"Why certainly. Our planned UDS-551 is equipped with 4 heavy laser cannons. It is most optimized for sustained long-range combat in space. This is the most preferred option if you wish to keep your carrier vessels as safe as possible by maintaining their distance from enemy warships. The UDS-552 that is also in development boasts 4 heavy gauss cannons. They can complement the firepower of the Onyx Cannon and function best at mid-range. It is the most destructive variant and can break down the defenses of an enemy warship remarkably fast."

All of that sounded impressive. At the very least, the UDS-551 and UDS-552 sounded much more suitable to be deployed in space.

That was not to say that the UDS-550 was useless, but a lot of people thought it was weird to introduce a heavy artillery mech that was mainly optimized for pre-Age of Dawn landbound combat.

There was no way the leadership of Isthmus Manufacturing was ignorant to these concerns.

The mech insiders remained patient and waited for a proper explanation.

The fact that the Ultimatum UDS-550 was one of Professor Larkinson's famous living mechs guaranteed that it possessed at least one powerful gimmick that completely elevated its effective performance.

Micky Tarukan was slowly moving closer to giving all of these avid individuals the answers they sought.

A minute passed by before he addressed one of the most prominent and visible features of the Ultimatum model.

"Now we come to the Onyx Cannon." Tarukan smiled. "Chiefly developed by Master Decimus Horst, a famed and authoritative heavy artillery specialist, it is not an exaggeration to state that the Ultimatum is literally designed around its main cannon. Among all of the second-class heavy artillery mechs on the market that are equipped with super-heavy guns, ours are superior by the simple fact that their firepower is not strong enough. When you field a heavy artillery mech that is

equipped with the most massive cannon that they can support under their own weight, you are buying access to the heaviest firepower that you can attain. There is no other second-class mech on the market that offers this level of firepower in a package as affordable and practical as our Ultimatum model."

That was yet another daring boast, but few people doubted the validity of this statement.

With a mech as powerful as this under its belt, Isthmus Manufacturing had more than earned their right to tout the supremacy of its new product!

Only a few people were aware that the Larkinson Clan had discreetly designed the Transcendent Punisher Mark III that could overpower the Ultimatum with ease, though the two mech models occupied entirely different price ranges.

In any case, Micky Tarukan devoted more time to exposing the details of the Onyx Cannon. He called out a projection that displayed a remarkably detailed schematic of the new weapon system.

The gauss cannon relied on lots of thick coils as well as huge capacitors to electromagnetically propel the heaviest possible metal round that could fit inside the barrel.

The concept sounded simple, but there were many important areas that developers needed to address in order to make sure that the weapon system remained both stable and powerful.

From material choice to the implementation of select technologies that brought a lot of minor benefits, the Onyx Cannon was a modern hyper cannon that was expressly designed to fire a solid mass of metal at the fastest possible speed.

"At a certain point, gauss cannons often struggle to attain higher muzzle velocities. Increasing this parameter is essential to making them more practical in space combat where every participant is constantly on the move. Even a few dozen milliseconds of delay can reduce the hit rate by as much as 30 percent. The higher the muzzle velocity, the longer the weapon's effective range. Yet if we want to pursue the greatest possible speed, then the projectile will become too small and light. That is counterproductive as throwing the equivalent of a toothpick at a heavily armored alien warship will not produce much of a result even if it is launched at great speed."

That was not entirely true. As long as the so-called 'toothpick' was launched at a high fraction of the speed of light, then its kinetic damage potential should not be underestimated!

However, it was impossible for a second-class mech to carry any relativistic weapons.

"The most convenient approach to increasing the damage potential of a weapon is to scale it up. There are clear limits to this approach as the mech will not only struggle to support the oversized weapon system, but also make it difficult to reach acceptable muzzle velocities. It takes an increasing amount of power to propel much heavier rounds at velocities that are adequate for ranged combat."

Many people in the audience and watching from their homes nodded. This was one of the eternal dilemmas of ranged kinetic weapons. It was also a reason why energy weapons were more preferred in space, because their energy beams traveled so quickly that factors like these no longer bothered them anymore.

The chief executive smiled as he made an honest admission to the crowd. "As this schematic clearly shows, the chief developer of the Onyx Cannon has clearly made the decision to emphasize power

over muzzle velocity. By constructing the largest possible super-heavy cannon that can be mounted on a second-class heavy mech frame, the Onyx Cannon is unable to match the muzzle velocities of lighter and more proportionate kinetic weapons."

In short, the attacks of the Onyx Cannon were guaranteed to hurt a lot when they struck their targets, but their accuracy at longer ranges made it difficult to consistently produce this result!

How could a powerful weapon possibly be useful if it ended up missing its shots most of the time?

From the moment the Onyx Cannon launched a super-heavy gauss round, the mech or ship being targeted would have time to perform evasive maneuvers that could cause the attack to miss by hundreds of meters or even entire kilometers depending on the range!

It did not do the Onyx Cannon any good by leaning so heavily towards power at the expense of long-range accuracy.

The entire point of employing heavy artillery mechs as bunker mechs was to use their firepower to pound alien warships at a comfortable distance!

If a carrier vessel had to fly closer to a threatening warship, then that was incredibly counterproductive as the latter would always enjoy an advantage in this type of confrontation!

Many people started to wonder whether this was the reason why the previous demonstration targets were so immobile.

Yet before they could feed these doubts any further, Micky Tarukan directly addressed this issue.

"Before you think that the Ultimatum is only marginally effective at long-ranged combat, let us witness another demonstration."

A familiar projection came to life again that displayed a situation in high orbit. A group of battle bots launched out of a combat carrier and began to perform all kinds of random movements in space.

Their sizes and characteristics all differed from each other. A few were heavy but boasted heavy armor. Many more were smaller, lighter and much more difficult to hit from a distance.

In the meantime, the 9 Ultimatums had already turned around and raised their reactivated Onyx Cannons.

The heavy machines produced the tell-tale sounds that indicated that they were charging their main weapons.

At the same time, the Ultimatums increasingly exuded an air that caused many of the nearby witnesses to experience odd feelings.

BOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM!

The main cannons simultaneously opened fire shortly after they had reached full charge!

A relatively short period of time passed before 9 battle bots dancing around in high orbit suddenly shattered and disintegrated into pieces!

None of the shots had missed!

This was a remarkable result, and one that could not be replicated by any other mech armed with a kinetic weapon.

Many people grew shocked, but others started to grow suspicious.

It was actually not that difficult to produce this result. As long as the Ultimatums had access to the future flight trajectories loaded into the battle bots, then they could easily calculate where they needed to aim in order to strike their targets at the exact right timing.

However, a company as large and prestigious as Isthmus Manufacturing would never cheat its customers to such a flagrant degree.

Only a relatively small group of people had figured out what was truly going on. They were more familiar with the mechs designed by Professor Larkinson than the general public, so it was not difficult to make the right association.

Micky Tarukan continued to exude confidence as he prepared to explain this phenomenon. "The results you see before you are authentic. Each battle bot is remotely controlled by third-party mercenary mech pilots who have not been given any specific instructions. The reason why the Ultimatum can still defeat the odds and achieve a remarkably high hit rate is because it relies on an extraordinary application of E-technology that is actually old. Professor Larkinson has actually designed numerous ranged mechs in the past that have produced such results on a wide scale."

More and more people made the connection or became informed by the Larkinson's old works.

The results attained by the Ultimatum no longer sounded so shocking when people heard that this was actually an existing capacity!

"Now that we have entered the Age of Dawn, he has improved his proprietary Guided Aim Technology and implemented it in the most destructive second-class ranged mech possible! While we dare not guarantee that the Ultimatum will never miss, we are absolutely willing to promise you that no other heavy artillery mech can attain a hit rate as high as that of our new model! Our latest product has perfectly solved the dilemma between kinetic power and muzzle velocity. By relying on a highly innovative roundabout solution, the Ultimatum can effectively give its users the best of both worlds!"

That ignited a bomb within the second-class mech community!

Chapter 5668 The Final Demonstration

The so-called Guided Aim Technology was one of the earliest 'innovations' introduced by Professor Ves Larkinson.

These days, only the immigrants of the Komodo Star Sector and the determined enemies of the Larkinson Clan were aware of this powerful capability.

The Larkinsons themselves did not really go out of their way to advertise the unnaturally high hit rates of their Transcendent Punishers. There was no reason for them to give their enemies greater convenience and give them the opportunity to figure out countermeasures in advance.

The public largely remained in the dark about the existence of this particular capability.

It did not help that Ylvaine's guidance had long been reserved as an exclusive benefit to loyal worshippers of the Great Prophet.

During the Sand War, many different parties including the Mech Trade Association attempted to reverse engineer the Holy Soldier mech model in order to 'steal' this extraordinary capability.

It went without saying that this attempt resulted in nothing but failure, or else a lot more ranged mechs would have possessed similar capabilities by this time.

For a long time, the elusive Guided Aim ability remained out of reach to the mech community. The Larkinsons fiercely hoarded it for themselves.

The release of the Ultimatum broke the old status quo.

For the first time in his career, Professor Ves Larkinson willingly gave up on the exclusivity of his proprietary technologies and made it possible for ordinary mech pilots to employ this ability!

The Ultimatum therefore gained another level of significance. Its notable combination of features produced such an effective package that it was difficult for other people to imagine whether other mech models that occupied the same space even had a chance of competing anymore.

Unless there were a lot of complications related to Guided Aim Technology that people did not know about, many mech designers who were working on their own heavy artillery mech projects started to question whether their work still had any meaning.

Not even the hyper heavy artillery mechs that were currently in development had much of a chance of beating this paradigm-breaking mech model!

As the potential customer base for this highly attractive mech model started to get to grips with the magical E-technologies of the Ultimatum, Micky Tarukan finally addressed the final surprise.

"The Ultimatum is more than an artillery version of a marksman mech. It is an engine of destruction whose firepower has reached a new apex. Isthmus Manufacturing is willing to make this unequalled mech model available to as many customers as possible because it is more than a strong mech. It is a product that can temper the rise of auxiliary warships because it can do the job of the latter much more efficiently! This is the single most important reason why not just Isthmus Manufacturing, but every human in the Red Ocean must support the proliferation of this mech!"

That was a big claim!

Micky Tarukan certainly had guts, because his call would certainly be disputed by the Terrans. There was no way the archrivals of the Rubarthans would ever let the Ultimatum gain dominance.

Even if it was originally designed by a prominent mech designer they sought to have closer relations with, since Isthmus Manufacturing took over responsibility for this mech model, it had become tainted as far as the Terrans were concerned.

Though the capabilities demonstrated by the Ultimatum so far managed to lend a lot of credence to its dominance in its market category, it had not yet attained a level of performance that could enable it to dominate an entire era.

"Let us hold another demonstration, shall we? There is one more dimension to the Ultimatum UDS-550 that we have yet to fully showcase. Since this aspect is not related to target prediction and long-ranged accuracy, we will display the full might of our new heavy artillery mech model at a closer distance."

The wide arena-like exhibition center lit up to expose numerous stationary targets on the far side.

What was special about these targets was that they presented different combinations of energy and armor-based defenses.

The simplest targets were a thick sheet of warship-grade hull plating and an active transphasic shield.

The more complex ones combined both in order to simulate the defenses of different alien warships.

None of them broke easily. A typical heavy artillery mech of the previous generation definitely needed to fire a few salvos with all of their armaments in order to break them open. The difficulty was particularly great when they had to overcome transphasic defenses.

Each of the 9 Ultimatums began to load their gauss rounds and charge up their main cannons.

"The Onyx Cannon mounted onto the Ultimatum UDS-550 is designed to work with both transphasic and non-transphasic hyper gauss rounds. There are clear differences in penetration power between both types of projectiles, but the latter is much more affordable by most consumers, so 8 of our Ultimatums are loaded with them. Only the final Ultimatum is loaded with a more precious transphasic gauss round."

He wanted to save the best for last.

As the heavy artillery mechs lowered their Onyx Cannons until they aimed at the targets on the other side of the main hall, the machine on the far left prepared to open fire first.

Just before the Ultimatum was about to strike the thick sample of warship armor plating, the closest people vaguely experienced a different sensation from before.

This time, the Ultimatum no longer felt as sacred as holy as before.

Instead, it started to gain a more ominous and threatening air.

Before the guests could process this sensation any further, the mech finally opened fire!

BOOOOOM!

CRUNCH!

As the weakest defensive target, the plate did not stand a chance. It was ultimately too thin and fragile to resist the full force of the non-transphasic round launched by the Onyx Cannon!

The manner in which its defenses failed looked spectacular. The solid piece of metal got struck with so much force that many pieces had shattered outright and launched them in many different directions!

It had actually been a better choice to employ a non-transphasic gauss round in this instance. This meant that a much higher proportion of the projectile's insanely high kinetic energy got transferred to the blocky target.

The results spoke for themselves. The physical impact was so great that the poor block of metal did not stand a chance.

BOOOOM!

The second Ultimatum struck a relatively strong transphasic energy shield that was typically utilized by smaller alien warships.

This time, the energy shield impressively managed to resist the attack, just as it was meant to. The phasewater used to enhance the performance of this barrier had made a huge difference in keeping it alive.

No one begrudged the Ultimatum for failing to punch through this defense.

Instead, a lot of people who were familiar with alien tech reacted with surprise when they saw how a single mech managed to destabilize the transphasic energy shield to this extent.

BOOOM!

It took another attack by the same Ultimatum to finally breach this defensive barrier.

BOOOM!

BOOOM!

BOOOM!

The next Ultimatums showcased their firepower on numerous occasions as their Onyx Cannons struck different targets and wore down their defenses.

These were all defenses that could typically be found on alien warships, but lone Ultimatums managed to break them down at an astonishing pace, especially when each of them had been allocated to separate targets.

"This... this is impossible!"

"How can these Onyx Cannons strike with so much force? I have studied the schematic just earlier! A super-heavy gauss cannon developed by Master Horst shouldn't be able to breach the transphasic energy shields and hull plating of alien vessels so quickly."

"This mech truly leaves no room for other heavy artillery mechs on the mech market. It is not enough for it to actually make use of prescience to attain greater accuracy. It also has to power up its attacks so that it can break alien warships without needing to rely on the space suppressors of melee mechs."

The more people observed the performance of these Ultimatums, the more they became frightened by its firepower.

The Onyx Cannon was too powerful!

Every estimate and calculation showed that it was punching significantly above its weight class!

It was not until eight of the targets got pummeled into pieces that Micky Tarukan broke the silence.

"As you can see, the Onyx Cannon does not rely on phasewater technology in order to reach a higher level of damage output. Everyone can rest assured that the Ultimatum UDS-550 will remain highly effective in the hands of any mech force that does not have any phasewater at their disposal."

The performance of the Ultimatum so far exceeded everyone's expectations, yet they still felt that the current demonstration had not yet shown the complete picture.

It was not until the final Ultimatum prepared its main cannon for firing that the atmosphere in the exhibition center gradually started to grow heavier.

The final heavy artillery mech deliberately dragged out the charging process just so that the guests could experience the magnified glow of the Ultimatum a bit longer.

As the final Ultimatum actually started to glow, the CEO of Isthmus Manufacturing suddenly made an incomprehensible action. He turned around, lowered himself to his knees and actually started to prostrate before the heavy artillery mech!

"Your Divinity, I beseech you to display a measure of your great might upon our ignorant eyes! Please allow us to witness your grace and reveal the blessing that you have bestowed on this mech model!"

Such behavior was exaggerated even for ardent Rubarthans. Most of them admired their god pilots a lot, but not all of them treated them as literal gods.

At the very least, this was not fitting behavior for the CEO of a big mech manufacturer!

However, no one cared about his antics anymore because a more dramatic action occurred.

The Onyx Cannon of the final Ultimatum glowed so brightly in orange that it had actually spawned an energy manifestation of a very familiar looking cat!

Even though the cat only looked and felt a fraction as great as the real deal, that unforgettable aura was unmistakable.

"MIIIIIIEEEEEW!"

When the cat let loose her iconic cry, no one dared to think she was an impostor anymore!

There was only one reason why the famous cat showed up at this time and place.

"The Destroyer of Worlds... has actually blessed this mech!"

"It is more than that... if the CEO's opening statement is to be believed... then all other Ultimatums have established a connection with the Destroyer of Worlds."

"I knew that the mysterious relationship between Professor Larkinson and our god pilot had become close! It must be because the Destroyer of Worlds became impressed by the potential of the younger mech designer and enlisted his aid to bestow the Ultimatum to the Rubarthan Pact. The story all makes sense now that we have obtained the crucial clue!"

Before the crowd could speak any further, the energy manifestation of Emma dove back into the Onyx Cannon and bonded with the transphasic hyper round.

Even though the projectile wasn't visible, many people instinctively felt that it had come close to bursting apart and annihilating everything in the vicinity!

BOOOOOOOOOM!

They immediately felt relief when the Ultimatum successfully launched its powerful round.

Practically an instant later, the transphasic hyper round that was directly blessed by Emma punched through a transphasic energy shield as if it had passed through a brush and proceeded to penetrate multiple layers of thick armor plating!

CRACK-CRUNCH-CRUNCH-CRUNCH!"

The force and power of the attack was so strong that the entire multi-layered construction actually slid backwards from the sheer magnitude of force that it had just endured!

Many pieces of broken metal fragments sprayed from the half-broken target. As the view became clearer, people could see that the much thicker and tougher warship-grade hull plating ultimately failed to prevent the transphasic round from penetrating all the way through and deal catastrophic damage to the simulated compartment in the rear.

A single Ultimatum was responsible for inflicting real damage on a potential warship.

It did not do so alone, but also received the indispensable assistance of an actual god pilot!

For a moment, utter silence reigned in the exhibition hall and many people's homes as they struggled to process what had happened.

"..."

Chapter 5669 Sticker Shock

If the release of the Fey Fianna put the Living Mech Corporation back on the map, the shocking introduction of the Ultimatum completely detonated human space!

The reasons for this were myriad. The Ultimatum's Guided Aim Technology, or rather E-technology was enough to put this second-class hyper heavy artillery mech model head and shoulders above all of the other products of its kind.

Yet the original designer of the Ultimatum did not leave it at that. For whatever reason, he actually managed to convince a god pilot to 'sponsor' his mech model!

It turned out that the rumors of a good relationship between Professor Larkinson and the Destroyer of Worlds had an actual basis in reality!

No one could have expected that such an eminent god pilot would ever condescend to cooperating with a second-class Senior Mech Designer, even if he was the most special one of his rank.

Regardless, it was up to the spooks and the historians to investigate the origin of their friendship and the reason for their unprecedented cooperation.

The mech industry mainly became preoccupied with verifying the amazing claims and determining how much the power of a god pilot could actually assist the Ultimatums throughout the Red Ocean.

The early tests conducted by a large number of Rubarthans and other experts all produced remarkably quick results.

They confirmed that the most remarkable E-technologies employed in the Ultimatum design originated from external sources.

One of them was tied to a 'dead' prophet called Ylvaine, but the other one was confirmed to be related to the Destroyer of Worlds, or at least an aspect of her great power!

Though people found it rather odd that Divine Irene Mox chose to express her undeniable relation to the Ultimatum in the form of her famous Emma avatar, most people chalked it up to a common love and obsession with cats.

All that mattered was that the wild and outlandish claims were true!

"From the moment I pray to the Destroyer of Worlds to annihilate my target, she will answer my prayers and bless the gauss round that launches out of the Onyx Cannon!"

"The Destroyer of Worlds loves explosions the most! The heavy artillery cannons that most of you have been neglecting all day are able to attract her blessing as well! The only limitation is that she only bestows them with her power one at a time. You will have to fire the cannons sequentially in order to make the best use of her might."

The influence of the Destroyer of Worlds among the Rubarthans as well as many other people was massive.

Each god pilot of humanity generated their own fanbase.

Back in the Milky Way, there were around a hundred known god pilots that people could choose to admire and interact with other like-minded fans.

Even then, the Destroyer of Worlds attracted more than the usual amount of devotees due to her relative informality as well as her overwhelming firepower.

Nothing emphasized the dominance of a god pilot more than to blow up entire planets all at once!

The greater the visible displays of power, the more the Destroyer of Worlds induced lots of people to regard her as their ultimate idol.

Now that red humanity had become cut off from the old galaxy, the population had much less god pilots to choose from. All of the other ones that remained stuck in the old galaxy had pretty much become irrelevant.

No matter how powerful they might be, they had no way of helping red humanity survive this difficult period when they were 50 million light-years away!

The citizens of the Rubarthan Pact pretty much only had two god pilots to choose from. Those from the Red Ocean Union were generally more open-minded and could pick any of the eight god pilots as their objects of worship.

Each of the eight had their merits, but the Destroyer of Worlds remained among the more popular candidates for the same reasons as before.

Within Rubarthan society, the upper layers generally favored the Spacelock, as he used to be one of them back when he was still a mortal.

The Destroyer of Worlds on the other hand became a lot more popular among the middle and lower layers of Rubarthan society. She not only rose up as an average commoner, but also used to be second-rater to boot!

She was the ultimate product of Rubarthan meritocracy and embodied the hope of so many people who sought to learn from her example!

Though the divisions between the two camps had become increasingly more fractious, the surprise release of the Ultimatum completely changed the landscape.

No matter which god pilot a person favored the most, there was no deep conflict between the two god pilots.

They both pledged their allegiance to the Star Emperor and promised to defend the Rubarthan Pact.

The upper-class Rubarthans had no qualms about placing large orders of a second-class mech that sold at a disgustingly cheap price.

From the perspective of second-class customers, the official list price of 30 MTA credits was extortionate!

This was way more than the 5 or 6 MTA credits that other heavy artillery mechs with comparable technical specs could attain!

Everyone and their grandmother could easily figure out that the Ultimatum did not actually cost close to 30 MTA credits to produce.

Otherwise, Isthmus Manufacturing wouldn't have discreetly retooled so many of its production lines and produced a huge amount of Ultimatums in advance so that they could be sold in an instant upon release!

The large mech manufacturer only adopted this strategy when it knew that it could get away with charging such a stupendously high price premium!

The high price tag tempered a lot of customer demand. As much as mech pilots all wanted to have a taste of the blessing of an actual god pilot, they were not necessarily willing to purchase a heavy artillery mech when they could purchase more than 7 nearly identical units that were just as serviceable in combat!

Of course, many people might be able to argue that purchasing the Ultimatums was worth it because their fantastic E-technologies adequately made up for the drastic increase in price, but this was a very contentious topic to say the least!

"Don't you realize that Isthmus Manufacturing is being kind to us all? If I was in charge of setting the price, I would have sold it at 100 MTA credits per copy! This machine is a guaranteed cash cow! Selling it at a relatively 'low' price of 30 MTA credits is the mech company's way of contributing to the defense of the middle zones."

"Isthmus Manufacturing is giving other mech companies enough space to keep their own heavy artillery mech models viable. The reason why the company has set the price so high is not just because it can get away with it, but also because it is important to keep the market ecosystem for this mech type alive. If the Ultimatum becomes so cheap that it is an instant purchase to any customer that needs such a machine, too many mech designers will abandon this mech archetype and ultimately stifle further innovation in this direction. We should thank Professor Larkinson and the board of directors of Isthmus Manufacturing for taking the health of the mech industry into consideration."

Though many potential customers suffered sticker shock, there were still a lot of first-raters who were more eager to purchase multiple copies of a second-class mech.

This actually led to a strange phenomenon where tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of first-class mech pilots actually played around with a mech that should have been horribly underpowered from their perspective!

Even though the Ultimatum was largely unable to keep up with first-class combat, the mech pilots still did not regret this diversion as the sensation of coming into contact with Emma, if only marginally, fulfilled one of their greatest dreams!

"Hahaha! So this is what it is like to wield ultimate power! Is this the willpower of the Destroyer of Worlds? I feel like I can crush everything!"

Even though the overly curious first-raters snapped up so many copies of this incredible mech model that they practically choked out more legitimate second-class customers, Isthmus Manufacturing already anticipated this scenario.

The overly curious first-raters did not actually buy the Ultimatums with the intention of utilizing them in battle. They at least needed to overhaul the entire design and bring it up to first-class standards before they could even consider this notion.

However, just as many mech designers had discovered in the past, it was not so easy to bend a living mech design according to their desires.

The greater the deviation from the original design, the more the associated E-technologies became disconnected from the resulting variants.

This was an old problem, but the first-raters who came in touch with living mechs for the first time became unpleasantly surprised that their hopes of channeling the blessing of Emma in proper first-class battle became dashed!

Once the immediate excitement and hysteria among the first-raters had subsided, the market for the Ultimatum gradually became more stable and sustainable.

Most successful second-class mech forces could still scrounge up the additional MTA credits to purchase at least a small batch of Ultimatums.

No matter how large their initial orders may be, none of the customers regretted the act of paying a huge premium to get their hands on this much-hyped mech model.

It was everything they wished for and more.

Even if the use of the E-technology abilities was not unconditional, most people did not have any problem with the demand to show their respect towards Ylvaine and the Destroyer of Worlds.

Aside from the Terrans and the other people from the Terran Alliance, everyone else pretty much had universal goodwill towards the strange prophet and an actual god pilot.

The market for other heavy artillery mech models temporarily plunged.

A glut of surplus machines had entered the second-hand market. This had already started to occur due to the transition to the Hyper Generation, but the release of a super bestseller had exacerbated this circumstance!

A lot of mech companies could only helplessly slash prices even further in order to make their products somewhat viable again.

Fortunately, there was always a market for cheap and discounted heavy artillery mechs.

The more premier mech forces that confidently took the fight to the native aliens usually had the means to procure plenty of Ultimatums.

It was the reserve forces, the garrison forces, the Planetary Guard units and the volunteer defense militias that usually had to work with tight budgets.

They were more than happy to snap up all of the outdated heavy artillery mechs and mainly repurposed them to defend a lot of planetary settlements and other fixed locations.

The buyers even assigned less qualified mech pilots with lower genetic aptitudes to these powerful machines.

So long as the heavy artillery mechs did not move on and engage in too much multitasking, it was still possible for low aptitude pilots to control the functions that mattered.

This was ultimately a win-win arrangement for most people involved. The ripple effects became increasingly greater as more settlements enjoyed a greater amount of artillery coverage.

Meanwhile, a lot of linefighters suddenly started to show up in battle with Ultimatums locked in their bunkers all of a sudden.

Many more alien fleets began to endure vastly greater damage from a distance as the Ultimatums not only missed a lot less frequently, but also inflicted so much damage that transphasic energy shields already started to collapse way sooner than they should!

The amount of losses suffered by the alien invasion forces in the middle zones spiked so much that even their commanders became shocked!

How could the introduction of just a single mech model change the strategic outlook of an entire war theater in such a short time?

While the Ultimatums sadly could not guarantee victory in every battle, their influence had become so significant that their effect on troop morale had become another significant benefits to the mech forces that invested in this expensive product!

Chapter 5670 Yuri Enfame

"Yuri! Wake up! Your order has arrived?"

"What order?"

"The big one."

Yuri Enfame needed no further information. There was only one order that could merit this much attention.

Hope and anticipation eagerly welled up inside of his heart. Left his cabin and moved over to the main cargo bay where a set of extra large containers had been deposited.

Only five of them had been shipped to this ship because she could only accommodate so much of them. The combat carrier had to empty her cargo hold and shove the remainder to the side in order to fit the new arrivals!

Commander Pellicky and a number of officers had shown up to receive the order and handle the remaining paperwork.

"...Everything appears to be in order, commander." An well-dressed company representative said with a genuine smile. "Congratulations on your new mechs. It is an honor for us to serve the needs of the defenders of the Rubarthan Pact. You have done good work in defending our colonies and sparing many civilians from getting bombarded by the foul aliens."

The female mech commander smiled back. "We are glad to be of service, though I admit that we are primarily fighting to obtain glory and riches. Who can resist the allure of promoting to first-raters? It has always been our greatest dream to become Rubarthans one day. In order to chase after this dream, my troops and I are willing to do whatever it takes to earn enough war merits to rise above our origins!"

"The Rubarthans welcome any talented and accomplished soldiers, but you have a difficult road ahead of yourselves. It takes a lot of war merits to earn those first-class implant upgrades, and you will have to pass difficult exams. As far as we are aware, no one has yet to complete this promotion track."

Commander Pellicky remained indifferent to these challenges. "We can only take this one step at a time. We will continue fighting until we die or become too exhausted to continue onwards. I have many friends and comrades who have chosen to steer clear of the border regions and instead chose to take up safer jobs such as guarding colonies in the rear, but each of them will live and die like second-raters. Their children will likely follow suit as well. In a time where the chance to become a first-class citizen has never been as clear as now, I cannot forgive myself if I turn back on this opportunity just because I am too afraid of confronting the aliens."

"Well said, commander! We hope that our most recent delivery to you can help you with your endeavors. The Ultimatums produced by our company are so powerful that they have received near-universal praise from each of the customers that have received them already. Be sure to treat them with respect. They are not comparable to your average mech. They are all packed full of E-tech that makes them alive and much more intelligent than you realize, and I have not even started with their invisible connections to the Destroyer of Worlds and some undead prophet. Make certain that your mech pilots and mech technicians read the respective instruction manuals. We will not refund your purchases or honor any warranties due to improper handling."

"You can rest assured that we shall treat them like the precious treasures they are. We have paid far more to acquire them than we would have liked. Is there a discount for repeat customers?"

"I apologize, Commander Pellicky. Isthmus Manufacturing offers many customized financial services and arrangements, but the Ultimatum has proven to be too popular and in high demand to warrant such treatment. There are too many customers after you that are eagerly awaiting their own orders. Our mech factories are already working around the clock to produce as many units as possible. Now that we have successfully fulfilled your order, your next one will unfortunately be placed on the back of the waiting list."

The mercenary commander and the company representative continued to chat for a minute before they finally shook hands.

"Thank you for fulfilling our order so quickly."

"Our company is always glad to serve your needs. Do not forget to call customer support if you have any significant issues with your newly delivered heavy artillery mechs. However, make sure to apply the solutions suggested by the instruction manuals first. The Ultimatums have several new

facets to them that require you to change your behavior in order to keep them in good form. If you do not treat them well, then do not be surprised if the living mechs will not take you seriously."

Isthmus Manufacturing had to emphasize this point several times to each of its customers. Too many people who lived in regions where the LMC had yet to gain prominence did not know anything about living mechs.

If these people continued to stick to their existing habits and treated their living mechs as if they were nothing but lifeless objects, then the disgruntled Ultimatums had several ways of retaliating against their own users and owners.

From locking out the glows to suspending their own interactions with their mech pilots, already dozens of Ultimatums had done whatever it took to stifle their users!

Fortunately, Commander Pellicky and her mercenaries took this matter quite seriously. They had 540 MTA credits to procure 18 copies of the Ultimatum UDS-550 model.

They also paid additional MTA credits to ship the cargo to the current location of their fleet and obtain the right to call for remote technical support.

Even though the Ultimatum UDS-550 was 'just' a second-class hyper heavy artillery mech, it was not a simple machine to maintain and repair. A lot could go wrong in the process of servicing the machine, so it was best to be safe than sorry, especially when every Ultimatum was worth more than 7 times of a normal product of this mech type.

"Andrea."

"Yuri! Just the mech pilot I wanted to see! I need your input first before I decide on how to allocate them and organize them. You must be excited, am I correct?"

"More than you can know." Yuri said as his back shuddered with excitement as he came close to the 5 extra-large containers. He could already feel the latent glows from the machines stored inside. "I have already read the manuals posted on the galactic net. I have even read many of the guides, reviews and user experiences. I cannot wait any longer. I need to pilot this new mech as soon as possible!"

"Well, you have the first pick. Which one is to your liking?"

The living mechs stored inside the containers had all been fabricated fairly recently. They were all young and had never been piloted before, so they were all pretty much the same.

Yuri Enfame did not discern any significant differences between the five packed mechs, so he made a choice at random.

"Are you sure, Yuri?"

"Yes. I have read that the character of a living mech is defined by its pilot. This might not be the most ideal mech for me today, but it will come closer with each passing day. Trust me on this, commander."

"Very well."

A crew of mech technicians arrived and brought one of the containers to a larger space.

They carefully opened the container and unpacked the mech.

This was not a difficult job as much of the mech had folded into a rectangular form that made it more convenient to transport the machine.

The biggest issue was that the large and heavy gun barrels of the Ultimatum had been removed and stacked in special holders to make the mech more compact and easier to fit into a container.

The process of reattaching the cannons was relatively cumbersome. They had to be installed properly in order to make them reliable enough to function even after they launched over a hundred attacks.

The massive Onyx Cannon was especially difficult to install!

Not only was it connected to a lot of systems dispersed within the frame of the enormous mech, but it was also really heavy and difficult to lift!

The Hooligan Barke was not a new and luxurious combat carrier. She was just a normal vessel that could fit 40 mechs at most. Her ship class used to receive a lot of appreciation for boasting better armor while still remaining fairly mobile, but that had taken place in a bygone era.

Now that the Age of Dawn had arrived, the wealthy mech forces had the luxury of upgrading or replacing most of their mechs and warships.

The Pellicky Praetorians did not have that luxury. They had failed to earn any big paydays in the last decade. The ordinary guard, patrol and convoy missions that they had run a lot over the years did not pay well enough to fund widespread upgrades and replacements.

In fact, Commander Pellicky had actually drained much of the funds that she had initially reserved to upgrade most of the outdated mechs in her mech roster.

Yet instead of spending that money to replace hundreds of old machines with modern hyper mechs, she instead chose to go all-out in replacing 18 of their decent and dependable bunker mechs with the new but undisputed king of second-class heavy artillery mechs!

This was why many other mech pilots felt rather mixed about their commander's impulsive decision.

Were the Ultimatums really worth the price?

Yuri Enfame did not have this particular doubt. How can a mech blessed by the Destroyer of Worlds be sold on the cheap?

Slowly but surely, the crew of mech technicians gradually installed the immense Onyx Cannon with the help of a melee mech that was able to lift the heavy gun barrel.

Once the mech technicians completed their inspection, the Ultimatum finally awaited its destined mech pilot.

Yuri had already changed into his piloting suit. He kept all of the advice for first-time mech pilots in mind and took a deep breath as he entered the spacious cockpit.

The interior design was different from the clean and utilitarian look of his previous heavy artillery mech.

He had heard that Professor Larkinson possessed an artistic flair that he always tried to channel into his mech designs in one way or another. Isthmus Manufacturing tried its best to rely on its

sophisticated tech to reproduce the paintings and reliefs that Ves had originally incorporated in the mech design.

The stories and symbolism conveyed by these artworks automatically put Yuri Enfame into a more receptive mood.

Once he began to interface with his machine, he immediately felt as if he had come into contact with a dormant but powerful beast!

"Hello, mech. I... am your new battle partner. Let us work together and blast as many aliens to pieces with your power and your gifts."

The second order living mech did not possess the capacity to engage in deep thinking or hold conversations with other people.

However, their intelligence should not be underestimated. The Ultimatum felt Yuri's heartfelt appreciation and reciprocated by making it clear that it was content!

As Yuri Enfame had passed the first time, his mind gradually started to expand across the new mech, giving him a taste of the huge power that he could command now that he was in charge!

The deck shook as the Ultimatum took a few experimental steps forward.

The pilot's previous heavy artillery mech only boasted four legs. The Ultimatum had 6 lower limbs, which meant that Yuri had to adapt quickly in order to master the movements of his latest machine.

The process turned out to be a lot smoother than he thought. As Yuri continued to convey his love for his new Ultimatum, his new mech responded by actively cooperating with its battle partner to establish a new rhythm of movement!

Soon enough, the Ultimatum proficiently traversed back and forth with all six legs moving in perfect synchronization!

"This is great, but this is hardly an important test. Let us move on to target practice."

Both of them grew a lot more excited at the thought of testing out their firepower!