

The Mech 5721

Chapter 5721 Versatile Uses

5721 Versatile Uses

As massive as his latest idea may be, this was not the time to explore it further.

Ves already became satisfied with obtaining the idea. This was the most crucial gain that he could make. Everything else that followed was a lot easier as he merely had to invest a lot of time in progressing his research.

The magnitude of this idea was so great that Ves almost lost interest in the Fey Shaper Contest.

However, his commitment to rewarding the participants of this contest prevented him from leaving right away. He needed to fulfill his obligations to the people who had spent a lot of effort into developing useful fey.

Ves and Jovy quickly completed their tour and developed a good enough understanding of all of the 50 fey submitted to the contest.

It did not take a lot of time for Ves to form a ranking based on his impressions and evaluations. He just had to ask himself whether he would rank one fey model on top of another and repeat this process many times until he came up with a final list.

Though he occasionally requested Jovy's opinions, Ves made sure that he was the one that decided the ranking.

Once he was done, Ves transmitted a message that requested the top 10 participants to get ready to present themselves on the stage.

People had already begun to move to a larger exhibition hall where the presentation was about to be held. Everyone grew more excited as they wanted to hear what the designer of the Fey Fianna thought about all of the interesting fey they had seen.

As Ves got ready to step up and address his audience behind a reinforced security screen, he idly asked a question to Jovy.

"What do you think about the ranking that I have formed?"

The Survivalist still appeared distracted from Ves' earlier revelations.

"Hm? Oh. I can understand the logic behind your decisions. The top 10 is compromised of a good mix of offensive, defensive and utility options. Personally, I think you have left out numerous utility-based solutions that should have earned a place in the top 10. Did you deliberately leave them out in order to add more variety?"

Ves nodded. "I did. Stuff like this is subjective to begin with, so the utility fey that lost out aren't entitled to place at the top. I think that it is inherently difficult to develop effective offensive and defensive fey that perform better than what is already possible, so the few successful attempts should be rewarded. The ecosystem of fey models needs to be healthy and varied enough to cater to every customer's needs. I don't want to strengthen the impression that the Fey Fianna can only effectively function as an auxiliary mech."

The Fey Fianna had a lot of potential when employed for offensive and defensive purposes. The model would lose out on a lot of sales if too many customers mentally dismissed it as a support machine.

That was not to say that Ves looked down on the decision to utilize the Fey Fianna for auxiliary purposes, but it was an enormous waste of its potential to lock it into this single role.

He hoped that by promoting a couple of excellent offensive and defensive options might encourage customers to be more flexible in the use of his drone mechs.

Minutes passed by as the main hall continued to get filled. Once everyone took their places, Ves hovered out into public view and looked down at the masses.

Eager and interested faces gazed up at Ves. The majority of attendees were ardent fans of the Fey Fiannas. Each of their lives had been positively impacted by his work.

It was these kinds of people that Ves worked hard to satisfy their needs. He wouldn't have become so successful without the support of so many loyal customers.

A smile appeared on his face as he began his introduction.

"Welcome to the closing phase of the Fey Shaper Contest. Half a year ago, I introduced a new mech line that has gone on to become a phenomenon in the second-class mech community. Even I did not anticipate that the Fey Fianna would catch on so quickly that it has become an integral component to the mech rosters of so many different organizations. Whether you value them for their ability to produce convincing decoys to the additional weight of firepower they add to your ranks, the Fey Fianna has undoubtedly saved many lives and resulted in the deaths of many aliens. Today, I intend to celebrate its success by highlighting ten of the most compelling fey models that have earned my appreciation."

Ten different fey flew in from the side. The crowd produced varying noises as they saw the selection arrayed below where Ves was hovering.

From the reactions that Ves could hear, his selection did not deviate too much from what others had expected. These were predominantly mech professionals who knew their craft well. They could spot a good machine when they were able to examine it properly.

"There are many deserving fey models among the top 50 that have passed the preliminary stages." Ves explained. "Just because 40 products have failed to make it to the top does not mean they are without merit. Each of them have their uses. They can be incredibly significant to mech forces that fight in a specialized manner. I encourage all of you to browse the full catalog and base your purchasing decisions depending on your actual needs rather than an overall score that does not take any specific context into account."

The heat disperser fey was a good example of that. It was a simple product with a single-minded use, but it could play such a major role in mech forces that relied far too much on energy weapons.

"That said, the top 10 all have qualities that enable them to stand out from the 40 other fey models that have failed to rise higher in the rankings. I would like to spend my time on going over the former and explain to you why I think they deserve their spots."

After transmitting a silent signal, 9 of the fey moved out of sight again, leaving just the machine that ranked at the bottom of the top 10.

"Let us begin with the work submitted by Miss Esbeth Sandhurst, the Trixie DARTER!"

A familiar information panel showed up again, displaying a familiar summary that gave anyone who had yet to examine the dragonfly-shaped fey a brief introduction to the fey model.

The female Journeyman responsible for designing the Trixie DARTER moved up to the stage upon Ves' invitation.

For security purposes, Esbeth Sandhurst was not allowed to float next to Ves. A physical screen as well as multiple transphasic energy shields isolated the two from each other.

Nonetheless, Miss Sandhurst clearly looked jubilant for her ability to squeeze into the top 10!

The significance of this accomplishment was great as the 11th place did not nearly receive as much acclaim!

"Miss Sandhurst, thank you for attending this event in person. Would you like to tell how you came to develop the Trixie DARTER?"

"I would be glad to, Professor Larkinson." The female mech designer replied as she faced the crowd with a demeanor that showed that she had obviously prepared for this eventuality. "The Trixie DARTER is not a completely original work. It is derived from one of my older mech designs. I care about the lives of many mech pilots who brave multiple dangers each time they deploy into battle. I have lost too many brave friends and acquaintances not because they got killed outright, but because they hadn't been pulled away from the battlefield until the engagement had always come to an end."

The tenth-place winner generously projected a basic design schematic of her original Trixie DARTER.

"This was why I set out to design a rare mech that solely specialized on extracting trapped humans from their broken machines. I have found that many mech forces treat search and rescue duties as a tiresome chore. I do not find this acceptable as mech pilots are subject to excessive risks the longer they spend in open space. I eventually developed a specialized mech that can rescue trapped mech pilots faster and more effectively than the alternatives."

Esbeth made a painful smile. "My work did not receive many orders. This is not because my work is inadequate. It is because the alternatives are better. The Trixie DARTER is not a direct combat mech. It takes up space that could otherwise be occupied by a proper combat mech. I have sought to fight against this inaccurate bias for many years, but I eventually concluded that absent any widespread changes, the Trixie DARTER has no future as a standalone mech. That is where the Fey Fianna comes in. The drone mech model has not only produced an enormous amount of revenue, but also employs larger and stronger fey than other comparable models. This has given me the idea to reshape my original Trixie DARTER as an unmanned, remote-controlled spur."

The woman perked up as she only kept up the projection of the design schematic of the new version of the Trixie DARTER.

"The living fey that I have developed for this contest captures the essence of the Trixie DARTER but does not deviate too much from the Fey Fiannas that they are now being paired with. Their controls and operations have been simplified in order to allow a mech pilot to proficiency control four or even more of the at the same time, but through testing I have found that my search and

rescue fey have become even more intelligent when up to four of them are synced up to a Fey Fianna. I have never managed to produce such excellent results when I have experimented with other drone mech models. This is what makes the Fey Fianna so special to me. The model has the ability to improve the intelligence and direction of any compatible spur, thereby opening up possibilities that cannot be found in other drone mechs!"

The crowd reacted positively to this story! They too learned that any living fey paired with a Fey Fianna moved and acted as if it was driven by its own dedicated intelligence. Their exceptional behavior went beyond the confines of ordinary AI and truly made people feel as if the fey were as intelligent and obedient as dogs!

Ves smiled as Esbeth Sandhurst praised the qualities of the Fey Fianna that attracted her the most.

"I am grateful for Professor Larkinson to bestow me the recognition of earning 10th place." The woman wrapped up her speech. "I hope that his endorsement will further assure you that my Trixie DARTER can be fully relied upon to perform search and rescue under the most arduous of battlefield conditions. They may be on the larger side when compared to other fey, but they are quick and have many solutions available to rescue mech pilots from a wide variety of wrecks and debris. The effective performance of my Trixie DARTERS almost match that of dedicated search and rescue mechs, but do not forget that every Fey Fianna can control four of my fey, which means that the latter mech can rescue many more lives without investing that much more into retrieving human soldiers."

Everyone clapped. Esbeth gave such a good speech that many people who originally showed little interest in this auxiliary fey model suddenly started to think it was a good idea to order a batch of copies.

Trained and experienced mech pilots were too valuable in this day and age. They may be relatively abundant now, but constant attrition would make them scarcer and scarcer.

It would be good for a mech force to preserve a lot more veteran mech pilots over the long run.

If that could be done by making a modest investment in a bunch of dragonfly-shaped fey, then that was more worth the reasonable price they would have to pay!

Chapter 5722 Thick Praise

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Esbeth Sandhurst gave a supporting and flattering speech upon earning tenth place. She sounded grateful to the customers that had given her old search and rescue concept a second life. On top of that, she also expressed her gratitude at Ves for giving her this chance to achieve success in a different way than usual.

"The Fey Fianna is a drone mech like no other." She openly praised. "Its unique ability to grant a living intelligence to any fey, no matter the design, turns every spur that is connected to the base mech into a smarter and more caring combat asset, as strange as it may sound. I have programmed artificial intelligences myself and made use of many third-party solutions. None of them has reached the depth of understanding and responsiveness of the fey. I don't know how Professor Larkinson has done it. Whether his work is based on a clever application or E-technology or a secret project from the Red Association is not important. All I know is that every fey based on the

template that the LMC has provided just works no matter whether it is designed for attack or support. It is amazing to see how little bugs and glitches have occurred when I paired by Trixie DARTERS to the Fey Fiannas for the first time. The drone mechs are much more universally compatible with different fey than I could have ever imagined. I suspect that if Professor Larkinson makes a serious entry in the artificial intelligence sector, I fear that he may exceed all of the competition straight away!"

The praise given by Miss Sandhurst sounded like a love letter. The Journeyman Mech Designer not only praised the Fey Fianna's amazing fey compatibility in order to get in the good books of the Larkinsons.

She highlighted an important trait that Ves had put a lot of work in. Every Fey Fianna possessed one superior personality and four subordinate personalities. The latter could flexibly occupy a compatible fey each, thereby taking partial control over the small machine's programming and could even override it in certain cases.

That latter part was crucial. By acting outside of the strict and rigid algorithms set by the original developers, the living fey truly came into their own. They were able to mimic the performance of much higher grades of AIs that required a lot more coding in order to exhibit intelligent adaptive learning.

Yet the magic of turning a fey into a machine that was driven by a truly intelligent life form went beyond that. There were limits to how extensively an AI was able to adapt and respond to dynamic situations on the battlefield.

Many of these limits existed because of technological or workload limitations, but it was also common for developers to impose artificial restrictions to prevent their AIs from accidentally engaging in harmful or self-destructive behavior.

For example, an AI programmed to watch for intruders and strike preemptively in order to eliminate a threat may choose to attack a friendly mech just because it had briefly pointed the muzzle of its rifle in the wrong direction.

Accidents like these happened many times throughout the years, and had been the cause of many standard software modules that expressly limited the ability for AIs to take dangerous actions for fear of harming friendlies.

This also led to industry standards where the use of armed drones had to be avoided at all cost.

If they had to be employed for whatever reason, then a human should always be able to oversee their operations and override any actions if necessary. In no way should these drones stray too far from their origin or lose contact with their human controllers.

The odd properties of the Fey Fianna did not fit this paradigm at all. Ves was certainly aware of the prevailing standards, but he outright disregarded them when he designed this mech. This was why the fey acted so much more intelligently and demonstrated amazing adaptation in battle.

In fact, this was just the just.

The older the Fey Fianna, the smarter the living fey became!

Only half a year had passed since the release of the Fey Fianna line. Once a few more years went by, Ves bet that the living fey would become a lot more effective in battle!

Not only were the living fey capable of gaining experience and becoming more proficient in pulling off difficult combat operations, but they could also rely on cultivation to boost their power through alternative means!

In short, the Fey Fianna provided every developer with an interest in developing autonomous combat units an excellent platform for their works to reach their full potential!

"As a mech designer, I am not ashamed to say that I adore the Fey Fianna and its unique possibilities." Esbeth Sandhurst wrapped up her string of praises. "The Trixie DARTER will not be the last fey that I will design for this drone mech platform. Many people think that the Ultimatum is the ultimate commercial work designed by Professor Larkinson, but I do not think so. The Fey Fianna has so much more potential due to its ability to augment any fey in ways that I cannot fully describe. We are all lucky to live in a time where we have gained access to an industry-changing mech. AI-operated devices will never be the same again, and we are all better for it. To those who are still harboring doubts about the Fey Fianna, please try them out yourselves. It is only when you experience them in person that you will understand why the living fey are so much better than if they are paired with any other drone mech. Thank you for listening to me, and thank you for supporting my product!"

The audience clapped as the talkative woman finally left the stage, but not before looking up at Ves and giving him a salute.

"She has done you a favor." Jovy transmitted to Ves as he remained unseen in the rear. "She has highlighted the superior intelligence of your living fey and made more people appreciate this aspect of your work."

Ves maintained an impassive look as he continued to hover high above the stage with his refined black suit.

"Not necessarily." He discreetly transmitted back. "She may have turned the Fey Fianna into a more attractive product, but she has also raised the matter that the living fey are operated by more powerful intelligences. That is bound to spook the people who have organized the public inquiry against my works."

The public inquiry was hanging over his head like a Sword of Damocles. It was an unnecessary distraction but one that Ves had to overcome sooner or later.

He just wished that it happened a few decades later when his works were more entrenched. It would be even better if he was promoted to a Master Mech Designer by then. The rank granted him a lot of prestige and authority over his field. That would have made it easier to overcome the opposition against his works.

"There is no need for you to concern yourself too much." Jovy said. "The opposition that has organized this public inquiry against you may be composed of numerous powerful parties, but they cannot overrule the absolute authority that the Red Association has on any subject that is directly related to mechs. Your living mechs are too strategically valuable to allow a band of conspirators to prohibit it. We will do our best to work behind the scenes to tilt the scales in your favor, but you must ultimately stand up for your own work in order to attain a more favorable outcome."

Ves felt uneasy about this upcoming circus. "I get the feeling that the organizers know that as well. I think their real goal is not to impose a legal restriction on my living mechs, but to cast so much doubt on my works that more and more people will begin to distrust my products."

"That may be the case. We shall see."

The time had come for Ves to announce the 9th place winner. He put the matter of the public inquiry aside and focused on the present.

"The Trixie DARTER developed by Miss Sandhurst has earned my appreciation for its unparalleled ability to save many valuable human lives during and after a battle. The product that I am about to introduce next serves a different purpose. The Fey Fianna can be employed in many different roles, and the next one offers much-needed offensive power that is both powerful and versatile. Let me introduce to you the tetralaser fey designed by Dr. Paul Reemar!

The next fey clearly looked like a laser gun fey, but with a twist.

The design of the fey looked like a long rectangular tube where the laser barrel was offset to a corner. The entire look of it was strange, but suddenly made a lot of sense when three identical fey appeared above the stage.

The laser gun fey did not look particularly special when it was by itself, but once its three brothers showed up, they all slotted together in a way that caused their offset weapon barrels to press together and form a larger weapon system!

[Tetralaser Fey

Developer: Dr. Paul Reemar, Weapons Engineer

Category: Offensive

E Energy Attributes: Fire

Summary: The tetralaser fey is a versatile laser weapon fey that is designed to cooperate with multiple identical fey. The offensive fey can be deployed as separate fighting units, but they can also combine together to form a single combination fey that can output much more power laser beams.]

"So that is why it is called a tetralaser fey!"

"How much power does this combination weapon have?"

"It is a pity that it is not one of the LMC's luminar crystal weapons. At least that will make it easier to repair and maintain these interesting fey."

The tetralaser fey clearly possessed a relatively simple design, but possessed a special gimmick that made it far more useful than what was apparent on the surface!

"It is quite daring for a weapons developers to present a fey that is meant to compete against the luminar crystal cannon fey that I have already designed for the Fey Fianna." Ves shared his thoughts about this contest entry. "However, I think that Dr. Paul Reemar has done a good job at presenting a competitive alternative. The firepower and efficiency of a single tetralaser fey may be inferior to one of my own fey, but it is cheaper and easier to modify. More important is its ability to combine together to form a combination weapon system. Its power is greater than any offensive fey that I know of, which is quite impressive as their limited capacities usually do not lend to greater power."

Ves did not know whether he could design a luminar crystal version of the tertralaser weapon system. The engineering involved in making this product only applied to conventional human technology.

If Ves wanted to adapt this approach to luminar crystal weapons, he would have to research this alien tech a lot more in order to make more extensive use of powerful luminar crystals.

This was not feasible for him at the moment, so he was happy that Paul Reemer provided his own solution.

"Dr. Reemar's work has earned 9th place due to the ability for his tetralaser fey to inflict more damage against larger, stronger and better-shielded targets than other fey. Greater firepower is always desirable for any mech forces that have chosen to participate in the Red War. With so many powerful alien warships trying to inflict losses on us, the Fey Fianna armed with tetralaser fey may possibly inflict greater damage upon the alien vessels. However, bringing these fey together also increases their vulnerability and removes a lot of redundancy. Those who want to benefit from the enhanced firepower of the combination fey should also take into account that they can be shot down at the same time, thereby stripping a Fey Fianna of its supporting element right away."

Chapter 5723 Sequence of Winners

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Dr. Paul Reemar made a short speech after his tetralaser fey became the 9th place winner.

Since the 6th to 10th place winners only earned a cash prize of 100 MTA credits each, he was actually not that better off than Esbeth Sandhurst. He only earned a little more bragging rights at most.

That was not to say that 100 MTA credits was a trivial sum. It was already enough for a mech designer who started out from nothing to acquire a fairly complete design lab and workshop.

Those who already had access to those facilities could purchase better equipment or acquire more powerful component licenses.

All-in-all, a weapon developer such as Dr. Reemar should be quite content with receiving this prize.

It was the fifth place winner and up that truly stood to gain a lot more wealth. Aside from earning greater prestige for ranking higher, he or she also stood to obtain 500 MTA credits.

Those that ranked higher could earn 1000 MTA credits, 2500 MTA credits, 5000 MTA credits or 10,000 MTA credits if they managed to earn the coveted top spot!

These were life changing sums for any independent professional or small company, but they were relatively small potatoes to most big companies.

That was just fine for Ves. It had always been his intention to encourage people such as Esbeth Sandhurst and Paul Reemar to design interesting living fey that could expand upon the options available to the Fey Fianna.

Meanwhile, those who worked hard enough to receive an invitation to go on stage took advantage of this opportunity to strengthen their brands and advertise their works!

The Fey Shaper Contest might not attract as many viewers as the previous events organized by Ves, but it still attracted a huge share of customers, both future and existing ones. Many of them had the

capital to purchase the products of the contest participants. This was a golden opportunity for these well-performing individuals to achieve a marketing effect that was normally way out of their budgetary reach! Once the developer of the tetralaser fey had reached his allotted time limit and moved off the stage, Ves proceeded to announce the next winners in sequence.

[Heat Disperser Fey]

Developer: Ray Tauron, Apprentice Mech Designer

Category: Utility

E Energy Attributes: Heat

Summary: The heat disperser fey is a hyper product that is designed to attach to any mech or large object and absorb heat before actively dispersing it into the environment.]

"...Many of you may question my judgment when I have designated the heat disperser fey in 8th place. Those that have witnessed or participated in many different battles will not do so, because they know that in the most intensive situations, heat management becomes progressively more difficult to get a grip on, particularly in space. When a mech cannot disperse their heat through the process of conduction and convection, the only means available to them under ordinary circumstances is radiation, which is quite limited. The heat disperser fey can relieve the immediate heat accumulation of any mech with greater ease by not only providing an additional vehicle for conduction, but also enhances the radiation efficiency due to its purpose-built design..."

[Metal Scrapper Fey]

Developer: Porto Digan, Journeyman Mech Designer

Category: Defensive, Utility

E Energy Attributes: Metal

Summary: The metal scrapper fey is capable of efficiently cutting apart scrap metal from broken wrecks. It can either bring the pieces of scrap back to a collection point, or it can also maintain hold of it to form makeshift physical shields that can offer additional defenses in battle. This makes the metal scrapper fey useful both during and after the conclusion of a battle. If no readily available wrecks are nearby, a mech unit can always bring their own disposable metal to make use of the metal scrapper fey in battle.]

"...I like the metal scrapper fey. Its main characteristic is that it offers an additional means of defense by repurposing scrap metal. The strength of these defenses are highly dependent on the properties of the materials, but that also makes it possible to attain better performance by investing in high-

quality materials. The dual-purpose nature of the metal scrapper fey also makes it useful once a battle has ended. It might be the fastest at breaking down wrecks and retrieving loose-flying pieces of scarp, but as long as their numbers are great enough, the fey can break down an entire derelict starship..."

[Anti-Shield Pulse Fey]

Developer: Sarah Koyama, Senior Developer

Category: Offensive, Utility

E Energy Attributes: Electric, Space

Summary: The anti-shield pulse fey is a specialized solution that is designed to effectively destroy (transphasic) energy shields by heavily altering the operation mode of a space suppressor. By concentrating the space suppression field and combining it with an active EMP effect can produce a highly effective shield-breaking fey. The product can overcome transphasic energy shields more effectively at the expense of greater power consumption and near-total immobility.]

"...We need more fey like this. The anti-shield pulse fey is specifically designed to speed up the process of breaking the formidable transphasic energy shields that the aliens so often rely upon to keep their warships in pristine condition. It may have its limitations, but its effectiveness when employed in the right conditions is unquestionable. The anti-shield pulse fey is so impressive that I am already thinking about purchasing a large batch of them in order to give my own mech army a means to overcome the defenses of enemy warships faster..."

Not everyone among the audience was enthused by the selection of the 8th, 7th and 6th place winners. They were useful fey models no doubt, but they were highly situational in nature.

They performed well in certain scenarios, but did not offer as much value in many other situations.

This was also why Ves did not rank them higher. He had been considering whether he should rank the anti-shield pulse fey in the top 5, eventually opted against this decision because the aliens could easily counter this specific model if they became familiar with it. That did not mean the anti-shield pulse fey was useless in the long run, but their owners had to make a careful consideration on when and where they should employ this solution.

The following fey did not have as many conditions and limitations. That was the main reason why they entered the top 5. Their greater universality meant that they were rarely a bad purchase. There should always be ways for a mech force to employ these fey in a productive manner no matter the circumstances.

[Multi-Decoy Fey]

Developer: Professor Emily Leflette, Senior Systems Developer

Category: Utility

E Energy Attributes: Light

Summary: The multi-decoy fey directly amplifies the existing decoy capabilities that is inherent to every standard fey model. Much of its capacity is occupied by specialized ECM and projector modules. This not only allows the multi-decoy fey to generate greater interference, but also produce up to 4 projections that appear as complete mechs in relatively close proximity by splitting into 4 sub-units. Relying on multiple advanced technologies, each decoy projection is able to produce emissions that closely mimic the light, heat, gravitic and other phenomena that are commonly measured by sensor systems. The fewer the amount of decoys being generated, the harder it is to discover their loopholes.]

The multi-decoy fey was a product that impressed Ves more than many of the other contest submissions.

It did not look all that powerful when it appeared above the main stage. It was covered with projection systems and ECM modules that caused it to look rather messy and disorganized.

People's impression of the multi-decoy fey improved a lot more when it showcased its main function.

The living fey split up into four smaller units before each of them produced a convincing decoy projection of a Fey Fianna mech.

"It looks quite real!"

"I can sense the heat produced by their flight systems. It won't be so easy for enemies to distinguish true and false, especially at a distance."

"I always had problems with fey getting shot after doing their jobs by posing as decoys. Being able to produce more of them from a single fey will not only save us more money, but divert more firepower away from our actual mechs."

No one disagreed with the selection of the multi-spirit fey. It had earned its place in the top 5 because the ability to generate 4 times as many decoys as other fey was incredibly practical and useful in any battle!

The biggest downside to the multi-decoy fey was that it had sacrificed the ability to do anything else to gain this power. It was unable to contribute more directly to a battle due to lacking space for weapon systems, defense systems and other functional modules.

However, the multi-decoy fey did not necessarily need all of these frills.

"Professor Emily Leflette has done an admirable job by leading a team of engineers who successfully developed a more refined subterfuge solution. The multi-decoy fey is unparalleled when it comes to producing multiple high-

quality decoys. The alien warships already have difficulty trying to distinguish the disguised fey from actual mechs. We can reduce our enemy's hit rate even further by employing a product that is expressly designed to waste their firepower even more!"

Ves genuinely appreciated the multi-decoy fey. He did not have any qualms about ranking it higher, but alas the following 4 fey models managed to impress him even more.

Still, it was not bad for this product to win 5th place. The prizes awarded to the winners became a lot more substantial at this point!

Unlike the previous mech designers and developers who got invited to speak on stage, Professor Emily Leflette was a lot older.

The Fey Shaper Contest primarily attracted young and independent professionals, but Ves did not prohibit the participation of older individuals who employed entire teams.

What ultimately mattered was that the resulting fey model would become strong enough to earn a high ranking!

Clearly, Professor Leflette managed to pull it off. She received far more publicity at this time than she could ever attain if she continued to work at a development company!

The older but fairly dignified woman addressed his audience.

"It is not unheard of to equip drone mechs with ECM spurs that can produce decoys that appear convincing at a distance. The results have never satisfied us because the spurs designed for those models are always limiting our work. They are too small and not capable of performing all of the raw calculations needed to increase the realism of an active decoy."

The woman gestured at the active multi-decoy fey hovering above her head. "The release of the Fey Fianna has given us a chance to fulfill the goal that we have set. The individual fey are large enough to accommodate more technologies. While I have designed the multi-decoy fey to split in order to effectively produce more than one convincing decoy projection at a time, they still remain connected to each other."

Every decoy mech had to be produced by a physical sub-unit. It was possible to create a projection of a mech at a distance, but without anything physical in its core, it would be incredibly easy to discern truth from falsehood.

If Professor Leflette truly managed to solve this shortcoming, then Ves would have no qualms about putting her in first place!

This was because if the aliens successfully struck a decoy mech, it did not necessarily go down because nothing physical incurred any damage!

Alas, the continued inability to do so without relying on any physical anchors producing many of the false emissions was an existing technological constraint.

Hopefully, red humanity would be able to produce a breakthrough in the future. Ves believed that decoy-generating products would see a vast increase in popularity. If he wasn't already swamped with other work responsibilities, even he might feel tempted to work towards a solution.

However, he was not a specialist in this field, so it was better for him to leave this job to more relevant professionals.

Chapter 5724 Infinite Coil Fey - EDITED

5724 Infinite Coil Fey - EDITED

The creativity of the collective astounded Ves at times. He had never thought about developing half of the fey that managed to enter into the top 50.

Inventive solutions such as the multi-decoy fey taught Ves that third-party developers could provide a lot of added value if he gave them an opening to demonstrate their craft.

The Fey Shaper Contest had definitely paid off big for the LMC. It had been fully worth it for Ves to make the trip to this planet. It was a shame that he wouldn't be able to speak with all of the contest participants up close, but he was already satisfied with getting a close and personal look at their works.

Once Professor Emily Leflette had concluded her speech in which she expressed her gratitude while also making sure to advertise the other products of her company, Ves began to introduce the 4th place winner.

"Up next is a special fey model that offers fantastic possibilities in terms of firepower. Its conditions of use may be a lot more cumbersome than the tetralaser fey that I introduced before, but those who want the maximum possible firepower should rest easy."

[Infinite Coil Fey]

Developer: Karl Steinbock-Bakhali, Journeyman Mech Designer

Category: Offensive

E Energy Attributes: Electromagnetism

Summary: The infinite coil fey at first appears to be a device built around a fairly large gauss weapon. The most distinguishing feature of this fey is that it is open-ended from two sides. This peculiar design choice is part of a greater design plan that allows for multiple infinite coil fey to link up with each other and merge their barrels together to form a longer combination weapon that can launch metallic projectiles forward with even greater force and speed than if they operate separately. The maximum quantity of infinite coil fey that can be stacked in a single continuous line is limited by the physical condition and the material quality of the units. Excessive recoil by stacking too many infinite coil fey may ultimately result in damage and breakdowns.]

Showing just a single infinite coil fey did not do this product justice. This was why 8 of them showed up at once.

Each infinite coil fey looked like a relatively short and thick tube. Professor Steinbock-Bakhali primarily added a lot of mass and structure to the fey in order to strengthen their structure and increase their energy reserves.

That also made the infinite coil fey a lot more expensive to produce and buy. This was an extravagant design choice as the firepower of this special fey was not necessarily superior.

At most, the infinite coil fey was able to resist more damage and had enough power to accelerate more heavy projectiles.

To be honest, the infinite coil fey was not worth buying over the more standard gauss cannon fey that Ves had included in the design of the Fey Fianna.

The only saving grace was its gimmick, which more than compensated for its many shortcomings.

"The infinite coil fey is a product that is clearly designed to work in unison with many other identical fey." Ves continued to explain as the eight fey in front and below him merged into a single formidable cannon! "By linking them together, they can continually utilize their coils to produce a powerful electromagnetic field that continually pushes a metallic projectile forward with greater and greater impulse. While there is a physical limit to how long this can go on, the infinite coil fey are theoretically able to launch a projectile with enough power to rival or even exceed the damage output of the famous Onyx Cannon of my Ultimatum model!"

He was exaggerating a little. The Onyx Cannon was a solid weapon system from beginning to end. The infinite coil fey remained separate for the most part and only linked up when they needed to make a powerful combination attack. Their many limitations made it doubtful that they could remain intact long enough to launch an excessively powerful projectile.

However, the greatest advantages to relying on the infinite coil fey was that they were much more mobile than a heavy artillery mech!

Unlike the lumbering Ultimatums that were mostly confined to serving as bunker mechs, the Fey Fianna and their accompanying fey could easily reposition themselves and their targets from other angles.

If this was the case, then it might not be important that the sustained firepower of multiple infinite coil fey was less than the Ultimatum. Most attacks were able to inflict serious damage as long as they struck exposed weak points.

While the infinite coil fey made a strong impression on the audience, Professor Karl Steinbock-Bakhali stepped onto the main stage.

The man was older and invested a lot more years in his craft like the previous winner. Ves did not exactly like it that another older participant had managed to enter the top 10, but the power and ingenuity of the infinite coil fey were so good that he had little choice.

"Mr. Steinbock-Bakhali, congratulations for winning 5th place in the Fey Shaper Contest. As a highly experienced mech designer, you have opted to develop the infinite coil fey for my Fey Fianna mechs as opposed to designing a mech that employs a variation of your infinite weapon system concept. Why did you make this decision?"

The Journeyman Mech Designer who made the highly unusual decision to leech off the success of another peer did not display any form of shame for his actions.

Seniority mattered in the mech industry. Mech designers older than a century were already regarded as seasoned and experienced enough to lead their projects. They rarely bothered to contribute to the products developed by other mech designers because that would be a tacit admission that they did not have as much confidence in their own independent work.

The only exception to this rule were active collaborations, but Steinbock-

Bakhali was most definitely not a part of the original design project centered around the Fey Fianna.

"You are correct, Professor Larkinson." The man waved up at Ves. "I have held this idea for years now. It has always been my wish to design a mech that can link their weapons together to form a cannon that is greater than what any single machine can bear. There lies the problem, though. The concept violates one of the oldest taboos of the Age of Mechs, which is that mechs cannot carry weapons that are too large and powerful for them. Their weapon systems must remain proportional to their size."

Hearing that already caused Ves to figure out what the devious older man sought to do with his infinite coil fey.

Steinbock-Bakhali smirked. "Instead of realizing my idea in the form of a mech, I chose to turn it into a fey instead. There are many advantages to doing so. My infinite coil fey can offer superior firepower in a more mobile package than resorting to heavy artillery mechs. They can dynamically adjust their power levels by linking more or less units together to attain the right balance between firepower and sustainability. While there are currently limits to how many infinite coil fey can be linked together, my design team is already in the process of developing multiple variants that are composed of tougher materials so that they can bear the greater pressure of a much longer combination weapon. According to my calculations, the linked fey should be able to launch a gauss round that can inflict as much damage as the gun batteries of smaller warships!"

In other words, a ridiculously long string of infinite coil fey could produce damage that was far in excess of their individual properties!

It was impressive how Steinbock-Bakhali was able to turn this crazy idea into a practical and workable implementation. It was far too easy for the infinite coil fey to shatter apart when it was forced to endure enormous pressure from all of the forces it was generating.

"That should not be all." Ves noted.

"Correct. The overarching reason why I have chosen to develop this fey is because it can benefit from your protection. As a tier 3 galactic citizen, your rights and privileges are far greater than mine. This is relevant because it can still be argued that my infinite coil fey may... skirt the taboo on mech weapon restrictions. I hope that if that happens, you would see fit to argue in favor of my product. Your words will carry great weight in the minds of the mechers who decide on these matters. With the Red War continuing to press against our defensive lines, we need all of the advantages that we can muster. I hope that my infinite coil fey can make up for the gap in absolute firepower and help our soldiers overcome the defenses of enemy warships with greater ease."

This open plea put Ves in a slightly difficult position. It was undeniable that he carried greater weight within the Association due to his many contributions and his high galactic citizenship.

However, that did not mean he called all of the shots. He might be able to get away with breaking a few rules, but that did not necessarily extend to other people.

The mechers had set their taboos a long time ago. They had never shown much flexibility towards any cases that flagrantly broke the limits that they had set.

However, the Red Association was not identical to the Mech Trade Association. The former had already started to diverge from the latter in many subtle ways, and the enforcement of the old taboos was one such distinction.

According to the current attitude of the mechers, it might very well be possible that they would at least quietly tolerate the existence of the infinite coil fey.

That was apparently not enough for Steinbock-Bakhali. The filthy leech wanted an open guarantee. Receiving one from Ves in public would definitely qualify!

Ves shifted his gaze to the eight linked infinite coil fey.

If he disregarded the attitude of its developer and solely considered the merits of the infinite coil fey in isolation, then it was definitely a fey that he was keen to preserve. It added a powerful firepower option to the Fey Fianna's arsenal that could not be substituted through other means.

"I cannot give you any promises." Ves eventually responded. "I appreciate your work. I really do. I think that mech forces should be given the choice to adopt this fey model into their own ranks. They have always been struggling to break through the transphasic energy shields of alien warships. It feels wrong to deprive the brave mech pilots fighting on our behalf with a solution that effectively closes the firepower gap. If the Red Association ever sees fit to put your infinite coil fey on trial, I am willing to put in a good word, but not because I want to make you happy, but because I believe that continued access to this product will benefit the mech pilots that we serve."

That was a nice way to spin his argument. It was the mech pilots that mattered, not the mech designers. People like Ves and Steinbock-Bakhali were just service providers in this context.

The answer made the 4th place winner happy. The older man graciously bowed and made his way off the stage now that he managed to obtain his desired concession.

The 8 infinite coil fey unlinked with each other and turned into separate units again. The two Fey Fiannas that had taken control of them from a distance steadily took the devices away from sight, making room for the next product.

"The 3rd place winner is special to me." Ves said as a particularly colorful and radiant fey hovered onto the stage. "It is a fey that is designed by an old acquaintance of mine. I cannot claim to be impartial in my evaluation, but I strongly believe it has earned its third place due to its merits. The product designed by the man who I have met way back in the Komodo Star Sector where I originally came from offers a functionality that I have not seen in other fey. If you do not believe me, then take a good look."

Chapter 5725 New Series of Hyper Gems

5725 New Series of Hyper Gems

Tristan Wesseling was having the time of his life.

Ever since the Age of Dawn commenced, he experienced a renaissance.

His design philosophy, which largely hinged on the use of gems to augment the performance of mechs in an unconventional manner, suddenly acted as if it received a stimulant!

The gems he used to produce in the past were curiosities more than anything. They slightly improved the performance of mechs in a small but slightly distinguishable manner. Their effects were as significant as their size.

In fact, if not for the fact that his gems were so small and easy to install on a mech, nobody would have bothered with making use of his products.

Most people did not appreciate his work for that reason. What did it matter if his products was able to increase the damage output of a rifleman mech by 2 or 3 percent?

Would making the armor of a mech 5 percent more resilient truly extend its lifespan?

After all, if a mech was prone to getting crippled by receiving 3 heavy attacks in the same armor section, a slight boost in defenses did not mean that the mech was able to resist 1 heavy attack more.

This was why only the most detail-oriented customers bothered to make use of his products. His pedigree as a former direct disciple of Master Katzenberg had given him a decent boost in credibility, but that did not help him much when he was unable to take advantage of her umbrella due to his emotional decision to cut off all of his ties to the Friday Coalition.

Though Tristan never regretted the decision to turn his back on the state that raised him and gave him the opportunity to become a young Journeyman Mech Designer, living through the Komodo War and becoming involved with its intrigues had thoroughly disgusted him to the point where he had to leave.

It was tough to stand alone. He still missed the days when he could take shelter under Master Katzenberg's umbrella and knew that many daily problems could easily be solved with a single call.

Yet it was by settling down in Davute and going through the process of leading his own mech company that Tristan truly started to mature as a mech designer.

No one held his hand anymore. He had to balance his finances, invest in expensive facilities and work hard to attract a customer base that appreciated his products.

Fortunately, his background in materials science turned out to be incredibly useful at the start of the Age of Dawn.

When hyper materials started to pop up like mushrooms, every material scientist started to get inundated with requests.

There were so many different variations of materials that became affected by E energy radiation that Tristan had been working non-stop to identify and measure the properties of hundreds of newly discovered hyper materials.

This not only gave him a strong boost in revenue, but also allowed him to grow more familiar with hyper technology.

On top of that, Tristan Design Services built up a lot of useful relations with influential companies based in Davute. Tristan found it a lot easier to solicit further contracts from them now that he had proven his competence, trustworthiness and above all his discretion.

Yet despite all of the hard work he put into raising his reputation in the regional mech industry, Tristan could not deny that his rise had been a lot smoother than it should.

His expression briefly darkened as he thought about it. He was a known friend of Professor Larkinson.

That meant that as long as Ves Larkinson continued to make a lot of accomplishments, more and more people were prone to giving Tristan more slack just because he happened to be acquainted with a rising star!

Suffice to say, this association did not do Tristan's pride any good.

He wanted to stand on his own two feet, but he was realistic enough to know that it was useless to deny connection.

Since people thought he was a personal friend of an impressive tier 3 galactic citizen, then he may as well accept his fate and take advantage of this favorable condition.

Though Tristan had never again betrayed his old friend's trust, he was not above using Ves' name on occasion in order to gain more leverage in a business negotiation.

He was sure that Ves would not mind, so long as Tristan did not go too far with tying everything to his friend.

For a long time, Tristan thought that his involvement with Ves would remain limited to this. The Larkinson Patriarch had clearly moved on from Davute, and he had already relocated to the Terran Alliance so that he could assimilate into first-class society.

It was not as if Tristan needed to borrow Ves' name any further. His growing comprehension of hyper materials and hyper technology finally enabled him to develop a series of hyper gems.

Their appearance changed everything.

No longer were they subtle to the point where thorough lab testing was required to notice their effects.

The gems that he managed to synthesize by combining several exotics and hypers together under extreme pressure were able to do more than slightly enhance the performance of mechs.

They were able to attract certain 'attributes' of E energy.

That alone might not sound impressive enough as that was the common effect of all hyper materials.

What made his gems different was that their separate effects synergized with each other!

For example, mixing in a small quantity of fire hypers into a gem strengthened its original effect of increasing the firepower of energy weapons!

By pairing the right gem effects to compatible attributes, Tristan had quickly amassed over a hundred different formulas for his new series of hyper gems.

Not only did the introduction of hyper materials double or triple the original effect of his gems, they also facilitated the performance of other comparable hyper tech on a mech!

Tristan managed to do all of this while still keeping his gems small and light!

Of course, he could also make his gems larger in order to amplify their effect, but Tristan had found that this produced a lot of diminishing returns.

This was why he favored quality over quantity. The more precious the materials, the greater the performance boost provided by a small gem.

One year after the start of the Age of Dawn, Tristan had fleshed out his signature hyper gems into two distinct product series.

His positive hyper gems were comprised of his original blend of hypers and exotics. They provided performance enhancements through purely positive effects. They were particularly suited for mono-elemental hyper mechs that overwhelmingly relied on the power of a single E-energy attribute to enhance their performance.

However, when his customers started to make use of his positive hyper gems, they found that they did not work well with all hyper mechs.

Tristan worked hard to develop his negative hyper gems as a response.

Different from his original hyper gems, the negative versions actually repelled specific E energy attributes!

This was an effect that was much rarer and more difficult for others to reproduce. They helped to increase the purity of ambient E energy radiation.

There were many uses for negative hyper gems. For example, they allowed a hyper mech that relied heavily on the fire attribute to avoid water-attributed E energy.

Many mech designers recklessly stuffed multiple hyper materials into their mechs, thinking that combining multiple attributes would lead to stronger compound effects.

While they were not necessarily wrong, their products often performed significantly below expectation as their designers vastly underestimated the consequences of putting together two conflicting E energy attributes!

In situations like these, a negative hyper gem developed by Tristan could relieve the worst symptoms and increase the stability of the hyper mech.

It was not a proper solution, but it was better than nothing.

Tristan had even begun to design his own hyper mechs that integrated the properties of his hyper gems much more intricately. His gems were already great, but it was their integration with mechs that needed a lot of work. He wanted to set an example and figure out more optimal methods to merge his gems with different mech designs.

It was during this period that he had decided to tune into the product reveal of the Fey Fianna.

Tristan never missed an event where Ves showed up in public.

His old friend's product reveals were especially compelling, so much so that Tristan tried to learn from example!

"The Fey Shaper Contest?"

At first, Tristan did not have much interest in taking part in this competition. He already had plenty of work on his lap. His mech company was growing at a nice rate, so there was no need for him to leech off the work of another mech designer, much less his fellow native from the Komoodo Star Sector.

Yet... as the Fey Fianna continued to impress the entire mech community with its excellent performance and its rich feature set, Tristan gradually changed his mind.

He could not resist the attraction of boarding a bus that was much more frequented than his own!

While Tristan Design Services had gradually started to become more known in the Davutan mech industry, it was far from becoming a household name in the region, let alone red humanity as a whole.

It was different for Ves! He and his Living Mech Corporation had become so well-known that even the first-raters knew about his amazing living mechs!

The opportunity to participate and earn an opportunity for his work to get presented to a much wider audience was too tempting for Tristan to resist!

His hesitation quickly crumbled. Tristan put down his pride and earnestly diverted a lot of time in developing a living fey that made integral use of his new hyper gems.

While it would have been easy to take one of the default fey designs and slap his hyper gem onto them, he did not think that was sufficient enough to constitute a serious work.

He had not thrown away all of his pride as a mech designer. He wanted to design a new fey that he could be proud of. It had to offer superior performance and other defined benefits to customers who were willing to make use of his work.

As such, Tristan went deeper and tried to elevate a fey far beyond its existing boundaries.

What better fey for him to reimagine than the iconic luminar crystal cannon fey?

The entire fey was built around a weapon system that primarily consisted of crystals!

Tristan had studied his friend's famous luminar crystal weapons in the past.

Although crystals was his specialty, that did not mean he could decipher all of the working principles of luminar crystals. There were too many alien design elements that completely obfuscated their core mechanisms.

However, Tristan still managed to deduce a few clues. This became useful when he tried to reinvent a luminar crystal cannon fey.

His shallow insights into the alien tech gave him an opening to combine his hyper gems with luminar crystal weapons in a productive manner!

It had not been easy to turn it into a solution that was not wasteful. His hyper gems were not cheap, so if they did not enhance the performance of the luminar crystal weapon by a large enough margin, they wouldn't be cost-

effective enough for mass production!

Fortunately, Tristan managed to resolve this problem in time for him to submit his work to the Living Mech Corporation.

As he wore his most formal suit and slowly began to step up to the podium, he felt more nervous than ever now that he came under the attention of his old friend again.

When Tristan looked up to the floating figure, he lamented the extended distance that separated the two from each other.

The metaphorical distance between them had increased as well. While Ves advanced to the rank of Senior and became involved in galaxy-wide affairs, Tristan still remained a Journeyman who struggled to expand his business operations beyond Davute.

Hopefully, his newly developed fey would prove popular enough to attract a lot of customers.

Once a lot more consumers outside of Davute started to experience the benefits of his hyper gems, they would hopefully inquire about his products!

Chapter 5726 Luminous Fire Fey

5726 Luminous Fire Fey

[Luminous Fire Fey

Developer: Tristan Wesseling, Journeyman Mech Designer

Category: Offensive, Utility

E Energy Attributes: Fire

Summary: A reimagined luminar crystal cannon fey that combines luminar crystal technology and Mr. Wesseling's signature gemstone amplification technology. The resulting integration of the two technologies has significantly increased the potency of the luminous fire fey's damage output while also bringing a myriad of other benefits that synergize particularly well with living mechs.]

The description of the Luminous fire fey did not do it justice. It possessed much more benefits than simply increasing the damage output of the luminar crystal cannon.

Ves did not blame the staffers and assistant mech designers who had been tasked with evaluating tens of thousands of fey design submissions. They could only determine the worth of a third-party fey model by looking at its specs and observing its surface characteristics.

The luminous fire fey defied simple analysis. Ves did not know how he managed to do it, but Tristan somehow managed to develop hyper gems and partially integrate them into his existing luminar crystal weapons!

The consequences were far-reaching, and Ves could not wait to introduce all of the benefits to his audience.

As Tristan looked up, Ves met his old friend's gaze and gave an encouraging smile.

This simple exchange was enough to convey that Ves still harbored goodwill towards Tristan.

Although their status had grown further apart than ever before, Ves still remembered the kindness and goodwill that he received from the second-

class mech designer. It was no trouble at all to give Tristan a larger stage to introduce his work to a wider audience.

Besides, the luminous fire fey deserved to be recognized. It was a rather ingenious example of technology integration, and granted benefits so profound that Ves suspected that not even Tristan understood the consequences of his own work!

"Mr. Wesseling." Ves spoke down from above. "Please introduce your contest submission in your own words."

"I would be glad to, Professor Larkinson." Tristan said and made a short bow before he turned towards the audience. Confidence welled up in his body as he knew his moment had come. "As you can already see, the luminous fire fey is an extensive modification of the luminar crystal cannon fey that comes standard with the Fey Fianna. Despite possessing the same mass and volume of the original, my product outperforms by almost every important metric, from firepower, temperature, beam cohesion, E-energy amplification and more. My proprietary gem technology is largely responsible for this. They can significantly boost the firepower of the modified fey through three distinct effects, which I will briefly explain with the help of this diagram."

Tristan activated a command that caused a projection to appear that displayed a simplified schematic of his luminous fire fey.

Numerous points embedded close to the center lit up in red.

"These gems are the heart of my new fey. They are comprised of a special version of my positive fire hyper gem. Due to their closely matching consistencies with Professor Larkinson's luminar crystals, their addition to the weapon system produces little to no interference. They can exert their effects at full efficiency, which cannot be done if you merely add one of my off-the-shelf crystals to a standard luminar crystal weapon."

The red gems in the projected diagram began to release a soft red glow that encompassed the entire weapon system.

"The first effect produced by my modified positive fire hyper gem is a relatively straightforward increase in the firepower of the weapon. The mechanics behind this effect are... esoteric, but the

measurements do not lie. Just a handful of these crystals can already increase the damage potential of this luminar crystal weapon by roughly 5 percent, and that is without considering other factors."

A 5 percent increase in firepower was nothing to scoff at. It might not make much of a difference if a mech force used just a single luminous fire fey, but what if there were 20? What if there were 200?

The performance boost would be equivalent to adding several more offensive fey to the lineup, which was enough to alter the balance of a difficult battle!

Tristan transmitted another command that caused the red gems in the diagram to attract a lot of energy particles from the surrounding environment.

"The second effect of my positive fire hyper gem is that it can increase the attraction of fire-attributed E energy. The luminar crystal cannon fey is already designed to take advantage of this specific exotic energy type, so a greater concentration of fire energy will directly increase its firepower through other means. My gems may look small, but they are so powerful in their concentrated forms that they can potentially double the concentration of fire energy if enough of them are embedded in a single fey!"

That was quite a significant improvement! Although E energy was not the sole variable that determined the damage output of a relevant weapon, having more of it around certainly helped to add a lot of extra oomph.

The gems in the projection began to glow even brighter as its two separate 'glows' interacted with each other.

"What is important to note about my hyper gems is that the first and second effects are not isolated. They interact with each other. The second effect amplifies the first one by a considerable extent, enough to increase the original 5 percent boost into a 10 or maybe even a 15 percent amplification depending on the circumstances."

Perhaps most people would think little of a 5 percent increase in firepower, but 15 percent sounded a lot more serious!

The difference in results became a lot more obvious at that point. Stalemates could be converted into outright victories with such a substantial firepower boost.

A lot more people straightened their backs as they became more attentive to Tristan's lecture.

The previous fey models already aroused their interest as they were all useful in different ways.

However, the third place winner of the Fey Shaper Contest clearly existed on a higher tier compared to all of the lower-ranking entries!

Tristan transmitted another command that caused blue gems to light up in the schematic. The odd gems had been placed closer to the exterior to the weapon frame, making it look as if they were working as a shield.

"The final piece of the puzzle is the negative water hyper gem. While it is partially made out of water hyper materials, the effectiveness of this negative gem is opposite that of a more conventional positive gem. It induces a reverse flow effect towards water-attributed E energy. In other words, it

repels exotic energy of this specific attribute and prevents it from contaminating the luminous fire fey."

The projection showed the concentration of water-attributed E energy in the environment.

Unlike its fire counterpart, the water energy particles simply couldn't get close to the fey. The negative gems embedded across the device slowed down their progress and caused them to get repelled instead!

The only disappointment was that the negative gems weren't as effective as the positive gems. The negative water hyper gem was unable to prevent all water-attributed E energy from penetrating the luminous fire fey.

That did not mean the negative gems failed. They cut back the contamination of undesirable E energy to such a large extent that the luminous fire fey was able to embrace fire energy to an even greater extent!

Tristan smiled with pride as he elaborated on his negative gems.

"As you can see, my negative water hyper gem can repel the antithesis energy of my luminous fire fey. This is highly relevant to the Fey Fianna because its base mech and its energy shield fey are both embedded with water hyper materials. They always attract significant flows of water energy, which is not desirable for any fey that leverages the fire element. The standard luminar crystal cannon fey therefore always underperforms to an extent unless it is deployed at a much greater distance from the base mech than usual."

That was not a desirable solution. Not only was it a lot harder to aim the offensive fey when it was placed further away, the data connection between the fey and mech could also get cut off by enemy interference.

If the use of negative hyper gems could reduce the need to keep incompatible fey separate from each other, then this was a handy solution!

Tristan wrapped up his shallow technical explanation. "Together, these three effects can comprehensively increase the firepower of what is already regarded as an effective fey.

Professor Larkinson's luminar crystal weapons are already renowned for their efficiency and their myriad of useful effects. Combining them with my hyper gems can augment their existing properties in at least three different ways, all without taking up too much space or expending any conventional energy. The only major disadvantage that I have to mention is its price. My gems are powerful, but it is for that reason that they do not come cheap. While I am working hard to reduce the production cost of my luminous fire fey, it is still at least 3 times more expensive than a standard luminar crystal cannon fey."

Three times. Many potential customers became a lot less enthused about the luminous fire fey once they heard that.

Was it worth it to gain a 50 percent increase in firepower but pay 300 percent more as a consequence?

The answer to this question was different for every mech force, but most of them struggled with their finances far too much to afford this extravagance.

The high price tag was the main reason why Ves ultimately ranked Tristan's work at third place.

The luminous fire fey was most certainly effective in combat, but it was a luxury product more than anything else.

The Larkinson Clan and other elite mech forces were more than willing to pay a lot of money for a slight increase in combat performance, but there were many other groups that needed to count every MTA credits that passed through their hands.

While the fey were supposed to be a lot less expensive than a full combat mech, it sort of defeated the purpose to make the former as pricey as the latter!

Only those who were lacking in carrier vessels and placed a huge premium on quality over quantity would be attracted to the luminous fire fey.

Ves for example had already ordered the Larkinson Army to look into adopting Tristan's work, though only when the luminous fire fey could be upgraded to quasi-first-class standards.

Not only would the mech legions that made use of the Fey Fiannas be able to burn and vaporize their targets a lot harder, but Tristan would also earn a massive amount of revenue, all without impinging his honor!

As Tristan completed his speech on the effects of the luminous fire fey, Ves took over as he was not done yet with explaining the benefits of this fantastic product.

"As comprehensive as his explanation sounds, Mr. Wesseling has not given you the full story of its remarkable properties. As a specialist in E-technology, I have managed to identify a fourth effect produced by his hyper gems. You see, each fey is alive when paired with a Fey Fianna. This is significant because the power and the growth of every living fey is highly dependent on the concentration of E energy. The favorable circumstances produced by the hyper gems places the luminous fire fey in a much more supportive environment. It can harness much more fire-attributed E energy at once, and it is able to grow faster while it is saturated in this environment."

A few people who possessed a good understanding of the growth properties of living mechs looked shocked!

They understood the implications of this revelation a lot more than the uninitiated masses!

Ves grinned as he faced Tristan yet again.

The former Fridayman looked genuinely surprised as the living mech aspect had been a blind spot to him! Tristan never thought about how his gems would affect the E-technology elements of his living fey!

"This is a fantastic benefit in my opinion. The use of Mr. Wesseling's hyper gems can effectively speed up the growth of any living fey or living mech for that matter! While I am not entirely clear how much faster my living products can grow, the effect is not small!"

Chapter 5727 Stand Tall

5727 Stand Tall

The combination of effects and synergies of the luminous fire fey were frankly insane.

Tristan had grown a lot since Ves last met his old friend in person. The former Fridayman had been working diligently to develop his own mech company, and managed to make ends meet for a long time.

The Age of Dawn and the introduction of exotic radiation clearly granted immense boons to the Journeyman Mech Designer.

As Ves studied the physical copy of the luminous fire fey floating above Tristan's head, it became clear that it possessed remarkable qualities that he had never seen in any other living fey.

All of this was due to the integration of Tristan's so-called hyper gems. The positive fire hyper gems and the negative water hyper gems both produced a myriad of effects that effectively increased the firepower of the luminar crystal weapon.

One of the reasons why the combined firepower amplification was so strong with this fey was because the luminar crystal cannon was not actually that strong.

If the same gems were used to amplify the firepower of a warship laser cannon battery, the paltry gems would hardly be able to make a difference!

The only way to make the gems more effective was to increase their quantity or improve their quality.

That could get very expensive.

The greatest advantage of Tristan's gem's was their compact nature. They provided a greater performance boost to a mech or object than anything else relatively to their mass and volume.

That made his gems useful in a lot more situations than this. Compared to his previous gems, Tristan's new hyper gems came much closer to matching the performance of Lucky's own gems.

The two types of gems definitely shared a common root! Ves even suspected that Tristan was gradually moving closer to what Lucky was naturally able to produce.

Ves looked forward to the day that Tristan's gems were no longer inferior to Lucky's products.

There were still far too many steps that Tristan needed to complete before that happened. The progress he made so far was already impressive, but when Ves knew what more could be done with these extraordinary gems, he was not as enthusiastic about them as he should have been.

That did not stop Ves from thinking about inviting Tristan to his clan.

The former Fridayman mech designer had abundantly proven his competence with his luminous fire fey.

His gems had improved to the point where they could provide powerful performance for second-class mechs.

It was not much of a stretch to think they could provide similar performance boosts to quasi-first-class mechs. Tristan would just have to synthesize his gems with higher grades of materials.

What held Ves back from making this decision was whether Tristan was even willing to join the Larkinson Clan.

Tristan had been working as an independent mech designer on Davute for numerous years now. He attained limited success so far, but his future prospects continued to follow an upwards trajectory.

Although he and his mech company had worked for the Davutan Branch of the Larkinson Clan numerous times, there was no indication that he actively sought to improve his ties with the Larkinsons in the past.

The Journeyman worked hard to stand on his own two feet, and he was adamant about maintaining his current boundaries, even to the point of rejecting a growing number of buyout offers.

All of this indicated to Tristan that he wanted to be responsible for his own success for the most part.

Perhaps he might be willing to cooperate with the Larkinsons more extensively by developing the luminous fire fey for the Fey Fianna, but he was clearly trying to improve his own business.

When Ves looked down at Tristan yet again, his old friend did not project anything that indicated he wanted to join up with the Larkinsons.

Even though the Larkinson Clan was clearly in the ascendancy, Tristan was different from all of the envious mech designers who wanted to join up and gain access to an easy track to becoming a first-rater.

In other words, Tristan was too proud to rely on excessive handouts. Even the luminous fire fey was just an attempt for him to earn lots of money by relying on the merit of his own work. It was emphatically not designed to attract Ves' sympathy.

Ves silently nodded at Tristan while maintaining eye contact.

Both of them were mech designers, and both of them had surpassed a certain stage of maturity. They had no need to exchange any words in order to understand each other's meaning.

Ves essentially conveyed his willingness to absorb Tristan and his mech company into the Larkinson Clan.

Tristan basically rejected Ves' goodwill and made it clear that he wanted to earn an honest living as a mech designer.

This was a respectable attitude.

In fact, Ves respected his old friend a lot more, because he would have made the same choice!

The more Ves climbed up the ranks, the more he realized that mech designers needed to possess a lot of pride and persistence as they approached their work. None of them succeeded in becoming a Master Mech Designer or Star Designer by leeching off other people's generosity!

In this case, Tristan clearly rejected the most beneficial short and medium-term option available to him. He deliberately made this choice in order to preserve his nebulous long-term possibility of becoming an excellent mech designer, with a minute probability of advancing to the rank of Star Designer one day!

No matter how astronomically small this possibility may be, Tristan was not one of the mech designers who gave up because of that. He was willing to grind and toil like an ordinary second-class mech designer because he believed that was the only way he could earn the ultimate payoff in the future.

Ves was not sure whether Tristan would be able to attain his ultimate dream.

The former Fridayman who had technically become a Davutan was taking his time towards promoting to Senior Mech Designer.

The successful development of positive and negative hyper gems were significant achievements and most certainly brought Tristan closer to the next step, but it might still take years before he finally caught up to Ves' current rank.

By then, Ves himself may have already realized his design philosophy at that time!

Ves closed his eyes and turned away from Tristan. There seemed to be no way for the two to converge anytime soon. They were following two different trajectories that were unlikely to intercept.

That was fine. Ves was short on time and always acted with great urgency.

Tristan on the other hand had found his own rhythm. He showed a willingness to follow a more sedate pace in order to strengthen his foundation and break through only when he was truly ready.

The only problem with that approach was that a functioning human society with a substantial mech industry might no longer exist by the time that Tristan came into his power.

Oh well.

"Thank you for demonstrating your product, Mr. Wesseling." Ves said in a formal tone as he adopted the role of host again. "Your luminous fire fey is a fantastic premium solution for customers who are looking to augment the firepower of their forces but lack the space to accommodate more units. Your newly developed hyper gems are particularly interesting to my clan. Outside of my fey, I can easily anticipate that they can augment the performance of all of my living mech models. Are you interested in discussing a long-term supply agreement for your specialty products?"

Ves valued Tristan's gems so much that he was not willing to wait until he had closed this event.

"Wesseling Design Services is always interested in conducting business with any party." Tristan smoothly replied as he played his own role. "I should warn you that I have yet to develop many variations of hyper gems. If you request hyper gems based on rare and less accessible attributes, then you must give me time to develop the right solutions. I am also unable to mass produce high-quality hyper gems at this time. They are too... volatile to be relied upon. I am not yet able to supply my customers with hyper gems that are effective enough to be utilized in first-class mechs."

"I understand, Mr. Wesseling. I will take your current limitations into account. I have utmost confidence in your ability to grow and refine your products over time."

The two exchanged a few more pleasantries with each other before Tristan finally moved off the stage, taking his impressive luminous fire fey as well.

Ves did his best to reset his mood and focus on his current priority.

"The luminous fire fey is an impressive product and certainly had the capital to win first place. The reason why I decided to place it at third is not because of its shortcomings, but because the following contest submissions are even stronger. As far as I am concerned, the top 3 all deserve to be in first place, but that is not permissible according to the rules that we have set. There must be

winners and losers, so the following fey is the penultimate product that does an impressive job of enriching the available options of my Fey Fianna."

A new fey hovered above the stage.

Different from the luminous fire fey that radiated so much power and generated a powerful E energy vortex, the second place winner looked like the polar opposite!

It was a fey that was coated in all black that was designed to reflect as little stuff as possible.

It also happened to be covered by emitters that were so form-fitting that they were barely raised from the exterior surface of the device.

Not that many people looked surprised to see it appear on stage. They had toured the exhibitions before and already had a hunch that this particular product would be able to rank at the top.

There were those that even thought it should have won first place!

Alas, Ves made a slightly different choice, but that did not mean that the fey was bad.

[Stealth field fey

Developer: Professor Czilia Avoqee, Lead Engineer

Category: Utility

E Energy Attributes: Negation

Summary: The stealth field fey is designed to work in concert with at least three more identical units, but should ideally be working in concert with many more. As its name suggests, the stealth field fey is designed to project a field that can not only dampen all outward emissions, but also make anything within the area of effect invisible to the naked eye, provided that the objects within are not producing any powerful emissions themselves. Only powerful sensors at close range or targeted scanning at further distances by alien warships can expose the flaws of this stealth field. The stealth field fey is a powerful example of high technology simplified for second-class mechs, and therefore suffers many inadequacies such as excessive cost, extremely high power consumption, relatively short run time and accelerated wear-and-tear. Despite all of these shortcomings, a group of stealth field fey can offer a viable solution to allow a modest group of mechs to silently approach an enemy position in space by relying on ballistic flight.]

The description was longer than usual, but the stealth field fey deserved it. This was a product that could most definitely sway entire battles in the favor of the human side, and it was all because the stealth field fey could effectively hide a bunch of mechs from the sensors of enemy warships until it was too late!

The tradeoffs were great, but as long as a mech force made good use of this tactical advantage, an alien foe could definitely be taken by surprise!

"Professor Czilia Avoqee, please come up to the stage and explain the development of your stealth field fey to us all. Where is tech derived from and how did you manage to fit such a powerful capability in the chassis of a relatively small fey?"

Chapter 5728 Many Limitations

The initial reaction towards the stealth field fey was surprise and wonder.

Those who had already encountered it during the exhibition already guessed that it would end up with a high ranking, but all of the other people who were tuning into the broadcast only managed to discover this product for the first time.

This was the debut of the stealth field fey!

Naturally, Ves grew immensely curious at the providence of this special fey. It was not every day that a high-tech development company with definite ties to a first-class power introduced a heavily simplified adaptation of advanced stealth technology to the masses.

Cutting-edge stealth technology was the exclusive preserve of states and major organizations.

Only they possessed the funding and other conditions needed to push the boundaries of this niche technological field.

As far as Ves was aware of, the effort to combine existing stealth technology with hyper technology was still a developing field. Many mech designers and scientists may have managed to produce breakthroughs, but their first priority was to keep their design applications in-house to benefit their own respective groups.

It was rare for a power to have put so much effort into researching successful solutions, only to convert it into a commercial solution where the public could easily gain access to the conclusions of all of that painstaking research.

Even if the company in question sold the stealth field fey at astounding prices, the profits generated from selling them could not compensate for the early loss of a temporary but highly strategic technological advantage.

There had to be more behind this profound move. Ves slightly narrowed his eyes as he looked down at the woman that led this development project.

The dusky-skinned engineer did not look as if she was here to market a product from her company.

She possessed the typical demeanor of a no-nonsense scientist who wanted to do nothing more than to remain behind closed doors and work with numbers all day. She did not look as if she cared about the business side of the technology sector in the slightest.

Her tone only strengthened that impression.

"Our stealth field fey is a strategic contribution of Heq-Lock Integrated Technologies, a subsidiary of the Devos Ancient Clan of the Terran Alliance. It utilizes a second-class adaptation of a new strain of advanced stealth technology that is expressly designed to overcome the common weaknesses of indigenous alien sensor technology, with a particular focus on deceiving their spatial and gravitic sensor systems. The stealth field fey should also be effective against most general human sensor systems, but it is not optimized for this usage."

Ah. That explained much. This was a deliberate ploy from the Devos Ancient Clan, which had become one of the allies of the Larkinson Clan.

The part about being optimized for use against the native aliens was an important distinction.

Stealth technology could be used for all kinds of misdeeds, so the parties that controlled it tried to keep it out of the hands of the general public.

Even if the public gained access to stealth tech, it was usually so outdated that they were prone to fail when confronted by modern detection systems.

The stealth field fey was a little different because it utilized a much more up-to-date variation of stealth technology. The only reason why the Devosans dared to release it was because it had been reduced to second-class and because it was entirely tuned to work against the native aliens.

"We have conducted numerous field tests of our stealth field fey, and we can confirm that they work." Czilia Avoqee continued to explain as if she was reporting to her superiors as opposed to potential customers. "Of the 14 attempts we have made, 12 have managed to advance quietly from a distance and remained undetected until they came within 15 kilometers of different alien forces."

That was an impressive result!

Although getting detected 15 kilometers away was not as good as remaining hidden until reaching point-blank range, the remaining distance was almost nothing in space terms.

There were dreadnoughts that were 15 kilometers long!

"Are the stealth field fey effective in environments outside of open space?"

The lead engineer shook her head. "I am afraid not, professor. Our product is not able to produce an effective stealth field under atmospheric conditions or elsewhere. They are solely designed to be employed in space. It is best if they are employed during an active battle as the presence of interference degrades the performance of enemy sensor systems and reduces the likelihood of detecting inconsistencies. If necessary, the stealth field fey can also be employed outside of a battle, but the risks are elevated in those cases."

Dr. Avoqee proceeded to project a simulation that showed the deployment of a Fey Fianna, four stealth fey and a couple of other mechs within the pyramid-shaped field.

"This is the most basic deployment scenario for the stealth field fey. A set of four fey deployed in a tetrahedron formation can effectively obscure the emissions of a small number of mechs. The exact amount is heavily dependent on the level of active interference at the site, the quantity of mechs, the spacing of the stealth field fey and most importantly the activity levels of the mechs themselves."

The simulation began to highlight a few variables such as the emissions outputted by the mechs.

"In general, the stronger the mechs, the more powerful emissions tend to be. This poses a problem as it becomes exponentially more difficult to minimize their presence. A larger quantity of mechs also imposes greater challenges as the stealth field fey will not only have to increase their distance from each other, but also have to compensate for many more changing variables. Active maneuvers and course changes are especially problematic as they produce much greater pattern changes that all need to be compensated for in real-time. In addition to these complications, hyper mechs and high-ranking mechs always affect the E energy radiation around them. Our stealth field fey can only negate their E energy fluctuations to a limited extent."

The mention of all of these limitations and constraints significantly depressed people's enthusiasm for this fey.

It shouldn't have been a surprise. Obtaining effective stealth capabilities by employing just four of these relatively small fey never came cheap. The development team led by Dr. Avoqee had to make a huge number of sacrifices in order to render it at least somewhat useful in this particular form.

The woman did not seem to care about all of the dismay she was causing with her words.

"However, the greatest constraint to utilizing the stealth field fey is their elevated power consumption. It takes a great amount of energy to maintain even a small active stealth field. Do not expect them to be able to lurk in space for hours or days on end by themselves. Not only will they drain their limited energy cells fairly quickly, but their heat sinks will be stressed to their capacity as well. There is no effective means for us to increase these limits without making the price even more unreasonable."

This was the biggest letdown of the stealth field fey. What use were they when they ran out of juice after being active for a relatively short time?

Still, not everyone gave up on this expensive and overpriced tech demo. Now that Dr. Avoqee had done her due diligence and given her audience a necessary reality check, she began to explain how the stealth field fey could be utilized in an effective manner despite all of the aforementioned limitations.

"Heq-Lock Integrated Technologies still considers the stealth field fey to be the successful outcome of an experimental development project because it has managed to fulfill its mission in numerous real scenarios. In every test, we have employed a variety of different configurations and solutions to increase the success rate."

The projection changed to show annotated footage of these tests.

"Here, you can see that we have managed to secretly deliver up to 30 mechs and 5 boarding shuttles in close proximity to an enemy fleet on standby. The lack of interference makes it much harder to approach in stealth, but we have compensated for that by resorting to numbers. Of the mechs that we have employed in this capacity, 15 of them are comprised of Fey Fianna. Of this group, 10 are entirely equipped with stealth field fey, which means that there are 40 stealth field fey working in total."

40 stealth field fey! That amounted to a large investment as none of them were cheap!

However, relying on numbers clearly worked as close to an entire mech company managed to approach an alien fleet without getting detected in advance!

The footage showed other interesting adaptations.

"In order to minimize the emissions of the mechs, shuttles and fey, they have been launched out of an advancing carrier vessel on a ballistic trajectory. None of the mechs aside from the stealth field fey have been fully activated. This allows the mechs to preserve their energy levels and remain cold for the entire duration. The only serious shortcoming to this tactic is that the lack of active flight significantly extends the time to arrival. The stealth field fey cannot remain active during this entire time interval."

The footage showed how the testers overcame this problem. Not all of the stealth field fey were active at the same time. 30 of them were constantly maintaining a cube-shaped formation while the other 10 remained on standby.

When a stealth field fey started to reach its limit, it dropped out of formation while a spare one moved into place.

Specialized support mechs that traveled with the covert mech unit gently replenished the spent fey. After that, the recharged fey were put on standby until it was their turn to maintain the collective stealth field again.

This was quite an ingenious setup. The use of so many stealth field fey at once not only increased the total coverage, but also added a lot more redundancy to the operation.

The limited runtimes of the stealth field fey were not that big of deal so long as the mech unit had ways to replenish them during the entire journey.

As long as speed was not an issue, the stealth field fey did not have to work excessively hard to obscure the emissions of so many small craft. Mechs that did little else aside from coasting through empty space generally weren't very difficult to hide.

The negation-attributed hyper materials also did their jobs of making sure the hyper mechs did not produce any noticeable wakes or trails in the surrounding E energy flows.

Although sensor systems that could effectively observe and measure the flow of E energy radiation were practically unheard of, it was better to account for this potential threat in advance rather than allow it to be a critical weakness a few years later.

Dr. Avoquee smiled as the footage showed the conclusion of the successful test. The infiltration unit successfully came close enough to sprint the remaining kilometers at full burn and rapidly sneak the boarding shuttles into the open hangar bay of an alien battleship that had failed to activate all of her segmented transphasic energy shields in time.

The footage ended at that point. It did not show how the infiltration unit managed to get away from this incredibly dangerous situation, but it was not necessary.

The point was that it demonstrated that the stealth field fey could open up a lot of new possibilities in the Red War so long as they were properly used!

"We have found that our stealth field fey is most effective when it is operating in larger numbers and as part of a mixed element. They can be utilized to smuggle torpedoes at close proximity or pass through blockades in complete secrecy. They can be used to spy on alien strongholds or extract critical personnel. The use of stealth technology is not uncommon in first-class combat, but with the release of our new fey, we hope that second-class mech forces will be able to leverage this capability to their advantage as well."

Chapter 5729 Cost-Saving Measure

5729 Cost-Saving Measure

The explanation provided by Dr. Czilia Avoquee successfully won her audience after she initially scared them away from purchasing her product.

The stealth field fey may be fragile, finicky, energy hungry and prone to failure in many conditions, but so what?

As long as a mech force properly accounted for all of these weaknesses and took measures to minimize exposure to them, the stealth field fey could still be utilized to secretly sneak over a bunch of mechs and other stuff!

Technology was all about recognizing limitations and working around them. Ves shouldn't be so surprised at this because third-raters and second-raters often had to work around them in their daily lives.

Even first-raters weren't exempt from the boundaries imposed by their physical reality.

They just had it a lot better because they could spend astronomical sums of money to obtain extremely inefficient but somehow effective enough solutions for most of their problems!

In any case, the stealth field fey presented so many useful possibilities in or outside a battlefield that even the Larkinson Clan wanted to obtain a generous quantity of them! They could make life a lot easier for its mech legions. The high price tags did not pose much of a hindrance to the increasingly wealthier Larkinsons.

It was as if the stealth field fey were specifically designed to meet the needs of the Larkinson Clan!

Of course, Ves was far from the only person who was willing to splurge on these useful solutions. Numerous leaders among the audience also made the same consideration.

Unlike stealth mechs, the stealth field fey was able to hide the presence of mechs that ordinarily weren't equipped with active cloaking systems. This was incredibly useful as it opened up the possibility of discreetly sneaking in scout mechs, hacking mechs, melee mechs and more without letting them get intercepted in advance.

The only issue was that it would be difficult for the covert mech unit to successfully reach their destination if their targets actively moved in space.

Ballistic travel was most conducive for stealth because the mechs mostly remained cold as they coasted through space.

If their target kept moving, the covert mech unit had to move as well, and that was problematic as the stealth field fey needed to compensate for a lot more activity.

The greater the variables, the greater the probability of exposing flaws.

That did not depress the enthusiasm for Ves and everyone else who saw great promise in this tech.

Despite the experimental nature of this product, its capabilities were just too useful to set aside and forget about its existence.

The ongoing war did not allow for red humanity to take its time to properly test out all of its new innovations. As long as a new tech was useful enough, it was better to put it to use despite the lack of exhaustive tests.

Besides, there was no guarantee that alien sensors would remain ineffective against the form of stealth employed by this product.

Stealth technology always got overtaken by advancements in sensor technology. Perhaps it might only take a few years before the aliens wised up and made sure to equip their warships with technological updates that rendered the stealth field fey ineffective.

If that was the case, then it was better to take advantage of the momentary effectiveness of the stealth field fey while they lasted!

As Dr. Avoqee completed her frank and factual presentation of her product, Ves chose to ask a few questions.

"I think I am speaking on behalf of many interested parties when I say that we appreciate your candor." He said as he continued to float above everyone's heads. "As exhaustive as your explanation may be, there are still many points of uncertainty. For example, is it possible for your stealth field fey to successfully bring an expert mech or an ace mech in close proximity to an unsuspecting alien fleet?"

"Not in a reliable manner." The woman decisively shook his head. "One of our failed tests happened to center around this scenario. High-ranking mechs are much more powerful and produce exponentially greater emissions when active. We do not have the technology to compensate for their domain completely shut down."

Many people frowned when they heard that. Ves was no exception.

"If that is the case, then the inactive expert mechs will turn into sitting ducks. Much of the reasons why the aliens are struggling to defeat our champions is because our high-

ranking mechs are not only a lot tougher, but are also capable of evading a lot of powerful attacks. Even if they get hit, their resonance shields can mitigate a lot of incoming damage. Keeping them off-line negates all of these advantages. They can only rely on their armor systems to withstand enough damage and buy time for the machine to activate in a hurry."

That was not ideal, particularly for relatively thin and fragile expert mechs such as the Dark Zephyr.

The way Ves saw it, stealth field fey should only be paired with relatively expendable mechs and mech pilots. They needed to be strong enough to complete their missions without making it too painful to lose them all of a sudden.

If it was not absolutely necessary, there was no reason to assign a precious expert mech for these risky duties.

"Will Heq-Lock Integrated Technologies continue to support the stealth field fey and update it with new technologies in order to retain its effectiveness over time."

"We are committed to preserving the longevity of the stealth field fey as long as it remains profitable." Dr. Avoqee responded in a decisive tone. "We have excellent scientists and developers in our employ, and we have access to a large database of high-end technologies. We are confident that we can continue to iterate on the fey and ensure that it will stay relevant as our adversaries continue to make their own advancements."

That was a powerful guarantee and reassured a lot of customers. None of them wanted to buy a product that was bound to lose its effectiveness after just a few years. Ves just hoped that Heq-Lock and its Terran backers were willing to keep their word.

"May I ask why Heq-Lock has chosen to implement its adapted stealth technology in a fey as opposed to a purpose-

built mech? Are there any special advantages that have turned my Fey Fianna line into a more suitable platform than a proprietary mech design?"

The woman smiled up at him as she offered her response.

"One of the requirements to maintain an active stealth field is to perform a large amount of directed calculations and apply the results with as little lag time as possible. It is exponentially more difficult to cloak an entire field of space as opposed to the fixed dimensions of a single stealth mech. It may not be obvious to the casual observer, but the most expensive and energy intensive component of our fey is not its specialized stealth field emitters, but its proprietary AI core."

The projected schematic zoomed in to highlight the relatively large AI core installed in the center of the fey.

She was right. The AI core looked way out of proportion of the rest of the fey. It was too large and expensive for what was supposed to be a relatively small combat object.

The maximum processing power contained in this core was common in high-end hybrid mechs or even corvettes!

Ves realized now that it was indeed the main reason why the cost of the stealth field fey was so excessive. Active stealth technology was incredibly data-intensive to maintain. It was not like throwing a cloak of invisibility over a mech and calling it a day. It took a lot of active reactions to precisely dampen or counteract the emissions released by mech or object.

Even the slightest flaws or delays in calculations could produce artifacts that looked like faint shimmers.

These flaws were barely noticeable most of the time, but a sharp enough sensor could still detect the momentary activity and come to the conclusion that a stealth unit was in the area.

This was a catastrophic result!

Powerful AI cores were therefore needed to perform lots of accurate calculations fast enough to keep the stealth field completely even.

Ves understood now why this variation of stealth technology fit so well with his Fey Fianna.

"Let me guess. The effectiveness of your AI cores has increased by a significant enough margin when they are integrated in a living fey, am I correct?"

Czilia Avoqee nodded. "That appears to be the case, professor. I have spoken to other developers in the preceding hours and they have also noticed similar patterns. Our stealth field fey is one of the few creations that is purposely designed to derive extensive advantages from this unexplainable effect. As long as the living fey possesses elevated judgment and processing capabilities, we can effectively employ a more affordable AI core to perform the calculations of a higher grade of AI core. We will lose this advantage if we implement our stealth technology in our own mech designs."

That was interesting. Ves had not been aware of this effect. The living mechs that he designed so far generally did not rely all that much on powerful processing capabilities in order to fulfill their role.

The Phobos was probably the most dependent on number crunching in order to maintain its highly effective stealth system, but Ves remembered that he had splurged on an AI core that was way more powerful than the expert stealth mech actually needed. He would rather equip the powerful machine with additional processing power in case it was needed one day.

"These stealth field fey are high-tech products. They shouldn't be easy to produce." Ves remarked. "Will Heq-Lock Integrated Technologies be able to produce enough of them to meet customer demand?"

The lead engineer's expression remained impassive. "I am responsible for production operations, so I cannot supply you with a detailed answer. It is my understanding that our factory is able to meet a modest level of demand. If we can produce enough stealth field fey to fulfill all of our orders, then we can employ another factory, but not much more."

"What is the limit?"

"The current version of the stealth field fey is heavily reliant on a number of rare exotics and hypers that are relatively limited in supply. For example, a hyper material with the negation attribute is still rare and difficult to find in the new frontier. The limited availability of raw materials will constrain production to a lower ceiling than what we consider ideal. We are trying our best to locate more sources of rare materials, but humanity's territories in the Red Ocean can only yield so much."

"I understand."

The industrial capacity of a civilization was highly dependent on territory. The aliens would find it much easier to mass produce the stealth field fey because they had much more abundant access to the necessary materials in their enormous turf.

Ves asked a few more questions about the stealth field fey and generally became satisfied with what he heard. Dr. Avoqee was not a careless engineer and accounted for many concerns in advance.

"Since the production of your stealth field fey is so limited, can you give our Larkinson Clan a priority on orders? We would like to order a batch of thousand units to begin with. Is that acceptable?"

The woman nodded. "That should not be an issue, though I must warn you that it will take time to complete your order."

There were plenty of ways for the Larkinsons to make use of these handy stealth field fey.

While the Larkinson Clan already possessed existing stealth capabilities of its own, they were mostly confined to specialized units belonging to the Black Cats.

Outside of the Phobos, the Larkinsons did not really have access to a combat unit that could employ active stealth to sneak close to a powerful enemy!

The addition of so many stealth field fey should relieve this shortcoming. It helped that the fey weren't all that big and could easily be stored.

Chapter 5730 The Winner of the Fey Shaper Contest

5730 The Winner of the Fey Shaper Contest

Just as in the case with Tristan's hyper gems, the development of stealth field fey had the potential to comprehensively strengthen the armed forces of the Larkinson Clan.

Ves was incredibly pleased to gain access to third-party innovations that the Larkinson Clan could never develop in-

house.

There was no one within the ranks of his clan who had any clue about how to make gems that could augment the performance of mechs in mysterious ways.

Even Ves had made little progress despite making use of Lucky's gems for such a long time!

It reminded him once again that Ves did not shoulder the entire burden of developing powerful solutions for his clansmen.

It was okay to rely on outsiders to fill up the gaps that the Larkinsons could not do so themselves.

In any case, as Dr. Avoqee and her stealth field fey finally moved away from the main stage, the time had come to introduce the final fey.

Many people in the audience already figured out what that fey may be. There was one more fantastic fey that was unlikely to rank between 11 and 50. The fact that Ves had not presented it so far was a powerful clue that its turn came last.

"I have been graced with many interesting fey models today." Ves said with a smile. "None of the products that have reached the top 50 are without merit. Many of them are marred with flaws, but that does not stop them from being useful under the right circumstances. What makes a fey a good addition to a mech force that employs Fey Fiannas is not only decided by their raw specifications, but also how well their owners are able to leverage their advantages."

The more advanced and powerful fey usually imposed more requirements on their users. The stealth field fey was the most extreme example of this kind.

"That said, I believe that my Fey Fianna line should have the freedom to choose from a range of different fey. The most complex ones should not be the only ones to earn your favor as the simpler fey are not only less cumbersome to use, but are also applicable in many more combat scenarios. Sometimes, all you need to win a battle are reliable combat assets that you can count on at any time."

The development of all of these new and fancy fey did not mean that the simpler ones became obsolete overnight.

The space suppressor fey, the energy shield fey and the luminar crystal cannon fey all remained fairly cost-effective.

The only questionable product among the original fey types was the gauss cannon fey. The Larkinsons did not employ any ranged kinetic weapon experts at the time of its development, so it was clearly lacking in a lot of refinements.

Regardless, Ves wanted to make sure that his customers would not feel overly pressured to employ expensive solutions such as the luminous fire fey or more convoluted products such as the infinite fey.

This was what ultimately decided which fey deserved to rank at the top.

"The time has come to announce the winner of the Fey Shaper Contest. This is a great honor as it has managed to earn my greatest appreciation among other fantastic products. None of the fey in the top 10 are awful, but only one of them is able to defeat all of the others in terms of value. My judgment criteria is based on an estimation of how much positive impact they can make in the war effort. Based on this, the best fey should be powerful enough to make a substantial difference on the

battlefield, but also affordable enough to be used in wider numbers. The following fey has managed to strike an excellent balance between price and performance. Now, without further ado, let me introduce you to the fey model that has clinched the top rank!"

A new silvery fey floated in from the side. It possessed an unusual circular shape and looked like a floating turtle shell.

[Shield Infiltrator Fey

Developer: Kelsey Ampatoch, Journeyman Mech Designer

Category: Offensive, utility

E Energy Attributes: Space

Summary: The shield infiltrator fey is a product that is foremost designed to pass through transphasic energy shields by relying on deception. It is designed to analyze the patterns of alien small craft and projectiles and imitate them in order to deceive alien control systems into identifying it as a friendly unit. If successful, the shield infiltrator fey should be able to pass through transphasic energy shields without encountering any meaningful resistance as it has been added to an alien warship's whitelist. Once it has managed to pass through the layers of energy defenses, it should have extensive access to the hull of the enemy vessel. If it has not been shot down or eliminated through other means, the shield infiltrator fey will be able to deliver a small payload that can range from small bombs to individual human infiltrators.]

The shield infiltrator fey did not look subtle, but there were definite reasons behind its unusual shape.

Kelsey Ampatoch ascended to the main stage like a woman who already knew from the start that she had clinched the top prize.

She had many reasons to be confident. Among all of the participants who ended up in the top 50, the Journeyman Mech Designer was the one who came from a first-rate state!

As an employee of Isthmus Manufacturing, the Rubarthan mech designer not only mastered all of the skills required to design first-class multipurpose mechs, but she also grew familiar with second-class mechs.

Her remarkable combination of skills and experience allowed her to develop advanced technological products while at the same time figuring out many ways to control the cost.

The shield infiltrator fey was an incredibly inspired product. It possessed an amazing function, yet remained cheap enough that most customers should be more than willing to purchase thousands of them without worrying about their budgets.

When people discovered how much it cost to purchase a shield infiltrator fey, they all became pleasantly surprised that it was also within their means to purchase this product!

"Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. As the lead developer of the shield infiltrator fey, it is an honor for me to be able to present my work to you. Its name already betrays its purpose. It is a fey that is solely designed to infiltrate the exterior defensive envelope of alien warships. The fey is not dangerous or useful in itself as it is lacking in offensive or defensive capabilities. I have stripped everything down until I have been left with the bare minimum. This has made my shield infiltrator

fey affordable enough that you can rely on a large quantity of them to successfully drive through at least a part of them through an active transphasic energy shield."

This was a tacit admission that the shield infiltration technology was far from perfect. Stuff could go wrong which would cause the fey to bump into the transphasic energy shield without obtaining permission to pass through.

The chance that this would happen was much greater if the alien adversaries were aware of the presence of these peculiar fey!

The first-class mech designer activated a projection that showed the shield infiltrator fey attempting to pass through the transphasic energy shield of a captured alien destroyer.

"In order to understand how our fey is able to bypass the most formidable defenses employed by the aliens, I will need to explain how energy shields work in general. As you should already be aware of, energy shields do not block anything that passes through them, though they could theoretically be made to do so. They are often designed to pass through harmless light as well as any form of energy or matter launched by the side that employs the energy shields. In order to prevent any conflicts, the energy shields are controlled by instructions that instruct them to pass through any laser beams, kinetic rounds or small craft. This is a manual process that has never produced any problems as all of these friendly activities are white listed."

Kelsey Ampatoch began to grin when she spoke her next words.

"My shield infiltrator fey is built with adaptive and partially morphable materials. This allows it to change its properties so that it can closely mimic the properties of alien matter. It is also built with an inbuilt sensor array that is specifically designed to measure data related to its purpose. The lower the range, the higher the quality of data and the shorter the time needed to decipher a valid pattern. Although my fey's computational power is not strong, it can borrow the processing power of the Fey Fianna or any supporting starship in the rear as long as an active data link can be maintained."

That was a powerful distinction. The stealth field fey had to carry their own powerful AI cores because relying on external sources for computational power would produce a lot of emissions that could expose the presence of cloaked units.

The shield infiltrator fey preferred to avoid attracting any attention, but it was not necessary to keep it totally hidden.

"The time it takes to calculate a valid pattern varies considerably based on the power and sophistication of the energy shield generators utilized by the enemy. Simpler transphasic energy shield generators usually lack many redundant protective measures that can hinder the operation of my fey. More advanced transphasic shield generators such as those employed by most major alien races are much more on guard against this sort of infiltration. They have most definitely confronted this threat in the past, and have developed countermeasures against it. There is still a small chance my shield infiltrator fey can pass through, but the success rate is likely below 1 percent."

That was too small. Unless a mech force had enough Fey Fiannas to launch hundreds of shield infiltrator fey, it was not worth bothering.

Kelsey Ampatoch thought so as well. "The more modern warships fielded by the native aliens are also much more attentive towards any objects that come in close proximity to their hulls. Their point defenses typically respond quickly and are able to shoot down my shield infiltrator fey with

ease as my product does not possess stealth or strong defenses. They are best employed against the warships of minor alien races for these reasons."

These were major shortcomings, but it was already a good start. It was better to have access to a somewhat effective solution than nothing at all! Together with the stealth field fey, the shield infiltrator fey opened up so many new possibilities for mischief that the aliens wouldn't know what would hit them in the following year!

"The results are excellent once they have succeeded in their infiltration." Kelsey smiled as he began to show footage of successful cases. "My shield infiltrator fey can only transport relatively small objects through the active defenses of an alien warship, but that is already enough to bring bombs, tracking beacons, human infiltrators and other payloads in physical contact with the exterior of the hull. If the aliens are particularly inattentive, then my shield infiltrator fey may be able to enter an open hatch or hangar bay, thereby allowing it to inflict much more serious damage to the enemy vessel."

The shield infiltrator fey was not large enough to carry anything powerful, but it did not have to. A relatively compact explosive device should already be powerful enough to knock out or disable the formidable gun batteries of alien warships when detonated in the right locations.

This was an excellent way to pull out the teeth of powerful enemy vessels and reduce their threat level without needing to drill through their transphasic energy shields!

The possibilities for infiltration were even greater. Even though it was not possible to hide the shield infiltrator fey, a single human infiltrator might easily be able to sneak aboard a ship and lurk around without alarming the alien crew.