

A Warrior's Rede

By: Wolfen

*REDE

*Clan Definition: One of the many forms honor takes in the Clans, a **rede** is an honor-bound promise. Breaking a rede may be punished by death.*

"Freebirth!" Chris Fetladral cursed as his *Timber Wolf* walked awkwardly through the marsh of Ohyrion- one of many that inhabited the world which him and his unit were assigned to garrison. The soft terrain wreaked havoc on the hip actuator, causing seventy-five tons of sheer destructive capabilities to stumble against the pines that pitted the center of the marsh. To the occasional onlooker, the scene looked something out of a child's anime: a marshy landscape with bamboo-like trees clustered in the center. It was a perfect replica of a samurai-duel-style environment. With grim amusement, the galaxy commander watched the secondary display, noticing that the rest of his command were also having the same sort of problems.

Without warning, a ruby light sprinted from the opposite end of the marsh, striking the Omnimech in the chest. Warning klaxons screamed while the computer accessed the extent of the damage, meanwhile he grappled with the controls to keep the beast balanced. After the first initial shot, several more lights, embroidering the same color scheme, came from the dense growth. This time, Chris was completely unprepared. It took a full second for him to realize that his mech was going down, as his body lurched forward in the command couch.

The other mechs fanned out around their fallen leader. Two massive *Turkinas* stepped to the forefront, obscuring any view the invaders may have had of their downed prey. Between the two of them, the air became alive with four silvery projectiles. They streaked across the marsh at sonic speed, snapping the trees in half like twigs as they made their way to the unseen enemy.

-Gauss Rifles.

Behind the fallen *Timber Wolf*, an *Avatar* and a *Vulture* took up positions, panning left and right for any other threats. There were none.

"Are you alright Galaxy Commander!" one of the mechwarriors under his command shouted. The voice was distinctly feminine, christened with the type of concern he had heard from one individual- his second in command.

It took Chris an everlasting two full minutes to comply. "Aff. Just slightly banged up." he murmured over a private frequency as he willed his *Timber Wolf* to a standing position. Its right shoulder rack was all but smashed to a worthless pile of metal from the fall. Dirt and grime clung to the machine, giving it the appearance of a sea monster. In a generous offering of smoke and fire, the galaxy commander fired back at his foe with the remaining lrm launcher. The boxy shoulder blossomed to life, sending all twenty warheads into the distance, littering the trees that outlined the marsh with fire and explosions.

Already the pair of *Turkinas* moved to either side of the battered *Timber Wolf*, their torsos swivelling from side to side like the *Avatar* and *Vulture* previously did.

There were no returned shots.

Chris Fetladral weighed his options. In the marsh, it was clear that 'he' was the intended target. The soft ground hindered the full potential of his Omni so it would be easy for anyone to pick him apart. If not for the intrusion of his command, things could have ended up the worse for wear.

"Okay people, listen up." he spoke softly into the command frequency. "Assault and Aggressor stars, flank left and shred that section of forest. Alpha Star, continue to run point, but watch out for pot shot. These freebirths are not clan, so don't expect any honorable tactics from them."

Quickly a series of "affs" strolled through his communicator, telling him that his command agreed with his assessment.

On the display, five of the blue specs that were the 'friendly identification signatures' of his colleagues moved off towards the left. With each spec, came information of the pilot and the chassis type, along with the magnitude of damage it took.

The lead mech of Aggressor Star, a *Nova Cat*, piloted by Star Commander Andrews, had minor damage to its right torso, while the arm joined to that section of its body was completely severed at the joint. Though the loss of the twin Heavy Lasers did little to negate the destructive capabilities of the Omnimech, it did, however, leave the star commander with limited weapons. All that remained would be the single heavy laser slung under the arm that housed a deadly LBX class-10 autocanon. Chris often why Andrew opted for that particular configuration. If anything, having the weapons stored only in the arms made the 'mech a sitting duck for those who manage to tear the limbs apart in the first or second volley, particularly if they were attacking from long range.

Mechwarrior Arnold's *Madcat MK II* was better off than the *NovaCat*. The display showed a faint pattern of green along the chest and legs of the massive ninety-ton mech. The Galaxy Commander watched with a smile as the hunched-over design lumbered forward, cutting a swath of destruction with its four extended-range medium lasers. The emerald beams blazed from the chest, searing through the weak bark of the pines, setting most of them ablaze. He also noticed that the pilot was holding off his most powerful weapons- the twin gauss rifles. The shoulder racks, however, belched venomous flame and smoke. Twenty warheads in all loomed up and over the omni, raining death into the forest beyond.

The other mechs in that star, a *Sunder*, *Hellbringer*, and *Summoner* were unblemished. They moved about methodically, each just a few meters from the other, maximizing their combined field of fire. Should any mech be unfortunate enough to find itself in the mix of those three war machines would find itself bathed in a sea of energy, missiles, and ballistic weaponry.

The other star, Assault Star, continued steadily through the marsh, not firing a shot into the unwelcoming wilderness that lie just beyond the edge of water. Of all the mechs in it, only Star Commander Nicole's *Madcat Mark II* was a replacement. In an earlier engagement, her *Cauldron-born*, had been destroyed, its legs amputated by pulse laser technology. For what it was worth, the mangled sixty-five ton machine had been ravaged for its parts- particularly the gauss rifle. Now, in a mech that supported a pair of the massive weapons, Nicole seemed more than happy with the transition from a heavy chassis to an assault. Even more frightening (if you were the opponent) was the fact that her talents as an adaptable mechwarrior worked rather well. Already she had been more than competent in piloting such a lumberous beast, and her accuracy spoke for itself.

To the left of her *MadCat Mark II*, a *Behemoth* snapped off a round from one of its weapons. The silvery projectile soared through the air at sonic speed, before cutting a swath of destruction into the forest. Birds and other creatures native to the region scampered or flew to escape the deadly machines.

Suddenly all of the mechs paused. Chris swiveled the fuselage of his *Timber Wolf* to the left, then right, as he read the readouts of his scanners. He knew that his mates were doing the same- their sensors were picking up the heat signature of mechs: **ENEMY** mechs. The majority of these reactor signatures were to the north of their position, where the attack on Chris had come from. In his command chair, the galaxy commander shifted his weight, readying himself for the battle that was to come.

And he didn't have to wait long.....

Painted a camo green and brown, a pair of *Sunders* walked from the mouth of the forest, cutting loose with their large laser and particle projection cannons.. The *Mark II* and *Behemoth* took the brunt of the attacks. Armor boiled and dripped from the legs and chest as the heat-intensive, crimson beams slashed into them, but not so much as to stop the forward moment of either mech.

In return, Chris' own forces fired, using their pair of gauss rifles. The four silvery projectiles streaked out to their intended targets. One of Nicole's rounds missed, plowing up dirt and wood from their firm hold. The other slammed into the right leg of the *Sunder*. Armor crunched as the round impacted, causing the mech to spin and fall onto its back. Apparently her foe wasn't competent enough to keep his machine upright, or simply failed to recognize the sheer firepower of her omni.

The *Behemoth*, piloted by Dirth, hit with both its gauss rifles. The massive metal balls slammed into the right arm and torso of the other *Sunder*. Unlike its counterpart, this one didn't fall under the assault, but rather continued to close range.

Chris watched his display as the two forces battled. The *Behemoth* had suffered mainly armor damage, which was only comparison to scratches. The *Sunder*, however, had far worse. Its right arm had been sheered clean off as the gauss whizzed into it, cutting up armor and internal structure like paper. The two large lasers fell to the ground with a loud thud, generating a small cloud of dust and debris. The ninety ton assault mech continued its ponderous advance onwards, perhaps in hope of getting close enough to use its other arm. The large muzzle at the end of the barrel dictated precisely the type of horrid weapon that most mechwarriors fear: a deadly 20 class autocanon.

In the universe of metal giants, the Autocanons had to be the deadliest close-range weaponry ever developed. These monstrosities were the bulk of assault mech weaponry, capable of ripping through armor like paper, and amputating the leg off heavy mechs. If a light mech was foolish enough to get caught in the crossfire, there would be nothing but a smoldering hulk of metal- hardly distinguishable as being the chassis of a battlemech.

Chris watched as the muzzle coughed flames, sending a blast of the slugs into the hundred-ton *Behemoth* with disastrous results. As the solid rounds worked their way up the length of the *Behemoth*, armor plating crumbled and fell, hitting the ground with sickening thuds as if to curse the deadly munitions. Halfway up the stricken assault mech, the pattern stitched towards the cockpit. At this, Chris moved his mech into action. The left shoulder rack blossomed to life as twenty of its warheads raced towards the enemy *Sunder*.

All but one warhead hit, with effective results. The legs of the *Sunder* buckled as the warheads detonated. Tons of armor were rapidly removed from their heat-forged holds, causing the ninety-ton assault mech to sway on its least-supportive leg; before falling face-first as its own weight drug it down. A small cloud of dust rose into the air before falling onto the exposed back of the metal giant.

"Sir, I am almost out of ammunition." Dirth spoke swiftly into the comm as he moved his assault mech away from the fallen *Sunder*. "Another exchange and I will only have my large pulse lasers."

"Quit whining, Dirth. Act like a warrior and press on!" shouted another one of the Keshik's warriors. It was a gruff voice, obviously masculine but much much older.

As the *Behemoth* continued on its reverse trajectory, another Omnimech stepped forward to take its place. From a distance, it looked almost identical to the one-hundred tonner, but its feet seemed to be much closer to the underside of its body, giving it a 'platform with feet' type of appearance. Despite its awkwardness, it's a feared mech among clan forces, notorious with the front-line galaxies of clan Jade Falcon: a *Turkina*. Weighing a sheer hundred tons and bristling with more weapons than any other mech in its class, the *Turkina* was referred to as the 'goliath of tanks' amongst the technician caste. And this particular variant lived up to its name.

Ricker's *Turkina* let loose a devastating battery of solid rounds as its dual LBX class 5 autocanons flashed. The shotgun-like projections peppered the fallen *Sunder* down its back- where its armor was weakest. Metal screeched as the rounds tore through the thin layer, then bubbled as a pair of charged lightning particles coursed into the gaping wound. However, Ricker was too battle-thirsty to realize the error of his assault.

Pouring that much weaponry into the rear of the innersphere mech had caused its reactor to go critical. In moments the punctured fusion reactor exploded, bathing the *Sunder* and the *Turkina* in a hellish yellow light. As the intense ray subsided, neither Ricker nor his fearsome omnimech remained.

Chris felt himself go numb as the wave of heat washed over his *Timber Wolf*, causing the HUD (heads up display) to frizzle. Though he had not really known the mechwarrior formerly known as Ricker, he had served his purpose within the Galaxy Command. The current sacrifice that warrior had made sent a chill down the commander's spine. *I will not fail.....*

Nicole's *Madcat MK II* continued its battle with the other *Sunder* which had gotten back on its feet. With the destruction of its compatriot, the *Sunder* began to slowly withdraw, though pitted against so many clan mechs rendered such a task far from successful. As the innersphere omni put distance between itself and her, the *Madcat MK II* lapped at the ninety-ton machine with its four torso-mounted medium lasers. The emerald beams cut through the narrow space, painting the armor of the *Sunder* a high-lighted green before boring into it. Armor melted as the heat-intensive rays curved a swath of destruction, but its thickness prevailed, delaying the full potential of light to wreck havoc on the systems hidden within. Throttling the massive assault mech into reverse, she cut loose with her twin gauss rifles.

At the same time, the *Sunder* snapped off with its own gauss rifle paired with the ppc. The gauss round sailed into the *MK II*'s left leg with terrifying force, threatening to amputate the limb after another solid blow. The ppc streaked for left torso. The asure bolt popped armor from its hold, leaving a smoldering crater in its wake.

Chris watched as Nicole's Omni staggered back, as she tried to maintain her balance. The two gauss slugs missed the right leg entirely, digging up rivets in the ground only a few meters away. Dirt and debris hovered in the air before gravity called it back to land solidly on the soil. He was certain that she would have the head of her lead tech for the slight error.

To his right, the *Vulture* beside him took several steps forward. Its shoulders blossomed to life as the lrms left their pods. All twenty warheads sailed towards the *Sunder*, peppering the ground and its legs. Already abused by the *MK II*'s assault, the leg gave in to the lrm barrage. Like a drunk, the *Sunder* teetered to the right then crashed down, its leg several yards behind it.

The battle was currently at a lull. Hailing his second-in-command, Teresa Ward, Chris rebuked her actions.

"That was highly uncalled for, Teresa. You have denied Nicole her right as a warrior."

The return was full of disapproval. "That is of no concern to me Galaxy Commander. The honor-bound rules of Zellbrigen were negated when they assaulted you. Besides, you also took a pot-shot at that *Sunder* when Dirth was retreating!"

Chris laughed to himself. She was right after all.

"Point taken." he concluded before switching to the command frequency. "Howling Keshik, let us return to our base for refitting. Beta Trinary, rendezvous with us and keep our space clear."

Beta Trinary, also known as the **AeroWing**, consisted of fifteen *Jagataiomnifighters*. To some, they were the superior fighters of the sky. Their current sector of patrol put them close to the Alysian Mountains, which was roughly five kilometers from the galazy commander's position.

"Keshik Command, this is Aero One. We shall link up in approximately fifteen minutes."

"Roger that Aero One. You are our eyes in the sky."

"Aff, Galaxy Commander."

Turning his battered *TimberWolf* to face the remnants of his trinary, Chris barked an orderly withdrawal. And as the day slowly faded to dusk, he wondered if this conflict would truly be over.....

(stay tuned)