

6844 Death Echo

Ever since Master Laila Rebecca Devos informed Ves that the Minerva Mark II had the potential to become an anchor mech, he had already begun to engage in one of his bad habits.

He wanted to innovate on top of what was already in the mech design!

This was a rather reckless and impulsive decision. Skilled mech designers regularly followed their feelings and made minor deviations from their original design. This was rather normal as local circumstances might demand adjustments to hopefully produce a better result.

Factors such as context, production machines, materials and comprehension could all present alternatives that might

produce a better or more suitable outcome than what the mech design proscribed.

Yet Ves intended to go much further.

He knew that Gloriana would hate him for this, but he was determined to give it a try!

Gloriana had already noticed his shift in attitude over the design network. She threw a mirthless glance in his direction. He pointedly ignored her feeble attempts to discourage him from going on an adventure.

Ves couldn't help himself!

Did he lack confidence in his Minerva Mark II design?

Not really, but he personally felt that even if it had the potential to become an anchor mech, it was only due to the inadequacy of

the Red Ocean's mech industry.

Command mechs were rare in general. There were not many mech pilots who were willing to complete the additional studies required to command troops while actively participating in the fight at the same time.

They had to maintain enough cool to maintain awareness of the shifting battlefield, but also run hot with passion whenever they directly confronted enemies.

Most mech commanders never managed to find the right balance that worked out for their individual situations.

Many of them became too cold and rational to the point where they could never muster the passion and emotion to break through.

Melkor Larkinson was one of many examples of these failures.

Other mech commanders became too engrossed in personal combat that they lost their overview of the big picture. Even if they broke through, they had already become false mech commanders.

Saint General Ark Larkinson was a typical example of such a distorted case.

Only a minority of exceptional mech pilots such as Saint Commander Casella Ingvar managed to thread the needle and defy the odds.

How many success cases like Casella were out there in the Red Ocean?

Ves never bothered to make a count, but it was definitely not too many!

Compared to the much larger and more prosperous mech community in the Milky

Way, the one in the Red Ocean was just a fraction of the size!

Ves did not dare to imagine that the Kingdom of Mechs would agree to bestow the designation of an anchor mech onto the Minerva Mark II.

Even with the accumulated advantages of archetech, phasewater technology, hyper technology and E-technology, the many mech designers of the Milky Way were not vegetables!

They had mastered their own forms of high technology! They also had access to unfathomable exotics with effects that no material in the Red Ocean could reproduce!

This was why Ves actually felt rather bad about the current situation.

If the Minerva Mark II could become an

anchor mech just by following the original design, then he could not regard this outcome as a celebration of excellence.

He would instead see it as a condemnation of a weak mech industry.

Ves did not want to win this honor by taking advantage of a vulnerability.

His pride as a mech designer did not permit him to earn this accomplishment without making any special effort.

What he actually wanted was to produce a mech that was so unquestionably superior that it could still become an anchor mech in the face of much stiffer competition!

Only then would this victory become meaningful to him as a mech designer.

Even though he had not voiced any of his current thoughts to his wife, Gloriana only needed to pick up a few clues from the

design network to become horrified at his choice!

Ves was like a gambler who eschewed a safe bet that would yield him a small profit in favor of a risky bet that would win him the jackpot!

If the previous approach had an 80 percent chance of success, the latter one had a 10 to 20 percent chance of success!

Any sensible mech designer would pick the former over the latter. The stakes were high. So long as Ves and Gloriana managed to produce a work that got recognized by the Red Kingdom, their path to becoming a Master Mech Designer would become shorter and smoother.

However, this benefit did not attract Ves all that much.

He was confident that he could break

through sooner or later if he continued to progress his design philosophy.

In other words, Ves did not fear failure all that much.

Since that was the case, he may as well toss other considerations aside and work towards the best possible outcome!

Taking a risky bet made much more sense to him! Developing a powerful new innovation on the spot would definitely advance his design philosophy much greater than if he stuck to the original plan!

This was why Ves had been avidly studying the Mentalist Crystal in his possession.

After spending valuable time on thinking and examining the mysterious crystal from multiple angles, he could not pick up anything obvious from the white and

translucent spherical orb.

The crystal did not contain any obvious spiritual remnants. Blinky had already taken a look inside and found that the Hunting Association had completely cleansed it of anything redundant.

What a powerful means.

The Hunters clearly did not want any accidents to occur. It would be bad if the Hunting Association delivered a Mentalist Crystal that still contained the remnant soul of a dangerous and savage calamity beast!

The thorough cleaning left nothing detectable behind. This gave Ves little to work with. The Mentalist Crystal was like an empty glass. Even he could not really produce anything out of nothing.

After a bit more thought, he decided he

needed a little help.

There was no rule that prohibited him from soliciting advice from an external consultant.

He reached into one of his uniform pockets and withdrew a small masterwork statuette that depicted the Daughter of Death.

"Helena. Come out and give me a hand."

His 'eldest sister' took a few minutes to respond.

The statuette glowed until it spawned a small spiritual manifestation of a gray-haired girl with a lotus in her hair.

She looked around in confusion. "What do you want from me, brother? I do not know the first thing about mech design. Nothing in this workshop makes sense to me. I roughly know what these machines can

do, but I have no idea how to operate their controls."

"I don't need your help with that, Helena. Take a look at this Mentalist Crystal instead. Can you detect any remnant of the exobeast that once grew this hyper material inside its brain?"

The Daughter of Death glanced down at the large and sparkling crystal. Its strong mental affinity caused it to exert a strange influence on living beings.

Even the manifestation of Helena became a little affected by its strangeness.

At first, Helena did not really detect anything noteworthy from her perspective. Even she could tell that certain parties had thoroughly scrubbed it clean of spiritual contaminants.

"This 'Mentalist Crystal' is interesting." She

remarked. "I am not sure whether to regard it as a gift of the universe or the product of a fundamental natural law. Under a string of coincidences, I can see how a feral beast may be able to spawn this crystal and develop a degree of sapience that can eventually match or exceed human intelligence."

Ves reacted with surprise. He did not know that his 'sister' could discern so much information from observing the crystal!

"All of that sounds interesting, but is there anything left about the original creature that produced this crystal that is salvageable?"

"Hmmm... possibly." Helena said as she began to scrutinize the crystal further.

"The process used to purify the crystal is overbearingly strong. This is a crude but

effective solution. However... nothing is perfect. This Mentalist Crystal... still bears an invisible imprint of the deceased. You can think of it as the echo of the dead. The soul of the creature has passed on, but the imprint it has left behind in this crystal has remained. The cleansing process has overlooked this subtle variable because it has no consequence to the use of this crystal."

"Is there a way to strengthen this echo and bring it back to life?" Ves inquired.

"That is... I do not know." She reluctantly said. "This echo is very faint and feeble. To turn it into a living entity is like creating something out of nothing. It shouldn't be possible, yet your design philosophy has enabled you to do this many times. Perhaps..."

Helena continued to ponder for a minute.

She then decided to take action.

He reached out with her arm and began to infuse death energy into the Mentalist Crystal.

Slowly but surely, a dark apparition of a calamity beast appeared over the Mentalist Crystal.

Its shape appeared vague and insubstantial at first, but it began to gain definition with every passing second.

The creature that originally produced the Mentalist Crystal appeared to be a large and monstrous feathered bird.

Ves grew intrigued.

"What are you doing, Helena?"

"I am adding substance to the echo of the beast that this crystal originally belonged to." The female spirit replied. "It may look

impressive, but don't be fooled. I can't bring back the dead when there is nothing of substance left. What I am doing is the equivalent of filling a bird-shaped balloon with death energy. The death echo is only a reflection of a once-powerful avian calamity beast."

Ves stared deeply at the so-called death echo. It only retained the shape of the calamity beast, but not the spirit or mind.

This was not an ideal outcome, but he could work with it. If his theories were correct, this may be enough for him to activate the greater potential of the Mentalist Crystal!

The exertion on Helena's part was not small. Her manifestation frowned as she continued to pump the death echo with more of her death energy.

"Alright, that is the limit of what I can do at this time." She said. "It is nothing impressive, but that is because the death echo cannot accommodate more without losing cohesion."

"Thank you, Helena." Ves smiled. "I will take it from here. Can you stay and make sure to keep this death echo docile. I am going to try to breathe life into it, but I am afraid that my life energy will produce unwanted reactions with all of this death energy."

"I can do that, brother."

Ves did not breathe life into the death echo himself, but instead called out Blinky again so that he could carefully channel life-attributed E energy in a controlled manner.

The companion spirit remained cautious at first.

With the help of Helena's strong control, the death echo did not exhibit any strong or dangerous reactions.

Seeing that the death echo remained stable upon contact, Blinky carefully began to increase his output of life energy.

The death echo quickly began to change with the infusion of a completely different kind of energy.

The echo's appearance gradually became brighter and more colorful.

Its wings started to shine in different metallic shades. Its feathers grew sharper and more defined.

What was most remarkable was that the death echo actually started to show faint signs of coming to life!

Ves was keenly able to sense that this was not an illusion. For whatever reason, the

Mentalist Crystal seemed to possess an extremely hidden reservoir of data and fed it to the death echo, causing the latter to gradually regain the mind and spirit of the original calamity beast!

"It's... working!"

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