



After a while of piloting, the two friends could finally see the suspicious silhouette a good distance away.

“I see it, I see it,” cried Lara, “Damn, that thang is huge. And creepy.”

“I bet I can defeat it easily.” Jennifer rolled her eyes, then continued, helping herself with vivid articulation, “Surely, its overrated magitech tricks can not hold for long.”

A video window popped up on the main display, capturing the worried witch.

“You know better than that,” chimed in Anne. “You two stay strong and careful. We shall keep an eye on you, but we may not arrive soon.”

“Will ya ever let us have fun?” moaned Lara.

Jennifer examined the control pane, then turned around, frowning.

“She is correct. We must stay cautious. It is, in fact, our first actual mecha battle. We did pilot it before, but we have never met anything particularly dangerous.”

She then smiled. “But I am excited.”

“No worries, sister. We have built that monster real good. There ain’t nothing to match my engineering and your smarts!” shot back Lara.

“I believe in you,” delivered the speaker with the serene voice of Evindal.

It was followed by aggressive replica, which was obviously Aaron’s. “Take that thing to hell! I-”

Face of Anne flinched, then her lips thinned out into an unamused smile. “Take care. We shall not bother you,” said she as her image faded away.

“Heh. Guys out there are sure rooting for us.”

“Lara, are the systems ready?”

“Oh, they so are.”

“Have you checked?”

“You doubt me?”

“I guess not. Well, we are in range now beyond any doubt. Are you willing to hit it?”

“Been waitin’, sis.”

Lara has approached the fire controls with passion, running through the switches among flashing lights before letting the weaponry loose. On the finalizing push of button a missile was sent out.

“See how that tastes,” grinned Lara. She then remembered that she had a soda can nearby, reached out and opened it.

“Goddamn, I told you not to eat here!” yelled Jennifer.

“Aw, come on! It’s a drink, anyway. Don’t count.”

Projectile turned into a little smoke cloud upon reaching its destination. The *thing* stood still.

“Well, I was not expecting much,” murmured Lara.

The *thing* started approaching slowly.

“Let us close in and attempt something heavier,” spoke Jen. *I was not expecting much either, but it is never good when something like this happens*, she thought.

Lara silently followed the given instructions. Her target made a move sideways.

“That machine... evaded? I am progressively starting to dislike it,” said Jennifer.

“Aw, crap! We should have worked more on homing systems!”

“Hey, that can work – try the manual homing!”

“On it!.. Hope we don’t waste many of our rockets.”

“You have stolen majority of these anyway.”

“Well, I did not risk for nothing! It’s not like they are easy to get. And here it comes!”

Lara grabbed the helm firmly as Jennifer sped up the movement. The android-shaped machinery ahead, now entirely corresponding the expected looks, stopped and smashed the missile with non-robotic dexterity.

“Not good,” commented Jen again.

Suddenly the loud noise reached the two from outside.

“Ah, I have waited on you, yes! My, cutting to the deal already, what a spirit! Wanna talk?”

Jennifer looked over to Lara, who had already prepared the external speakers.

“The hell are you?”

“Why, I will be Electroheart, nice to meet you!”

Lara and Jennifer exchanged glances.

“If I may,” continued the tremendous form of metal, “I would like to mention that I have excluded any and all of my henchmen from the field to assure that no one is to cause us any... unnecessary complications.”

Lara made a face.

“Why don’tcha try speakin’ human for once?”

“Well, I would thereby like you to engage with me – in combat. No extras. No nuisances. Do me a favor, respect my decision and make this fight be of importance.”

“You got it, punk!” exclaimed Lara.

“Ah, such spirit is indeed of a worthy one! Shall we then set up the regulations further?”

Two gigantic machines were towering in the middle of wastelands near a desolate train station.

Jennifer shut down the external speakers.

“Hey, hey. Keep it down.”

“I see you are taking your time to consider the regulations in question?” the gargantuan device kept declaring. “I anticipate your answer.”

Lara leaned on the side and sipped a good amount of soda.

“What? I have my adrenaline up. We might fight the Magitech on the overpowered mecha prototype or we might die trying. A delight!” She paused, inhaled deeply, tasted her drink, and then finally finished. “That’s how it is, sister.”

“Do you truly think it is Magitech?”

“Well, who can it be, eh?”

“Eccentric and poetic and all, huh. Still, it is surprising for the Magitech himself to arrange a fight over this train station.”

The voice spoke again. “I am concerned with your manners, miss. It is plainly rude to avoid answering.”

Jennifer carried on. “Surely, that must mean there is something valuable in there; our suspicions must have been correct. But to fight a mecha vis-a-vis with a mecha? There must be something else, must be...”

“Hey, ya heard his speech, didn’tcha? He’s ready to fight one big bad opponent. Know what that means? Remember our little trick?”

“Oh, that. Haha, I might have forgotten it in all that fuss. Good one, Lara. You keep up the communication and firearms while I take control of all the primary functions. We shall wait until the right moment and only then do we split up.”

Jennifer looked forth. The monochrome machine was standing still outside their cockpit screen.

She lowered her voice, reaching for the speaker controls.

“How unspeakably complicated could it be to deceive a feared mastermind?”

“Hey you!” lit up Lara, “how ‘bout that: rule is *I take you down?*”

“Go, go, go!” turning the microphone off, she returned to the weapons, sending the salvo.

The eager enemy was quick to answer.

“No rules then? Curses. Hey! You know, this metal was perfectly polished! Well then, so be it!”

The metal creation has turned to send a wave of Ether energy.

“God, demon or whatever! Down!” shrieked Jennifer. “So it is freaking magical, it is, alright.”

Electroheart yelled once more: “A good start it is, tru-”

“My fizz!” interrupted Lara.

“You spilled it, damn it?”

“My damn fizz!”

“You clean this up as soon as we are done!”

“As if I have nothing else to do!”

“I shall have dealt with you. Damnation! We do need the magic reflection! I am redirecting the power. Wait. Ack, lasers! Shoot. They have less reserves to use now that the shields are up and on, but it is not worthless to attempt a shot. Hit it, Lara!”

The can kept rolling around as the floor tilted repeatedly. *Safety fixations were a must indeed*, thought Jennifer, hanging in the movement control suit.

Laser rays cut to the magic golem looking just like two great bright strings. Lara consorted the foe, “Eat this!”

“Bold move, miss! Using technological progress is sure a great way to prove your supremacy-”

“Aw, shut it!”

“You better keep it effective,” said Jennifer, minding the audio tricks. “He has a sword, which I did not notice earlier, as it is obvious now. I may need to switch to melee.”

“Hey, it hits the spot! Wai-wait, the thing flickers a lot. Also, why are the marks so tiny? Hell! Is that all?”

“Oh, fantastic, a shielded magical abomination.”

“Although, as you may notice, magic does have the upper hand sometimes,” went on their opponent, but Jennifer was far too occupied to listen.

“Wait! Nonono! it is getting on the offensive! Forget the lasers and brace yourself!”

“The only thang that worked is useless? For real? How’s that fair, bastard?”

Unaware of their banter, enemy – with a joyous “Brace yourself!” – has unleashed a swarm of sharp metal that used to look like a fancy decoration for the device. Pointy pyramids were led on the curve by telekinesis. The flock master stood with an arm cast out forward.

“Forget it!” broadcasted the mecha speakers.

Having said that, Lara ran her fingers on the panel vigorously as the empty fizz can was flying around the cockpit. Jennifer was sweaty from rushing to do all she could to deflect the incoming attack with a concentrated hand shield instead of a global-coverage energy field. Lights went dim for a moment.

*Damn it!* thought she, unable to deal with the overly complicated microphone manipulations. An impact shook the great device.

Lara was sending the rockets and lasers all together as she noticed something.

“Hey, look!”

“Lara, halt! We are approaching the energy reserves, and, god, demon or whatever, on this occasion it is severe! I mean it! It is real!”

“It worked!”

“What, excuse me?”

Lara hit the sound switch temporarily for a passionate “Take that, armless!”.

She was partially right, as the golem had a deformed chunk where its hand used to be. But the other hand was rising a sword of absurd size. Given that it was just right proportionally, it was quite big.

“You have impressed me, miss. It is time to put an-”

“Armless, armless!” added the chaotic lady.

“Silence!” cried the opponent.

“Oh, so it was a word play,” Jennifer regarded her friend.

“Yup.”

“Well said, sister.”

“I see `im runnin` swirlin` that knife thingy. Guess it’s your turn, sis.”

“What turns? We are cooperating!”

“Sis.”

“What?”

“Siiiiis...”

“Oh. Yeah, correct.”

“Yup, I’m goin`. Better watch ou-OUOUO-” Right after undoing the belts, Lara was forced to hug the seat tightly as she was standing up, so as not to fly directly after her precious fizz.

In order to avoid chuckling, Jennifer spoke. “I am concentrated indeed, so you are but free to go!”

Lara stood for a bit, panting. She looked down and raised her boot from the sticky puddle. “Well, it’s true, I have to clean here. Someday.”