

The Mech 5681

Chapter 5681 Spaceburst Shells

Rage. Pain. Destruction.

This was all the mutated Ultimatum had on its incoherent mind.

The living mech that existed just a short time ago was gone.

So was the mech pilot known as Yuri Enfame.

Due to a confluence of strange circumstances, the two had actually merged together to such a degree that it was unclear whether any distinct part of them was left intact in the resulting fusion.

Fortunately, the mutated Ultimatum still retained much of the original functions of the mech. Its vastly more powerful spirituality had also inherited much of Yuri's piloting skills and judgment.

This was important because the machine was still able to effectively channel its power towards demolishing its foes!

Its aura of destruction grew at a perceivable rate with each and every attack. It derived great satisfaction from breaking open the alien warships that intimidated Yuri a lot and caused him to feel so much distress.

As the other surviving mechs of the Pellicky Praetorians and the other three mercenaries tried their best to finish off the weakened alien vessels through their own modest efforts, it looked as if they had established a good rhythm.

That was until the nunser battleship and the mechs of the Grimly Brothers both focused all of their efforts on taking down the Hooligan Barke!

It became abundantly clear to the aliens and the cosmopolitans that the Ultimatum stationed inside one of the bunkers of the combat carrier was the only lifeline left for the mercenary forces.

Once the strange mech got wiped out, there shouldn't be anything standing in the way of a total human defeat in this star system!

At this moment, the enhanced defenses of the Hooligan Barke were being sorely tested. The nunser battleship's transphasic energy shields might not be in a good condition at the moment, but her full weapon arsenal still remained fully operational!

Each attack from her primary and secondary gun batteries was powerful enough to give the Red Two's own warships a run for their money.

There was no way the Hooligan Barke could have withstood this much concentrated firepower for such a long time!

The only reason why she managed to hold out while only suffering much more reduced damage was due to the magical domain field projected by Ultimatum One.

Yet everyone worried that the odd machine was rapidly approaching its limit. The damage inflicted with each subsequent salvo struck the flagship with greater force, causing her to lose more hull plating and suffer more severe hull breaches.

If the nunser battleship wasn't dealt with, then this vessel alone could wipe out the remaining mercenary forces by herself!

"Commander! Ultimatum One has almost managed to strip the segmented transphasic multi-layered energy shields of the nunser battleship. If we force our most effective shipkiller asset to attack the mechs of the Grimly Brothers, then all of its efforts may have gone to waste."

Once broken, energy shields could be restored so long as their generators remained intact. Every human fighting against the aliens knew that it was taboo to leave this kind of job half-done.

The only way for them to produce a lasting result was for Ultimatum One to commit to this attack and break the hull of the nunser battleship.

This would not be easy as the nunsers generally built their vertical tower-like homeships thick and tall.

Since the vessels functioned as their homes as well as a fighting vessel, the nunser battleship attached to the alien raiding fleet consisted of a lot of strong alloys. Key sections were even covered with transphasic alloys, making them far tougher than any other part of the massive alien hull!

Commander Andrea Pellicky furrowed her brows and looked down to analyze the projected map.

A lot of mechs and combat carriers had already fallen due to prior attacks launched by the alien raiding fleet.

What was left might not be enough to keep the aliens on the backfoot while at the same time fend off the cosmopolitan assault from the rear.

If the surviving mercenaries wanted to get out of this battle alive, then it had to deal with both groups of enemies at the same time!

Focusing on one enemy at the exclusion of the other one was a great taboo!

As Pellicky observed the movement of friendly forces and witnessed how the remaining mercenary mechs around the combined fleet failed to stop the Grimly strike force from approaching her flagship.

There were precious few assets left to fend off the incoming mechs.

"Wait."

She suddenly recalled an important piece of information related to the newly acquired heavy artillery mechs.

"How many Ultimatums remain operational?"

"We only have 9 left if we exclude Ultimatum One. Three of them are stationed in the remaining intact bunkers of our flagship while the rest are assigned to our other surviving combat carriers."

"That is enough!" The mercenary commander grinned! "Instruct all of our bunker mechs aside from Ultimatum One to concentrate their firepower on the incoming enemy melee mechs. Make sure the other Ultimatums load spaceburst shells in their heavy artillery cannons. Do not bother to conserve any ammunition!"

"Acknowledged, commander. What of Ultimatum One?"

"Make sure to orient our flagship in a way that allows it to continue to pummel nuns' battleship. The leading alien vessel must fall. Hopefully, the remaining aliens will be a lot more hesitant about pressing the attack once their capital ships have all been struck down."

It was obvious what Commander Pellicky wanted to accomplish. She wanted to rely on the other heavy artillery mechs or more specifically the 9 other Ultimatums to intercept the traitor mechs!

She took a massive risk with this decision. The lives of her mercenaries as well as her allies hinged on whether the recently sold mechs could do their jobs during this critical time!

The odds were stacked against them. The Grimly Brother mechs were not exactly top-tier, but they were all based on well-regarded mech models released during the Phasewater Generation.

More concerning was the custom mechs piloted by Alexander Grimly and Cory Grimly!

The former piloted a powerful rifleman mech that completed his skills well enough to accurately pick off individual mechs from a notable distance with its powerful laser rifle.

The latter piloted an offensive space knight that was tough enough to resist a lot of damage with the help of its kite shield but also fast enough to keep up with other offensive mech units.

Commander Pellicky gritted her teeth. She just had to hope for the best, because she did not see any other way out. She just hoped that the generational gap between the mechs of the Phasewater Generation and the Hyper Generation was truly as people claimed.

As the Hooligan Barke and other combat carriers spun around and made sure to give most of their bunker mechs clear firing lines towards the approaching enemy melee mechs, they soon began to open fire!

The older heavy artillery mechs that the mercenary forces had yet to replace mostly utilized laser cannons or positron cannons.

Energy weapons were more economical and convenient to use for mercenary forces operating at a limited budget. They were more accurate at longer ranges. The logistical constraints were much less severe as the spent energy cells could always be recharged by the power generators of a combat carrier. In addition, there was no need to reserve a lot of cargo space for ammunition.

However, their ability to hit fast-moving targets at a distance was not only dependent on the quality of the machines, but also the skill of their pilots.

The traitor mech pilots may be crazy for embracing the cosmopolitan cause, but their skills were still just as good as any professional!

Mercenaries tended to prize any skills related to survival a lot more. The Grimly mech pilots had not forgotten how to employ evasive maneuvers to make it as difficult as possible for their opponents to accurately land their energy beams on their agile machines!

Pellicky grimaced as she observed the performance of the older heavy artillery mechs. The power of their attacks may be good, but it was useless if they weren't able to hit anything!

"Stop trying to fight by yourself and work together with other ranged mechs to box in the enemies. Weave a net of energy beams around their mechs!"

The heavy artillery mech pilots fortunately possessed sufficient training to employ this cooperative tactic. It took a few moments for them to coordinate their fire across multiple different mercenary forces, but soon the Grimly Brothers started to lose melee mechs at a faster rate than before.

Unfortunately, it was not enough!

By employing this tactic, it took multiple ranged mechs working in coordination to take down a single melee mech at a time.

The remaining ones experienced much less pressure as a result and advanced with greater confidence.

Yet after a short delay, the Ultimatums that were still in normal working conditions finally began to open fire!

This time, the heavy artillery mechs did not employ their iconic Onyx Cannons. The massive super-heavy gauss cannon was more of a siege weapon than a fly swatter.

The recently purchased mechs instead relied on their more reasonable and proportionate heavy artillery cannons to launch spaceburst shells at the incoming swarm of melee mechs at a steady firing rate.

Silent booms erupted from the heavy artillery mechs as they alternated their fire to improve their ability to track rapidly-moving mechs.

The space around the Grimly Brother mechs soon became engulfed in black puffs that seemingly burst out of nowhere and engulfed the immediate space with a combination of heat and pressure!

It was a pity that the cheap shells bought by the Pellicky Praetorians lacked a homing function.

It was generally too easy for ECM systems to blind them or fool them, so this feature was generally left out unless it was powerful enough to resist these countermeasures.

Most of the spaceburst shells therefore reached their programmed distance and exploded into empty space.

Yet as the Ultimatums continued to fire, they threw so many explosive shells into space that a few of them eventually managed to detonate close enough to an enemy mech!

"Five down!"

Two of the melee mechs struck by an Ultimatum artillery shell faltered in their flight as their exterior armor and multiple internal components received significant damage!

The remaining three machines flew a bit further away from the exploding shells, enabling them to get away from the hit with light to moderate damage to their exterior.

However, their flight systems still got affected, causing them to lose enough mobility for them to be easy targets for follow-up attacks!

Pellicky grew more and more satisfied by the results of the regular Ultimatums.

While the spaceburst shells lacked the force and penetration power to eliminate the mechs in a single blow, they more than made up for it by exploding across a wider volume of space. It was quite difficult for the melee mechs to get away unscathed if a shell exploded just close enough.

The accuracy of the Ultimatums was fairly average, but Pellicky soon noticed that the attacks of three of the heavy artillery mechs struck with significantly greater power than the others.

Each of their explosive shells never failed to cripple or outright disable an enemy melee mech as long as they came close enough!

It just so happened that the three Ultimatums also happened to be stationed in the other remaining bunkers of the Hooligan Barke!

"Find out why these three Ultimatums are dealing more effective damage than the rest of our new heavy artillery mechs!"

It only took seconds before a bridge officer reported back.

"The mech pilots report that it has become much easier for them to resonate with one of the design spirits, commander! For whatever reason, the activity generated by Ultimate One has produced an environment where it has become much more conducive to employ the Amplified Destruction embedded abilities of the new mechs. The Destroyer of Worlds is on our side!"

More and more people started to believe in this when they witnessed the Ultimatums shredding the incoming enemy mechs.

The Grimly Brothers were suffering significantly greater casualties than they wished, and it was all because of the excellent firepower of the Ultimatums!

However, the excellent performance of the Ultimatums also attracted a lot of attention from their opponents!

"The Bison Chive is under heavy fire! Alexander Grimly and his contingent of ranged mechs are focusing their fire on one of her bunkers! We... we just lost one of our Ultimatums!"

"No!"

Chapter 5682 The Power of the Ultimatums

5682 The Power of the Ultimatums

The Grimly Brothers weren't as stupid or as ignorant about mechs as the native aliens.

Before they stabbed the Hullsi Wardogs in the back and exposed their true allegiance, the troops of the Grimly Brothers kept up with the news and acted like any other mercenaries.

They followed the latest developments in the mech industry as avidly as other mech pilots. They knew about the Ultimatums and listened to many of the wild claims about its performance.

Yet now that they had begun to fight against these mechs themselves, the troops of the Grimly Brothers learned that these mechs fully deserved all of the hype!

The hyper spaceburst shells launched by the modern heavy artillery mechs were not only relatively fast, but also exploded across a wider volume of space than the explosive shells of the previous generation.

The E energy empowering the explosive ordnance of the Ultimatums significantly increased the lethality of every explosion!

It was as if every explosion directly weakened every affected armor plating to the point where they were only partially as effective as before.

Perhaps more powerful quasi-first-class mechs may be able to withstand this power, but the relatively ordinary second-class mechs of the Grimly Brothers were not equipped to withstand this power.

"The Ultimatums are tearing the Grimly mechs apart!"

"Why didn't we buy our own batch of Ultimatums? They are definitely worth far more than 30 MTA credits per copy!"

"Don't let the Grimly Brothers wreck these precious mechs! Provide cover for them as much as possible!"

As the ranged mechs of the Grimly Brothers tried to take down the Ultimatums one by one by focusing as much of their attacks on them as possible, they experienced even greater pushback from the ranged mechs of the four mercenary outfits.

In order to give the heavy artillery mechs enough breathing room to eliminate the incoming melee mechs, the rifleman mechs of the Pellicky Praetorians as well as their allies went all-out!

They increased their firing rates as much as possible. Their kinetic weapons fired as three-quarters or even half-charge in order to rain more projectiles at their opponents!

Though the power and the muzzle velocities of these hasty attacks were not as great as before, they produced greater suppression than before as the Grimly mech pilots found it much more difficult to focus on eliminating the bunker mechs when they came under heavy fire.

The rifleman mechs armed with energy weapons either overloaded their guns or simply reduced the charge rate of an individual energy beam.

They managed to land a lot more hits onto their Grimly counterparts as a result, making it even more difficult for the enemy pilots to concentrate and focus on their mission.

Despite these measures, two more Ultimatums became overwhelmed by a torrent of mixed ranged attacks.

The custom rifleman mech piloted by Alexander Grimly happened to inflict much more effective damage than the surrounding machines.

"Damn! Alexander never told us that his custom mech was equipped with a transphasic laser rifle. This weapon is chiefly responsible for carving open the protective bunkers that our heavy artillery mechs are relying upon for protection."

Though the Ultimatums were doing an increasingly better job at blasting enemy melee mechs apart, Commander Pellicky winced with every machine that got wrecked.

That was 30 MTA credits down the drain!

"Instruct the three regular Ultimatums stationed on our flagship to focus their attacks on the mechs of both Grimly Brothers. They are too threatening to leave alone."

While the remaining Ultimatums continued their mission to whittle down the other melee mechs, the three machines that somehow fed off the large amount of destruction E energy attracted by the mutated machine focused their full efforts into taking down the leading traitor mechs.

This was a much harder mission!

No matter whether it was the fast and agile transphasic rifleman mech or the tough but also fairly mobile offensive space knight, neither of them allowed the attacks to stop or slow them down.

The mercenaries soon made another concerning discovery.

"The kite shield held by Cory Grimly's mech is transphasic! It is able to resist much more damage than normal alloy shields!"

That was bad because the mech continued to lead the other melee mechs of the Grimly Brothers forward.

Once Cory Grimly managed to get close enough to the Hooligan Barke, it could continue to rely on its transphasic kite shield to fend off a lot of attacks while utilizing its axe to hack at the bunkers that protected the other Ultimatums.

"Please confirm whether the axe held by Cory Grimly's space knight is transphasic."

"According to our scanners, there is a 80 percent probability that it is a low-transphasic bladed weapon."

"Take it down first!"

"Our heavy artillery mechs are trying, but their progress is too slow due to a lack of transphasic weapons. The custom space knight is expressly designed to endure a large quantity of attacks without losing too much combat effectiveness in the process. Even if we manage to wear out the transphasic kite shield, the mech's remaining armor should be able to resist enough attacks."

Damn!

Commander Pellicky sensed a growing degree of threat from that machine.

While the transphasic rifleman mech piloted by Alexander Grimly could only take potshots from afar, the mech piloted by Cory Grimly posed a much greater threat to the Hooligan Barke!

Having a transphasic offensive space knight tear its penetrating axe through the hull of a starship was the worst nightmare of any mech commander!

"What is the status of Ultimatum One?!"

"The abnormal mech has moved past its peak. Its power levels are slowly decreasing, though it has already managed to inflict significant material damage to the nunsen battleship. Its progress is significantly delayed by the other alien warships putting their hulls in the way. While the quantity of enemy warships is dropping at an accelerated rate, the most powerful enemy vessel is clearly taking advantage of the temporary reprieve."

This was not good news! Pellicky glanced at the projection of the mutated machine and saw that it was indeed showing signs of flagging.

Even if this horrible machine managed to produce as much power as an ace pilot paired with an ace mech, it was ultimately not as strong. The foundation of the half-organic monstrosity was much poorer and unable to sustain this exceedingly high level of energy consumption.

While a part of Commander Pellicky grew hopeful that there might be a way to rescue Yuri from this warped machine once it had exhausted its power, that could only happen if they won this battle.

In order to do that, the mercenaries needed to destroy the Grimly Brothers!

It all came down to the two leading mechs. Both of them needed to be destroyed in order to eliminate the greatest threat towards the Pellicky Praetorians!

Unfortunately, the secret cosmopolitans had invested so much in the development of their custom mechs that they could not be taken down in a short amount of time!

Transphasic weapons and armor still retained their superiority in the Hyper Generation. This was especially the case when only a single side had access to this kind of gear.

There was not much time left. The transphasic offensive space knight piloted by Cory Grimly only needed to cross a moderate distance before it arrived right at the doorstep of the Hooligan Barke!

The relatively modest amount of melee mechs left behind to screen the combat carriers could only block a portion of the incoming enemy machines, but it was impossible for them to stop a genuine transphasic mech!

Commander Pellicky suddenly recalled another important feature about the new Ultimatums.

"Gilbert. Anastasia. Rofan." She called the names of the other mech pilots assigned to the other Ultimatums on the Hooligan Barke. "Are you able to use the predictive targeting systems of your mechs to land a direct hit on Cory Grimly's mech with your Onyx Cannon? Respond with yes or no."

"No."

"No."

"No."

Pellicky furrowed her brows. "Reason?"

"According to what I can surmise from my living mech, there is so much destruction E energy around us that it has displaced everything else." Anastasia replied. "The Ultimatum needs another kind of E energy to leverage its other embedded ability. This... is partially our fault. If we had more practice and proficiency in piloting the Ultimatum, we wouldn't have to rely on this crutch. There are rumors that genuine Ylvainan mech pilots don't need to resort to this measure at all to establish a connection with their prophet."

Commander Pellicky dismissively waved her hand. "It is not your fault. Forget about the custom mechs piloted by the Grimly Brothers. Turn your focus back on intercepting the other mechs. They are weak enough for you to be able to eliminate with great efficiency."

"What about the transphasic mechs of the Grimly Brothers?"

"We can only rely on one asset to take them down." Pellicky responded. "Helmsman, turn the Hooligan Barke around. Give Ultimatum One a clear shot of the enemy transphasic mechs!"

"Commander, doing so will reduce the pressure on the nunser battleship."

"Our melee mechs have almost reached the alien raiding fleet. Tell them to concentrate on tearing her apart while her transphasic energy shields are still down!"

There was a risk that the friendly melee mechs might fail, but that was a risk that she had to take. Ultimatum One was the only truly reliable asset she had left.

The Hooligan Barke spun around and prevented the monster mech from firing any further shots towards the heavily damaged nunser battleship.

At this angle, the biggest threat towards the monstrosity was the two transphasic mechs. There was no way for the mutated heavy artillery mech to fire her cannons at the alien raiding fleet positioned at the opposite side of the battlefield.

Though the strange mech expressed its frustration by stomping its uneven legs against the deck of its bunker, it soon began to shift the angle of its Onyx Cannon.

Suddenly, Alexander Grimly sensed an acute threat. His rifleman mech began to put more power into its flight system while at the same time firing a transphasic laser beam that lost half of its strength before it accurately carved into the bunker that protected the source of his discomfort.

The Ultimatum One fired.

An attack that was almost just as powerful as the initial strikes lanced through space and almost managed to land a direct hit onto the transphasic rifleman mech!

"Miss, no, partial hit! Ultimatum One's empowered attack managed to sever a leg off Alexander Grimly's mech."

The transphasic rifleman mech made a lot more irregular movements while it furiously struck back. The domain field surrounding Ultimatum One sapped a lot of strength from the incoming attacks, but it had been growing weaker at a steady rate, which meant that the attacks were becoming increasingly effective.

However, just as Alexander Grimly was about to pull the trigger yet again, he immediately sensed danger and tried to juke his mech in another direction.

Unfortunately for him, the monster mech just happened to predict his evasive trajectory and fired its mutated Onyx Cannon at the right angle and the right time!

The empowered super-heavy gauss round directly struck the torso of the transphasic rifleman mech!

As impressive as its defenses may be relative to non-transphasic mech, there was no way a ranged mech like this could withstand a direct hit from an attack that had the power to breach the defenses of alien warships!

The custom mech outright disintegrated upon impact!

So much kinetic energy transferred into the inadequate defenses of the ranged mech that it immediately shattered into millions of broken and separated parts!

When Cory Grimly became alerted by what had happened to his brother, he immediately became overtaken by the loss!

"BROTHER! No! You promised we would fight side by side to bring humanity to the light!"

Even cosmopolitans could feel sad!

However, Cory shook his head shortly afterwards and concentrated on the fight. This was no time for him to mourn! The mission came first!

"You will pay for that! Our righteous cause shall prevail no matter how much blood must be spilled!
FOR A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY!"

Chapter 5683 Cory Grimly

5683 Cory Grimly

Much to the surprise of everyone on the battlefield, the four mercenary outfits managed to overcome their period of adversity!

When the battle started, the mechs of the Pellicky Praetorians, the Five Fingers Club, the Rutherford Family and the Desiccators faced an uphill battle that was so steep that they saw little hope of climbing their way to the top.

The treachery of the Grimly Brothers and the rapid collapse of the Hullsi Wardogs should have turned the mercenaries into sitting ducks when they squared off against the formidable native alien raiding fleet bearing down on their positions.

Yet the sudden outbreak of Ultimatum One changed their entire fate.

Mechs got obliterated while combat carriers sundered apart at an alarming rate, but with the help of an abnormality that could not be explained, the four mercenary outfits managed to strike back and inflict serious losses onto the alien fleet!

Now, the aliens had lost their flagship while rendering multiple other capital ships vulnerable.

The nunser battleship that acted as the minder of the alien fleet had received such a pounding that the mercenary melee mechs tore into her guts with no hesitation, causing her to collapse from within!

The remaining alien warships started to slow down and fight less vigorously as the alien crew members clearly became shaken at the continuous setbacks.

The downfall of pretty much all of their capital ships had caused the remaining aliens to become disorganized and less willing to press the attack.

This caused them to become easier prey to the melee mechs that dove on them like a swarm of piranhas!

Equipped with the newfangled space suppressors, the melee mechs visibly destabilized any transphasic energy shield they came close to. Even if an individual module was not too effective due to the lack of phasewater integrated in their specific models, the sheer quantity of mechs was too much for most warships to resist, especially if they belonged to the smaller ship classes.

This was one of the many instances that proved that the Hyper Generation had given red humanity a fighting chance in the Red War!

It would have been a lot more difficult for the Red Two to encourage the masses to pilot mechs into battle against huge alien warships if they did not have a readily available solution to overcome the notoriously powerful defenses of the latter!

Though the non-transphasic space suppressors were only effective when employed in larger numbers, second-class and third-class mech forces were not short on them for the time being!

So long as the production of mechs remained strong and the pool of manpower remained abundant, many human forces were more than willing to throw lots of mechs into the fray in the hopes of earning war merits and other massive rewards!

"Come on, men! We need to finish off these warships as fast as possible! If we take too long, we won't have motherships to return to. Take down these transphasic shields no matter the cost!"

As long as the mercenary fleet and its escort mechs could continue to provide support from a distance, the downfall of the alien raiding fleet became increasingly more likely!

Yet even as the human mercenaries were on the verge of repelling the alien fleet and earning huge rewards in the process, the assault from the rear threatened to undo much of their gains!

The Grimy Brothers proved their determination to act against red humanity's interests by attacking the mercenary fleet from the opposite direction, thereby making it a lot more difficult for the defenders to properly handle both threats.

The Ultimatums helped a lot. Their heavy artillery cannons usually merited very little attention due to how ordinary they seem compared to the powerful Onyx Cannon.

This was not a surprise. The Onyx Cannon was the star of the heavy artillery mech. The entire design was clearly based around this incredibly cumbersome and oversized super-heavy gauss cannon. It was a weapon that aspired to be a shipkiller and had proven this capacity in several instances during this battle!

Yet it was the extreme characteristics that also sabotaged the Onyx Cannon from posing an effective threat against small fast-moving objects such as mechs.

Once the Onyx Cannon opened fire, the heavy artillery mech had to work hard to charge the weapon back up. Even if the pilot decided to launch the weapon at half-charge, it still took far too many seconds to prepare the weapon to fire again!

The consequences of missing a shot were too great as a consequence. The Ultimatums bought by the Praetorians therefore did not bother to employ this weapon system against the enemy mechs.

The only way to make them viable was to successfully pair them up with the Guided Aim embedded ability, but the Praetorian mech pilots were unable to reach out to Ylvaine due to lack of practice and other factors.

This was a major product flaw and significantly complicated the use of the Ultimatum. Commander Pellicky and many of her mercenaries put much of their hopes onto the seemingly magical features of this fantastic new hyper mech.

"The learning curve of this heavy artillery mech is much steeper than expected."

"It is an excellent siege weapon, but it has its limitations."

Fortunately for the mercenaries, the spaceburst shells launched by the heavy artillery cannons more than made up for this shortcoming.

Though their muzzle velocities were fairly low, the spaceburst shells were remarkably effective at damaging and ultimately blasting melee mechs to pieces!

No matter how much the mechs tried to evade or maneuver around the field of explosions, there was no way for them to continually evade the spaceburst shells as they kept pouring in at a moderate rate!

More than half of the melee mechs dispatched by the treacherous Grimly Brothers had already fallen. The remaining ones already lost a lot of momentum, but the traitor mech pilots pushed their machines forward regardless because there was no way out for them anymore!

"Take these mercenaries down and sow terror in the hearts of red humanity!" Cory Grimly roared over an open channel as his custom space knight led the charge! "The Genlock Cell's plan must prevail! Do not let my brother's sacrifice be in vain! Let us bring a new multi-racial utopia to reality by showing these people the folly of human supremacy! For the great cause!"

"FOR THE GREAT CAUSE!"

"For progress!"

"FOR PROGRESS!"

"For a pluralistic society!"

"FOR A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY!"

Before their sudden betrayal, the two Grimlys established a reputation for being leaders who were good at uplifting other people.

To see Cory Grimly leverage his leadership ability onto his fellow cosmopolitans made their betrayal even more incomprehensible to the mercenaries.

How could these smart and successful mercenaries be so stupid enough to embrace the cosmopolitan cause?

There was no way for them to find any answers. The situation had become more dire even as their enemies had already started to drop like flies.

Even though the mechs of the Grimly Brothers suffered heavy damage, the remaining ones could still pose a threat to the vulnerable combat carriers of the mercenary forces.

The mercenary commanders had already dispatched most of their melee mechs to the alien fleet!

The ones left behind might be able to slow down the mechs of the Grimly Brothers for a time, but the damage wrought by the alien raiding fleet heavily impacted their ability to fend off any remaining enemies.

No one was in a good shape anymore!

The only machine that still appeared to be going strong was the offensive space knight piloted by Cory Grimly.

The expensive transphasic machine had done a remarkably good job at resisting all of the spaceburst shells that struck its hardy kite shield and its resilient armor plating.

As a high-quality mech that combined offense, defense and mobility in a particularly dangerous combination, the offensive space knight could pose a massive threat to any combat carrier once it got close!

Commander Pellicky already determined that no melee mech among the remaining defenders could contain or eliminate Cory Grimly's elite mech.

The traitor leader was too good of a pilot! He would definitely be able to effectively leverage all of the advantages of his machine to evade any stiff resistance and strike at the weak points of his targets.

The Hooligan Barke was exceptionally vulnerable to Cory's transphasic axe!

It was clear that Cory Grimly had set his sights on Ultimatum One.

Though the mutated mech had demonstrated a huge amount of strength, the traitors already noticed that the former's lengthy outburst was already beginning to decline.

"Hah! The Pellicky Praetorians have already exhausted their trump card! They are more vulnerable than they have ever been!"

Everything rested on Ultimatum One. The horrifyingly warped machine was the only hope for the mercenaries to save their fleet, defeat their most threatening foes and end this day with at least some of their lives intact.

The monster mech had already made good progress in neutralizing the threat posed by the Grimly Brothers by eliminating the transphasic rifleman mech piloted by Alexander Grimly, but this caused the surviving brother to become even more wary at this abnormal machine.

Cory Grimly felt a huge threat from the Hooligan Barke. He had already banked his offensive space knight to the left just as a blindingly powerful super-heavy gauss round rushed through the position occupied by the mech just a moment earlier!

"Miss!"

The only consequence suffered by the offensive space knight was getting exposed to a wave of destruction E energy.

While the mech's alloy shield and armor plating suffered a bit of damage, the effects were far too minor to compromise the machine's integrity.

The traitor leader adopted a vicious grin. He was determined not to repeat the mistake made by his late brother.

As far as evasion went, Cory had always outperformed his brother, mainly because he honed his instincts in close quarters combat a lot more often!

It was obvious to him whenever the abnormal Ultimatum was about to fire. Not only did it project its intentions like an open book, but it also fired shortly after its mutated Onyx Cannon reached full charge!

Cory had already timed the delay between shots. As long as he made sure to focus fully on evasion when the opposing super mech was about to open fire, his offensive space knight would be able to escape the brunt of the attack!

"Hah! Miss again!"

He had heard and read about the Ultimatum's fiendish ability to predict the trajectory of targets and provide suggestions on where to aim. He did not feel as if the opposing pilots were making use of this cheat-like ability.

So long as this was not the case, Cory was confident that his powerful mech could cross the remaining distance and chop the newfangled Ultimatums to pieces with its hungry transphasic axe! The traitor leader briefly estimated the amount of Onyx Cannon shots he would have to endure before his mech finally reached the side of the Hooligan Barke.

"You only have three shots left before your mech will taste my axe!"

The space knight suddenly rolled to the side just as another super-heavy gauss threatened to shatter its alloy shield to pieces.

"Two now, haha!"

Time was running out for the mercenaries. Cory Grimly's subordinates may be dropping like flies, but that was poor consolation when this high-quality mech possessed the power to destroy entire combat carriers by itself!

Ultimatum One wouldn't be able to do anything to the enemy space knight as long as the latter circled its way around.

No matter how powerful the Onyx Cannon may be, it was impossible for this huge and ungainly weapon to fire at the rear of the heavy artillery mech it was attached to. The Ultimatum was exceptionally vulnerable to melee mechs, which was a trait that was common to all machines of this mech type!

"Don't let Cory Grimly get any closer! Shoot his mech down regardless of the cost!"

Chapter 5684 The Final Sprint

5684 The Final Sprint

Though Cory Grimly had never broken through to the rank of expert candidate or expert pilot, he was still an exemplary mech pilot in other aspects.

Even when a lot of ranged mechs brought their weapons to bear against offensive space knight, he relied on his powerful intuition and his impeccable skills to deftly maneuver his machine in unpredictable loops and diversions.

He did so while making sure that he did not prolong the time of arrival too much.

He knew as well as everyone else that as long as his powerful mech reached the Hooligan Barke, the combat carrier as well as the Ultimatums stationed inside her bunkers were likely doomed!

This acute threat forced all of the remaining Ultimatums to bring their weapons to bear against Cory Grimly's mech.

The traitor leader suddenly encountered much stiffer resistance during his final sprint as multiple hyper heavy artillery mechs showered his machine with hyper spaceburst shells!

The faint power of destruction attached to every warhead added a little extra power to the explosions, causing the offensive space knight to endure continuous damage to its defenses.

The mech's energy shield briefly came online and managed to serve as a brief buffer that saved the mech from suffering a lot of physical damage.

Unfortunately, the sheer quantity of attacks quickly overwhelmed it. The space knight tried its best to block as many attacks as possible with its transphasic kite shield.

As tough and resilient as it may be, transphasic alloys were not invincible.

Even if the power of a single spacebust explosion was not enough to break the armor of the transphasic mech, what about a dozen of them? What about two dozen explosions!

Though the Ultimatums temporarily gave the other enemy units a reprieve, Cory Grimly endured a lot more pressure than before!

Not only were the continuous explosions overwhelming the structure of his alloy shield, but the interference also made it a lot more difficult for him to maintain his awareness of his surroundings.

As the mech's metallic structure groaned as it started to receive increasingly more direct impacts, Cory felt as if he was being subjected to the force of a supernova.

The heavy artillery cannons of the Ultimatums were too overbearing when employed en masse!

If this continued, then Cory would find it much more difficult to anticipate Ultimatum One's supercharged attack and evade it in time!

"Help Cory!"

"Let my mech serve as your shield!"

Other melee mechs had sped up and deliberately positioned themselves in front and around Cory's mech!

The mech pilots had all chosen to step up during this critical time. They voluntarily placed their machines in harm's way, knowing that the continuous shelling would rupture their mechs and break apart their cockpits with ease.

Nonetheless, they fearlessly proceeded anyway because Cory Grimly shouldered the hope of advancing their Great Cause!

The cost was great. Mechs fell like flies as they literally treated themselves as human shields for the battered but not broken transphasic space knight.

They only bought a short amount of time, but that was more than enough to give the enemy elite mech crucial breathing room!

Cory not only managed to restore his composure, but was also able to direct his full concentration towards the attack he knew was coming!

"Hah!"

His mech launched upwards at just the right time for his machine to evade the powerful projectile that punched straight through two of the mechs like they were toys!

The space knight almost lost its legs from the attacks. The armor plating that covered the lower limbs still became exposed to destructive energies that had a corroding effect on the surface.

"Miss! One shot left!"

Even if Cory's mechs had endured a lot of damage, space knights were built to take hits and keep going. The mech might look significantly damaged on the outside, but it protected its internals so well that the machine still retained most of its combat effectiveness.

There was no doubt in everyone's mind that the transphasic mech could demolish any other mech in a face-to-face confrontation!

This was the worst nightmare for the Ultimatums stationed in the bunkers of the Hooligan Barke!

Their heavy artillery cannons launched spaceburst shells as fast as they could with no regard to how quickly they were using them up. Unfortunately, the literal cannon fodder that constantly got in the way prevented them from damaging or disorienting Cory Grimly's mech.

As the distance between the traitor mechs and the mercenary fleet continued to shrink, the monster mech that had dominated much of the battle prepared to fire its mutated Onyx Cannon for what may be the final time.

Whatever consciousness was in control of this warped accident still understood that Cory Grimly posed the greatest danger. It did not let its previous failures deter its attempt to nail the elusive space knight with its most powerful attack.

However, as admirable as its determination may be, the consciousness obviously lost much of the spontaneity and creativity of the original mech pilot, because the machine simply waited for the Onyx Cannon to reach its full charge before pulling the trigger right away!

This predictable firing pattern gave Cory Grimly a lot of help because he knew almost exactly when he should move!

The only question was in which direction his mech should evade. Whoever was in control of the supermech had come close to predicting his evasion pattern.

This was a deadly game that many mech pilots needed to be proficient in order to survive and thrive on the battlefield.

Cory had always prided himself on his evasion ability. He probably would have performed just as good if not better if he chose to specialize in piloting light skirmisher, but he wanted to excel in a mech archetype that best complemented his late brother.

"Up!"

As the damaged space knight moved in Cory's chosen direction, the super-heavy gauss round missed its target to such an extent that its destruction E energy wake barely affected the machine!

Though the powerful shot caused a rain of debris to spread in front as it had drilled through one of the mechs acting as a shield, that was the extent of damage inflicted by the monster mech!

"No!"

Commander Pellicky looked dismayed when Yuri's mech had missed the final crucial shot.

There was no time for the powerful machine to launch a third attack!

"Prepare to receive the incoming enemy mechs! Grab whatever weapons or tools you can find. Get ready to arm the improvised boobytraps and detonate as many explosive shells in the faces of the

enemy mechs as possible. Don't worry about the Hooligan Barke. We can always replace a flagship, but we can never replace our lives!"

Much of the crew had already spent a bit of time on preparing for this scenario. There was not much they could do against mechs when they no longer had any melee mechs left to block the enemies.

A number of non-essential crew members had already begun to evacuate at this time. Escape pods launched from various points of the hull and flew in the direction of other friendly mechs, heedless of the energy beams and projectiles that regularly crossed the surrounding space.

Commander Pellicky did not make any effort to run. She bore too much responsibility, and she did not think the Praetorians could make it out alive once they lost their greatest weapon.

"Yuri." She transmitted over multiple channels. "I hope you're still alive in there. A powerful enemy is coming. The transphasic space knight has already circled around and is currently hacking its way through the hull. It won't take long before it breaches the interior of your bunker and assails your mech from the rear. Either evacuate or do whatever you can to defend yourself against Cory Grimly."

The mercenary commander had no idea whether her subordinate got the message. The bloated machine acted like it was under the control of a stupid automated program again. Instead of trying to turn around and maybe bring its Onyx Cannon to bear against the enemy coming from the rear, the mutated heavy artillery mech went back to shooting the enemies in front!

The half-biological abomination launched another attack that managed to pulverize three enemy mechs that just happened to cross the same line!

This was an amazing feat, and helped to relieve pressure for the mercenary fleet.

However, this attack did nothing to stop Cory Grimly's rampage!

His space knight had already gotten rid of its alloy shield, but that enabled it to hold its transphasic axe with two scarred but fully functional arms and carve through the compartments with steady determination.

Any infantry, defensive installation and other measures failed to slow down the intruding machine.

The mech was too tough! Small arms fire almost universally bounced off its mech frame. Its sensors detected a lot of obvious traps in advance, allowing it to neutralize them or simply go around.

The only discomfort the space knight experienced was the strange energy field that caused Cory Grimly to feel as if he was moving in a zone of death.

However, it was clearly weakening, as if the source had already deflated like a balloon.

There was nothing else inside the flagship that could stop his mech's advance.

The Hooligan Barke was hardly the strongest or the most robust second-class combat carrier. She was a typical product designed for private use. There was no budget for any serious anti-mech countermeasures. The general recommendation to this kind of scenario was that the crew of the vessel should simply give up and evacuate as soon as possible!

That was not really a solution at all to the Pellicky Praetorians, so the mercenary commander continued to urge Yuri to get ready to confront the incoming threat!

"He's come!"

The thick and sturdy gate that shut the rear of the bunker compartment abruptly started to tear and deform!

The transphasic axe was able to cut through the ordinary alloys with ease, but the space knight still had to hack its weapon many times in order to carve out an opening through all of the mass in the way.

The monster mech finally exhibited a reaction when it suspended its latest attempt to charge up its Onyx Cannon.

Though the monster machine had yet to turn around with its five uneven legs, it had finally registered the threat from the rear!

Pellicky widened her eyes when she saw that the machine's secondary armaments mounted on the back started to swing or swivel backwards.

"They are still in working condition?!"

She thought that Ultimatum One's original heavy artillery cannons had mutated so far beyond recognition that it was impossible for them to function anymore!

Clearly, she had underestimated the strange phenomena that caused Yuri's machine to turn into a monstrosity.

Just as the space knight carved out a rectangular-shaped hole through the reinforced gate and knocked it open, the monster mech's short and stubby mortar launched a goopy projectile directly through the newly created breach!

Unfortunately, the velocity of this giant green snot ball was so dreadfully low that the vigilant and alert enemy had plenty of time to press his mech to the side and evade much of the attack!

A small portion of the snot ball nonetheless managed to clip one of the space knight's arm, but other than corroding a bit of armor plating, the attack failed to produce any other results!

The next instant, three powerful rays of light lanced from the miniature triple-barreled laser cannon battery!

The power of these laser beams was exceptional relative to the size of the mech and weapon system!

However, Cory Grimly easily anticipated this attack in advance due to detecting the massive buildup of heat.

Even as he grew confused about the fact that the Ultimatum mech looked far different from what he expected, he still commanded his mech to utilize its transphasic axe to breach the nearby bulkhead and create enough space for his machine to sidestep the barrage of energy weapons fire!

Once the miniature triple-barreled laser cannon battery had expended its attack, the space knight hopped back with a vengeance and sprinted forward before the odd machine could launch any further attacks!

"What?!"

Cory Grimly did not expect for his space knight to get smacked by what appeared to be a giant hair follicle!

The 'weapon' was so absurd that his space knight almost failed to lift up its axe in time!

On instinct, Cory chose to meet the incoming hair with the sharp side of his transphasic weapon as opposed to its flat side.

This turned out to make quite a difference as the hair literally snapped as if it had been shaved by giant razor!

"..."

Though the crazy cosmopolitan leader struggled to understand what was going on, this did not stop him from pressing forward!

The final obsidian black tentacle whipped forward in an attempt to land a final blow onto the space knight.

There was not enough space inside the bunker for the latter to evade, but it did not matter because the enemy lifted up one of its arms and allowed the tentacle to smack and fracture the remaining armor plating on this limb!

The force of the tentacle may be strong enough to inflict damage, but it was not strong enough to repel the space knight!

"This ends now!"

With a final heave, the space knight jumped onto the back of the heavy artillery mech, thereby preventing most of Ultimatum One's weapon systems from threatening the intruding machine.

Cory Grimly's mech then proceeded to lift its transphasic axe before chopping it down onto the rear of the beetle-shaped mech!

The outer layers of the hyper alloy plating parted easily enough as they failed to produce sufficient resistance against the exceptional penetration properties of the weapon!

Chapter 5685 Thicc Mech

5685 Thicc Mech

As a secret cosmopolitan, Cory Grimly liked to think he developed an open mind.

He studied the histories, technologies and cultures of many different alien races.

He developed an admiration of how they evolved under vastly different circumstances before finally making their way into space.

He developed a yearning when he heard how so many alien races managed to reach a tenable state of coexistence with each other.

Sure, not all intelligent races managed to gain a foothold in a galactic community, but the fact that it was possible should have been a signal for humanity to follow the prevailing trend and blend in with the harmonious multi-racial society that the aliens had built!

Cory Grimly hated the fact that he was born in the wrong timeline. Instead of living in a reality where humans such as himself could interact freely with aliens without suffering any condemnation, he lived in another version where such actions were considered taboo!

To a genuine cosmopolitan like Cory, this was as absurd as forbidding people to breathe!

Cooperation and coexistence were universal ideals. In both the Milky Way and the Red Ocean, the aliens of those respective galaxies had managed to reach a state of partial integration with each other.

Their borders still existed, and so did their territorial rivalries, but they no longer bothered to wage all-out war against each other anymore.

The intelligent and enlightened aliens all came to the conclusion that cooperating with each other was less costly than trying to wage endless war against their rival species.

There were enough wise and far-sighted alien leaders among them who successfully managed to find common ground despite their many racial differences.

By emphasizing what they had in common while compensating for each other's weaknesses, the aliens of the Milky Way and the Red Ocean had been well on their way of building true galactic communities where many different races worked towards common purpose.

If humanity could become a part of those communities, then Cory would have been able to explore the cultures of other alien races by visiting their planets in person!

He would be able to make friends of individuals of vastly different species. No matter whether they looked like three-fingered frogs or amorphous balls of slime, as long as they were civilized members of the same galactic community, he had no doubt he would have been able to become best friends with any intelligent alien!

It had always been a dream for Cory and his brother to explore the wonders of every alien race and make use of their new technologies. Human mechs could have become a lot stronger and more diverse if his own race became open-minded enough to allow aliens to assist in their development.

Alas, such a reality was too far away for the cosmopolitans living in this reality. Cory Grimly had little choice but to keep this dream to himself and his fellow cosmopolitans.

At this moment, Cory wondered whether one of his dreams had come true.

Instead of expecting an experimental version of the Ultimatum where the designers had gone crazy in trying to boost its power, he became confronted with a mess of a machine.

The Ultimatum was still vaguely recognizable as one, yet it looked completely wrong on every level.

It had grown thicker and fatter. It lost a leg but the remaining ones all grew in different shapes and lengths. Its heavy artillery cannons had been replaced by a random collection of weapons, one of which happened to be a completely useless hair follicle that his mech had already cut in half!

The creepiest part about the machine was the human-like head that appeared to be locked in an eternal scream.

Even though the head was mounted towards the front, it was somehow able to rotate and turn so that it directly faced the intruder that had jumped on top of its back.

The second-creepiest part about this abomination of a mech was that parts of it had been replaced by organic matter!

There was no rhyme and reason for this substitution as many parts had been replaced with disgusting biomatter for no clear reason.

It made Cory feel as if his space knight was standing on top of an alien that had undergone a failed cybernetic transformation.

Whatever the case, the situation at the moment did not give him the luxury to get to the bottom of this mystery.

All that mattered at the moment was to put an end to this monster mech's existence!

Since the bunker was exposed to vacuum, no noise propagated throughout the surroundings.

Each time the transphasic axe hacked against the thick back armor of Ultimatum One, it left another thick cut through the hyper alloy plating.

Though the axe inflicted serious damage with each strike, heavy artillery mech was designed to resist a lot of damage, so it was not easy to break past all of the armor layers!

It did not help that the mech's unknown transformation had caused its exterior to gain additional mass, some of which happened to be organic!

After breaching through another layer, the axe started to cut through flesh. A copious amount of red blood spurted from the cut that the space knight had made.

From the moment the axe cut through this layer of flesh, the monster mech started to thrash a lot more violently!

It was as if the mech was in pain!

The machine redoubled its efforts to repel or destroy the intruding machine, but its options were too limited.

Its Onyx Cannon was only able to aim forward. It was impossible for it to angle its massive barrel backwards. Even if it did, Cory Grimly had many different ways to counteract this move.

The triple-barreled laser cannon battery may have been able to strike at the space knight if not for the fact that the latter had simply placed one of its feet on top of the weapon mount!

The strange mortar was even less of a threat because the space knight had already chopped the weapon apart.

The only weapon system that could do something about the enemy mech was the black tentacle.

It had entered into a wrestling match with the arm of the space knight. Both sides tried to overwhelm each other, but found it difficult to gain the upper hand.

Frustrated by the interference produced by this alien-like limb, Cory commanded his mech to chop at the trunk of this limb, only for the transphasic axe to barely produce a cut.

For whatever reason, the durability of this tentacle exceeded that of the rest of the mech frame!

While that made it difficult for the space knight to get rid of it, there was no problem in holding it in place for the time being.

Its physical power was inferior to its resilience!

Cory went back to attacking the back surface of Ultimatum One. As long as he managed to get deep enough, he would definitely be able to crush the power reactor and other essential internal systems!

He just had to be a little patient.

"This is taking too much time!"

He was pretty sure that the Ultimatum model wasn't supposed to be this tough. The abnormal machine was twice or maybe even thrice as damage resistant as the thick layers forced the space knight to do a lot of work to get past all of the armor layers.

After hacking its way through multiple layers of alloy and flesh, the intruder mech finally managed to breach its way into the internals!

However, much to Cory's surprise, a lot of internal components that should have been vulnerable to his mech were all covered by thick organic growths.

While it was unclear what purpose they served, they most definitely added more obstacles to his goal.

"No matter! Extra flesh won't prevent your fall!"

The partially organic mech shook and thrashed even more when the axe fell onto the flesh surrounding the vital internal parts.

Though each of them had gone through a lot of weird changes, they still played an essential role in the functioning of the mech.

Blood and sparks erupted from the exposed machine. Its power dropped as Cory's space knight mercilessly tried to butcher the oversized mech with one chop at a time.

The cosmopolitan's eyes finally lit up when he detected the cockpit of the mech. It was covered with thick strands of flesh, but they were not that difficult for his transphasic axe to hack through.

After spilling a lot of blood, the space knight raised its axe one more time before letting its blood-soaked edge fall straight through the metallic shell that encompassed the cockpit!

"Die, human supremacist!"

More blood spilled out of the cockpit than any other organic injury that Cory Grimly's mech inflicted before.

Though it was normal to produce a few splotches of human blood that subsequently flash-froze into red crystals due to exposure to vacuum, the red liquid that spilled out from the cockpit far exceeded the blood volume of a small human body!

Cory Grimly grew confused. Was there even a human body inside? What was up with all of this blood and flesh? What sort of illogical machine had he decided to attack, and who was crazy enough to design this monstrosity?

"I need to finish this." He reminded himself.

The mutated mech still remained operational despite the extensive damage to its externals. Since destroying the cockpit was not enough to take it down, Cory would just have to wreck even more parts!

He felt as if he was attacking an alien battleship rather than a heavy artillery mech. There were so many strange parts that his space knight needed to destroy that this was taking far longer than it should!

Just as his machine raised its blood-soaked axe for yet another strike, Cory suddenly sensed a huge threat directed towards his machine!

Right now, his instincts were warning of threats coming from multiple directions! He did not have the time to determine whether it came from the machine he was attacking. He just knew that he needed to move his space knight out of the way before it got struck!

Just as he directed his machine to move away, the annoying black tentacle suddenly seemed to gain a burst of strength.

It had not only wrapped itself along one of the arms of the space knight, but also tried to pull the mech backwards as if it was an overly clingy girlfriend!

"Let go!" Cory barked as the free arm of his mech attempted to chop apart the tentacle with the transphasic axe, only to produce a moderate cut that was far from sufficient to get rid of this entanglement!

The space knight did not have the time to swing the axe another time.

Two super-heavy gauss rounds punched through the bulkheads positioned at the sides of the bunker and struck the upper body of the space knight at the same time!

One of the rounds severed the entangled arm, which inadvertently freed the space knight from the grip of the black tentacle!

However, the space knight had no time to take advantage of its freed state as the second super-heavy gauss round successfully managed to punch through the center of the torso!

Its damaged armor plating was unable to resist the force of the attack.

Instead, its brief resistance enabled the round to transfer even more kinetic energy upon impact, causing the entire mech frame to shake and ultimately tear itself apart as it failed to absorb the excessive forces!

The deformed round ultimately managed to push its way through the deformed armor plating and disintegrating components before rushing right through the external hull plating of the combat carrier and off into space!

"It's gone!"

"Cory Grimly's transphasic space knight has been demolished! There is nothing left intact aside from a pair of legs!"

The greatest threat to the monster mech had unexpectedly met its end due to a surprise attack from two other Ultimatums that had attacked from other locations inside the ship!

The two heavy artillery mechs had to utilize its slow legs to leave their bunkers and navigate as closely to the bunker that held Ultimatum One as possible, all the while making sure to remain discreet enough to keep Cory Grimly in the dark!

The two Ultimatums finally stopped a fair distance away from the bunker. They had managed to get a lot closer, but they did not dare to go too close.

They ultimately put their trust in the power of their Onyx Cannons and bet on their ability to punch through multiple bulkheads before striking their targets!

The Pellicky Praetorians had become extremely thankful for the fact that the main weapons of these newfangled mechs had proven themselves to be strong enough to complete this crucial task!

"We're saved!"

Chapter 5686 Professor Vector Loban

5686 Professor Vector Loban

The battlefield no longer resembled a quagmire.

It had become a giant, expanding junkyard.

Debris and broken parts littered the surrounding space. Broken mechs, broken combat carriers and broken alien warships spread across space in every direction.

A lot of pieces were bound to get caught by the local planet's gravity well. They might even get pulled in and crash onto the surface, causing a lot of devastation to its recently terraformed ecosystem.

Other hazards also existed as faltering power generators exploded after reaching their limits and previously unexploded ordnance blew up for one reason or another.

Further complicating the state of the debris field was that a lot of survivors from both sides of the conflict managed to survive the battle that had recently come to an end.

Both humans and aliens of two distinct races still clung to life in the more intact pieces of ship wreckage or inside the escape pods flung into space.

One of the trends of the Red War was that the victor always laid complete claim to the spoils.

The loser of a battle had no way of retaining any control over the battlefield. All of the debris, intact goods and survivors in the area completely fell at the mercy of the winners of the battle.

This dynamic enriched many human and alien groups!

Not only did the winners usually receive rich rewards from the Red Two or the Red Cabal for inflicting a serious blow against their foes, but they could also look forward to salvaging a lot of valuable parts and materials, thereby enabling them to make up for their losses and strengthen their forces even further!

Unfortunately for the four surviving mercenary forces, their losses this time were a bit too big.

The Pellicky Praetorians had suffered moderate losses. The mercenary outfit could make up for the loss in mechs and mech pilots easily enough, but starships were a different matter.

Commander Pellicky had made the strategic decision to utilize her combat carriers as decoys and damage sponges.

While the results vindicated her strategy, it did not make the aftermath look any nicer!

Starships represented hard currency in the new frontier!

Each interstellar vessel granted autonomy and strength to their owners. No matter how outdated or how much their condition had deteriorated, they still held a lot of value simply by virtue of being able to move while carrying lots of cargo!

The Pellicky Praetorians had lost two-thirds of their combat carriers. If the loss of mechs hadn't been so exaggerated, they might even have to discard a few mechs in poor condition because they couldn't fit into the remaining hulls anymore!

The losses suffered by the Five Fingers Club, the Rutherford Family and the Desiccators were roughly comparable.

The Rutherfords became especially devastated as their more powerful and expensive assets could not be easily replaced now that they had fallen from grace. They no longer had access to better goods and services as their old allies no longer respected them enough to provide favored treatment.

The patriarch of the Rutherford Family sounded especially morose.

"If we do not manage to obtain enough compensation from the Red Two for foiling this cosmopolitan conspiracy, then we must put an end to this costly venture. We have been blinded by greed, so much so that we have agreed to become footsoldiers in a war that should actually be fought by the mechers and the fleeters."

Perhaps the only party that actually had reason to celebrate this pyrrhic victory were the Desiccators.

Their losses had been great, but their mechs and starships had never been the best to begin with. It may just be possible for them to completely replenish their losses so long as they earned enough war merits from this victory.

However, the real reason why the Desiccators celebrated this victory so much was because they obtained a lot of alien bodies to indulge in their sick fantasies!

No matter whether the aliens were alive or dead, the Desiccators took as many as they could. They engaged in insane rituals where they doused themselves in alien blood while wearing the chopped body parts on their heads or across their bodies.

They even built a massive pile of alien skulls inside one of their starships to serve as a monument for this great victory!

Commander Pellicky did not enjoy the group meetings at all. Each time they met in person or in a virtual setting, she would have to hold in her disgust whenever her eyes laid on the leader of this sick gathering.

The old man's burned with fanatical glee as he wrapped himself up in a coat made out of carved strips of nunser hide. The oversized skull of a nunser commander wrapped around his head, while parts of the hooves had been installed over his arms and legs.

If not for the man's considerable augmentations and powered exoskeleton frame, he wouldn't have been able to bear the weight of all of these heavy nunser body parts!

"The forces of darkness have been sated by our sacrificial offerings. Our doom has just been postponed. We need more bodies. If you have recovered more of them, please trade them to us. We are more than willing to give up some of our other spoils in order to obtain more bodies. The nunser bodies are especially precious to us. If they are still alive, then that is even better! The suffering of a dying nunser tastes the sweetest to the dark forces that lurk in our shadows."

Everyone else looked disgusted when they heard the cult leader ramble on about his justifications to indulge in his twisted habits. How the man even managed to run a somewhat functional mercenary outfit was a mystery.

"You may have... our share of aliens." The Rutherford Patriarch said without bothering to do a good job at hiding his disgust. "We prefer to obtain phasewater in exchange, but we are willing to accept other high-grade exotics as well."

The Dessicator leader suddenly dropped his grin and stared unnervingly at the uptight patriarch. "Do not play us for fools. We will only give you a small share of our phasewater in exchange for those bodies. If you think you can take advantage of us, then pray that the forces of darkness will not devour you when you least expect it. I would love to wear your face on my own one day."

Everyone else shuddered at those words.

Commander Pellicky cleared her throat. "Let us dispense with the threats and continue to allocate the spoils."

The surviving mercenaries continued to police the battlefield while waiting for the follow up. Not only had they contracted a professional salvage company to do the hard work of salvaging and transporting back most of the debris, but they also requested the mechers to stop by in order to address a few difficult concerns.

It normally took a week or maybe two weeks for the mechers to dispatch one of their representatives to a battlefield.

This time, the mechers prioritized this matter so much that they immediately dispatched a fast destroyer.

The small warship that was clearly built for speed arrived in less than three days!

Once the superdrive-equipped vessel arrived in orbit of the planet, Commander Pellicky immediately invited the mechers to the Hooligan Barke.

"Please forgive us for not being able to accommodate you as well as we would have liked." The female mercenary commander said as she wore a vacuum-sealed suit of armor. "The hull breaches and the intrusion of hostile mechs has caused much of my flagship to become exposed to vacuum. Sealing all of the breaches is not our highest priority at the moment."

"It is of little consequence." A Senior Mech Designer wearing a high-tech hazard suit responded. "Is the... anomaly stored in an air-sealed chamber?"

"Yes, professor. We... did not dare to move it or disturb it too much. It is still positioned in its original bunker. We have taken the liberty to patch up all of the gaps in a hurry and repressurize the

chamber. Other than that, we have done little aside from trying to ascertain whether the mech pilot is still alive and how we can assist in restoring its condition."

Professor Vector Loban looked inquisitive as he continued to navigate the debris-strewn corridor.

"The footage that you have transmitted to us shows that the anomaly has not only gained a lot of organic matter, but has also released an excessive quantity of blood, more than what her volume should reasonably be able to contain."

"That is correct, professor. We have made rough estimates on how much blood has spilled from its 'wounds'. It has been bleeding for hours until it has gradually regenerated and sealed many of its open wounds. Enough blood has spilled onto the deck to fill up the entire volume of the transformed mech by two-and-a-half times. It doesn't make sense. There is nothing aboard our ship that can possibly supply so much blood."

"Have you analyzed the composition of the blood?"

"We did. We repeated the process more than a dozen times with five different lab machines installed on multiple vessels. They have all returned the same data. The measured samples are a near-exact match of Pilot Yuri Enfame's blood. The only anomaly is that it contains additional traces of hyper materials that we are unable to identify. We do not understand their purpose and we have suspended any further investigation when we concluded that we are not equipped to handle this incident."

The mercenary commander continued to supply a few more observations until they arrived before one of the side entrances of the bunker.

A squad of infantry soldiers permanently guarded the sealed bunker in order to prevent anyone from intruding and gawking at the monstrosity.

Once they passed through the reinforced hatch, they beheld the powerful 'cyborg mech' that had entered into a dormant state at this time.

"Impressive." Professor Vector Loban uttered. "As a biomech designer, I have designed and studied many mechs that combine both metallic and organic parts. Those are all carefully engineered works where there are clear and obvious reasons why the parts must be derived from conventional or organic technology. This... this is pure chaos. I cannot see any order or logic in this partial organic transformation."

"What... what does that mean, professor?"

"It is a strong indicator that there is no direction to its transformation process. It is likely as you have said. This is a purely accidental incident that is not driven by any conscious intent. Alas, that will also complicate our investigation. It will be much more difficult for us to ascertain the true cause behind this course of events. Is this a one-of-a-kind accident, or is it triggered by a major design flaw that the famous designer of this mech model has overlooked?"

The implications were enormous! If it turned out that the Ultimatum could trigger a catastrophic transformation that caused its mech pilot to disappear, then that would spark a huge amount of outrage throughout human space!

The safety of the highly popular Ultimatum line would fall into doubt. The mech community might even begin to harbor doubts about the safety of the LMC's other living mech models!

The outcome of this investigation could potentially ruin the business prospects of one of the most prominent new mech designers of his generation!

Naturally, the mechers needed to treat this matter extremely seriously. It was fortunate that Professor Vector Loban was close enough to respond the fastest to this acute incident.

As a member of the Transhumanist Faction, he was more than willing to help Professor Larkinson by massaging his results.

Of course, the premise of this was that the Ultimatum model was genuinely not dangerous and at fault.

The RA Senior Mech Designer proceeded to study the dormant and healing monster mech carefully. He had a feeling that if he poked too hard, he might not receive a friendly response!

Chapter 5687 What Is This Thing?

5687 What Is This Thing?

The Premier Branch located on the surface of New Constantinople VIII had become a lot livelier in the span of a few months.

The Larkinson Clan had gradually started to hire more first-raters to run its various offices in this first-class branch.

Many of the new hires were Terrans. The Premier Branch had to filter out a lot of unsuitable people in order to end up with a relatively small batch of personnel that was both competent and willing to commit to the clan.

The Design Department had also become a lot more active than before. The 25 second-class Journeyman Mech Designers recruited on Borteale III had acclimated to their new lives and truly saw themselves as Larkinsons.

Gloriana carefully supervised them and made sure to put all of their skills to good use. There were a lot of existing mech lines that needed to be updated to the Hyper Generation.

Fortunately, each of the new hires were competent enough to be able to work effectively in design teams. The technological complexity of most older mech models such as the Ferocious Piranha and the Crystal Lord was not too high.

Ves only occasionally had to drop by in order to upgrade the living mechs to the fourth generation.

Different from living mechs of older stock, the fourth generation introduced a lot of advantages, such as an easier transition to a third order living mech, mech cultivation methods and Ascension Runes.

The early generation mechs had all been designed during the Age of Mechs, so they missed out on many of the benefits that became available at the start of the Age of Dawn.

Ves couldn't wait to transform all existing living mechs into their most modern hyper mech versions!

He predicted that his products would become even more powerful and popular as a result!

As development of these mass production models continued according to schedule, Ves also spent a lot of time and effort on studying high technologies typically used in first-class multipurpose mech models.

There was so much for him to study in depth that he simply did not have the time to master each and every field as extensively as he would have liked!

So many new possibilities opened up for him as he gradually became proficient in the application of plasma weapon tech, support link tech, minidrive tech, active field repair systems and more.

High technologies were extravagant in cost, but their power was usually worth it to those that could afford them. The power gap between first-class and second-class mechs was so great that they shouldn't even be treated as products of the same category.

The technological diversity was also so much greater due to how much crazy stuff suddenly became possible that the variety in first-class multipurpose mechs was practically endless!

First-class mech designers no longer strictly adhered to the definitions of the classical mech archetypes.

A heavy mech equipped with lots of artillery weapons might look as if it was vulnerable in melee combat, but that was not necessarily the case when it suddenly transformed into a bipedal form and started to swing absurdly long plasma swords in wide, sweeping attacks.

A lighter and smaller mech may look vulnerable when struck, but when it was equipped with a powerful azure shield generator and an energy link receiver, it could continually keep its mech frame spotless as long as there was a supporting unit nearby that continually supplied energy.

There were many examples such as these that completely defied the logic of lesser mech design. Creativity and imagination became a lot more important as first-class multipurpose mechs had to rely on massive synergies between their miniaturized parts to defeat the competition.

Ves understood that even if he obtained the bare minimum qualifications to design a first-class mech, he would only be able to develop a very limited range of competitive mechs by himself.

He would have to team up with other mech designers who possessed much greater expertise in other advanced fields in order to truly realize a mech that was powerful enough to match the exceedingly high standards of the first-class mech community.

It made him feel more excited because there would always be new and fancy tech for him to discover and incorporate into his designs!

As a mech designer who craved novelty, first-class mechs sounded like a dream to him because he would never get bored by running out of original new mech concepts one day.

As Ves continued to progress on multiple levels, the only priority that was not making as much progress was the Dark Zephyr Mark III Project.

Gloriana's decision to commit to upgrading the Dark Zephyr into a true archemech added a lot of difficulties to what should have been a more straightforward upgrade project.

Even when Gloriana was spending MTA merits like water, her Arache 01 implant set could only do so much in speeding up her comprehension of the more advanced and obscure facets of archetech.

Most researchers that had delved into archetech only excelled in one specific aspect of this alien tech base. They had very little to teach in other areas, which forced Gloriana to hire many different tutors, some of whom were not immediately available for one reason or another.

Aside from these difficulties, it also took a lot of effort for her to pass on her teachings.

Since Ves declined to commit too much in archetech, he had much less time to devote on studying archetech. It took longer for him to comprehend the basic principles and simple applications, but that was far from being able to design a mech entirely out of archemetal.

There was no way for him to make major contributions in the design of the Dark Zephyr Mark III for the foreseeable time, so it was no surprise that this upgrade project fell behind schedule.

Venerable Tusa Billingsley-Larkinson would just have to wait a few extra months for his living expert mech to get its long-awaited upgrade.

The other Larkinson expert pilots also had to wait longer as well because there was little point in upgrading their aging machines without mastering archetech to a sufficient degree.

While Ves increasingly began to question his decision to support Gloriana's initiative, he suddenly received an unexpected visit from the mechers.

"What... is this?" He questioned shortly after he got teleported inside the cargo bay of a fast destroyer.

"This is one of your products that we would like for you to investigate." Professor Vector Loban explained. "Its former owner calls it the Yuri Machine, named after the original pilot that has mysteriously disappeared when the mech has undergone a completely accidental transformation, or at least as far as we know."

"Uh, I think you need to start at the beginning."

Professor Loban obliged the request. He summarized the circumstances of the battle where the recently acquired Ultimatum UDS-550 piloted by Yuri Enfame abruptly transformed into a half-organic monstrosity.

"So your greatest guess is that the Ultimatum has actually merged with the mech pilot?" Ves puzzlingly asked. "That is... an interesting theory. I thought that only peak ace pilots can start the Mech Body Merger Process."

"That is not entirely correct, Professor Larkinson. There have been instances of operation union and corporeal union in the past. They usually involve experiments centered around boundary-pushing biomechs. Most experiments ended in failure, but there are occasional cases of partial successes. If the Yuri Machine was the result of a deliberate experiment, then it can be considered a partial success as well. This makes this case much more interesting."

Ves made his stance clear. "I am not involved with what has happened to this mech! I am already busy enough. I have no reason to randomly induce a mech that I have never come into contact with to start a weird and uncontrollable transformation process that has somehow caused it to absorb a lot of E energy and merged with its own mech pilot! Even if I want to conduct such a crazy experiment, I would do it here where I can supervise and monitor the entire process."

"We are not suspecting you of any impropriety. We merely wish to obtain answers. Is this a unique accident, or should we expect this to happen again in future battles? If it becomes apparent that this is a possibility that is inherent to the Ultimatum model, is it possible to replicate this transformation process in a lab environment? We have many more questions."

"I get it." Ves said. "I can understand why you guys are so concerned, but why bring this to me? You could have kept this to yourself."

"Our faction prizes your continued association with us." Professor Loban responded. "You are one of our most effective agents of change. Many of your inventions have begun to make a greater impact on our society. We do not want you to slow down your progress because you have been beset by major scandals that have put the safety and stability of your living mechs under question."

That caused Ves to frown. He could not explain what had happened to the so-called Yuri Machine. His living mechs were supposed to grow, but not in an extreme manner! He could think of no reason why the growth of a seemingly normal copy of the Ultimatum UDS-550 went out of control to the point of disregarding the safety and wellbeing of its pilot!

"Let's get this over with." He sighed. "I suppose the first answer that you want to obtain is to figure out whether the original mech pilot is still alive in there, am I correct?"

Professor Loban nodded. "Yes. According to my own examination, the Yuri Machine has gained a large amount of biomatter, so much so that approximately 39 percent of her total mass is organic. A part of the biological tissue is converted from metallic mech components, but much of it is actually generated from the large-scale conversion of E energy as far as we know."

"What?! Really? That... should not be possible." Ves said in a disbelieving tone. "As far as I know, only god pilots and maybe a few other similar entities should be capable of this feat."

"I am only sharing our own observations with you. We do not have any further answers. We hope that your investigation may provide us with the answers to this question and more."

Ves no longer stalled and cautiously began his examination of the so-called Yuri Machine.

Even though the mechers had implemented a lot of safeguards to prevent the machine from lashing out and inflicting damage to its surroundings, Ves was reluctant to get close.

He cautiously observed the Yuri Machine from a comfortable distance and began to make a lot of interesting observations.

"This machine is a mess." He said.

"What do you mean by that, Professor Larkinson?"

"I always design my living mechs with a specific focus and purpose in mind. I try to avoid adding irrelevant stuff to their spiritual foundations because that causes them to disperse their strength. The Yuri Machine... is the opposite to what an Ultimatum should be. It has absorbed a lot of destruction energy, but it is of very mixed origin. The mech has also absorbed a lot of other related junk in the process. I bet that these are the primary culprits behind the Yuri Machine's highly chaotic and random transformation process. There are parts to its spiritual foundation that remind me of aliens and their warships. They don't belong in an Ultimatum at all. I am completely in the dark why this living mech has malfunctioned so badly to the point where it has become part alien and part warship."

The Yuri Machine had become an impossible existence. Ves could not imagine himself replicating this exact mech even if he utilized all of the same materials.

Reproducing all of the parts as closely as possible before assembling them together into a near-exact replica of the Yuri Machine was useless as the mech would not even be able to function!

As Ves continued his examination, it became increasingly clearer to him that this monster machine had transcended its nature as a mech!

It had become a completely new kind of object that superficially resembled a mech, but was actually an entirely different thing altogether!

Chapter 5688 An Unprecedented Transformation

5688 An Unprecedented Transformation

The Yuri Machine was horrifying on many levels.

Ves had always designed his mechs to serve as a partner and a friend to their mech pilots.

The Ultimatum was no exception to this rule. Though he liked to be adventurous now and then, he never joked around whenever he designed a mass production mech.

He tried his best to not incorporate any extreme experimental technologies in the products meant to be sold and utilized by the public.

This was also one of the reasons why he designed the Transcendent Punisher Mark III at the same time as the Supremo Project as it was known at the time.

The Transcendent Punisher Mark III was not only a lot more powerful due to being a quasi-first-class transphasic hyper mech, but also contained a few experimental features such as the Divine Foresight Mark I Neural Interface.

The latter would never be allowed on a commercial mech as it put into question the long-standing notion that mechs were always safe to pilot.

Once people on a larger scale began to assume that piloting a mech could cause a lot of harm to the mech pilot, then the dominance of mechs would definitely be shaken.

That could not be allowed to happen!

Fortunately, Ves had no intention of spreading the Divine Foresight Mark I outside of his Larkinson-exclusive mechs.

He had made similar decisions on other features that were not as prominent but made similar tradeoffs between performance and safety.

The Ultimatum was already strong enough in other areas that Ves never felt the need to resort to desperate measures to elevate its combat effectiveness even further.

Ves always assumed that he had struck a good balance that turned the Ultimatum into a product that mech pilots could entrust their lives to. Unless the Rubarthans who fabricated and sold this particular mech to the Pellicky Praetorians had messed up along the way, he could not come up with a logical reason why this incident had taken place.

"I can partially deduce what has happened to transform a perfectly normal copy of the Ultimatum into the Yuri Machine, but I cannot tell you why." He told the envoy of the Transhumanist Faction.

"Please tell us what you can, Professor Larkinson. I did not expect to obtain all of the answers when I brought this machine to you. Even scattered information is of considerable value."

That caused Ves to direct a questioning look at the RA Senior.

"What is this all about, Professor Loban? Why are you Transhumanists so interested in this machine? Don't tell me it is because you want to protect my reputation. I can do that myself. I am not afraid of any doubts, especially since this is the first and only time that such an incident has happened."

Vector Loban smiled back. "Have you forgotten our goals and ambitions already? Our faction is a gathering of people who endeavor to promote human evolution. Our initial target has always been to find a means for humans to combine with mechs in order to attain the ultimate form. We have always regarded god pilots as the current pinnacle of human evolution because they are the only true success cases. Other attempts to initiate a partial or complete fusion between a human and a mech have always ended in varying degrees of failure. Even the closest successes come with severe flaws and implications that make it untenable for mass adoption."

Now that the Transhumanist had mentioned this, Ves finally connected the dots. He stared back at the Yuri Machine and began to look a lot more hesitant about getting involved in this crazy affair.

"You... are kidding right? You want to turn yourself into this monstrosity?"

"Oh, we are being very serious." Professor Loban grinned. "Just think of it! God pilots themselves have proven that combining the human mind with the raw power of a mech results in the perfect combination! What is not to like? On the premise that we retain our full faculties that we once did as humans, our newly improved forms can make us as powerful, physically immortal and capable of applying endless upgrades! When we combine this package with E-technology, we may be able to develop a method that may make us as powerful as a god pilot one day!"

Ves understood the significance of the Yuri Machine a lot better.

Not only did it look like a case of a physical merger between a human and a mech, but it had also demonstrated a huge amount of power when it was active!

Although it was unclear whether the huge outbreak of power was temporary or permanent in nature, it at least signified that it was possible for the Yuri Machine to wield as much power as a combination between an ace pilot and an ace mech.

What was even more important was that it could do all of this without needing to go through the arduous tests that mech pilots needed to subject themselves to in order to push their willpower beyond their limits!

The resonance meters of the mechs and starships in the battle that led to the accidental transformation of the heavy artillery mech had not detected any instance of extraordinary willpower from beginning to end.

The mechs possessed much more sophisticated sensor systems, and they had not detected any form of true resonance either.

Blinky had specifically tried to look for this as well, but the sensitive companion spirit did not sense anything that felt comparable to the willpower of an expert candidate, expert pilot or ace pilot.

Ves strongly believed that Yuri Enframe had not broken through during that battle. It was nearly impossible that this ordinary mech pilot was the culprit behind the strange transformation.

"This is going to be difficult. I need to get a closer look at the Yuri Machine in order to glean more clues out of this anomaly. Is it safe for me to step closer?"

Professor Loban nodded. "We have reengineered this compartment to reinforce the containment of the Yuri Machine. We have made a special effort to strengthen the energy shields and other defensive measures, both to protect this machine from external interference and prevent it from posing a threat to others. Several first-class multipurpose mechs that are specifically configured for this mission are stationed right outside. Please do not restrain yourself. Get as close as you want. The Yuri Machine has yet to rouse itself from its dormancy, and we do not expect it to unless it perceives a threat. It has only ever taken action against obvious enemies, no matter whether they are human or alien in nature."

"I see. That is good to know."

In response to this information, Ves decided to adopt a friendly approach rather than a subtle one. He loosened his own restraints and started to radiate a soft glow that made people feel healthier and more alive.

Ves had confirmed many times that it had a positive effect on mechs, particularly because it identified him as their progenitor.

He was the reason why they had been granted the gift of life!

Once Ves had made his adjustments, he slowly approached the Yuri Machine, taking care not to make any moves that might startle the sleeping machine.

"So far, so good."

When Ves came close enough for the mutated mech to get into contact with his glow, the Yuri Machine did not exhibit any elevated activity.

He was able to get a better feel of the former living mech now that he came closer. Blinky was able to gain a much more detailed look at the monstrosity's spiritual foundation.

"What have you discovered?"

"The Yuri Machine... has gained a lot of power. I can truly see why it has demonstrated power comparable to an ace pilot and ace mech. I think that the latter can easily beat the former in a real fight, but that does not detract from how amazing it is to gain so much power right away. That said, the sequelae are much bigger and more severe. From a spiritual level, I do not detect anything that distinctly feels like a human inside of this monstrosity. I can recognize human-like traits, but it is as if Yuri and his living mech has been stuffed into a blender before throwing a lot of other random junk before mixing it altogether."

That was not what Professor Loban wanted to hear. "So when this Yuri Machine regains consciousness, we will not be able to interact with the pilot known as Yuri Enframe, but with a new personality that consists of an amalgamation of other factors?"

"Yes, but there are different ways to merge stuff together. You can do a complete fusion or a more segregated one where the different entities still retain their distinct personalities. The manner which led to the creation of the Yuri Machine is especially messy, so this has resulted in the complete breakdown of all distinct personalities. If we wake up this machine, it will probably be unable to demonstrate any truly higher order thinking processes. This is because it does not have any cohesive personality. It is like a disorganized hive mind that is only able to act on instinct if at all. I see no reason why anyone would want more of this. A piloted mech is better in any way."

Perhaps this was not what Professor Loban and the Transhumanists wanted to hear, but Ves had to be honest. He really did not want them to study the Yuri Machine and attempt to turn themselves into similar monsters!

"Then... is it possible for you to 'untangle' the parts of Yuri Enfame that have blended into this machine and reform them so that he can regain his mind?"

That was an interesting question. Ves immediately stroked his hairless chin as he thought about the viability of this approach.

"Theoretically, I can make the attempt. I cannot guarantee the quality of the results. Not only do I lack practice in this highly invasive procedure, but I am pretty sure that not all pieces that make up Yuri Enfame's spirituality have remained intact. Whatever happened that forcibly integrated him into his own living mech has caused parts of him to get destroyed or lost. Even if I piece him together, he won't be entirely whole anymore."

"That is already a good outcome, Professor Larkinson. Please proceed right away."

"You want me to do it right now?"

"We have already collected enough data of the Yuri Machine in its current state."

"If I attempt to do what I have just described, there is a chance that this might go terribly wrong. The Yuri Machine might get the impression that it is under attack."

"We will be ready to respond if that happens. Please. This is important. We must know whether there is any hope to recover the consciousness of Pilot Enfame."

Seeing that the mechers understood the risks, Ves proceeded to get to work. He sent out Blinky who cautiously approached the Yuri Machine's formidable spiritual foundation.

Whether because it was in deep sleep or because it took comfort in the presence of its original progenitor, the Yuri Machine still did not make any dangerous moves.

"Mrow."

Blinky started to get to work by carving out pieces of Yuri Enfame and piecing them back together again.

Ves remained fully vigilant in case the machine suddenly became hostile, but it never woke up even when Blinky had torn and rearranged large parts of its spiritual foundation!

This suggested that the Yuri Machine had at least subconsciously recognized that Ves meant no harm to its existence.

However, Ves felt it was more likely that the Yuri Machine had already endured so much soul-tearing pain that Blinky's gentler treatment was nothing in comparison!

Whatever the cause, the operation proceeded a lot smoother than anyone thought.

By the time Blinky had completed his effort, the Yuri Machine still appeared stable, which was a massive relief!

Ves almost couldn't believe what he had done.

He had effectively recovered as many spiritual fragments of Yuri Enfame as possible and formed them together while making sure that they did not get separated from the rest of the Yuri Machine.

In other words, he turned Yuri Enfame into the companion spirit of the mutated Ultimatum!

This was a completely unprecedented phenomenon!

Just the very notion that it was possible to turn an actual human into a companion spirit of a living mech was enough to shatter many people's minds!

"Here comes the important part." He said. "Let's see whether I managed to pull it off. I am not sure if I have recovered enough of the mech pilot for him to regain consciousness again."

The most important moment had arrived.

Chapter 5689 Reconstructed Personality

5689 Reconstructed Personality

Ves had 'created' an unprecedented lifeform.

When Professor Vector Loban initially arrived out of the blue and foisted the Yuri Machine onto him, Ves grew incredibly concerned that he was at fault for what had happened.

Even now, he still did not know whether the Ultimatum lost control and devoured Yuri Enfame on its own accord!

This was part of the reason why he felt driven to 'restore' Yuri's shredded spirit and reconstruct him into a more human whole.

Though Ves made it sound easy, it was actually quite a delicate and challenging ordeal.

People's spiritualities weren't actually made out of intangible building blocks that he could assemble and disassemble at will.

Unlike mechs whose physical components could be swapped in and out with little consequences, any major change to any aspect of a human would induce massive and possibly traumatic consequences to their psyche!

It went without saying that Yuri experienced one of the greatest pains imaginable.

His soul got torn apart before being devoured by his own living mech piece by piece!

The Ultimatum hadn't been gentle about it as it somehow went out of control as well!

The agony suffered by the pilot as he was being absorbed against his will amplified the negative consequences to the Yuri Machine and most definitely fueled its chaotic mutations.

This was why Yuri's recovery became so important. Ves needed answers, and since no one else could give him what he needed, he hoped that the pilot himself might be able to fill up the many gaps in the story.

"The mech is not responding." The visiting RA mech designer noted.

"It is still in a recovering state I think." Ves speculated. "We can probably wake it up if we stimulate it, but the risks of doing so are... considerable. I have no idea whether my attempt to piece Yuri back together has actually improved his condition. It may be that the rest of the Yuri Machine will try to assimilate him again, thereby causing further trauma and losses."

"We understand the risks, but we have a great degree of confidence in your abilities. As I have already stated, we have taken all of the possible safety precautions aboard this ship. Please proceed."

Ves just shrugged and tried to wake up the Yuri Machine as gently as possible.

Since there was no real cockpit anymore that contained any activation buttons, Ves utilized Blinky to gently poke at the machine's dormant spirituality.

Though he would have liked to wake up Yuri alone, the fact that he was an extension of the mutated spiritual foundation meant they were a package deal.

In order to wake up Yuri, Ves had to wake up the monster as well!

It took several attempts to prod the Yuri Machine awake. The half-organic machine had gained a lot more traits associated with organic lifeforms due to its mysterious transformation. Sleep was an intensely beneficial process that enabled any organism to accelerate the recovery of its physical and non-physical condition.

Getting interrupted was not pleasant to say the least. When the Yuri Machine finally received enough stimulation to come online, it did so by producing both noise and heat!

THRUUUUUM.

A low booming noise hummed from the monster as its organic and mechanical parts started to come online.

The four weapon modules mounted on the back began to twitch and move as if they were ready to open fire in an instant.

The powerful Onyx Cannon slowly began to accumulate a charge, not because the Yuri Machine wanted to fire it right away, but instead wanted to keep it on standby in case its firepower was needed.

As the powerful machine continued to come to life, its strong but mixed spiritual foundation became more active, causing the machine's behavioral pattern to follow a confused and inconsistent set of orders.

When the machine's powerful sensors finally started to register its immediate surroundings, it immediately started to get alarmed at the unfamiliar environment!

However, when it detected the presence of Ves and the absence of any obvious threats, it did not feel as threatened enough to lash out. The symbol of the Red Association was placed on the bulkheads and Ves' active glow did much to reassure the machine that it was not surrounded enemies at the mind.

"Please remain calm. Commander Pellicky passed you over to the mechers in order to fix your faults." Ves spoke directly to the Yuri Machine. "Do you remember what you used to be? You used

to be a living mech, a copy of the Ultimatum UDS-550 that I designed a few months ago. Do you remember your roots? Please think back on who you used to be. Are you still the living mech that is made to serve its mech pilot and become his battle partner?"

The monstrous machine started to shift its enormous body. Its uneven legs looked as if they were about to move, but they did not do so as there was nowhere obvious to go. Ves had the sense that the machine was confused more than anything.

It would have been much simpler if a clear and obvious enemy was in the vicinity. At least it knew what to do, as it still retained most of its combat instincts.

This was an unprecedented and unclear situation to the mutated mech. It was alone and isolated from any obvious ally. Its progenitor, which it vaguely managed to recognize, was a friendly presence, but it did not really ask to be reunited with its maker.

All the while, the Yuri Machine's more destructive and violent instincts constantly urged it to let go of everything and start to blast its entire surroundings!

There were even a few alien traces inside of its spiritual foundation that strongly pushed for turning its miniature laser cannon battery towards the two humans before opening fire!

This was why Ves and Professor Loban remained on guard. There was no telling what kind of impulses the Yuri Machine might indulge in at any moment of time. The fact that its Onyx Cannon and its other weapons continued to twitch showed that it was clearly warring from within!

"Remain calm. There are no enemies here. The aliens are far away and no human is under threat in this star system. I did not wake you up to fight, but rather because I wanted to talk with your mech pilot. He is still there, are you aware of that? You merged with your mech pilot, causing him to become a permanent part of you. Can you wake him up and present him to us? We would really like to talk to him. I know you can bring him forward. Please allow Yuri Enfame to come forward and speak to us. I am sure he would appreciate the opportunity to talk."

The mention of its mech pilot's name triggered a lot of associations to the Yuri Machine. It began to make a louder noise and almost tried to step forward.

Fortunately, the Yuri Machine eventually understood what Ves was asking. It froze and fell silent for half a minute before it became active again.

A projector suddenly came online and began to form a shaky image of Yuri Enfame as he was last seen!

The image of the man in a piloting suit was not exactly clean, but it did the job.

"Yuri?" Ves asked. "Are you awake?"

The projected form of the mech pilot did not appear to be in a good condition. He bent over and held his head as if he was suffering the worst migraine in the galaxy.

[Ahesciena.] The pilot said in a garbled and off-tone voice.

"What?"

[Hurt... I am hurt...]

"I know. There is little I can do about it. This may sound harsh, but please pull yourself together. I have tried my best to restore you, but I can't do anything else unless you tell me about your current condition. Do you still remember your name? Who are you? Who do you work for? What mech do you pilot?"

These were basic questions, but they were related to his core identity.

Even so, it looked as if Yuri had trouble recalling those basic points of information.

[I think... I remember. I am Yuri Enfame. Pilot and mercenary. I work for... Pellicky something.]

"Your employer is Pellicky Praetorians, founded by Commander Andrea Pellicky."

[I remember! Commander Pellicky has always... been good to me. Why... why don't I remember her face anymore?]

"There are certain problems with your memory." Ves said. "Don't think about what you cannot recall. Let us leave that aside for the time being. Focus on what you can recall instead. Do you remember your mech?"

[Of course I do! I received the first pick of Ultimatums bought by my commander. I became so happy and proud when I first piloted the machine.] It appeared that the pilot's memories of his mech were much stronger.

"Do you remember the live practice sessions where you put your new mech through its paces?"

[I do! It took so long for me to get accustomed to the limitations of the Onyx Cannons. The four artillery cannons were also powerful enough under the right circumstances. I spent so many hours trying to go deeper and activate its powerful abilities. Wait... my mech. What happened to my mech?] The pilot began to look dumbfounded as if he was just beginning to register the highly altered state of his current 'mech'.

"Yuri! Don't pay too much attention to your mech! It is still okay, in a manner of speaking. Let's focus on you and your life instead. Where did you grow up? Which mech academy did you attend?"

Ves attempted to divert the attention of the pilot, but Yuri looked increasingly more distressed as he was beginning to register how much his mech had changed since he was last in control!

[Why... why is my mech larger? Why has it become so bloated? What is the matter with all of this strange flesh embedded throughout the mech frame? WhY Does mY OnYx CanNon LooK like It Has Grown bOnE SpiKes!? WheRe Are tHe FoUr HeaVy aRtiLlerY CannOns? WhY Is TheRe A GIANT HAIR STICKING OUT OF MY MECH?! WHY DOES MY MECH HAVE AN ALIEN TENTACLE STICKING OUT OF ITS BACK?!] As Yuri started to become more and more freaked out about the state of his 'mech', the man's depiction started to look increasingly more distressed!

At the same time, the Yuri Machine reacted to his elevated state by becoming just as active as its human side!

The two started to mirror each other, which was exactly what Ves did not want to see.

The two weren't as separate as Ves thought!

If one of them began to panic, the other did so as well!

[WHY IS MY MECH LIKE THIS?!] Yuri roared in full-blown panic!

His monster machine echoed his cry by lashing out with its black tentacle and firing its laser cannons in a random direction!

Bang!

Frssssss!

Azure energy shields immediately came online and prevented the Yuri Machine's attacks from going anywhere.

Ves flinched. Even though he knew that there were a ton of protective measures in place, it was still scary for him to be so close to a mutated mech.

This was especially the case when the monster in question had powered up so much that its current attacks could give an expert mech a run for its money!

"It is beginning to absorb a lot of destruction E energy! It is charging up its transformed Onyx Cannon!"

"Not to worry, Professor Larkinson. Do not underestimate the defensive measures of our warship. You are not at risk. The Yuri Machine remains fully contained. First-class multipurpose mechs are just as powerful if not more."

"I am not too sure about that! Don't measure this mech by its physical characteristics or its historical performance! Everything about it defies common sense!"

[DIE ALIENS! DIE TRAITORS! IWEFXXE JUO KHALASI!]

BOOOOM!

The entire compartment shook as the Yuri Machine opened fire with its mutated Onyx Cannon!

Chapter 5690 Emergency Option

5690 Emergency Option

While a fast destroyer was far from the biggest and strongest warship that the Red Association had at its disposal, it was still a vessel that was built to fight in the main battles of the Red War.

She was built during the Hyper Generation but had undergone a quick refit that replaced many of her systems with hyper technology equivalents.

When the Yuri Machine opened fire, the out-of-control monstrosity expected to breach its way out of this unfamiliar cage!

Instead, the extremely powerful azure energy shields that surrounded it from every direction fully managed to withstand the power of its mutated Onyx Cannon!

Different from its other armaments, its Onyx Cannon had become subjected to largely focused evolution. It was the Ultimatum model's primary instrument of destruction, and it was also the weapon system that Yuri Enfame and his living mech cared about the most.

This resulted in focused evolution that not only caused the weapon to increase its caliber, but also increased its maximum charge quantity, enabling it to fling a projectile with greater speed and force than normal.

If that was not enough, the Yuri Machine had become so steeped in the power of destruction that it was able to absorb and channel a lot more destruction E energy than any ordinary living mech!

Yet despite all of this formidable power, the azure energy shields still remained intact after getting struck up close.

Even the shockwaves failed to spread beyond the confines of the energy cage!

Though Ves and Professor Loban retreated just to be safe, neither of them were at risk from the Yuri Machine. The vastly superior tech, materials and scale of the warship's defensive systems crushed any hope for the rogue machine to wreck anything.

Even so, this was hardly an ideal situation. The personality of Yuri clearly sustained a lot of damage, so much so that he was still suffering the same ailments as the rest of the monstrous machine!

BOOOOM!

The Yuri Machine kept moving and bumping against the azure energy shields while at the same time lashing out with all of its weapons systems.

Even its giant hair follicle started to slap at the energy barriers while accomplishing nothing in the process!

Ves looked ugly at this sight. Yuri had sounded so cognizant at first, but he eventually became lost in his memories of fighting against the cosmopolitans and the native aliens.

"How do you suggest we proceed, Professor Larkinson?" Vector Loban asked.

"Let's just tire him out." Ves suggested. "If you can keep this up, then do so. I think it is best to make the Yuri Machine realize that no one here is out to get it. There are no enemies and your ship is not its enemy. Once it has lost its steam, it should hopefully sober up and realize that it is not on the battlefield anymore."

They moved to a nearby compartment while the Yuri Machine continued to fire its Onyx Cannon in another useless attempt to break past the transphasic hyper energy shield.

Even if the mech was able to channel a lot more destruction energy, the base performance of the Onyx Cannon was still constrained by its second-class roots.

The fast destroyer's energy shields on the other hand were produced by genuine first-class warship-grade generators!

The difference in energy levels were simply too high for the Yuri Machine to overcome!

The situation might have become more concerning if the mutated mech demonstrated the same amount of power as its initial outburst during the battle, but that was clearly a temporary breakthrough event. Its normal strength was closer to that of an expert mech rather than an ace mech.

Even though Ves' first attempt to talk to Yuri Enframe had failed, he still made substantial gains.

Professor Loboan looked hopeful. "We are happy that you have made visible progress. We had... other options available to us, but we were optimistic about your chances to retrieve at least a part of Yuri's original personality. So long as a semblance of him remains intact, there is hope for a greater

recovery. We may not be able to restore what he has lost, but with proper guidance and education, he may regain his humanity by embracing his new life."

These words reminded Ves that the Yuri Machine still held a lot of value to the Transhumanists.

"Are you guys still trying to turn yourselves into mechs after you have witnessed how this can go wrong?"

"We cannot stop and doubt our goals just because we have encountered a number of setbacks. We have been striving for our ambition for centuries. We can afford to bide our time and explore many different research directions. This is hardly the only catalyst that is able to bring us closer to our ascension."

"There are other ways to gain power and longevity, you know." Ves pointed out. "The availability of E energy has made it possible to engage in cultivation once again. More and more people have begun to practice it. Even those that do not consciously engage in it are subconsciously growing stronger due to constant exposure to exotic radiation."

"We are well aware of that, Professor Larkinson. Our faction has been exploring this new and promising field since the beginning of the Age of Dawn. However, we are well aware of all of the faults of ancient cultivation approaches. We do not seek to return to the past and become another version of the Five Scrolls Compact. Our strength lies in our modern understanding of advanced technologies and our ability to develop advanced solutions. Rather than seek to transform ourselves into flawed beings, we can do better by combining both old and new theories to produce superior results that can easily exceed anything the ancients have attained. The Progenitors of Mechs have already shown us the way forward. Humanity's best path towards evolution is inextricably tied to mechs."

Ves was not so sure about that. The Transhumanists were all made out of mechers, so it was given that they were all biased towards mechs.

Was it truly the best idea to seek a more accessible way for humans to transcend their limitations by merging with mechs?

"I don't think the Yuri Machine is a good example to take lessons from. It has gained a lot of power, but its rapid growth process was too uncontrolled. I think it is clear that the lack of strong willpower is one of the reasons why it has become so messy. The Yuri Machine is the product of an accident rather than any deliberate intent. Even if you try to replicate it, there is a good chance that the results will also be subject to contamination."

"Any problem can be solved." Professor Loban said in a dismissive tone. "The condition of the Yuri Machine has striking parallels with your Carmine mechs. In both cases, the living mech and the mech pilot has developed a permanent bond. You could argue that the Yuri Machine is a future, if flawed, evolution of a Carmine mech. Do you agree with this statement?"

Ves could see what the Transhumanist was getting at. There was indeed a bit of convergence between the Yuri Machine and his Carmine mechs.

"Your characterization is not completely wrong, but not completely correct either. I don't consider the Yuri Machine to be an evolution of a Carmine mech. It has become something else entirely. In my ideal model of a Carmine mech, the mech and mech pilot will continue to develop a closer relationship with each other, but they should always maintain their distinct identities. What they

have established is a partnership that works best when they work together as different entities. The synergy they can produce is much greater than if they merge completely to the point where they have become one and the same."

Professor Loban nodded in understanding. "I see. It is not surprising that you chose to pay attention to this aspect. However, it can be argued that god pilots fall outside of your ideal state. They are always in total control."

"That is because they emerged before living mechs was a clear and distinct concept." Ves retorted. "The mech pilot is dominant because the mech was never supposed to possess a strong personality. This is different for my living mechs. I have explicitly designed them to serve as an equal partner to their human pilots. This should ideally be sustained all the way to god pilot. I cannot say what will happen once they merge with each other, but I suppose it is possible that the end result may look like a much more perfect and balanced version of the initial state of the Yuri Machine. However, if I am in charge, I would still like for the mech and mech pilot to remain distinct enough."

"Understood. This is a good ideal to pursue. Is it still possible for you to design a Carmine mech that can artificially induce a greater fusion that will ultimately result in a far-reaching physical and non-physical fusion between the mech and mech pilot?"

The Transhumanist sure possessed a lot of interest in Carmine mechs. Did he want to conduct experiments where human test subjects merged with their mechs just to see whether the former still remained distinct enough to live on as humans who happened to occupy the bodies of a mech?

"The development of the Carmine System has yet to reach the stage where it can induce such a fusion." Ves carefully answered. "Even if it was possible, I am seriously questioning whether it is desirable to add this function to my Carmine mechs. The mech pilot will have to sacrifice a lot just to permanently occupy the body of a mech. How will he possibly be able to live a normal life? Will the transformed 'mech' be treated as a human or an object?"

"We can address these issues at any time. What is important is whether this potential evolution of the Carmine System can produce a similar outbreak of strength to that of the Yuri Machine after its initial formation. Think of what has happened during this battle. The Pellicky Praetorians and their mercenary allies had been forced into an impossible situation. With alien warships at the front and cosmopolitan-aligned mechs pressing up from the rear, the defeat of the mercenary defenders had become a certainty. The anomalous transformation of the Ultimatum mech has changed everything. The Yuri Machine almost single-handedly turned this battle around and has snatched victory from the jaws of defeat."

"What are you getting at, Professor Loban?"

"Do you not see? Think of how many times this circumstance can be repeated if it is possible to replicate the transformation of the Yuri Machine! If you can successfully replicate this transformation process and embed it into your Carmine mechs as an intrinsic feature, then each Carmine mech pilot will have an emergency option at their disposal that can turn their own battles around. Think about it. Would you rather resign yourself to total defeat where all humans will lose their lives, or would you rather make the courageous decision to sacrifice your life as a human and embrace the machine in the hopes of fighting for a chance for your friends and comrades to live?"

That... was an astonishing idea!

Ves widened his eyes as he considered this extreme proposal.

Though it sounded problematic in several ways, it was completely beneficial from a utilitarian standpoint!

Red humanity was at war. People were struggling to contain the continuous alien incursions. Every defeat represented a massive loss of soldiers, mechs and starships.

If an evolved Carmine mech was able to give all of these losing forces a backup option, it may be possible to prevent much further losses so long as the Carmine mech pilot agreed to sacrifice his own wellbeing!

Now that the idea had entered his mind, Ves couldn't get rid of it. He felt it was his duty to explore whether it was possible to design such a mech.

"I need to take a closer look at the Yuri Machine."