

The Mech 6031

Chapter 6031 The Power of Rivalries

When Ves next met up with Gloriana after she finished her work session, he cuddled against her as they rested in their parlor.

He slowly regaled the discussion he held with the legion commanders of the expeditionary fleet.

"Miaow~"

"Mrow~"

Clixie comfortably rested on Ves' lap. Blinky had emerged from Ves and leisurely licked the Rubarthan Sentinel Cat's fur.

Meanwhile, Gloriana partially occupied herself by communing with her pet arche engineer. Her Archglove-covered hand rested on different parts of Hekkel's archeshell. Each time she made contact, sparks of electricity occasionally ran through the glove and shell.

Hekkel did not seem to mind. The domesticated alien engineer made an expression that looked like he felt completely content.

Despite the idyllic atmosphere of the parlor, the topic of discussion was much graver.

As a newly promoted Senior Mech Designer, Gloriana possessed a good understanding of the state of the mech industry. She quickly comprehended the enormous implications of the rise of alien phasefighters.

"You are right about the seriousness of this trend." Gloriana said as she furrowed her brows. "I do not think we need to fear for the future of high-ranking mechs. It is impossible for the aliens to challenge the supremacy of god pilots. It is much more difficult to say whether low-ranking mechs will remain as well-regarded in the coming decades. The Age of Mechs is already behind us. The rise of phasefighters is but one of many weapon platforms that can overthrow the dominance of mechs in our society."

That sounded a bit too exaggerated for Ves. Phasefighters had their merits, but the infrastructure and culture surrounding low-ranking mechs had developed for so long that they had become entrenched in human society. It required a huge amount of effort to shake the inertia surrounding humanity's worship and adoration of mechs.

"What do you mean by that, Gloriana?"

"Have you forgotten about the Starfighter Corps set up by the Red Fleet?"

"I did hear an announcement about that, but starfighters haven't actually attracted much attention as of late. I think the fleeters are still in the process of setting it up. It takes years to train starfighter pilots and to develop suitable ones that can be used to defend planets and such." Ves responded.

"Have you ever thought that while the native aliens are eager to steal our human technologies, the Red Fleet is just as eager to imitate alien phasefighters?"

That remark caused Ves to freeze.

The Red Cabal clearly invested a lot of resources and attention on the development of phasefighters. That was very obvious to Ves due to how quickly they improved since they first appeared.

The aliens were determined to develop small craft that became strong enough to rival mechs, and they had a good chance of succeeding!

Given how much the enemies of red humanity invested into the development of phasefighters, the Red Fleet could easily obtain a bargain by capturing high-tech elite phasefighters from the battlefield before reverse engineering them in their labs!

Ves also thought about what might happen beyond this point.

If the Red Fleet learned the essence of alien phasefighter design and began to develop improved versions of the same craft, then the native aliens would eventually find out and find ways to capture the superior fleetcraft!

Ves even surmised a more direct way for the native aliens to comprehend the last starfighter advancements of the Red Fleet was by relying on the Cosmopolitan Movement to steal the latest tech!

In fact, there was an even faster and more efficient way for the aliens to absorb the technological advancements of red humanity.

That was for the Red Fleet to directly leak their starfighter advancements to the native aliens!

There were far too many ways this could be done. If at least one admiral of the Red Fleet had a vested interest in spurring on alien phasefighter development, he or she could easily figure out a means to pass on cutting-edge human tech to the native aliens!

Once the aliens received and digested human starfighter advancements, their scientists and engineers would proceed to develop their own advancements based on their own tech bases, thereby generating improvements that would have never crossed the minds of human starfighter developers.

Once the native aliens finally started to produce superior phasefighters, it was time for the Red Fleet to harvest these gains once again!

Ves almost shuddered as he thought about this cycle. This positive feedback loop could go on forever!

Although there were definite elements of collusion in this loop, one side did not need to do anything to gain the cooperation of the other side.

As long as they recognized what was best and acted in accordance to the most optimal outcome, they would eventually recognize that both sides showed enough willingness to implicitly cooperate with each other.

Why shouldn't they work together? The Red Fleet would be able to accelerate the development of human starfighters by a very large extent!

After all, the fleeters weren't the only ones who contributed to the advancement of human starfighters anymore. Their alien counterparts also provided a lot of assistance!

The alien phasefighter developers also had little reason to refuse the aid of their nominal human foes. The native aliens had remained complacent for a long time. It was not until a superior

technological opponent in the form of the human race arrived that the major alien races understood that they were no longer the most technologically advanced civilizations in the neighborhood.

Although humans are still relatively unfamiliar with phasewater technology, their advancements in many other fields of technology completely crushed the accomplishments of the native aliens!

If not for the fact that the native aliens possessed a lot more depth when it came to figuring out the finer applications of phasewater, they wouldn't even have the qualifications to collude with red humanity!

Humans and aliens may belong on opposite sides, but they both had a common interest in improving their own small craft.

Human starfighters equipped with phasewater technology were little different from alien phasefighters, so improvements in one area could easily lead to improvements in the other area!

"Do you realize it now, Ves?"

"I... think I do, Gloriana. If this goes the way I think it does, then both human starfighters and alien phasefighters will undergo a very quick and radical development trajectory!"

This trajectory looked awfully familiar to Ves. That was because it sounded very similar to the development trajectory of mechs during the previous age!

While mechs had obviously been invented during the later stages of the Age of Conquest, it was not until the Big Two broke human space into many squabbling states that mech development truly took off like a rocket!

By creating lots of states that had many reasons to fight against each other, the rival military establishments invested lots of resources and manpower into speeding up the development of the only effective war weapon that they were allowed to use, which was mechs!

The Terrans and the Rubarthans constantly competed against each other in restrained but very consequential restricted battles. If the Terrans came up with a superior mech, then the Rubarthans would work extra hard to copy their adversary's technological advancements or come up with their own alternative!

The same went for second-rate states such as the Friday Coalition and the Hexadric Hegemony.

Even though the two large states of the Komodo Star Sector had never waged a war until the end of the Age of mechs, they never dared to fall behind in the development of their military mechs.

Every Fridayman and Hexer knew that if their mech armies became too weak, their archrivals would not hesitate to launch a war to settle the ownership of the Komodo Star Sector once and for all!

In fact, one of the driving reasons why the Hexers ultimately decided to start a war against the Fridaymen during that time was because those female supremacists thought that their mechs and soldiers were much more superior!

In reality, the Hexers grossly overestimated their strength. They merely achieved parity at best.

In any case, rivalries always seemed to spur on military development the most.

A much more familiar example to Ves was the age-old rivalry between the Bright Republic and the Vesia Kingdom.

Since the two third-rate states actually waged regular wars against each other, they had quickly developed very strong martial traditions that had been tested over a span of over four centuries.

Their soldiers became more courageous than the ones who originated from peaceful states. Their military mechs had all become very practical and cost-effective without exception.

Ves may have outgrown the Bright Republic by a huge extent, but he always valued many of the basic lessons and principles that he learned at the time. They had never steered him wrong and still remained relevant to the present day.

It was due to those lessons that Ves always remained a bit out of tune compared to the rest of the high-ranking mech designers of the Design Department.

The vast majority of them originated from second-rate states and all started out their careers by designing second-class mechs. They grew up in a very different mech culture that caused them to inherit significantly different traditions.

Despite the superiority of second-rate states, Ves did not look down on his original lessons at all. He was product of a state that owed much of its existence over the centuries on the strength of its military mechs!

In any case, the power of rivalry was one of the strongest drivers of innovation that Ves could think of. Now that he recognized all of the pieces of the puzzle, he became increasingly more convinced that the development of human starfighters and alien phasefighters may quickly come to rival the development of mechs!

"Starfighters will play an increasingly more important role in human space going forward." Ves stated with concern. "It is a very suitable small craft to employ at the bottom. Starfighter pilots require less training and education to do their jobs in a competent fashion. Starfighters are generally cheaper and easier to produce en masse. While I do not see them participating in any offensive fleet-based actions anytime soon, they are very easy to use in the defense of planets and star systems. You just need to build enough hangar bays in orbit or on the surface of a planet before you can fill them up with as many starfighters as they can fit. Once an alien raiding fleet arrives to stomp out a colony, tens of thousands of starfighters can quickly sortie and overwhelm the enemy phasefighters and warships!"

Many mech designers probably looked down on this notion of relying on starfighters to defend planets, but that was because they still regarded these small craft as very poor alternatives to mechs!

Yet what if they weren't inferior anymore? What if a well- designed starfighter that was not too expensive could beat an ordinary mech in a fight?

Once that happened, the ecosystem for mechs was bound to receive a shock!

Both Ves and Gloriana understood that they needed to make preparations in advance. It would be too late for them to respond when starfighters and phasefighters finally achieved parity with low-end mechs.

As mech designers, they both held an obligation to defend the mech industry against rival industries!

"Let's think about countermeasures." Ves proposed. "As long as we can develop effective counters against phasefighters, we can suppress the latter to an extent."

"I think you mean that you will develop effective counters, not we." Gloriana correct her husband.
"Pardon?"

"I do not have the time to waste on mass production models anymore, Ves. My work obligations have multiplied. I am not only responsible for designing a batch of low-tier expert mechs for the newest expert pilots of our clan, but I have also begun preliminary work on the Amaranto Mark III Project and the Riot Mark III Project."

Chapter 6032 Expert Mech Policy Revision

Ves originally wanted to bring up the topic of designing counters against alien phasefighters and anti-mech warships.

He quickly set this matter aside because his wife brought up a much more interesting topic of discussion.

Expert mechs!

His wife had already made a lot of preparations in advance. This allowed her to get ready to take action as soon as there was demand for new and upgrade expert mechs.

"There is no need for you to concern yourself too much over the development of low-tier expert mechs." Gloriana said as she projected a few of her draft designs. "Now that our clan has nurtured a large and growing batch of high-ranking mech pilots, our policy towards newly emerged expert mechs should correspondingly adjust."

"Are you talking about..."

"Instead of going all-out and design the most powerful low- tier expert mechs that they can handle, it is better if I tone down the initial designs and make the expert pilots less dependent on excessively powerful machines. It will be much more conducive to their growth if they need to struggle and prove themselves in order to earn upgrades for their machines. By starting out with a relatively basic expert mech and letting them work for their upgrades on an incremental basis, I believe that we can achieve a much better fit between man and machine in the long run."

Ves had already contemplated this change in development strategy as well. It was much more economical and a much more rational use of time and resources.

As Ves observed the drafts that Gloriana had made for the latest batch of Larkinson expert pilots, he could truly tell that they were very basic and generic compared to their last high-end design projects.

If the Larkinson pilot broke through while using a Ferocious Piranha, then Gloriana was prepared to design a personalized expert mech version of the same light skirmisher.

If the pilot utilized a Fey Fianna, then Gloriana would simply design a personalized expert mech interpretation of the same mech concept!

By working with existing successful mech concepts, Gloriana did not have to spend a lot of time on research and thought experiments. The formulas had already proved their viability, so Gloriana could skip straight to more important design choices.

While Gloriana planned to add a few unique features to every low-tier expert mech based on the selection of compatible resonating exotics, she did not intend to be too extravagant and load any experimental tech onto the machines.

"Do you want me to design Ultimate Modules for these low-tier expert mechs?" Ves offered. "It will take time and effort, but even if they are not as good as the Dark Wind Module, I can still bestow the new machines with their own trump cards."

The idea sounded tempting, but Gloriana shook her head.

"No. It is important to limit the scope of investment in our low-tier expert mechs. The latest expert pilots are new to their powers and are still at a stage where they are trying to discover the best ways for them to contribute to a battle. We cannot and should not make decisions for them in advance by granting them mechs that are already loaded with many abilities. This should be a more iterative process that takes place over a span of multiple decades."

She made a lot of sense. The Larkinson Clan was no longer short on expert pilots, and it had also exhausted the initial supply of 500 general cultivation elixirs.

The new generation of expert pilots therefore needed to struggle hard and rely on their own efforts to gradually develop their combat system and grow their resonance strength.

If any of the new expert pilots was particularly talented or possessed an eye-catching ability, then Ves might decide to invest a lot more resources into speeding up their growth.

Otherwise, he was fine with letting the expert pilots temper themselves in the normal fashion. It took a lot of time and effort to design high-quality expert mechs. This treatment should only be reserved for more powerful high-ranking mech pilots.

In that case, Ves was fine with leaving Ultimate Modules out of low-tier expert mechs. This might make the low-tier expert pilots weaker and less able to affect the battlefield, but it gave them much more room for growth since they needed to struggle a lot more during the early stages.

This was both an economical and practical approach towards developing expert pilots. The biggest problem was that it took a lot more time to achieve good results, but Ves could live with it as he could rely on the earlier generation of expert pilots to enhance the Larkinson Clan's high-end combat power.

Gloriana quickly outlined her overall policy towards the development of expert pilots.

New expert pilots would only receive a low-tier expert mech with basic functions and no Ultimate Modules. The machines would also start out with transphasic parts, but their phasewater content should be fairly modest at the start.

Once the expert pilots reached the middle stage of their growth, they should already earn a lot of iterative upgrades for their expert mechs. At that time, the machines should also receive their Ultimate Modules and raise their phasewater content.

"High-tier expert pilots deserve much better treatment." Gloriana calmly stated even as she continued to pet Hekkel's back. "Each of them are either ace pilot candidates or are fairly close to becoming one. Their combat power has also grown to a point where they have often outgrown their old machines. The Hex Army and many other mech militaries usually decide to bestow powerful new high-tier expert mechs to these valued pilots. After all, each of them has the potential to advance to ace pilot in the future. It is always a good idea to provide more lavish treatment to these powerful pilots. Not only will their combat power skyrocket, but they are also more likely to remain loyal to their states."

Any state or organization that was stupid enough to neglect the treatment of high-tier expert pilots would always regret it when their talents decided to defect to another employer!

The Larkinson Clan certainly couldn't neglect this issue either. Ves fully agreed with Gloriana's stance.

"So you intend to standardize the process of upgrading existing expert mechs to much more powerful high-tier expert mechs to any of our high-tier expert pilots, is that correct?"

Gloriana nodded. "Designing completely new high-tier expert mechs from scratch is the prevailing norm in the mech community, but that is not suitable for us as there is value in aged living mechs. Upgrading the existing machines of high-tier expert pilots should become our own standard. It is the right stage in their development trajectory to issue major reworks of the living mechs that the pilots are familiar with. This is also an excellent opportunity to convert the older expert mechs into archemechs."

"Oh? I thought you intended to design archemechs for all of our expert pilots? Why limit the benefit of this powerful alien tech to high-tier expert pilots and higher?"

"Because archetech introduces too many complications, Ves. I have already received a report from the maintenance crew responsible for servicing the Dark Zephyr Mark III that they are struggling to understand the basic theories needed to fulfill their responsibilities. If Tusa's mech ever incurs serious damage, the clan may be forced to ship the archemeh back to my location so that I can perform repairs in person!"

There were many other complications associated with the use of actual archetech. A lot of common materials could not be used to produce replacement parts for the Dark Zephyr Mark III.

Even if there were a few suitable materials around, the workers over at the expeditionary fleet needed to use specialized fabrication machines to produce the right archemetal components, and that required a lot of study and comprehension!

The trouble was not too great for the time being as there was only a single archemeh in the expeditionary fleet.

What about the future? What if 6 or 12 expert archemechs got stationed in the expeditionary fleet?

So long as archetech remained foreign to most people, the archemechs would always impose significant logistical burdens onto the forces they were attached to! Not even the Larkinson Clan could support too many of them at a time!

"Okay. Let's settle for your plan, then. I am okay with reserving archetech for our more powerful and proven expert pilots. They should be able to make much better use of its stronger and more advanced capabilities anyway."

His wife smiled and pecked his cheek. "I knew you would understand. I may revise this policy and supply expert archemechs to weaker expert pilots in the future. It depends on how quickly I can design a completely new archemech by myself. I am not satisfied with my mastery in this tech base. There is much greater depth that I have yet to explore and master. Only after doing that can I begin to develop my own adapted version of archetech."

This was bound to be a very long and tedious journey. Gloriana was not afraid that she would be lacking in opportunities to design archemechs.

After Ves expressed his agreement with Gloriana's plan, they finally shifted their attention to the coming upgrades to two familiar expert mechs.

"As part of my new policy, the Amaranto and the Riot are both due for major reworks." The female mech designer said. "After the Dark Zephyr, these two expert mechs most urgently require upgrades. I think it is best if I start to upgrade them into high-tier expert archemechs in the next half-year."

Ves raised his eyebrows when he heard that. "It took a lot of months to complete the development of the Dark Zephyr Mark III. Are you confident enough in your ability to complete two major upgrade projects on a concurrent basis on top of your other responsibilities? You still need to spend a decent amount of time to design those low-tier expert mechs, and you also need to help Master Benedict upgrade the Dark Zephyr into an ace mech."

Gloriana smirked and tapped her finger against the side of her head. "I am not as slow and incompetent as before. My advancement to Senior, my upgraded cranial implants and most importantly the lessons learned from the previous upgrade project have all increased my ability to handle these tasks much more efficiently than before. If necessary, I can delay the completion of the two upgrade projects by one or two months, but I believe that will not be necessary."

Since Gloriana sounded confident enough, Ves was willing to give her the benefit of the doubt. She had done so many times whenever he made his wild claims in the past. It was only right for him to reciprocate.

"So what do you have in mind for the next versions of the Amaranto and the Riot? Both of them are originally my babies. I don't mind it if you want to take them over and put your own spin on their designs, but I hope that you won't trash the mech concepts that have worked out so well for their expert pilots."

"You have no need to worry about that, Ves. I have no intention of making radical changes to their configurations. I have already asked Venerable Stark and Venerable Orfan about their preferences. Both of them have completely become accustomed to the configurations of their respective machines. What I seek to accomplish is to expand upon their existing expert mechs. By introducing new technologies and strengthening existing ones, I hope to lay an excellent foundation for the Amaranto and the Riot's eventual transformations into ace mechs."

In order to make her intentions clear to Ves, she activated a projection of a very rudimentary draft design of the Amaranto Mark III.

Ves' eyes immediately lit up when he saw Gloriana's vision for the massively improved Amaranto.

The original expert rifleman mech had always been characterized by extremely powerful attack power and very weak defenses.

The newer version not only employed multiple measures to enhance the firepower of the Amaranto to a higher level, but also made excellent strides to shore up the Amaranto's defenses!

Chapter 6033 Extreme Firepower Redefined

Ves had a lot of affection for the Amaranto. She was his first masterwork expert mech and encapsulated a large part of his past creative madness.

Although the Amaranto's flaws and limitations gradually became a lot more apparent over time, the expert mech was still able to make major contributions in battle on account of her extreme emphasis on firepower.

With two different luminar crystal weapons at her disposal, the Amaranto could choose to employ a precise and tricky rifle, or a very powerful and overwhelming cannon.

Either way, the Amaranto became a force to be reckoned with from the first time she went into service!

As Venerable Davia Stark continued to improve her resonance strength and her marksmanship capabilities, the Amaranto in her hands became stronger and achieved greater results.

This improvement was not only due to the increasing strength of their true resonance and the greater display of skill, but also due to the Amaranto's growth as a living mech!

As one of the older and most respected living mechs of the Larkinson Clan, the Amaranto had taken after her pilot and became more taciturn in terms of personality.

Just like her expert pilot, the Amaranto also harbored very deep animosity towards alien species!

Neither the expert pilot nor the expert mech showed any reluctance when it came to fighting against alien opponents. They especially got fired up whenever they had an opportunity to kill the raiders who sought to destroy human colonies!

Now that the once-broken-but-now-recovered expert pilot had become an ace pilot candidate, Ves was very confident in her ability to break through.

Compared to her peers, Venerable Davia exhibited greater maturity and possessed a much more driven personality.

In fact, Ves was afraid that she had forsaken too much of her humanity in order to pursue her quest for revenge. Would she still be able to break through if she had lost sight of her own personal development?

Aside from this fault, Ves was highly optimistic about her breakthrough chances. Supplying her with a massively upgraded mech should definitely do the trick, especially when the Amaranto was already a masterwork mech!

Ves paid close attention to Gloriana's vision of the Amaranto Mark III. His wife had invested a considerable amount of time and effort into drafting a comprehensive proposal about the next iteration of the Larkinson Clan's original high-end ranged mech.

"Let us start with defense, which is arguably the least dramatic area of improvement." Gloriana stated. "The Mark I stood out for lacking the Unending alloy that was ubiquitous in our other early expert mechs. This was because we were much poorer and only possessed a limited reserve of this special material. By the time we updated the Amaranto to the Mark II, we made up for the deficiency in defense to a large extent, but the expert rifleman mech still does not excel in defense."

She tapped her finger onto the projected draft design. All of the exterior and interior archemetal components lit up in sequence.

"Our circumstances have changed drastically since then, Ves. We can employ much more expensive first-class materials and increase the structural defense of the Amaranto to the same standard as a first-class mech. The Mark III will therefore experience a large boost in defense, though the increase is not as high as you may expect. This is due to a radical design choice I have made for this design. Can you deduce it, Ves? Can you tell me the tradeoff that I have made that forces me to compromise on the Amaranto's defenses?"

The Amaranto Mark I started off so fragile that she could easily crumble apart if she was attacked by a single expert mech or multiple standard mechs.

The Mark II addressed this shortcoming to an extent, but she still retained her characteristics as an expert marksman mech to an extent.

No matter the version, the Amaranto was never designed to put herself in harm's way!

Her core design concept centered around extreme firepower. In order to realize that, Ves and Gloriana had always made many design choices that made the mech weaker in other aspects.

They believed that the tradeoffs were all worth it because the Amaranto had never been designed with versatility and self-

sufficiency in mind.

She only had one job, and she had always done that extremely well.

As for the other jobs, that was what the rest of the Larkinson Army was for. There was no need to rely on the Amaranto for defense of melee interception.

Now that the time had come to design the Mark III, it became clear that Gloriana had continued their earlier tradition and tried to make the Amaranto's offensive power more pronounced.

As Ves studied the design, he soon noticed a few quirks. The entire mech frame looked different from the Dark Zephyr in a way that caused him to grow suspicious.

He narrowed his eyes as he studied the draft design with a more critical eye. The lack of detail and the absence of data made it harder to figure out what exactly caused him to notice that the Amaranto was different, but as he continued to study the design, he began to approach the truth.

His gaze continued to rake across every visible archemetal component. He noticed how they were designed in a way that assumed that they were weaker and more fragile than what he expected of an archemech of this caliber.

More importantly than that was that Gloriana also made a number of design choices that did not really make sense under normal circumstances.

She had shown unusual restraint and prudence in terms of reducing the possibility of E energy attribute conflicts. This indicated that his wife was unusually concerned about creating accidents whenever the Amaranto channeled a lot of E energy.

"Wait.. this design... is made up almost entirely of hyper materials!" Ves gasped!

"Yes! Good observation! In my current plan, I anticipate that it should be possible to use medium and high-grade hypers to construct at least 90 percent of the entire archemch frame! I am trying hard to explore whether I can make up for the remaining 10 percent, but even if that is not possible, this is already enough for me to fulfill my goal."

Ves couldn't help but react with shock at Gloriana's audacity!

This was an extreme design choice that he never expected from his wife!

Hyper materials were new but great. They introduced a lot of new possibilities to red humanity. Their main contribution was to allow humans to channel the power of E energy in a systematic and effective manner through machines.

If this was all, then it made a lot of sense to build everything important out of hyper materials.

In reality, there were many complicating factors that made this a bad idea.

Hyper materials never really stood out for their strong basic performance characteristics. They were not the toughest of materials. They were not able to absorb the greatest amount of heat. They were also less robust and more prone to producing faults when compared to exotic materials.

The human race had spent a much longer time exploring the nature and applications of many different exotics.

People like Ves were also able to use exotics to a very high degree due to benefiting from all of the accumulated wisdom and millenia's worth of technological advancements in the science and application of exotic materials.

Hypers were much newer and less familiar to modern humanity. Even if hypers possessed the potential to perform just as well as exotics in the same functions, it was clearly a few hundred or a thousand years too soon to realize this condition.

Humanity's understanding of hyper materials was both scattered and mixed for the time being.

Combined with the clues that suggested that hypers would never be as robust as exotics, many mech designers had already concluded that it was foolish to design an entire mech made out of hyper materials!

The machine may indeed be able to attract a large amount of E energy, but it would also become a lot more fragile than a more conventional mech!

The current trend in the mech industry was to treat hyper materials as a more accessible version of resonating materials.

People already started to treat hyper technology as the poor man's version of true resonance.

Regardless, it was common sense that a good mech still needed to be built predominantly out of exotics.

Hypers could only be used as a supplement to augment the basic features of the mech and possibly bestow a few more advanced capabilities.

Gloriana's design approach for the Amaranto almost completely upended this well-established mech framework!

"Why... forsake so many exotics for hyper materials?" Ves skeptically asked. "Your extreme design choice may still make the Amaranto tough enough to withstand the attacks of lots of standard mechs and most expert mechs, but it will definitely become more fragile than the Dark Zephyr, which is absurd since the latter is a light mech! I thought that we would agree to pull up the defenses of the Amaranto so that she won't instantly fold if an enemy ever manages to threaten her existence, but you are clearly going in the opposite direction with this. Any ace mech or phase leader that is able to get close enough to inflict serious damage onto the Amaranto can easily crumple our precious machine. For what purpose did you decide to forsake defense to such an unprecedented extent?"

His wife did not deny the faults he mentioned. She was fully cognizant of the consequences of her design choice.

She just believed that she had a very good reason to go in this direction.

Her finger tapped the projection again. The entire archemach started to absorb massive amounts of light-attributed E energy. The mech channeled so much light energy that she had already become blindingly bright!

Then, the light suddenly disappeared.

To be more accurate, the Amaranto directed all of that powerful light energy into her luminal crystal rifle and proceeded to fire the most potent, resonance-empowered light beam that Ves had ever seen!

Even though it was only a very casual simulation, the scene where the Amaranto Mark III channeled so much light energy into pure damage was an awe-inspiring sight!

"Glass cannon is the defining phrase and concept of the Amaranto Mark III." Gloriana proudly stated to her husband. "The Amaranto as a high-tier expert mech and possibly an ace mech should continue her tradition of compromising on everything aside from maximizing her firepower. Her archemach frame does not exist to defend her against attacks. Our starships or the Bastion can already perform this job much better as far as I am concerned. The Amaranto's entire archemach frame should completely be dedicated towards maximizing her firepower. The enormous amounts of hyper materials used to construct the next iteration of the Amaranto will all be based on the light attribute. This will turn the Amaranto into the brightest but also the most lethal presence on the battlefield!"

Ves could not imagine how much power the Amaranto could accumulate in a single fully charged shot.

He made a few estimates, but he did not dare to say for certain that they represented the living rifleman mech's upper limit.

The true figure had to be higher! The Amaranto wouldn't be able to justify the fact that most of her archemetal components were made out of hyper materials as opposed to more conventional exotic materials.

Ves guessed what Gloriana wanted to accomplish with this extreme decision.

She wanted to upgrade the Amaranto into a truly fearsome ranged mech! She wanted the Amaranto to gain the power to penetrate through all of the energy defenses of an alien warship and inflict serious material damage onto the hull!

No other outcome was acceptable! As long as the Amaranto could effectively snipe formidable alien warships from afar, she would turn into an indispensable asset to the Larkinson Clan for many years to come!

"I... love this idea!"

Chapter 6034 Stark's Ulterior Motive

Ves adored Gloriana's vision for the Amaranto.

He also felt conflicted by her decision to double down on turning the expert marksman mech into a machine that existed for no other purpose than to launch powerful attacks from the rear.

If Venerable Davia Stark successfully managed to advance to the rank of ace pilot, the Amaranto at that time would amplify all of her strengths and only modestly increased her ability to cope against powerful enemy champions.

This was a very risky choice. Ace mechs in people's imagination were machines that were prototypical god mechs. They had already gained so much power that they completely transcended the existence of ordinary mechs.

Ace mechs were rare and often deployed alongside a large troop of mechs on an individual basis.

This meant that ace mechs were always designed to be self-sufficient. They at least needed to possess the ability to fight against other ace mechs.

It would be great if ace mechs possessed pronounced strengths based on the specializations of the ace pilot, but it would be devastating if their weaknesses were severe enough to cause them to be defeated with ease!

As long as they confronted the wrong sort of enemy, a state might lose an incredibly valuable asset!

This was why ace mechs increasingly tended to evolve into multipurpose mechs as their pilots continued to grow in strength. It didn't matter if the ace mechs no longer excelled in any area as long as their weaknesses no longer became as glaring.

The more valuable the ace pilot, the less their employers were willing to lose their precious investment!

States and organizations would rather see their ace pilots get defeated to the point where they had to flee the battlefield in tatters than to see their most valuable strategic assets get countered and killed with ease!

Of course, not every ace mech evolved in this direction. The personality and stubbornness of many ace pilots sometimes made their employers helpless.

For example, Saint Jeremiah Gauge insisted on sticking to the swordsman mech archetype. This somewhat worked out as the powerful Fridayman ace pilot was able to launch very powerful sword energy attacks that could easily strike targets at a distance.

However, there was no way his Neo Amadeus could beat a true ranged ace mech in terms of ranged firepower back when the ace pilot was alive.

The Amaranto Mark III envisioned by Gloriana would suffer from a similar shortcoming. No matter whether she became a high-tier expert mech or an ace mech, the high-end marksman mech would always be able to dominate any enemy from afar, but instantly become incredibly vulnerable up close!

Venerable Stark's persistent offensive focus caused her to neglect the development of her defensive skills and abilities. Even if the Amaranto was able to wield a few backup knives or swords, there was no way the relatively fragile mech could overpower an equivalent enemy up close!

As Ves continued to feel conflicted over the glaring shortcomings of Gloriana's draft design, his wife leaned forward and placed her palm onto his hand.

"You are still thinking about an ace mech like a member of the Larkinson Family from the Age of Mechs. Haven't you realized that its role has changed? The Red War is a very different sort of conflict from the wars of the past. Unlike the human mech armies that our clan fought against in the past, the alien fleets are made up of completely different enemy types that all possess very different traits."

"The aliens may be different, Gloriana, but that does not mean our expert mechs and ace mechs have become invincible. You cannot underestimate their determination to defeat our champions."

"Do you think it is that easy for the native aliens to counter our high-ranking mechs? You already identified that the aliens are much less able to field genuine champions at the ace mech level on the battlefield. The only champions that can truly pose a threat to our ace mechs are phase whales and phase lords, but they rarely put their lives at risk. The native aliens have nothing else to rely upon. Their elite phasefighters are nothing without the ability to induce pilot breakthroughs."

His wife raised a good point. The Amaranto Mark III should have little to fear from the enemy so long as the enemy did not deploy a rare phase leader.

The Amaranto should easily be able to deal with enemy warships and phasefighters, especially if the living mech was able to maintain distance. Venerable Stark never feared a duel at range!

However, if the enemy fleet happened to host a phase lord, then the Amaranto would not be able to fare well if she failed to snipe this powerful foe at a distance!

Phase lords were infamously tough and difficult to kill. Their body mass was enormous and their spatial barriers were very difficult to breach. If they happened to possess giant suits of armor like the Eminence of Torment, then they could gain even more layers of protection!

All of that made it increasingly more difficult for the Amaranto to take down phase lords at a distance. There was little the living mech could do to stop such a resilient foe from getting closer.

Ves let out a helpless sigh. "If we commit to this design direction, then the Amaranto Mark III should never be deployed by herself. She must always be accompanied by an ace mech that can stop enemy champions in their tracks."

Gloriana did not see a problem with this arrangement.

"You are fixating too much on the demerits of my proposal. I admit that the Amaranto Mark III at the ace mech-level is not able to take care of herself as well as other ace mechs, but the main advantage we gain is that we can gain a supremely powerful offensive platform that is able to inflict the greatest amount of precision damage that a Saint can produce! Such an ace mech can rival an alien battleship in terms of firepower. As long as Davia Stark continues to grow and develop her abilities, she will develop in a similar vein to the Destroyer of Worlds, who also chose to commit to piloting artillery mechs when she could have chosen differently. In an age where warships have made a resurgence, it has become even more important for us to gain the ability to dominate our enemies at range."

She made a very good point. Ves couldn't help but become swayed by her arguments. So what if the Amaranto Mark III continued to possess glaring weaknesses? As long as the future ace mech continued to act in concert with a well- equipped mech army that could adequately block enemies from getting close, then the powerful marksman mech would be able to take down every threatening target from a distance!

"We already have plenty of ace pilot candidates who are versatile such as Venerable Joshua and others who excel in close quarter combat such as Venerable Vincent Ricklin." Gloriana continued. "It still remains uncertain how long it will take for them to break through, but I am convinced that enough of them will advance into ace pilots in the coming decade that we do not have to be concerned about the Amaranto lacking protection any longer. The main reason why you are so worried is because we only have one other ace pilot at the moment."

If Stark was the only ace pilot who fought on behalf of the Larkinson Clan, then Ves would feel a lot more reluctant about adopting Gloriana's proposal.

The rise of Saint Tusa slightly relieved Ves' concerns, but not to a large extent.

The Dark Zephyr Mark III was not a suitable complement to the Amaranto Mark III at all. The former was a light mech that was not able to block tough and powerful enemies aside from killing them. If the latter was not possible, then the Amaranto would still be in grave danger!

It would be better if the Amaranto Mark III was paired with an ace mech version of the Bastion. If Jannzi managed to break through, she could resume her old responsibility of serving as an indomitable shield to the most powerful offensive asset of the Larkinson Clan.

In fact, there were many other suitable pairings as well. Another combination that Ves thought of was pairing the Amaranto Mark III with the Jedda Sandivar.

Unlike the Dark Zephyr Mark III, the Jedda Sandivar of the Adelaide Mercenary Company excelled at confusing and containing enemies, both weak and powerful.

In the previous battle, the Jedda Sandivar completely managed to stop the Eminence of Torment from launching deadly spatial ripple attacks at the starships of the expeditionary fleet!

This told Ves that the Amaranto Mark III probably wouldn't have much to fear if she resumed her place in the expeditionary fleet.

The trouble came when it was time for the Premier Branch to participate in the first wave of deep strike operations.

Unless the Jedda Sandivar got upgraded into a first-class ace mech and joined his first-class fleet as a hired retainer, it would be difficult for the Amaranto Mark III to remain safe while she was deployed deep behind enemy lines.

The probability of encountering phase whales and phase lords was much greater when attacking the heartland of alien space!

Perhaps another ace pilot or two might emerge among the current candidates of the Larkinson Clan in the next few years, but what if they took longer to trigger their second apotheosis?

Ves found it far too risky to embark on a deep strike expedition with just the Dark Zephyr Mark III and the Amaranto Mark III in tow!

He quietly cursed the high-tier expert pilots who apparently took their sweet time to breakthrough before he turned his attention back to Gloriana's proposal.

Although Ves was tempted to pull back on her extreme design concept, that would be detrimental to the Larkinson Clan in the long run. The fit between Venerable Stark and her battle partner would also drop.

"Okay." He eventually said. "I am fine with this proposal as long as Venerable Davia Stark is aware of all of the pros and cons of your proposal."

"Venerable Stark already approves of my design choices. I consulted her first before I drafted the Amaranto Mark III. She is very cognizant of the vulnerabilities of this mech concept, but she prizes the ability to snipe targets at long range far too much to accept any compromises in this aspect. In fact, she sounded absolutely obsessed with preserving this key strength."

Though Ves did not think about it, hearing how Venerable Stark not only accepted this design direction, but absolutely embraced it, reminded him of the reason why she managed to regain her strength when she was at her lowest point in her career.

His expression turned to stone when he made a very frightening guess about Venerable Stark's plan.

What if she aspired to become the most powerful sniper in the Red Ocean so that she could assassinate everyone she perceived to be at fault for the original tragedy that had befallen the people of the Komodo Star Sector that got engulfed by the sandmen?

Although hardly anyone today remembered the Sand War, Venerable Davia Stark was one of the few people who still remained traumatized by the genocide that swept up entire third-rate states!

Though she managed to do a good job of hiding it, Ves could not forget that she harbored a grudge against the mechers and fleters for being so neglectful to the lives and wellbeing of ordinary space peasants!

Still, even if she wanted to tear down the foundation of the offshoots of the MTA and CFA in the Red Ocean, it would be far too easy for her to get wiped out if she went on a one woman crusade.

The only way she could make the Red Two pay for the sins of the past was by engaging in guerilla warfare.

The most effective way to do this was to become so good at sniping targets at range that not a single defensive measure could stop her attacks!

As long as her Amaranto became strong enough to pierce through the defenses of phase leaders, Davia Stark should also be able to assassinate important officers and dignitaries of the Red Two!

Chapter 6035 Exploiting Resentment

Ves had a feeling that if the Amaranto continued to develop as a powerful tool for long-ranged assassination, he may eventually contribute to the birth of the most nightmarish killer of the Red Two!

Neither the mechers nor the fleters would be able to rest easily if they became terrorized by a rogue ace pilot or maybe even god pilot that excelled at takedowns launched from extreme distances!

The Amaranto could act like an assassin that secretly set up in a hidden location and quickly sneaked away once she had fired her killer shot.

It would be hard for the Red Two to guard against such a potent killer!

As long as Davia Stark and her Amaranto became strong enough, then no form of passive defense would be able to stop her fully charged shots from punching through and killing important VIPs!

Not even other high-ranking mech pilots would be safe against her assassination attempts.

Ace pilots were still human to an extent. None of them wanted to stay permanently welded to their ace mechs.

So long as Stark was able to catch these unsuspecting ace pilots away from their ace mechs, then these powerful heroes died just as easily as any other human!

Most ace pilots completely rejected the notion of killing their peers and rivals when they were outside of the cockpit. The mechers not only forbid this practice, but put a lot of effort into branding such actions dishonorable.

Not that this deterred Venerable Stark in any way.

As a woman who had set her mind on revenge, Stark had long forsaken all notion of honor and fairness!

Since the aliens, the mechers and the fleters never exhibited any genuine honor and fairness towards innocent civilians, then Stark had no reason to hold herself to a higher standard!

She was one of the rare high-ranking mech pilots who did not value honor!

A powerhouse with almost no bottom lines had the potential to become a fearsome killer!

Ves inwardly shuddered at the thought. What sort of monster was he nurturing? How many mechers and fleters would Davia Stark kill once she completed her 100-year contract with the Larkinson Clan?

However, Ves quickly relaxed after thinking about the possible consequences of letting her loose if she was still alive at that time.

Who knew whether the Red Association and the Red Fleet would still be standing 80 or 90 years later.

Even if the Red Two remained as strong as ever, what did their concerns have to do with the Larkinson Clan?

Ves may have gained the status of an honorary member of the Red Association, but he never fully embraced the mechers. He had always tried his best to maintain a degree of separation from the Red Two. In no way did he want to become absorbed in their power structure.

Ves disliked the Red Two, but he did not hate them. Most of the mechers and fleters were actually quite decent. He willingly cooperated with the Survivalist Faction, the Transhumanist Faction and the Second Main Fleet because it was in his best interests to do so. He benefited a lot from receiving their backing and protection.

Yet that still did not give Ves a reason to prevent Davia Stark from pursuing her vendetta against the mechers and the fleters.

Ves made a sincere agreement with the powerful marksman mech specialist. He did not want to break his principles by betraying the trust of one of his key clients. He also did not want to turn a woman with almost unparalleled lethality into an enemy!

In addition, the Red Two may have separated themselves from the Big Two to an extent, but the former had inherited enough of the latter's foundation to represent a continuation of sorts. Neither the Red Association nor the Red Fleet had made any attempts to dismantle their hegemony over human-occupied space.

Since the Red Two had no qualms about inheriting all of the property and authority of the Big Two, then the former should not complain if they had to inherit all of the sins of the latter as well!

No matter whether they resided in the old galaxy or the new frontier, the mechers and the fleters were still the same for the most part. They possessed the same faults and held almost the same degree of disregard for space peasants. It was their elitism and their strong neglect towards the interests of the lesser folk that caused them to earn Venerable Stark's animosity.

As far as Ves was concerned, this was the negative karma that they accrued through their stupid policies. They deserved to suffer the consequences of their own actions!

Combined with the fact that Ves had his own complaints about the Red Two, he was not very motivated to rein in Venerable Stark in any way.

Despite his honorary membership and his close associations with the mechers and more recently the fleters, Ves did not feel any obligation to help them or protect them from this potential future threat.

The Red Association and the Red Fleet were already strong in their own right. Their control of human civilization enabled them to extract an insane amount of wealth and resources from the states under their reign. If they couldn't protect themselves against a single rogue marksman specialist, then that was their fault.

If he was being honest, a part of Ves even looked forward to raising Davia Stark into an extremely powerful offensive asset.

For the next 8 decades or so, all of her impressive firepower would remain at his disposal!

That was more than enough time for Ves to grow his power base and the Larkinson Clan to mature into a galactic power in its own right.

By the time it was finally time to let Davia Stark go, Ves would hopefully have a dozen other powerhouses of similar strength in his service.

He did not feel any guilt towards exploiting her drive for revenge. As long as she abided by her word and fought for the Larkinsons, then Ves would do everything in his power to enable her and strengthen her as much as possible.

Ves had no hope of convincing Davia Stark to join the Larkinson Clan and set aside her vendetta.

It was a hopeless idea. Expert pilots and ace pilots with a cause almost never changed their minds. Instead of harboring false hope, Ves instead accepted the fact that she would leave his service eventually.

There were still many years to go before that outcome would happen. For now, Ves was still willing to invest as much resources and effort into her development as he did for any other champion of the Larkinson Clan.

This was why Ves became more engaged when he discussed the planning for the Amaranto Mark III.

After Gloriana had made her intentions for the mech frame of the Amaranto clear to Ves, she shifted her focus from defense to offense.

"An archemach frame that is almost fully made out of hyper materials is not a weapon in itself." Gloriana told her husband. "It exists as an amplifier and an external source of power for the primary weapons of the Amaranto. It is not an exaggeration to claim that the design of her offensive armaments will make or break this upgrade project."

That was an odd statement to make. The extreme makeover of the Amaranto's mech frame was unprecedented and introduced a lot of new risks and dangers. Gloriana could not rely entirely on the lessons she learned from designing the Dark Zephyr Mark III to succeed in this project.

"What do you have in mind for the Amaranto's arsenal, Gloriana? Do you want to upgrade her existing weapons, or replace them with new ones?"

"The Instrument of Vengeance and the Instrument of Doom should both remain at the Amaranto's disposal, but they need to be overhauled to the greatest possible extent in order to prepare them for combat at the level of an ace mech."

She activated a couple of projections that displayed vague interpretations of the upgraded mech rifle and mech cannon.

"Are those your attempts to visualize archetech versions of luminar crystal weapons?"

His wife nodded. "I am not as familiar with luminar crystal technology as you, so please explain to me whether it is possible combine archetech with luminar crystal technology."

Ves had never contemplated this question in the past. Back when he and his wife designed the Dark Zephyr Mark III, they never found it necessary to contemplate this subject because Tusa never asked his mech to be equipped with serious ranged weapons.

He could not avoid this subject now that his wife was ready to design the Amaranto Mark III.

"My answer is no with an asterisk."

"No with an asterisk?"

"In my professional judgment, it is too difficult to combine archetech with luminar crystal technology. A weapon that is completely made out of luminar crystals cannot easily be turned into archetech as the distinctive traits of both will get mixed up to the point of producing an endless amount of glitches and malfunctions."

His wife leaned forward. "That means it is possible, correct?"

"...Maybe." Ves gestured towards Hekkel's very distinctive crystalline archeshell. "There are obviously examples of archetech and archeshells that incorporate crystals, but that does not mean that the use of luminar crystals will instantly produce greater synergies. We need to conduct a lot of research on combining both in a way that allows them to combine their strengths while compensating for their weaknesses. I do not see how we can complete this research in a short amount of time. The knowledge and effort required to successfully develop a luminar crystal archetech weapon is beyond the scope of Senior Mech Designers such as ourselves. I highly advise you to wait until we have become Masters before revisiting this research topic."

He was being very serious about this. He acknowledged that it may be possible mash archetech and luminar crystal technology together, but the benefits weren't worth the huge amount of investment required to produce a successful outcome!

His wife looked disappointed. She was smart enough to come up with a similar answer, but she hoped that he might still have a solution.

Since that was not the case, Gloriana quietly shook her head and replaced her fantastical weapon designs with more familiar-looking ones.

"Since that is the case, we will continue to rely on luminar crystal technology for the Instrument of Vengeance and the Instrument of Doom. Archetech only bestows a small advantage to the performance of ranged weapons, so it is not logical to rely on it to reconstruct the Amaranto's armaments."

"I see. The current iterations of the Instrument of Vengeance and the Instrument of Doom are certainly powerful weapons, but the Amaranto should have reached their upper limits some time ago. It should not be problematic for me to apply straightforward upgrades to the materials that make up their luminar crystals. By utilizing new luminar crystal formulas that are made up of combinations of high-end first-class materials, their firepower and resilience will reach a much greater height. The upgraded weapons should still be able to keep up with Davia's growth for a long time."

These were easy upgrades that did not entail much serious redesign work. Ves could easily complete the work in a month as long as there weren't too many complications. He did not find it difficult to

incorporate phasewater technology and hyper technology into the weapons either. The current versions of the two weapons already possessed transphasic and hyper properties anyway.

However, that clearly did not satisfy Gloriana's ambitions for the Amaranto.

"I have another question, Ves. Can you turn the Instrument of Vengeance and the Instrument of Doom into Ultimate Modules? I can think of no better aspects to empower with your latest innovation than the primary offensive tools of our expert marksman mech. If you can empower them even further by granting them extremely powerful Ultimate Abilities, then I am confident that the Amaranto Mark III can truly gain the power to penetrate defenses of any warship or phase lord!"

That... that was an interesting possibility!

Chapter 6036 The Ultimate Sniper

Ves rubbed his hairless chin in thought.

It made a lot of sense to convert the weapons of the Amaranto into Ultimate Modules.

After all, the expert marksman mech did not really need to gain an auxiliary function or an alternate attack mode like the Dark Zephyr Mark III.

The Amaranto only needed to do one job really well. Every other aspect ranked lower in priority.

While the Dark Zephyr was a specialized mech, it was less extreme than the Amaranto due to the need to perform well in multiple different situations.

Since the Amaranto was already highly focused towards offense, then why not go all the way?

The only question now was whether it was even possible for him to incorporate the technological features of Ultimate Modules into luminar crystal weapons.

"I think... it might be easier than you think." Ves judged after half a minute of thought.

"Oh? I thought the opposite was the case. Why do you think it would be easy?"

"Ultimate Modules are advanced applications of hyper technology and E-technology, remember? The Instrument of Vengeance and the Instrument of Doom both happen to lean heavily in these directions already. The latter is especially interesting as it is also a blessed weapon that can draw power directly from the Phase King. I can make use of that existing foundation and go a step further by creating subordinate spirits that can inhabit the weapons on a more permanent basis so that they can gather their own Ultimate Runes."

"Is it necessary for you to create a subordinate spirit for every weapon? I am not complaining about this design choice, but I want to make certain that you are committed to this endeavor. The Amaranto only ever makes use of one of them at a time. It should be sufficient to create a single subordinate spirit that is compatible with both armaments."

"That is indeed possible, but I think the extra effort is worth it in this case." Ves replied. "It will take slower for either weapon to develop, but the Ultimate Runes they accumulate over usage will perfectly fit their circumstances, which should be much more to your liking."

His wife nodded in confirmation. "It will slow their development, but I am of the belief that achieving a more perfect fit is a more worthwhile pursuit than making faster but much less fitting gains."

"The next issue that we need to decide is how to differentiate the two weapons and what aspects I should focus on strengthening when I rework them into Ultimate Modules. I don't think amplifying their firepower is the universal solution. The two weapons are designed for slightly different purposes, so their evolutions should make their strengths more pronounced."

Gloriana already had clear ideas on how to differentiate the two weapons even further. She tapped the projection of the mech rifle, causing it to become larger.

"The Instrument of Vengeance is the original weapon that we have paired with the Amaranto. Its firepower is no longer the strongest, but even if it is older, it outperforms the Instrument of Doom in terms of accuracy and precision. Not only is Venerable Stark able to achieve a higher hit rate at much more distant targets with this weapon, she is also better able to land her shots of small and fast-moving targets such as the Dark Zephyr."

In other words, the Instrument of Vengeance allowed the Amaranto to hit targets that other ranged mechs could not accomplish. This was the original strength of the expert marksman mech and turned Venerable Stark into a highly precise threat at range. The fact that the Instrument of Vengeance could also grant the Amaranto the ability to bend any energy beam attack further enhanced the living mech's ability to target weak points.

Unfortunately, the Instrument of Vengeance was a weapon designed to counter powerful mechs for the most part. As the Larkinson Clan started to confront alien warships and phase leaders to an increasing degree, the luminar crystal rifle's strengths no longer seemed to matter all that much.

The two principal enemy types of the native aliens were huge and relatively sluggish. They were much easier to hit at range than extreme accuracy and precision no longer seemed necessary anymore.

On top of that, the native aliens relied so heavily on energy defenses that the Amaranto was effectively unable to target the weak points of her enemies.

This was why Ves developed the Instrument of Doom for the Amaranto. The much larger cannon made up for the expert marksman mech's firepower deficiency and increased her relevance against the enemies that the Larkinsons fought nowadays.

Gloriana understood this truth as well as Ves.

"The Instrument of Vengeance is not as useful today, but that is not necessarily the case in the future." She said. "When we upgrade this weapon, I believe it is important to preserve its original character but make its strengths more pronounced. My idea is to make the Instrument of Vengeance excel at striking targets at much more extreme ranges than it is capable of in the present."

"How extreme are we talking about, Gloriana?"

"Several light-seconds. Over a million kilometers."

"What?!" Ves almost spluttered when he heard that figure. "That... that is insane! Just the tiniest bump or mechanical discrepancy can already make the Amaranto miss her target by tens of thousands of kilometers!"

His wife smirked at Ves. "High-ranking mech pilots regularly make the impossible happen. Why not this? I am confident that we have the tools we need to turn the Instrument of Vengeance into a ranged precision weapon that holds the record for possessing the longest effective range in non-siege combat!"

In other words, Gloriana truly believed that the Amaranto armed with the Instrument of Vengeance could snipe targets like moving mechs or starships at a range where the enemy effectively had no chance of making a counter-attack!

"Even if the Amaranto is able to attain extreme scores in accuracy and precision, how will she know where to shoot? Wait... are you thinking about..."

"The Illustrious One is the principal design spirit of the Amaranto." Gloriana stated. "I do not intend to change that. However, that has not prevented Stark and her battle partner from cooperating with the Phase King whenever they make use of the Instrument of Doom. I understand that the Eye of Ylvaine makes heavy use of the Great Prophet, but this design spirit should not be exclusive to that mech legion. I am sure that he would be happy to guide Venerable Davia Stark's aim in exchange for her powerful feedback."

The addition of Ylvaine was the final piece of the puzzle that could transform the reworked Instrument of Vengeance into the ultimate sniping weapon.

No ace mech or greater phase lord had any chance of retaliating against the Amaranto if the latter started to open fire at such a ludicrous range!

In fact, even if the first shot missed or failed to breach the target's defenses, the Amaranto would still be able to fire a lot more shots without needing to fear reprisal.

This was because it took a large amount of time for most enemies to transverse several light-seconds in an instant!

Even if the powerful enemy possessed teleportation capabilities, the Amaranto or an accompanying mech or ship merely had to produce a powerful enough warp interdiction field to make instant interception impossible.

As Ves continued to work out this very ludicrous-sounding scenario, he understood that this could definitely turn the Amaranto into the ultimate sniper among her peers!

To be able to snipe at targets at interstellar distances was a whole new game!

"If... if Ylvaine agrees to lend his power to the Amaranto in this way, then I think that there is definitely a reason to make use of the Instrument of Vengeance again." Ves concluded after a bit of thought. "The Amaranto was not originally designed to function as a cannoner mech. I am glad that you came up with a very special concept that gives her a compelling reason to pick up her old rifle again. I can think of many different scenarios where the ability to strike at targets at ranges far beyond any human or alien imagination can be of use. No one else will be able to rival the Amaranto when it comes to taking out powerful targets that are located light-seconds away aside from ancient phase whales and god mechs!"

Although Ves could not say for certain whether this was the case, he truly believed it was difficult for any other ranged ace mech to be able to match or exceed the performance of the Amaranto in this regard!

She would become a completely unique existence with an unrivaled advantage!

The best part about this was that reworking the Instrument of Vengeance in this manner also enabled her to return to her roots!

"Damn, I'm so excited by this implementation of the Instrument of Vengeance that I cannot wait to go back to the design lab. I am much more confident about our chances of pulling off a successful deep strike expedition when I can add such a killer asset to our first-class fleet!"

Of course, that assumed that Venerable Davia Stark managed to break through and become an ace pilot in the next few years.

Somehow, Ves had absolutely no doubt that she would be able to break through. The main reason why she was held back for the time being was because the Amaranto had not fully kept up with her growth.

Once she managed to get her hands on the Amaranto Mark III and learned how much further her effective range had grown, she would probably break through on the spot!

Both Ves and Gloriana grinned at each other as they wordlessly envisioned this future scenario.

Once they calmed down a bit, they directed their attention to the Amaranto's second weapon.

Gloriana changed the projection to display a large luminar crystal cannon.

"When the Amaranto participates in direct action against alien warfleets or phase leaders at more conventional ranges, the advantages of the Instrument of Vengeance are no longer as relevant as before. This is where the Instrument of Doom comes in. I still intend to turn it into the premier solution when absolute firepower is a higher priority than extreme precision. The upgrades to the oversized luminar crystal cannon should therefore focus entirely on amplifying its power and penetration characteristics. As a blessed weapon tied to the Phase King, it already scores well in those two areas, but my ambition is to turn the Instrument of Doom to become the mech version of the spinal cannon of the Doom of Xenos!"

Gloriana certainly did not hold any modest ambitions.

The Doom of Xenos was the dreadnought with the most powerful single attack capabilities! Her massive hull was built entirely around a spinal cannon that ran from one end to the other end of the ship!

Needless to say, a single shot from the dreadnought's main cannon was enough to crack an entire planet, all without relying on a God Kingdom like the Destroyer of Worlds!

"The Instrument of Doom is already a highly-tuned luminar crystal cannon." Ves said in thought. "I can comprehensively upgrade its firepower by replacing the cheaper luminar crystals with much more expensive ones. However, I am not very confident in increasing its penetration capabilities. I can't stuff more phasewater into it without making the weapon unstable, and I can only moderately increase the amplification provided by the Phase King by utilizing more superior high-grade hyper materials. In short, I cannot improve the performance of the Instrument of Doom as drastically as the Instrument of Vengeance."

That was not necessarily a big deal. Ves developed the Instrument of Doom years after the initial completion of the Amaranto, so the massive cannon was already much further ahead of the tech curve.

Even so, Ves felt it was an insult to his status as a mech designer if he did not produce more qualitative improvements when he updated the Instrument of Doom!

How could he improve it so that there was a much clearer distinction between its old and new version?

Chapter 6037 Investing Big

Ves was very pleased with the plan for the Amaranto Mark III.

His wife's vision for the expert rifleman mech not only made the living mech's offensive power a lot more pronounced, but also turned the Instrument of Vengeance relevant again.

If he was able to improve the luminar crystal rifle in the way he wished, then it would transform the Amaranto Mark III into a terror to all of the enemies of the Larkinson Clan!

Most battles that took place in deep space tended to be fought across tens, hundreds and occasionally thousands of kilometers.

Depending on the relative velocities of the warships and the accuracy of their laser cannon batteries, it was possible to land shots at targets that were inconceivably far away.

However, almost no one was able to retaliate against an enemy that far exceeded the distance between Old Earth and Luna!

Most energy beams dispersed and scattered across such extreme ranges, and the muzzle velocities of most kinetic projectiles were too low to have any chance of striking moving targets.

However, Gloriana was correct to state that high-ranking mech pilots were able to do the impossible.

It should be within the realm of possibility for Venerable Davia Stark to empower any energy beam to the point where it was able to maintain perfect cohesion across multiple light-seconds.

True resonance could also fix the inherent causes that might cause the output of the Instrument of Vengeance to deviate from perfect alignment to a very distant target.

Even if the actual results were not as good as Ves hoped, it was already good if the Amaranto Mark III was able to snipe targets that were 'merely' a light-second away.

Only the most advanced warships armed with laser cannons tuned for precision were able to overcome the 1 second light lag and occasionally land a shot against moving vessels!

Ves deeply believed that once the Amaranto Mark III joined his first-class fleet, a lot of potential threats that the Larkinsons might encounter during a deep strike expedition could easily be eliminated in advance!

Unfortunately, not all serious threats could be taken off the board in this manner.

When the time had come to wage an open battle against a formidable opponent, the distances between both sides would become a lot more compressed, even in space.

Otherwise, how could melee mechs still be relevant in the Age of Dawn?

When lots of warships and a powerful phase lord relied on their tough and multi-layered energy defenses to advance towards the Larkinson Fleet, trying to attain extreme scores in accuracy and precision no longer mattered anymore.

The Amaranto Mark III could easily attain a 100 percent hit rate against these enemy types in most situations.

This was why the Amaranto needed the Instrument of Doom. In a situation where absolute firepower became a greater priority than extreme precision, the luminar crystal cannon became a much more ideal weapon for the living mech.

The problem was that neither Ves nor Gloriana were satisfied with the planned improvements to the Instrument of Doom.

The blessed weapon was most certainly a lot more up to date, but that was not a good excuse to perform a perfunctory upgrade to its tech and material composition.

The Amaranto Mark III Project was a rare instance where the Design Department completely reworked a powerful expert mech so that it became ready to face the challenges of the future.

If Ves and Gloriana failed to develop improvements that were significant and impactful enough, then the Amaranto Mark III would eventually become limited by the Instrument of Doom's lower growth ceiling!

This was not what the Larkinsons wanted to see. It would take months of development time for Ves and the Larkinsons to revisit the design of the Instrument of Doom as a separate project.

Instead of waiting for that to happen, Ves felt it was a lot better to qualitatively improve the Instrument of Doom alongside the other elements of the Amaranto Mark III Project.

Ten minutes passed by as Ves and Gloriana tried to come up with good ideas on how to improve the high-end luminar crystal cannon.

Sadly, the two did not have an endless reservoir of tech to draw upon. They already brought out the best design applications that they could implement onto the weapon design.

Gloriana furrowed her brows. "If we want to raise the performance of the Instrument of Doom further than the limit of what we can already accomplish, then I see no other way than to resort to two different solutions. We should either try to incorporate compatible high technology, or we should try to augment the power by resorting to powerful hypers or exotics that far exceed the performance of more common first-class materials. It is best if we can combine both."

"That... is going to be really expensive." Ves frowned. "Aside from that, I am not sure we possess the capabilities to handle such advanced tech and materials. It is likely that we need to borrow the help of outside consultants, which means that we must divulge the design specifications of one of the Amaranto Mark III's main weapons."

"It is for a good cause, Ves. I can understand why you are reluctant to expose the inner workings of the Amaranto Mark III, but you do not have to share the complete design to an outside party. It will

be fine as long as you limit it to the Instrument of Doom itself. Do you truly think our most powerful ranged weapon can be countered if you understand its technological principles? Pure firepower cannot be resisted with ease!"

His wife made another good point. Though Ves did not really want to divulge even a part of the design of his Ultimate Modules, it was not as if anyone could copy or neutralize it just by studying their physical design specifications.

The matter ultimately came down to whether Ves was willing to trade greater firepower for much greater cost and information sharing.

As Ves observed the draft design of the improved Instrument of Doom and envisioned how much easier the Amaranto Mark III would be able to demolish the proud energy defenses of the aliens, he felt it was sacrilege to his own design philosophy and his duty as a mech designer to deny the weapon a chance to shine!

He already made a decision in his heart.

"I think... it may be time for me to bring out one of the truly good stuff from one of my vaults."

That certainly caught his wife's attention.

"Are you serious about that, Ves? You have been hoarding an increasing amount of treasures over time, but rarely took them out in order to augment your works. I thought you insisted on saving them until there is a true need for their power. This... is not one of those times. The Amaranto's firepower is already slated to receive a massive boost after we have completed her upgrade. Any further increase in power is welcome, but not entirely indispensable."

"That is where you are wrong, honey." Ves shook his head. "Even though there is no acute crisis hanging over our heads, we are bound to encounter enemies that we cannot overcome due to a deficiency in firepower. The Amaranto may be our only hope of breaching the defenses of an indomitable phase whale. I would rather invest heavily in extra insurance that might save us one day than to act like a cheapskate and regret my decision when Larkinsons are dying around me. Besides, those precious resources aren't doing anything useful when they are collecting dust in my vaults. It is only by converting them into finished goods that we can make use of their actual value."

As far as Ves was concerned, as long as he made his mechs powerful enough, all of the resources spent in improving them could easily be earned back through winning battles against stronger and more formidable opponents.

Ves mentally glanced at the list of strategic goods that he had tossed into his vaults over the years.

He had truly managed to amass a sizable collection of high-

value goodies. The thought of using one of them to amplify the power of the Instrument of Doom made him feel like a kid in a candy store!

"Let's see..."

He came across numerous goods that he had harvested years ago but never really paid attention to. For example, he still preserved the spiritualities of Venerable Relia Foster and Venerable Ghanso Larkinson!

Ves knew he could make a couple of exciting products with these fantastic ingredients, but he had yet to come up with a compelling idea where he could justify their inclusion.

He also retained a large spiritual fragment of Emma, which sounded like a good fit for the Instrument of Doom.

However, he felt it was not suitable to use the companion spirit of a god pilot to augment the weapon of another high-ranking pilot.

The Amaranto Mark III was already shaping up to become a high-tier expert mech that only reached her full potential if she borrowed the powers from the Illustrious One, the Phase King and Ylvaine.

There had to be a limit to how extensively Venerable Stark relied on external factors to become a more productive combat asset.

When Ves thought about the more recent materials he obtained, he winced when he thought what he had done with the ATC-A alloy bar that he bought in the grand auction.

The high-quality artificial alloy developed by the Resonance Smith was expressly designed to enhance the shield-breaking capabilities of mechs!

Yet what had Ves done with it after he bid 10 kilograms of phasewater for the most expensive variant of ATC series alloys? He fed it all to Lucky!

What a waste!

It would not be easy for him to knock on the Resonance Smith's door and exchange for another batch of ATC-A. The Star Designer was a notorious figure in the mech community due to serving as a key pillar of the Unbound Humanity Faction.

From a political perspective, Ves stood on the opposite spectrum of the Resonance Smith as he had created the proposal to found the Red Collective, which added even greater rules and obligations on human society!

Fortunately, ATC-A was not the only extraordinary material that Ves managed to acquire during his last business trip.

There was one other material that made a profound impression.

His eyes firmed up when he decided that it was time for him to bring out the big guns.

He meant that unironically.

"I have an idea." Ves slowly said as he made a difficult but necessary decision. "I have a material in my possession that is far more powerful and precious than everything else my vaults put together. Not only that, but I believe that its properties complement the Instrument of Doom well enough to justify its use for this project."

"What material are you talking about, Ves?"

"During my 'work visit' to one of the illustrious warships of the Red Fleet, I managed to receive a very special artificial exotic alloy that is only known as EE-343F-00334R."

His wife looked surprised. "What?"

"I am not allowed to divulge any confidential information, so please forgive me if I cannot explain anything further. I think the fleeters don't mind if I tell you a few innocent details. Let me tell you this. EE-343F-00334R is a key material to one of the functions that makes the Dominion of Man special. It is also an exceedingly rare and precious super-class material that completely overwhelms the category of first-class materials."

His wife might not completely understand what EE-343F-00334R could do, but she already became astonished after she thought about the hints dropped by her husband!

"These super-class materials sound as if only dreadnoughts and god mechs deserve to make use of them. Do you even know how to make use of it in a safe and effective manner? If you do not, then there is a good possibility that the Instrument of Doom might explode if you rashly try to incorporate EE-343F-00334R!"

"I am aware of the risks." Ves responded. "I have no intentions of experimenting with EE-343F-00334R by myself. There is only one way for us to develop the Instrument of Doom of our dreams. We need to work together with the researchers and developers of the Red Fleet!"

"What?! Are you crazy, Ves?! Why would you ever think about collaborating with the fleeters on a mech design project? This is absurd!"

"Do you think I have another choice? The mechers shouldn't know much about EE-343F-00334R. Only the fleeters understand their experimental materials the best. I am sure I can make a deal with the Second Main Fleet. Let me contact their liaison first in order to determine whether this is possible."

Chapter 6038 External Assistance

Captain Zonrad Reze spent most of his time on the Babylon Excavator that had recently become a part of Ves' permanent protection force.

The large and relatively self-sufficient reconnaissance cruiser had not formally joined the Bluejay Fleet, but simply hovered an awkward distance away from the warships belonging to the Red Association.

Although Ves did not call Sigrund on a daily basis, he had made sure to stay in touch every now and then. Both sides understood the importance of developing closer relations with each other.

Zonrad quickly accepted the call after he received the request.

"Ves." His physical projection spoke as he took a look around the parlor. "I see this is an informal occasion. What is your request?"

"I am not sure whether we can speak about it over a relatively insecure communication channel. Can you come down here so I can explain my needs in person?"

"Very well, but it will take time for me to reach your base. Ever since we upgraded the defenses of your facility, it has become impossible for us to teleport directly to your location."

"That's fine. We can wait. I can use the time to retrieve important material and head over to a more secure meeting chamber."

Sigrund did not fail to recognize the hint that Ves had given. The clever hybrid AI already had a good idea on what this discussion was all about.

A short time later, Ves and Gloriana both welcomed the arrival of Captain Zonrad Reze.

The RF captain greeted the two Larkinsons before setting his sights on the diminished bar of EE-343F-00334R.

The fleetier frowned when his gaze shifted between the super-class alloy and Gloriana.

"Oh, come on, captain." Ves said in an exasperated tone. "How do you expect me to maintain its confidentiality when I plan to incorporate it in an expert mech where my wife will take charge?"

Even Sigrund couldn't deny the difficulty of keeping all of the details concerning the use of this strategic material a secret.

"I understand what you seek from us, but I will need to consult with Fleet Admiral Argile first." Captain Reze said. "I will try to apply for limited permissions for your wife. For what purpose do you wish to make use of this alloy?"

"Let me give you a brief explanation."

Ves quickly summarized his thoughts on developing a much more powerful and effective version of the Instrument of Doom.

"...I don't know whether EE-343F-00334R can be applied to an energy weapon like this. As long as it is possible, I think it is worthwhile for me to do so. Even if the use of this super-class material is overkill for the time being, I am sure that Venerable Davia Stark can grow to the point where she can fully leverage its extraordinary properties. What do you think?"

Sigrund did not look very optimistic about this plan.

"I do not possess any expertise on powerful exotic alloys, and I still need to investigate how much information I can divulge to you and your wife. Please give me a moment."

The captain exited the secure chamber and only came back 2 minutes later. His expression looked a bit more relaxed than before.

"The fleet admiral agrees to your conditions. He is very pleased with how the Dominion of Man is shaping up to become a literal god ship. Compared to all of the radical changes that you have engineered on the dreadnought, the confidentiality of EE-343F-00334R is no longer as sensitive as before. Our research teams are already in the process of developing superior solutions that incorporate hyper materials."

As far as Ves was aware of, the Red Fleet was not able to replicate EE-343F-00334R. This meant that the Rubicon Spatial Transfer System and any tech that was reliant on it could not be repaired or maintained forever.

That was not necessarily a bad development. The Red Ocean offered an abundance of phasewater and brand-new hyper materials that had much greater potential than EE-343F-00334R. The fleeters just had to put in a lot of hard work in order to develop a version of the Rubicon based on phasewater technology and hyper technology.

"So will your researchers provide technical assistance in the development of the Instrument of Doom that incorporates this alloy?"

"Yes. We cannot provide unlimited support, but our researchers and developers are happy to guide you in the right direction." Captain Reze confirmed. "I do have to mention that the material scientists that are familiar with this alloy have warned us that it is not the most suitable choice to apply to a directed energy weapon. Do not get me wrong. The effect of using a small quantity of this alloy on your Instrument of Doom will still produce radical improvements, but much of the potential of this powerful material will be wasted. You are using the primary gun battery of a dreadnought in order to destroy a shuttle."

That made sense, but Ves did not really care about the waste. He was aware that EE-343F-00334R was best used to develop a really fantastic teleportation system, but that sort of tech was completely beyond his current capabilities.

Instead of keeping EE-343F-00334R in his vault for several decades until he finally had the perfect opportunity to leverage its properties, Ves would rather make use of it now and strengthen his forces in the short term.

"I am fully aware of the implications of my decision, but I still want to go through with it." Ves affirmed to the fleetier. "As I have stated before, I think that Venerable Davia Stark will come to learn how to draw out the potential of EE-343F-00334R in her own way, especially once she becomes a Saint. I do not mind it if it remains underutilized for a long time."

That satisfied Sigrund. "As long as you are aware of it. I can understand your need to augment the firepower at your disposal. There are other solutions available, though. The Red Fleet is open to other fruitful exchanges. We can grant you access to powerful weapon tech and much more suitable materials in exchange for your own technological applications. Do not forget that we have invested much more R&D into energy weapon systems than the mechers. We are much more reliant on firepower to complete our missions, so our understanding of ranged weapons of any kind ranks at the top."

That sounded like it might actually be true, but Ves doubted it was that simple. There were numerous Star Designers in the Red Ocean that had managed to push the boundaries of what was possible with ranged energy weapons.

"Thank you for the offer, but I do not have any other immediate needs at the moment. I will contact you again if I require further services from the Red Fleet."

That was an obvious dismissal, so Captain Reze did not stick around for long.

Both Ves and Gloriana became satisfied with this new cooperation. The fleeters would offer their essential technical support in integrating EE-343F-00334R into the Instrument of Doom. In exchange, they would be allowed to take a good peek at the design of the powerful luminar crystal cannon.

One of the reasons why the fleeters agreed to this exchange so easily was because they did not really give up anything too important.

Ves already figured out that the fleeters were working to make EE-343F-00334R irrelevant and obsolete. There was no reason to remain so uptight about protecting its secrets anymore if that was the case.

This meant that the Red Fleet undoubtedly picked up a bargain! The opportunity to get a close look at one of the powerful weapons of the Larkinson Clan and become involved in its development was a golden opportunity for the fleters!

Still, Ves felt the exchange was worth it because he had absolutely no idea what to do with EE-343F-00334R if he tried to make use of it without any knowledgeable direction. The super-class material was so advanced that there were very real chances that he might accidentally blow up Diandi Base if he mishandled it in any way!

The only other use for this material that he could come up with was to feed chunks of it to Lucky, but the gluttonous cat already had enough in his opinion.

In the end, both Ves and Gloriana became satisfied with this development.

"As long as our cooperation with the fleters is successful, the Instrument of Doom will undoubtedly become a weapon that we can be proud of." Gloriana spoke with a satisfied expression. "It almost sounds sinful to expend such an impressive material on a 'mere' expert mech or ace mech, but that makes this so exciting. It is very rare that mech designers such as us can make use of an alloy that even the Red Fleet must take seriously. It makes me feel as if we have finally reached a height where we are truly allowed to design top-tier mechs that can rank alongside other legendary mechs."

Ves had the same feeling as well. The planned improvements of the Instrument of Vengeance already sounded ridiculous enough, but to incorporate an extravagant material into the Instrument of Doom would definitely push the value of the Amaranto to an unsurpassed height!

He quietly apologized to Saint Tusa. His cousin thought that he had won the grand prize for obtaining the most powerful Larkinson mech to date.

Unfortunately for his cousin, it seemed like history was about to repeat itself.

Once the Amaranto Mark III took shape, the reinvented rifleman mech would completely outclass the Dark Zephyr Mark III!

It was not that the Dark Zephyr Mark III was weak.

The real problem was that the Amaranto Mark III would become too outstanding when it came into existence!

Nobody would take a second look at the Dark Zephyr when the Larkinsons gained ridiculously powerful ranged mechs that could snipe targets that were light-seconds away or instantly overcome the energy defenses of powerful enemies at shorter ranges!

Saint Tusa would definitely feel completely outclassed once again when Davia Stark managed to destroy threatening enemies faster than he could reach with his pitiful light mech!

Oh well. Ves did not really care about the impact that the Amaranto Mark III would have on Tusa's psyche. The man was an ace pilot. He could take a few hits on his pride.

Now that Ves and Gloriana came up with a very clear and promising plan for the Amaranto Mark III Project, it was time for them to take a closer look at the Riot Mark III Project.

The two initially went over all of the obligatory technological upgrades that should be applied to all high-tier expert mechs.

New and improved features such as sixth generation living mech, second generation god body method, archetech, the Energy Weaver Mech Ecosystem, a higher phasewater content and so on should all elevate the performance of Venerable Rosa Orfan's expert spearman mech to a much higher level.

Yet when it came to adding or improving the truly special and unique features of the Riot, Ves already had his own plans about how he could qualitatively transform the living mech's identity.

"One of the strengths of the Riot is that he excels at sowing chaos. I think it should be possible for us to amplify this aspect and turn it into the signature strength of the expert spearman mech. Yes, we have already reserved a tier 3 Destroyer spear for his usage, but that should not be the most defining strength of the Riot. The living mech has much greater potential than engaging in mindless destruction."

"How do you want to draw out the Riot's hidden potential, then?" His wife asked as she crossed her arms.

"By resorting to outside help." Ves smirked. "I am willing to 11:06

compromise the Riot Mark III's confidentiality as long as we can collaborate with an excellent mech designer who can definitely bring a lot of value to Venerable Orfan's machine. What do you think about inviting Jovy Armalon to participate in our mech design project?"

Chapter 6039 Chaos Factor

Gloriana looked surprised once again.

Her husband again made a decision that contradicted his insistence on secrecy.

Why had he changed so much? Why was he suddenly okay with involving outsiders in the development of the most strategic military assets of the Larkinson Clan? He had always been careful about maintaining at least some degree of separation in the past.

While it hadn't always been possible to keep outsiders completely away from the Larkinson expert mech designs, Ves and Gloriana could still take measures to limit the exposure of sensitive information.

That might not be possible this time. Implicit in Ves' latest proposal was to turn Professor Jovy Armalon into a full collaborator in the Riot Mark III Project!

This went far beyond providing limited consulting advice or developing an isolated mech system such as a fancy mech weapon or a quirky flight system.

A goal as broad and vague as enhancing the Riot's chaos properties could not be fulfilled by making a quick pass at the mech design.

Jovy Armalon needed to get involved in the upgrade project from the beginning. The mecher would have to make his mark on the expert spearman mech design every step of the way in order to fully take advantage of his design philosophy and his expertise on probability manipulation.

"Are you truly certain about this decision? What if your friend refuses your invitation?"

"The Riot is a precious Larkinson expert mech, but it is not one of my favorite ones if I am being honest." Ves responded. "To me, the Bastion, the Everchanger and the Phobos are much more

reflective of my passion and my ideals. I do not want to compromise the purity of their designs by rashly involving outsiders. As for other Larkinson expert mechs, they are still important, but not to the point where we need to forgo clear and obvious opportunities to improve them in a misguided drive to maintain total secrecy. It is not as if the mechers are still clueless about the details of expert mechs such as the Riot."

He did not consider it a disaster if all of the details of the Riot got leaked to the public one day. The original concept for the expert spearman mech was centered around turning him into a very tough, tenacious and disruptive force.

The Riot might not excel at either offense, defense or mobility, but scored decently well in each of these areas. Venerable Orfan could flexibly take on multiple different roles at once as she utilized the strengths of her battle partner in different ways.

The chaos element suited the pairing well as it could sow a considerable amount of confusion among their opponents.

Chaos made the Riot's defenses unexpectedly tougher than expected.

It could also make the Riot's attacks more unpredictable, thereby making them harder to guard against.

The characteristic hyper ability of the Riot was his Disharmony Barrier. This mutated the already enhanced resonance barrier of the expert spearman mech to infect whatever he was fighting against with a touch of chaos!

From what Ves had observed in the recent battle footage of Venerable Orfan and her battle partner, this trick certainly threw a lot of alien opponents off-balance!

It was a pity that the Disharmony Barrier was not as effective when applied to large alien warships. It was originally designed to give Venerable Orfan an edge whenever she dueled against an opposing expert mech.

In any case, Ves wanted to improve the Disharmony Barrier and everything else that made the Riot so delightfully chaotic, but he was afraid he did not possess the knowledge and expertise to do right by the living mech.

Despite not regarding the Riot as one of his favorite products, he still cared enough about it to make an exception to his rules and bring in the most suitable outsider that could elevate the living mech to a greater height.

Since Ves himself was okay with this, Gloriana had little reason to deny his proposal.

Ves proceeded to call his friend and quickly explained what he sought.

The physical projection of Jovy looked intrigued to say the least.

"I once told you that I would be happy to collaborate with you, but only when you are ready to design first-class mechs. Participating in the development of the Riot does not exactly satisfy this condition..."

"Pff!" Ves snorted. "You only put up that rule because you don't want to waste your time on designing weak and trivial mechs. The Riot Mark III is completely different from those ordinary products. It is a much higher-end product than a typical second-class mass production model. We

are planning to upgrade the Riot to a high-tier quasi-first-class expert mech first, which means that most of her mech frame will already incorporate first-class tech and materials in advance. Once Venerable Rosa Orfan breaks through, we will convert the Riot into a proper first-class ace mech, just like what we are planning to do with the Dark Zephyr. Doesn't that sound exciting to you, Jovy?"

It was not every day that a Senior Mech Designer, even one of Jovy's caliber, received the privilege of participating in the development of a first-class ace mech!

In fact, Jovy would most definitely be willing to take part in the development of a second-class ace mech just because of the priceless opportunity to service the needs of a powerful ace pilot!

Although there was no guarantee that Venerable Orfan was guaranteed to break through in the short or medium term, Jovy had spent enough time with the Larkinsons to know better.

In his judgment, the Larkinsons possessed so many unique advantages that the Larkinson expert pilots had the greatest chances of breaking through!

Since that was the case, Jovy judged it was worthwhile for him to participate in the development of the Riot Mark III even if certain aspects of the design were primitive from his perspective.

At the very least, designing a mech of sufficient complexity alongside Ves was anything but a waste of time!

"Very well, Ves. You have my cooperation. I will need to clear a part of my schedule for this, but I look forward to working together with you on a proper mech design project."

"Great! The Riot Mark III Project is still in the planning phase, so there is still a lot of room for changes and additional input. My wife will transfer the necessary files to you later, but for now I want your input on how you can enhance the Riot Mark III's chaos aspect."

The physical projection of Jovy smiled as the mecher clearly became intrigued by this challenge.

"You know, Ves, you have presented an interesting demand to me. The reason why I chose to specialize in probability manipulation is to reduce uncertainty. My mechs are able to perform unlikely and improbable factions at a significantly greater rate because of my deliberate manipulation. A good mech in my view should be a machine that can more consistently perform at a higher standard. Do you understand what I am trying to convey?"

Both Ves and Gloriana nodded.

"I get it." Ves responded. "If you have a 6-sided dice that you are about to throw multiple times, you want it to land on 6 as often as possible. What I want from the Riot Mark III is for him to become much less consistent. The 6-sided dice that represents this expert mech should not only be unbiased towards any side, but should also be expanded to a 12-sided or a 36-sided dice! The greater the possibilities, the greater the chaos!"

Such a mech would be a nightmare to pilot to anyone that preferred to control a reliable and consistent machine.

That happened to encompass most mech pilots!

"Your analogy is not quite accurate, but it presents a simple enough image of how I manipulate probabilities." Jovy spoke with an amused expression. "I am not entirely certain about why you

want to turn the Riot into a less consistent and more variable expert mech, but I can immediately deduce one advantage of designing it in the direction that you have described. It becomes harder to predict your living mech's actions."

"Predict as in mathematically model the Riot's performance?" Gloriana questioned.

"No, predict as in trying to prophesize its future actions. As you may have already known, special existences such as Ylvaine are not as anchored to the present timeline as the rest of us. They possess the rare ability to leap beyond the immediate time and look into the past or future. There are secret research departments in our Association that have studied this for longer than you know, but I am not privy to their activities. I can only say that the ability to glimpse into potential future timelines is not unique to your design spirit, and that the reliability of prophecies is not as high as we wish."

That was not a big surprise to Ves. The Big Two or the Red Two would have tried to establish cooperation with Ylvaine a lot sooner if his foresight was unique.

Ves guessed that a few Star Designers must have managed to crack some of the secrets of time and built some fancy grand work that could literally take snapshots of potential futures.

The only concern that Ves had was how much good information the mechers and the fleeters were able to acquire with their attempts of glimpsing the future. Did they see him do anything naughty? Hopefully Jovy was right that the veracity of the Association's prophecies was not that impressive!

"Just because we are bad at predicting the future does not mean our enemies are bound by the same constraints." Gloriana mentioned. "I think I see the value in preparing for a counter that we may not necessarily need, but can save us when we eventually confront an enemy that can see the future."

Her husband was of the same mind in this regard. It was always useful to have a contingency in reserve.

"Mind you, I do not think the Riot can defeat all attempts at divining the future." Jovy cautioned. "A very powerful opponent on par with the most dangerous speculative threats from Messier 87 may defeat these measures due to the enormous power disparity. Other than that, the greater the variance and the greater the possible outcomes of the Riot, the greater the cost of making an effective prediction. If Venerable Orfan can truly become a Saint, then I can likely upgrade the Riot's randomness to a level where Ylvaine and our Association's own secret means cannot path the Riot's actions in the slightest. The cost of doing so would exceed their energy budgets."

This could become a highly strategic advantage in the long run. Anything was possible in the Age of Dawn. Who knew whether a god pilot or a cultivator emerged that excelled in the manipulation of time. If such a threatening figure ever targeted the Larkinson Clan, then having an asset on hand that could frustrate any time shenanigans was worth its mass in phasewater!

"I originally did not think of this, but I can see how this can be a handy feature." Ves admitted. "Do you think that expanding the Riot's chaos factor can be of more immediate use to Orfan?"

Jovy thought for a moment before offering an answer.

"Well, if she ever fights against a high-ranking mech pilot or maybe a particularly competent phase leader, she can foil their predictions and mislead their intuition to her advantage. Becoming more unpredictable is a greater strength than you realize."

Ves became a lot more interested after hearing that!

Even if duels between expert mechs or ace mechs had become a very rare occurrence during the Red War, Ves never ruled out the possibility that human infighting would rear its ugly head once again!

If the Larkinsons ever encountered a powerful opponent that claimed he could read anyone's moves, Ves knew which champion he should push forward.

Chapter 6040 Destroyer Resistant Materials

The two upgrade projects gained a good start by establishing cooperation with different partners.

Soon after making the agreements, Jovy became a regular participant in the discussions and the work sessions centered around the Riot Mark III Project.

Both Ves and Gloriana noticed the differences right away. As a talent of the Red Association, Jovy Armalon brought a degree of brilliance and knowledge that hardly anyone else could surpass!

"As I have mentioned before, designing a mech based on the concept of increasing uncertainty is the opposite of what I am usually trying to achieve." The mech designer spoke half an hour after a shuttle dropped him off at Diandi Base. "Even if I have never worked in this direction in the past, I possess enough theories and inferences to be certain on how I should approach this challenge. The best way to increase the so-called 'chaos factor' as you have called it is to add unstable materials to the Riot's mech frame."

Jovy waved his hand in the air, causing projections of different exotic and hyper materials to appear. Most of them looked rather sketchy at first glance.

"These are not the typical materials that you add into a mech." Ves remarked with a critical eye. "I don't exactly know what they do, but they all look rather unstable to me. If you attempt to make a mech out of these materials, then the machine is liable to explode as long as it receives a strong bump!"

He was not exaggerating. The more Ves looked at the materials, the more he sensed how much energy they possessed and how precarious they were kept in place.

Humanity discovered a huge variety of exotics over the ages. From the moment the human race stepped into the stars, countless pioneers and explorers encountered one strange material after another. Scientists had also become addicted to blending multiple different exotics together to produce even more miraculous materials.

Yet out of the vast majority of the exotics that humans came in touch with, only a very tiny fraction of them were suitable for use on an experimental or industrial scale. It was not an exaggeration to say that 99.99 percent of exotics in the Red Two's humongous database had never really been used in a serious capacity.

People merely discovered them and tried to figure out if they were useful. When they failed to come up with any application that justified the cost of using these weak or difficult materials, they gave up their attempt and moved on to exploring the use cases of other materials.

A similar story applied to the recent emergence of hyper materials. A lot of material scientists eagerly embraced one of the bounties of the Age of Dawn and madly tried to explore and catalog every new hyper material that mutated out of ordinary resources.

However, the most predominant problem with most hypers was that they were not economic enough. Most were fairly weak and unable to withstand the rigor of combat.

There were hyper materials that generated strong E energy reactions, but were so fragile that they essentially broke apart due to their own activity!

Of course, there were a lot of material scientists that were working to develop new hyper alloys that sought to preserve the reactivity of these powerful hypers while massively increasing their ability to withstand stronger reactions.

In short, what Jovy had done was pull a selection of materials that most mech designers and engineers considered defective. No sane person would think that it would be a great idea to add them to any serious products, especially ones that had the power to save or doom the lives of their users!

"There are interesting materials available that not only possess high energetic activity, but also produce a range of unstable phenomena." Jovy spoke with a smile. "Despite their many flaws, their randomness is so great that they should be an excellent fit for the Riot. What I intend to do is procure hundreds of different samples of exotics and hypers and examine them closely. If my experiments confirm that a good selection of materials can increase the Riot's chaos factor, then we can proceed to work on integrating them into the archetech structure of the mech."

Ves glanced over at Gloriana, who looked quite troubled at this approach.

"I have not investigated how stable we can keep these volatile materials if they are incorporated into archemetal components." She spoke in thought. "Well-designed archetech is theoretically able to compensate for at least a part of the shortcomings of these defective exotics and hypers. The tech base is derived from how the arche used to grow their archeshells by devouring all sorts of materials from their lost home planet. They had little ability to distinguish between stable and unstable resources. Through evolution, the arche species have come to develop their own set of coping mechanisms where they are able to neutralize or compensate for the weaknesses of volatile materials."

"Can you replicate that in a targeted fashion, Gloriana?" Ves asked.

"It is theoretically possible, but I will need to conduct many experiments." She said. "I may also need to consult my archetech tutors. If I try to complete this research by myself, I will probably waste numerous years just to produce an acceptable result."

Fortunately, they were collaborating with a genuine RA mech designer this time. Jovy made a welcome offer.

"There is no need for you to be concerned about that. I can contact a few of those experts and work out a small agreement. I am willing to spend my social capital on this because it is originally because of my involvement that you are burdened with the task of trying to integrate volatile materials into your archemach. Besides, any successful result from your research is of good value to me. I can use the solutions that you have developed on other products of a similar nature."

This was a collaboration effort, so Jovy should not come away empty-handed. Neither Ves nor Gloriana had any objections to allowing the mecher to take away this additional harvest.

The only goal that mattered to the Larkinson was to transform the Riot into the strongest and most suitable battle partner for Venerable Rosa Orfan. Maximizing the chaos factor was more important than retaining ownership over a bunch of research results.

It was not as if the Larkinsons were able to hide their research activities anyway, especially now that Jovy directly worked alongside Ves and Gloriana for the duration of this design project.

Gloriana and Jovy talked a bit more about the exhaustive empirical research they needed to undertake. They needed to do a lot of work in order to successfully produce archemetal compositions that satisfied all of their requirements.

"Even with the help of additional archetech experts, there is no guarantee that we may succeed within a handful of months. You need to be prepared to delay this initiative or give up on it for the foreseeable time." Jovy warned.

The only female among them shrugged. "I understand. That is research. It wouldn't be so respected if it is easy to produce positive outcomes. Do not worry. If it appears that we have stopped in front of a wall, I can accept the need to rein in my ambitions and make do with more practical alternatives. We can always revisit this effort at a later date when it is time to design the Riot Mark IV."

That was a healthy perspective to take. Ves wished them luck, but he did not dare to assume they would succeed within the stated time period. A few months was too short to conduct so much profound research on combining volatile materials with archetech.

"By the way, I have a question for you, Jovy. As you already know, I have recently procured a Terran tier 3 Destroyer spear. If Venerable Orfan manages to break through in the next few years, I will likely bestow the right to wield the Destroyer weapon to her. Is there anything special we need to pay attention to? I have heard that it takes a lot of effort and preparation to properly allow a mech to wield such a powerful weapon."

Jovy chuckled. "It just so happens to be that the Destroyer spear has the potential to amplify the Riot's chaos factor. The high concentration of Destroyer particles in the speartip has a tendency to lash out and attempt to devour any matter in the vicinity. These reactions are often random and can happen at any time if they are not properly controlled for. Normally, the Terrans design their mechs in a way that tries to tame the volatility of the Destroyer weapons as much as possible. This is certainly the safest approach that you can take with the Riot Mark III Project. However..."

It was not difficult to figure out his argument.

"Are you suggesting that we should loosen up on this approach and allow the spear to... go rogue every once in a while?" Ves cautiously asked.

"That is not quite how I would put it, but that is my general suggestion." Jovy answered. "This is an optional idea. What I have just put forward is no different from playing with fire. If you cannot stand the thought of getting burned, then by all means forget what I have said and take the safe approach."

"There is no need to play around with us, Jovy. You wouldn't have taken the initiative to plant this idea in our minds if you did not already have an interest in seeing through. Do you truly think the Riot can handle a Destroyer spear that is less than absolutely stable and controlled? A tier 3 Destroyer spear is already capable of destroying a high-tier expert mech if the pilot becomes even slightly inattentive! Even ace pilots need to maintain constant suppression of the weapon in order to prevent it from damaging their own ace mechs."

"The value of a Destroyer spear lies exactly in its extreme volatility. The lower tier Destroyer weapons are much more stable but also much weaker as a consequence." The RA mech designer stated. "I am not suggesting that Venerable Orfan should wield the spear when she is still an expert pilot. What I am trying to propose is that once she becomes a Saint and gains the ability to wield the tier 3 Destroyer spear, she should pilot a mech that can not only withstand at least some degree of outbursts from the weapon, but also exploit its dangerous reactions as an additional weapon against her enemies."

Gloriana's eyes lit up as she began to see the value in Jovy's proposal. "I understand! When the Terrans invented Destroyer weapons, the Rubarthans tried their best to develop Destroyer resistant materials. While the latter cannot completely negate the danger of Destroyer particles, they can at least last much longer than the alternatives. I suppose we can blend plenty of Destroyer resistant materials into the Riot Mark III to increase her defense against this specific weapon type."

This was a good idea. Incorporating Destroyer resistant materials into the Riot's mech frame massively increased the living mech's ability to safely handle a dangerous and partially unleashed Destroyer weapon."

Playing with fire was dangerous, but not to the same extent if the person doing so wore a fire-resistant suit!

"Destroyer resistant materials are more expensive, but that should not be an issue for your clan." Jovy mentioned. "The better alloy formulas are all confidential, but I will obtain one for this project. The only issue is that you will need to develop archemetal components that combine Destroyer resistant materials and highly energetic materials. These are two completely different material types, so it will not be easy to marry them together."

"I am not afraid of this challenge." Gloriana said as she became more fired up. "If we are able to succeed in our research, then the Riot will not only become much more difficult to damage, but also possess unparalleled offensive power in melee combat! Not even the Royal Jeem of the Boojay Family can match our spearman mech in terms of attack power!"