福井晴敏（ふくい・はるとし）

1968年、東京都墨田区生まれ。1998年に『Twelve Y.O.』で第44回江戸川乱歩賞を受賞し作家デビュー。『亡国のイージス』『終戦のローレライ』『Op.ローズダスト』など著書、映画化作品多数。現在、月刊ガンダムエース誌上にて本作『機動戦士ガンダムUC』を連載中。

COVER DESIGN
akihito sumiyoshi + fake graphics

Kadokawa Comics A

機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン 6

福井晴敏

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《ユニコーン》が示した次なる座標は地球連邦政府首都・ダカールだった！
ラプラス・プログラムが示した地に《ユニコーン》を立たせるべく、
イスラム系反政府勢力のダカール襲撃計画に協力するバナージたち。
しかし積年の怨讐は、巨大MA《シャンブロ》が吐く炎となって暴走を始める！
首都を飲み込む炎を前に、バナージが選び取った行動とは……!?
かつてない一大スペクタクルに息を呑む、新・宇宙世紀神話第6弾！

機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン
MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM UNICORN

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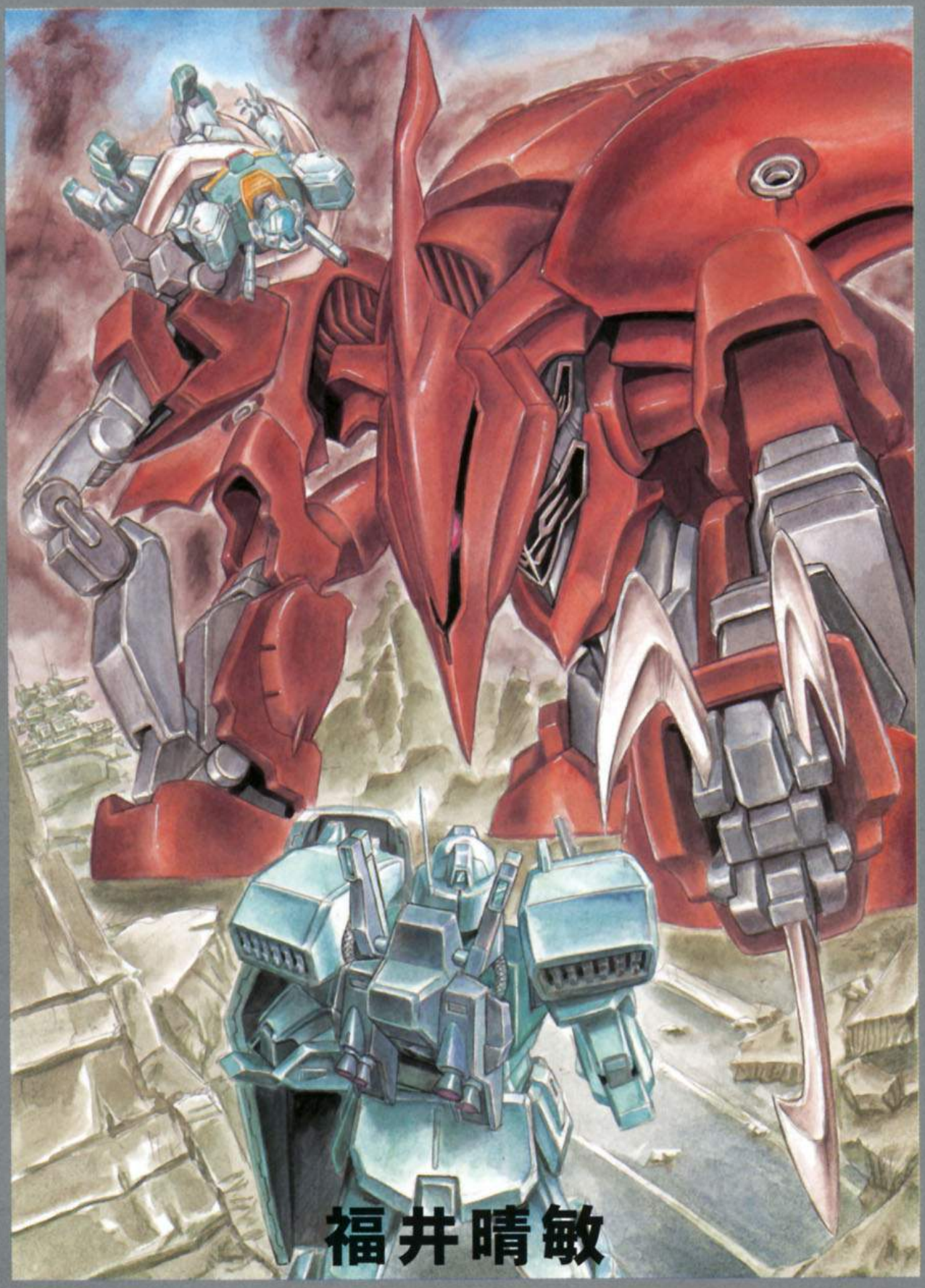
機動戦士ガンダムUC ユニコーン

6 重力の井戸の底で



福井晴敏

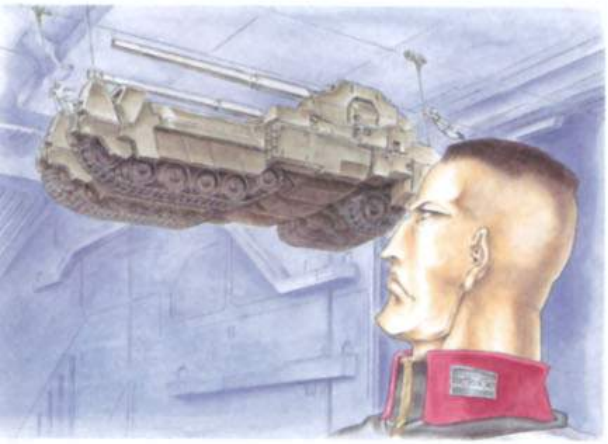
キャラクターデザイン 安彦良和　メカニックデザイン カトキハジメ　原案 矢立肇・富野由悠季　挿絵 虎哉孝征

Previous to GUNDAM UC

前巻までのあらすじ

宇宙世紀0096年。工業コロニー〈インダストリアル7〉では、開放されれば連邦政府を転覆しかねないと言われる秘密『ラプラスの箱』をめぐり、ネオ・ジオン軍残党と、地球連邦軍、ビスト財団の思惑が交錯し、偶発的な武力衝突事件が起こった。

コロニーに住む少年バナージ・リンクスは、謎の少女オードリーを助けたことからこの争乱に巻き込まれ、生き別れの父と判明したカーディアス・ビストから『箱』を開放する鍵となるモビルスーツ《ユニコーン》を託されることとなる。バナージはオードリーと共に連邦軍の戦艦《ネェル・アーガマ》に収容されコロニーを脱出するが、その背後には『箱』を求めるネオ・ジオン軍残党の首魁＝フル・フロンタルが迫っていた。



一度はフロンタルに敗れ、ネオ・ジオン軍残党の拠点〈パラオ〉へと連行されたバナージであったが、《ネェル・アーガマ》による奇襲に乗じて〈パラオ〉の脱出に成功。追撃してきた強化人間・マリーダを撃退しつつ《ネェル・アーガマ》への帰還を果たす。そしてミネバ・ザビとその正体の知れたオードリーは、その戦闘の混乱の中でリディと共に艦を脱出。《デルタプラス》で地球へと降下していった。

《ユニコーン》が示した『箱』への手がかりである旧首相官邸〈ラプラス〉残骸の調査中に、バナージたちは再びフロンタルの襲撃を受ける。ダグザを失い、顔見知りとなったジオン兵をその手にかけながら、バナージも地球の重力に囚われ大気圏へと落下してゆく。《ユニコーン》が燃え尽きんとした刹那、バナージを救出したのは、地球へと連行されるマリーダを追って来たネオ・ジオンの偽装貨物船《ガランシェール》であった。

イラスト／安彦良和、虎哉孝征

太陽を背負い、黒い機体を仁王立ちにさせた獅子の〈ガンダム〉が、表情のない視線を〈ユニコーンガンダム〉に注ぐ。
――（中略）バナージは黒い〈ガンダム〉の目を見返し、その者の名を喉奥から搾り出した。「マリーダ……さん……」（本文より）

Chapter 1

Part 1

The voice that was heard from the headphone sounded like water flowing under the floor. Swoosh, kok kok, such irregular sounds seemed similar to the sounds that would be made when changing water pipes.

"…I don't know."

The sonar operator opened his closed eyes and took off the headphones from his ears. The two duty crewmen beside him looked over at the sonar panel to check that all the functions were working properly, and then put their headphones back onto the console hook. The dim lighting of the sonar room showed the wry faces of shrugs, and Adi, who sat on the duty officer chair, felt a sense of despair.

The 42-year-old sonar operator was relatively experienced even amongst the highly experienced NCOs. When Adi was still a toddler learning how to walk, the sonar operator had already got onto the submarine. In terms of reading sonar, there was no doubt that the sonar operator was Adi's senior, but he lacked sensibility. The sonar operator was used to not using his imagination, and kept following the conclusion made by the sonar receiver. However, no matter how advanced technology was, a submarine crew member required instinctive intuition and the ingenuity of a craftsman.

"This is the sound detected by the passive sonar 30 minutes ago. It really did not feel like the wavelength of a jet engine, and the sound does seem to flicker from time to time.

Of course, it was impossible for a rookie sonar operator who just got assigned here half a year ago to criticize him face to face. Adi put the sampling number of the audio record into the analyzing monitor, and cautiously said,

"However, there is a regular rhythm in the sound we received. This really doesn't sound like an underground volcano activity. Some submarines amongst the old nuclear submarines would let out such sounds. If we can compare it with HQ's database…"

The analyzing monitor showed uneven waveforms. Despite the ship database showing a lack of match, there was no guarantee that this was not a sound from the propulsion system of a submarine. At this point, the

screw propellers would only be used when navigating on the water surface, and when submerged, the fusion water jet engine that produced less noise would be used. However, a noiseless propeller system technology had already been the subject of research ever since the old centuries, when USA and the Soviet Union were in the midst of their cold war. The sound displayed on the curve was similar in some extents the early silent propulsion system.

Adi probably would have viewed this as a noise created by natural phenomenon if he had not found past records in the library of the submarine school. He continued to increase the intensity level of the sound analyzing monitor, but the sonar operator gave him a sighing voice, "I say, Adi…"

"It's a good thing to be passionate about your research, and I admit that your ears are very sensitive. However, this isn't a group activity a student's doing here. Is it possible for a nuclear submarine in the old times to appear here? It's true that some certain old century submarines are still in service, but their facilities are already upgraded. Do you feel that anyone will still use those antiques that are shelved outside the ship's database."

The sonar operator stood up, got behind the duty crew member, and put his hand on his fat waist. He, who had maintained a nice slim figure when he was young, finally succumbed to the biggest enemy of a submarine crew member, a lack of exercise. What was worse was that the food provided in submarines were the best in the army.

"Listen up, we're looking for a spaceship here, a spaceship of those Zeon remnants who pulled off this one heck of an acrobatic and fell into the Atlantic Ocean. They definitely injected water inside the ship and submerged underwater. It's impossible for that ship to make the noise of a water jet engine, and it's definitely more impossible to make the sound an ancient nuclear engine. You'll just hear the sound of the ship hull being compressed because of this unexpected submersion, and that should be what you're looking for. The navy isn't giving you expensive equipment just to satisfy your own interests.

The words that pressed down on Adi's head caused him to feel that it was no different from the water pressure pressing down on the ship body. He lowered his dejected face, "Yes" and put on the headphones again. The sonar operator snorted, pulled his stomach in and passed behind the duty crew member to leave the sonar room that could be said to be as cramped as a can of sardines.

The curtain rail that was used as a separation was pulled aside, and the air came flowing into the sonar room from the neighboring command room. Unlike the cramped sonar room, the command room that was 10m wide would often have 10 important crew members ranked below the captain working there. To the Earth Federation Submarine EFS "Bonefish", this block was basically functioning as a brain. The sonar room that was connected directly to it had to use the sonar sensors equipped inside the ship to act as the ears as far as possible, and report the situation around the ship to the central command. All duties were handled mechanically in rhythm in this 200m long Juneau-class submarine, and this was one of the organs supporting it.

At this point, the submarine was 300m in depth. It was moving at 10 knots per hour as it moved between the African continent and the South American continent. The Atlantic Ocean below the equator continued to search below the wide ocean space approximately 50m below. This belt of mountains underwater in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean was called the Romansh fault zone. As the young crust formed here had some magnetic minerals, it was very difficult for the sonar sensor to detect. If the Neo Zeon spaceship wanted to hide, this would be the most suitable space. The precipitous reefs around the fault were also in the way of the search, but it was imaginable that the enemy would not submerge too deep. Even if they have similar air capacity, the pressure resistance specifications of a spaceship would still be far inferior to a submarine. If they wanted to sink deeper, they would be crushed by the water pressure before their allied forces came to save them.

No, basically, it was worth doubting whether there were forces on Earth that could be considered their ally. It had been three days since they started the search, and the underwater search monitor only showed signs of reefs, and the source of this sound that was detected was the allied ship that was carrying out the search at the same time. The mood in this submarine that was under the normal marine department felt as relaxing as naval training, and the crew all forgot about the tension they had when they started launching. Adi felt that he was quickly losing interest in the source of this unknown sound as he sighed. Beside him, Corporal Genon heard him out and said, "Don't think too much about it."

"The sonar operator is an athletic type who became famous for football, so he can't get along with an academic-based man like you."

Genon took down the headphones on his ears as he smiled, "But I do feel that it's not an ancient nuclear submarine as well. There's no response on the sound screen anyway, so I think you probably heard the sigh of a "Sea Ghost"."

"A sea ghost?"

"it's just a rumor. About half a month ago, the SOSUS detected an unknown sound at the Atlantic control branch. At that time, they were wondering if there was a system malfunction…"

The so-called SOSUS was a defense system spread throughout all oceans in the world by using the sonar receptor embedded at the seabed. This system was particularly concentrated at the ports of several constituent countries, and it was not a laughable affair when the SOSUS of the Atlantic near the Federation government capital, Dakar malfunctioned. "Why isn't this news get reported?" Adi pointed out.

"Because the system is just titular decorations after the Zeon remnants navy got dispersed. They're scared that the budget will be cut if they reported this malfunction."

"Is that so…"

"It seemed that the people from my dad's time even had a fierce fight with Zeon's "Mad Anglers", but currently, it's impossible for the diving fleet to meet actual battle anyway. Even our "Bonefish" is an old granny of 17 ship years. The navy would have been toast together with the army if not for the consideration of unemployment. In this age, the reason why everyone can live is all because of the space forces."

"Then why did you join the army?"

"To obey my parents. If the son isn't serving in the army, the retired officer living off pension will be sent to space. At their age, I don't want to send them to live in the colony. Aren't you the same?"

As Genon glanced over at him, "I…" Abi could only mumble as he turned to look at the sonar board. Adi's father was a NCO in the navy, and without that relationship, there was no way he could have entered the army. Deep inside his heart, he did think that he could continue to remain on Earth as long as he stayed in the navy, but he did not choose to join the navy simply because of self-preservation. He simply loved ships, not the ships flying around in space, but a real ship that moved on the sea.

Due to his father's occupation, he was often near a base in his youth. Perhaps it was because of this that he loved the sea ever since he was young. Adi always respected his father, who was awarded a shiny dolphin mark that was hung in front of his chest, and the bedtime stories that were told when he was young left him longing for the sea. The singing of the whales that could be detected from the sonar, the beauty of the sea surface at sunset, the mobile suits of Zeon that looked like Krakens', and the suffocating intense battles against enemy submarines—especially at the end of the One Year War, where the great naval battle near the coast of Jaburo, the old headquarters of the Federation army, took place. Adi kept begging his father to keep talking about that story, and he did not know how many times he heard it.

When he was young, Adi hoped to enter the navy when he was young and board a submarine. Despite him becoming distant from his father in his youth like ordinary people, he never lost sight of this aim. He successfully entered naval cadet academy, got more points than what was required to graduate through extra-curriculum studying, and was given the right to be assigned to the "Bonefish", considered the newest submarine even as the naval fleet's equipment were stagnated. It was of the same class of submarine as the one Adi's father rode on in the War, both Juneau-class ship and Adi definitely understood its structure and capabilities as well as the captain. He enthusiastically embarked on his first voyage, but the seas after the war was different from what his father said. It was not a place of adventure.

After two Neo Zeon wars, the Zeon remnants left on Earth were basically swept, and the ones were merely some sporadic terrorist attacks from guerilla forces. Earth did not experience a real large scale war for 5 years. Despite the Neo Zeon forces that were derogatorily called "Sleeves", the uprisings normally happened in space, and it was completely unrelated to the navy, especially the diving fleet that would only remain underwater.

"I heard that the battle before caused the relic of "Laplace" to be wrecked."

Genon changed the topic. Adi remembered seeing the debris of that official residence in low orbit through the window when he went on a space camp in primary school. He added on, "Looks that way."

"They said that the Neo Zeon ship crashed into Earth together with the relic there…those aliens were really persistent."

Genon gave a wry look as he put the headphone back on to end this idle chat time. That's right, those aliens have come to our territory. Adi thought about that again as he held onto the headphone tightly. The space forces did not know about the seas, so if a commotion in space is dragged to the sea, we're the only ones who can respond. Adi mused in his head as he looked back to inspect on the various functions on the console.

He inspected the underwater search monitor that could recreate the situation at the seabed through CG and the sound screen that showed the shape of the target through the active sonar reflected off the bottom of the sea. The main sonars that were installed on the bow and the sides, separated equally, could block off all excessive sounds and concentrate the detected sounds inside the head phones. The excessive sounds here would refer to the machine sounds from the "Bonefish" itself and the fusion water jet engines installed on both sides letting out sounds of sea water being stirred.

The air pressure from Earth to space would actually go from one to zero, but in water, the water pressure would increase according to the depth. Considering that the place was not suited for humans to live in, a seabed of 300m was an isolated zone like space. Even if the enemy spaceship sank into the bottom of the ocean, it was not easy to save it. However, there was a chance that the Zeon remnants had a submarine for rescue. Adi closed his eyes, put his elbow on the console and paid whole attention to listen out the sound. He pricked his ears upon hearing the water flow that sounded like it was shaking an old pipe, and wanted to identify the enemy presence that was submerged underwater.

The area around the submarine was darkness, where light could not return. If there were windows, it was possible that they would be seeing darkness that was darker than space. Above this place was the ocean surface, sky and space where there were tens of billions living there. What kind of people do the people living in the colonies see us as? Adi gave a wry smile as he suddenly thought about him. He, who remained on Earth, stayed in a large metal tube that was moving at the bottom of the sea. It seemed that the people who moved to the space colonies called Earth as a gravity well, so people like him probably drew the short stick of the gravity well by staying over here—

Gonk! At this moment, the blunt sound of metal knocking into each other rang in Adi's ears.

The hand that was pressed on the headphone immediately tightened up, and he looked over at Genon beside him. It seemed that the other man heard the same sound too. Adi turned his pale face, worked on the console, pulled out the problematic sounds, corrected them, and stared at the round screen of the sonar radar. Soon, the screen showed an orange light, and a sound beeping alarm rang as it entered Adi's ears.

There were no matches. It was impossible to detect the propeller noises, but something was approaching gradually from the starboard. The distance was less than 1,000 meters, and an unknown metallic sound continued to ring. Adi only called about taking up the wireless communicator microphone in the ship as he yelled, "COMMAND, THIS IS THE SONAR!"

"Sonar detected, position 132. Target speed estimated at 30 knots."

The metallic sound that had a mysterious rhythm to it did not stop. As Adi and Genon were carrying out their own identifications, the voices of the captain and the sonar operator rang inside the sonar room. The captain looked skinnier as compared to the sonar operator, and he looked less lively as before due to a recent gastric ulcer surgery. However, to a marine, the captain was still a respected figure, "What do you think that is?" Adi saw the captain lower his head to stare at him, and tensed up as he answered,

"I don't know. This sounds different from a torpedo tube being opened, but it still does sound metallic. I'm guessing that it's a machine running…most likely, the sound of an actuator running."

Adi finished, and he himself felt that this was the case. This deep ringing sound that persisted on did seem similar to a crane or a similarly large machine. The sonar operator said, "This guy's a rookie, but his ears are sharp." The captain put the standby headphones over his ears and put his mouth to the nearby wireless communicator microphone. "Command, this is the captain speaking. Get the torpedo crew to position. Head east and prepare room for vessel operations. Increase speed by 10."

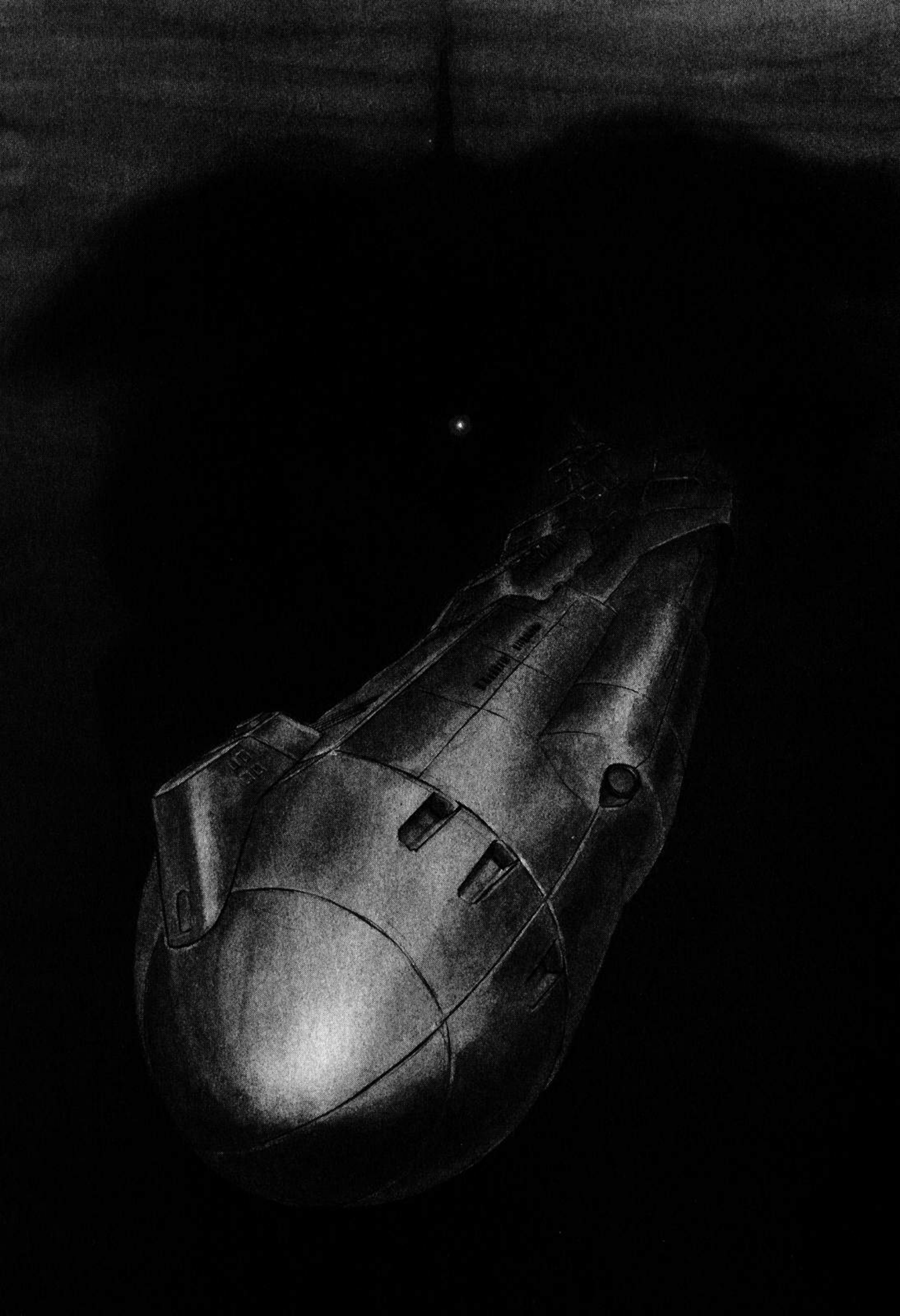
Ting, ding. The speed indicator rang, and as the submarine sped up as it changed its course, the inertia that was caused started to act on the bodies. The sonar operator put his hands on Adi's to support himself, and it seemed that he was praising the rookie for responding quickly. The competing sense of delight and tension rose in him as he looked tense while operating on the console, "Target's increasing in speed!" but was shocked by Genon's called.

"Distance at 800. Coming right at us!"

The flickering on the radar was quickly approaching the circle. It went passed 40 knots, the fastest speed a Juneau-class could move in water. The captain with an obvious black-ethnic blood immediately turned pale and commanded to the wireless communicator. "Command, increase speed by 10 again. Go full throttle." At the same time, the sonar operator yelled "Hit the piner!" and Adi immediately pressed the active sonar on the console.

KONG!A shrill sound spread through the speakers, rocking the ship body of the "Bonefish". The reflected waves bounced through the machine 4 times faster than it was in air, and the target silhouette appeared on the sound screen. One could feel that everyone present gasped.

As both sides were basically maintaining the same height, the shape of that thing was definitely how it looked from the front. However, the target's silhouette was extremely abnormal. It was shaped like a flat rhombus, its longest length was 80m long, and its height was more than 30m tall. Looking at its shape, it was most definitely not a submarine, or rather, it was far from an ideal submarine. Also, the target was changing shapes from time to time as it approached the submarine underwater at a high speed.



"Is that the sea ghost…?"

The captain mused. The object continued to approach with its propeller system still silent, charging right at the starboard of the "Bonefish" that turned back. It doesn't have a fusion water jet engine, so why it is able to move so freely in the sea? Adi's mind went blank as the sonar operator pushed him aside to work on the sonar board. "60! It'll crash into us directly!" he warned. "Emergency evasion…" the captain ordered in the wireless communicator, "Too late!" but Genon yelled louder as the sudden feeling of death that came caused Adi's body to stiffen.

I'll die in such a place. I haven't done anything yet. I'm not as active as dad, and I never experienced such adventures. The sunsets, whale songs, everything, I haven't experienced—

"IMPACT!"

The captain's voice that sounded like a scream rang in the ears. Then, the sound of metal being ripped echoed through the ship, and Adi was thrown off the ship.

Genon too was knocked aside, and the captain and sonar operator had their backs crashed into the wall. The alarm rang, the lights were flickering, and Adi heard the sound of the ship being crushed. A large amount of seawater was rushing in through the ripped shape, and the hull where up and down could not be identified continued to sink. The sea ghost that bared its sea monster-like fangs gnawed the entire submarine to shreds—and Adi's consciousness faded as he swallowed the fear his father never experienced.

Part 2

The 'claw' that penetrated through the rubber-like sound-absorbing material cut a hole through the belly of the submarine and pulled it out.

The high pressure of air inside the ballast tanks spurted out of the crack, and the "Bonefish" was surrounded by the forceful air bubbles. The seawater replaced the air as it flowed in, tilting the submarine to the right, and the buoyancy was completely negated as the "Bonefish" sank to the bottom of the sea. The hull hit the seabed violently, and before the dust of the reefs being scattered spread in the sea, the object nicknamed the sea ghost started to float slowly.

The unit had 3 sharp claws on its pair of arms—or rather, forelegs, and they bend back with the sound of the actuator ringing. The part that was installed at the base of the arms were arched shaped armor that looked like shells, and from the front, its silhouette looked like a flattened rhombus, but it was merely a small part of this complicated model. The gigantic arms and narrow streamlined body made it mechanical silhouette look like a crustacean residing in the sea, while the rear end of the body looked like a hermit crab that was much larger in volume than the body. Looking down from above, its front end had the form of a spade, and it was reminiscent of a raptor. The part that looked like a head had a crack on it, and one could see a brightly glowing 'eye' inside.

The monoeye sensor that was first developed by the old Principality of Zeon flickered, and the air bubbles carried its back that was giving off air bubbles as it started to leave the bottom of the seabed that was in eternal darkness. Its arms turned behind, overlapping with the armor on its shoulders, and changed its form. The arms turned behind, shelved in with the shoulders armors. It changed its form to become a completely streamlined body, but the form itself showed no sense of submersion at all. It was possible to find such machines that were shaped like monsters in this Minovsky Particle era of weapons, weapons that were half similar to a mobile suit—mobile armors. The AMA-X7 "Shamblo" flipped over its large body that looked like a kraken as it moved amidst the high pressure of the deep sea. The Magneto Hydro Dynamics (MHD) units installed within its shoulder armor continued to let out a different noise from the fusion water jet engine as it changed its course horizontally at a depth of around 100m.

Unlike mobile suits that were fixed to be humanoid mobile weapons, mobile armors were not fixed in shape. As long as it could satisfy its original purpose, the size of it did not matter, and the limbs that controlled the unit's mobility need not be limited to limbs alone. The "Shamblo" itself was no exception, and in fact, it looked like a submarine that had arms for combat, but the unique trait was that only a few pilots were needed to operate this, unlike a submarine that required many people. There was a cockpit block with a linear structure in the middle of this unit that could be considered a motor fortress—and over there, one could see Mahdi Garvey seated on the captain seat, looking down at the CG corrected seabed image.

There was a wide space akin to that of a shuttle control room in this cockpit, and there was a wall of screen right at the front. There were three operating seats in front of the screen, one to operate, one to detect, and

one to defend. The captain's seat controlled the attacks, and there was a very large and high space behind the cockpit. Of course, the captain's seat could control everything in this system when things were critical.

The screen replicated the scenes in the sea through the combined information obtained from the nightvision cameras and the sonar, and the enemy submarine that was sunk was giving of air bubbles and floating materials that scattered everyone. Walid and Abbas, 2 young men that were old enough to have beards, were seated on the operating and detection seats respectively as they stared at that scene. The only female, Loni was seated on the defense seat as she continued to stare at the screen. Mahdi saw that her delicate shoulders were tensed up, "Are you scared, Loni?" and asked her from the behind the console of the captain's seat. The light brown face covered by the helmet visor turned around, "Yes, father." and Loni's black eyes looked anxious as she answered.

"That's good. Those who aren't willing to show emotions will not be able to handle things coolly when something unexpected happens. Abbas, Walid, watch carefully too. We just killed more than 200 enemies. There'll be more bloodshed after this, so don't you look away from the corpses of the enemies.

"Yes." Abbas and Walid answered in unison as they stared at the blood and entrails. As according to customs that lasted since ancient times, Madhi had many wives and many concubines, and the 3 people in front of him at this point had the purest of bloodline in the Garvey family. Madhi really wanted to let his deceased father, who was unable to see the faces of his grandchildren, everything, including the first results of the "Shamblo". Fear and excitement continued to make him feel this way originally, but he immediately changed his mind soon. He thought about how it would not be long before he meet his father, and his beard that had some white hairs in it curled up above his mouth.

It had been more than 6 years since he inherited the inheritance from the First Neo Zeon war and started to build this "Shamblo". Looking at the remnants of the submarine that sank in front of their eyes, the Earth Federation army would know that the sea ghost was not a mere illusion. Those people would understand immediately that this so-called thing would create a more direct threat to them. The dormant period had ended, and the time to take action had finally arrived. After the several battles in space, the "Box" fell onto Earth—and they were fighting for this "Box" that could topple the Federation government.

However, it was still unknown where the Neo Zeon ship that had the "Box" went. It had been 3 days since they received the report, and Madhi searched around the ocean where they could have possibly crashed into, but there were still no results. He turned his eyes on the seabed search monitor that showed the bits of the enemy submarine that were swimming about. Abbas, who was seated on the central control seat, said, "The "Sleeves" Heavy Lift Vehicles will fall onto Earth immediately, and interrupted with a steady voice befitting that of the eldest son.

"I heard that the "Garencieres" entered the atmosphere in the middle of battle. Is it possible that it broke up in air or split into pieces when it landed in the water?"

"Zinnerman won't make that mistake. But it's possible that they went slightly off course and was forced to land in the desert…"

He met the captain of this cargo ship in question, Suberoa Zinnerman once. They had different beliefs, and Madhi felt that the other man was a warrior, but in the end, he felt that the simple truth was that the fate of humans was in God's hands. The time that was set at Greenwich Standard indicated 6:40 am. After checking the time, Madhi checked the time it would take to reach the HLV reclamation point, decided that it was time to pack up, and lifted his head from the console.

"Can't be helped. We'll pause our search for the "Garencieres" for the time being. New course, position 020. Let's go retake the "Sleeves" HLV."

His three children repeated this command as they worked on their respective consoles. The MHDs propellers on the shoulders absorbed seawater, and the large body of the "Shamblo" tilted slightly.

The slits on the shoulders took in seawater, and the powerful magnetic field created by the superconductive coil triggered the tube-shaped propellers that would absorb seawater and shoot it backwards in an accelerated manner. The MHD was the earliest system that was developed amongst the silent propulsion systems, but it was soon forgotten because of the similarly silent fusion water jet engines that were becoming commonplace as it lacked output. For a large mobile armor like the "Shamblo" that completely abandoned hydromechanics with its exterior, this was still insufficient, and there was a completely different engine in it.

The machine that was like a large ray quickly spun rode on the water flow raised by the MHD propulsion system, and tilted its slanted position back

horizontally. The Minovsky particle spaceship engines that were hidden inside the arms were installations used when a spaceship moved under gravity. It could scatter Minovsky particles regularly and create I-fields to let the object float. The engines the "Shamblo" had were considered amongst the newest amongst the Minovsky era crafts that were becoming smaller, and the seawater that was ionized by the I-field would become the 'protective layer', greatly reducing the resistance when diving in the water. This was the result from the Neo Zeon development plans and the Garvey Enterprises developing this. In fact, the expenses for producing a "Shamblo" alone was enough to build a solar generator that could power three basic industries.

However, this was worth it. The "Shamblo" that obtained the power of the Minovsky Craft system would show its real value once it landed. He sat in this cockpit that would not shake, checked that the functions of the "Shamblo" were perfect, and said as if he was muttering to himself, "In the worst case scenario, even if we can't find the "Garencieres", there wills till be a way."

"Things are moving. The fact that Full Frontal, who remained completely silent before this is hurriedly sending reinforcements over here is the best proof. Also, with this "Shamblo", I can look forward to settling the hundred years of grudge as a "descendant of Dubai"…"

Loni merely moved her head slightly as the three children did not say anything. They bore the tragic fate of their race and the power to topple the current situation. Madhi stared at the backs of the trio and looked over at the sea surface that was rippling 100m above. The CG corrected screen showed the sea surface, radiating with what he believed to be a Holy light, indicating for sure that Allah existed, and seemed to be blessing the "Shamblo" that managed to succeed in its first battle.

The large body of the "Shamblo" continued to move in the water as it shook the Neo Zeon medal that was a mere formality. The weak propulsion sound was not detected by the sonar's eyes as the machine disappeared deep within the veil of the thick seawater.

Part 3

"It sank?"

Ronan Marcenas could not help but parrot the other person's words as he lifted his head from the documents he read halfway. "Yes." Patrick answered as he put the readied information onto the table.

"Vice Admiral Ted privately contacted us. The rescue team is currently sent to the water site, but the chances of the crew surviving are despairingly slim…"

It seemed that Patrick's words tailed off weakly not just because he was feeling compassionate about the submarine that was sunk. Ever since the Neo Zeon ship that took in the "Unicorn" dropped onto Earth, Patrick had been busy running around the area where he was contesting for elections, and had to become the relay man between the Senate Council that included Ronan, and the Central Intelligence Branch. Ronan looked away from his anxious looking son-in-law as he picked up the information that had the works for internal use and quickly browsed through it.

The EFS "Bonefish" last sent a distress signal at the Atlantic Ocean, and lost signal after that. It was not hard to imagine that the military vessel that went to search for a Neo Zeon ship made contact with a Zeon remnant that was looking for the same target, and was sunk before it could fight back. Ronan looked at the crew list that had no purpose other than to act as a list of names, and muttered deep within his heart, Are these martyrs for the "Box"? He then took off his reading glasses and put aside the stacked information. This is retribution for dealing with the unemployment issue so carelessly, huh?", he mused as he turned his chair to the window behind him. The office that retained light extremely well in this residence was basked in the midst of the scorching afternoon sunlight.

"The Minovsky particles jamming the sensors aren't the cause of this incident. After the war ended, the reason why no one went to repair the surveillance network destroyed by Zeon was because people wanted to leave the surveillance job to the Earth military. That's why it's so troublesome to search for a ship that dropped onto Earth. Even if the remnant army managed to build up their forces, the current situation is such that the military is unable to grasp information about them. There's no need to let people waste their lives like this if the surveillance satellites of the same level as before the war are still functioning in the first place…"

Patrick showed neither affirmation nor negation as he turned his face to Ronan. It was no wonder, as Ronan's era was the one that established this system, while his era would be the one forced to pay the price. Ronan rubbed his eyes and held his sigh in forcefully as he looked back at Patrick

with an appropriate look to his first secretary, and said, "Then, how are things proceeding?" Patrick took out the other information tucked under his armpit and spoke,

"I sieved through the namelist the vice-admiral handed over. This one should be most suitable."

Ronan put on his glasses as he glanced at the information with the data. "Commander of Londo Bell, Captain Bright Noa…" he read as he looked up at Patrick, "So he came down to Earth?"

"He rode on the "Ra Cailum" to the Far East in order to test the newly equipped Minovsky Craft. This man is a commander, but he is also acting as a captain at the same time. I suppose it's because he is a man who's born to be on a ship, and I do find him a serious and upright person."

"This man is stubborn. You've at least heard of his name, right?"

"Of course. To a young man like me, he's a hero in the past anyway. I was engrossed when I read about the "Battle records of White Base."

"The legend that time caused misunderstandings about him, and he was excluded from the mainstream military. The higher ups thought that he had thoughts of rebelling…to put it simply, they suspect him as a Newtype. After that, the Senate Council seemed like it had intentions of pulling him out, but he was merely satisfied with acting as commander of Londo Bell from the sidelines. Well, he's not a man suited for politics."

Ronan spoke of what he saw on the surface, "Can you rein him in?" and gave a probing look. Patrick did not avoid his father-in-law's stare as he answered,

"That "Nahel Argama" belongs to Londo Bell. It had been severed from contact with the command of Londo Bell ever since the ship was loaned out to the Senate Council. To a man like Captain Bright, he will be tense over being unable to contact a ship under his command, let alone knowing that the ship is involved with the previous terrorist attacks."

There's hope if we go in from there, Ronan felt somewhat chilly in his heart as he saw Patrick's face indicate this as such. He imagined how this man who was known for his sportsmanship, was gradually being dyed in the color of politics, and felt both reliable and guilty. He took off his reading glasses and gave the other man a serious look, "Is the "Nahel Argama" stuck in its orbit?"

"it's the doing of the Vist Foundation. The crew on the "Nahel Argama" are directly involved in these incidents. If they come out to testify, the allies supporting the Foundation will be in danger."

"In other words, if they're still in the hands of the Senate Council, we have nothing to sue the Foundation with. Also, the Earth military searching the "Sleeves" are under the Foundation's watch. We need to get a pawn here. This pawn must have a sharp mind and must know how to deal with complicated situations.

Ronan stared over at the photo of Captain Bright which looked resilient and upright, and tapped his index finger on the table. After about 3 seconds, he made his decision and put the stack of information into the drawer, saying, "Help me arrange a meeting with him."

"Looking at how we can't survive without the tension of war, the Earth military is more reliant than the space military. The news that Mineva Zabi accepted our protection has probably reached the Foundation's ears. You have to proceed cautiously."

"Alright. Meet in Dakar?"

"No, this place is good. Make it quick. I can't leave Dakar for too long."

It would take slightly more than 2 hours to fly from Atlanta to Dakar if he rode on the Hypersonice Transport (HST). He could return back immediately if he wanted to, but he did not want to talk about measures to be taken against the "Box" at the Parliament where the reporters would work in shifts and patrol there. He saw his first secretary nod his head, turned around, and wanted to look away, but recalled something as he called out to the other man facing away from him, "Patrick." The son-in-law seemed like he detected the slight change in tone as he turned his face around and looked over his own shoulder.

"…Eh, are you still on good terms with Cynthia?"

Ronan sensed that his words at this point seemed hollow as compared to before, but he could not help but continue his words fluently. Cynthia did not know that the person called Audrey Burne was Mineva Zabi herself, and she was completely locked out of the loop in this battle for the Box", but there was no reason why the very instinctive daughter of the Marcenas family would not detect the heinous air inside and outside the family. Ronan did hear from the butler Dwiyon secretly that Cynthia was feeling

more and more frustrated with Patrick for being unwilling to say anything, and a cold wind was blowing amidst their relationship.

Patrick showed a somewhat unexpected look, "Please don't worry." and answered as he relaxed his mouth. That delicate smile showed a concern for the father-in-law, and also looked like it was teasing a man who was clumsy when it came to domestic affairs.

"She is becoming a little nervous, but she is an adult. It seems that she's getting along well with Miss Mineva…Audrey too."

"Really?"

"But please find a chance to explain to her. She's a member of the Marcenas' family after all."

I'm just an outsider after all these words that came out of left field entered Ronan's unprepared heart, and Patrick left the office. This would be the fate of a man who did not care about his family, doing something he was not used to doing. He endured the pain that crept into his chest, pushed back the leather chair and got up. He stood at the window and looked at the courtyard where the sun shone down on.

The Dogwood trees that surrounded the residence were growing light pink flowers. The Late April of Southern USA accepted summer faster than the Northern Hemisphere. The greenness got thicker, and Ronan, who was fascinated by this scene under the shining sun, heard the sound of the horse galloping far away , and looked over there. He saw the horse rushing through the Dogwood.

He recognized that the hands holding onto the reins belonged to Riddhe, who had his legs tucked tightly around the horse's abdomen, and he lowered himself such that his chest nearly touched the horse's neck. The face that became one with the horse appeared and vanished between the gaps of the trees. He critiqued the school's British horse-riding the school taught as boring, learnt Western horse-riding on his own, and did not look elegant at this point. He looked very different from the high class people, and was racing as if he wanted to be primitive like the horse, but his flowing blond hair was so beautiful it throbbed in Ronan's heart, who watched his son ride on the horse until he disappeared. His hair color looked like golden flames that were bursting with all sorts of emotions in his heart—

However, there was a tinge of dark shadow on his back. He managed to remain oblivious to the truth until a few days ago, but after knowing how fragile the base supporting this world was, he looked like he was racing on the horse while trying to shake off the shadow on him. But no matter how he dashed, those things could not be shaken away. Whether it was the truth about the "Laplace Box" or the destiny that await the Marcenas family, Riddhe could only view them as part of him and try to accept it as he continued. Ronan sighed deeply as he turned his back against the window. He could not shake off the galloping sound he once heard as it remained in his extremely unhappy body.

Part 4

She heard before that there were no animals that were more sensitive to human emotions than horses. If the person on the saddle was filled with vigor, the horse would be willing to listen to the command; if the rider showed any fear, the horse would look down on the rider. It seemed that the horse could detect even a bluff as it would suddenly stop and move at times and do disobedient things to the rider. As its appearance showed, a horse was probably a very proud living creature.

At this point, this horse that was racing definitely understood its rider's feelings. This Anglo Arabic horse let its pitch black mane sway as it ran around the outskirts of the wide courtyard, seemingly becoming one with Riddhe Marcenas. Even if someone stood on the terrace and looked down, that person could sense how the duo became one, and Mineva Zabi felt amazed by this. That horse looked like it really trusted Riddhe, or it would not be racing so quickly like that.

However, it was a little saddening to see it like that. The rider looked like he wanted to vent all the frustrations he accumulated for a long time as he was forced to pick up the reins, and the horse that felt its rider's emotions looked somewhat fearful. The rider wanted to run away from something he could not shake off no matter what he did, and the horse looked like it was racing with fire burning on it…would its feet not be burned if it raced like that?

As Mineva thought, she subconsciously thought of poking her body out from the parapet of the terrace, and sensed someone behind her. Cynthia Marcenas appeared as she stood at the glass door that was pushed aside, and she met Mineva in the eyes as she said, "Its name is Pligrim, a horse Riddhe's been taking care for a while." She showed a smile that had no other intention as she strolled over while her blond hair fluttered. Mineva felt somewhat guilty in her heart as she avoided the stare of the other person.

"It's not a horse that's easy to tame, but for some reason, it's extremely close to Riddhe. If I want to ride on it, it'll definitely look away first. However, it's been 3 years since that child left the house."

Cynthia stood beside her and looked over, "How about you try to ride on it?" it was obvious from her stare that she was trying to test. "No thanks…" Mineva answered as she looked back at the courtyard.

Mineva remembered that when she was young, during the time when the Neo Zeon space fortress "Axis" was still around, she had some beginner lessons on horse riding at a colony somewhere. It was too awkward to see the regent and her people look at her worriedly, and she once rode on a horse and sprinted off without listening to advice. However, she did not think that she could ride on that horse in her current state of mind. Even if she asked Riddhe to help her hold the reins, it would only bother the horse that would be carrying 2 people. Cynthia looked down at Riddhe that was riding on the horse, "He's really a useless child." She sighed as she mused, and Mineva did not feel comfortable hearing this.

"He's always been like this in the past, always unable to hide what he was thinking, and never cared about the people around him when he put his mind to him. He's already everywhere at once, but he's attracted to small details for some reason, so he'll always bear everything by himself alone."

This is really a rather accurate correct analysis. Mineva felt impressed that Riddhe's relative was able to see through him so thoroughly, but felt a little depressed as she thought about how she had not been talking to Riddhe during this while, and looked away to the sky.

It had been 3 days since the time she first stayed at the Marcenas' residence. Riddhe was often not home as he had to deal with the repairs of the "Delta Plus" that was left at base and other things, so she did not have the chance to talk to him, while Ronan and Patrick would constantly avoid her. The ones who would meet her were Cynthia and Dwiyon, and it was obvious that the men with status were unwilling to meet her. Cynthia too detected this unnatural atmosphere—but to her, the girl should be the source of this strange phenomenon. Mineva thought about this, felt that the sunlight that could shine in her became uncomfortable, and lowered her face.

I just want to leave this place, she thought. I can't do anything even if I stay here. Will I merely be imprisoned here as Audrey Burne and become a diplomatic card to be used in the future? Or will I feel the unknown attraction on my skin just like that night we had the party…

"Our family is like this, so it's kind of hard to relax…but I hope that you'll watch over Riddhe. I suppose that guy will recover to who he is normally after a while."

Mineva's shoulder that was touched shuddered slightly, and she recovered from her thoughts. Cynthia showed an understanding smile of one of the same gender before leaving the terrace. So being attentive to small details is a trait in the family? She watched the back profile of the calm and carefree adult leave as she felt miserable and grateful, muttering inside her heart that it would be great if that were really the case. However, Cynthia's guess would most likely be wrong, as her view about anomaly in Riddhe's heart being a one-time change was just a hopeful expectation. He, who was gradually changing, was suffering over it. It was because Mineva was an outsider who need not be responsible for this—or rather, she was the one who bore his emotions that flowed—that she was able to see the change in Riddhe most clearly.

But at this point, Mineva could not tell what kind of emotions Riddhe was experiencing. She sighed and looked up at the blue sky where the clouds were gathered. She heard from the news that there seemed to be a battle in low orbit on the other end of the sky. If that battle triggered the recent commotion, is there a Neo Zeon vessel entering Earth? What's the situation with the "Garencieres" now? What about the "Nahel Argama", "Unicorn" and Banagher?

She continued to remain in where she was even as events were progressing at every moment. Mineva closed her mouth as she felt anxious and wanted to shout out. Riddhe's shouts as he raced on the horse echoed through the echo, and the galloping filled with his anger vented on the ground passed deep into her body and soul."

Part 5

The scorching sun continued to light the sky from above as it was so hot it seemed like noises would be made. The sunlight, which should be appropriately called heat rays, shone on a burning hot desert that stretched to a distant horizon.

The temperature was 42 degrees Celsius, and the hot air that blew by combined with the sunlight to rob the dry and hot skin of any moisture it had left. At this point, the sun had risen directly above them, and it was hard to find anything that could be used as a shade. Suberoa Zinnerman continued to peel the skin that was dry because of the sunburn, and looked up at the sand dune right in front of his eyes. The bow of the ship glittered under the sunlight's reflection, and one could see the "Garencieres" buried under the dune.

"Sure looks like it was buried deep. We'll be able to hide from the eyes of the surveillance satellites, so I suppose you can say that it's good in some way…"

Flaste Schole said this as he reached his hand out to the exterior of the ship, "HOT!" and immediately pulled back his hand. It had been 3 days since they went off their estimated course and landed in Western Sahara of Africa. The result of trying to make the ship land on its belly was that the "Garencieres" ended up sliding in the desert by several kilometers and was dived into the sand dunes. There were two sandstorms after this, and it was buried under the sand. The bow and a part of the broadside lying horizontally were the only parts exposed, while the rear hatch of the aft

was buried under several tons of sand. There were 3 main thrusters, and one of them had its nozzle exposed from the dune, but it looked like a mere rock amongst the rocks scattered in the desert. It was very likely that nobody would notice a cargo spaceship buried in the desert unless they analyzed the satellite visuals intently.

Like the rockets that were launched into space, the "Garencieres" landed in a vertical manner under gravity. Once it flipped onto the floor, it was no different from a tortoise with its legs facing up, and had no chance of changing its position on its own, let alone leave the land and fly. Basically, there was no way to move away other than to move this large amount of sand that was piled up, and they only managed to dig out the airlocks through manual labor. It was really impossible to drag out the cargo hangar at the aft of the ship if they lacked the assistance of a large machine. The rear hatch at the belly of this triangular ship was already more than 20m long, and at this point, the sand could only end up piled on it in a slope.

Besides, we're surrounded in all corners. Zinnerman again understood the seriousness of the situation itself as he put the brim of the captain's hat to eye level. Flaste looked over at the exterior of the broadside that was hot enough to cook an egg as he grumbled, "It'll be great if the starboard can face up."

"In that case, we'll be able to use the unloading hatch on the side. We can't do anything now that the hatch at the back is buried in sand. A mobile suit can get out if we shoot a beam from inside…"

"But the "Garencieres" will really meet its end. Let's just treat it as a final resort."

Zinnerman lifted his head as he drank the water inside the bottle, unwilling to talk about this topic again. The desert was not a suitable place for discussions, and the sweat that flowed out started to evaporate afterwards. The dust-like fine sand would enter all corners as long as there were openings. It would cause the machines to malfunction and wear people out physically and mentally—Flaste was extremely familiar with the terror and troubles it would bring as he once had to survive in Africa during the One Year War. As all the crew was hiding inside the tilted ship in this bright sunny day, Flaste exposed himself to this scorching weather, and he was definitely recalling his memories that time. There's no time to hesitate now. We have to decide if we should go with our last resort.

He could only see sand, sand and more sand around him. The Sahara Desert that occupied 40 percent of the African continent was 13 million square kilometers in total area, and the largest desert in the world. The average temperature here was above 30 degrees Celsius, and the annual rainfall was less than 200mm. if anyone were to take off their clothes because of the heat, they would be burned red immediately and incur contagious skin diseases. In late April, temperatures could rise to above 40 degrees Celsius, and this place would become an actual burning hell. However, this was a result of the abnormal weather conditions causing global warming to be accelerated after colonies were sent crashing to Earth, prompting the desertification of Earth. Despite all these, one thing that never changed since the old ages was that temperatures would drop drastically after sunset, and at night, there would be icy cold winds that could freeze people to deal.

The cruelest thing about this was that this wide open place encouraged people to think that they could walk through a desert if they wanted to. A lot of desert victims were bothered by such mirages as they ended up moving around their point of accident, and finally ended up as dried up corpses in the wilderness. The dunes would move according to the winds, and the desert that would change the landscape as well was an overly cruel world where humans had to survive with their own power. While there was the advantage of not being spotted if they remained here, the chances of them being spotted by their allies would be marginally slim.

Thus, the desert became a hidden nest for Zeon remnants on Earth, and a few guerilla organizations set up base here to this day, but nobody knew how long it would take before they discovered the "Garencieres". They did report beforehand when they passed through the atmosphere, but their estimated course was the Atlantic. It would probably be a few days later before they realized that the "Garencieres" went off course and landed in the desert several thousand kilometers away from the estimated point.

The forced landing caused the wireless satellite device to be faulty. The only thing left was the wireless communicator of the mobile suits in the ship, but the range could exceed the horizon. The emergency distress call sender machine was still alright, but it was not practical to try it as they could not guess which side would detect the signal first, the enemies or the allies.

Since this ship had the key to opening the "Laplace Box", the Federation army would logically search around the area with all its efforts. In contrast,

the Zeon remnants who hardly had enough resources probably would not be able to afford a large search party. "It's almost impossible to repair the wireless satellite device if we don't swap the entire thing." Flaste said as he gave a look firmly believing that there was no time to hesitate.

"It's a good thing that we have ample water and food, but we can't just stay here all the time. We'll be detected by the enemy if we don't contact our side. Tomura just said that he heard the sound of a plane flying above us."

Flaste looked up at the thing layer of clouds floating in the air, and took a gulp of water. Once they finished their search in the Atlantic Ocean, quite a few surveillance satellites would turn to look at the desert. Zinnerman blew out air from his nose as he answered,

"Looking at the map, we'll see an oasis if we move 60km to the east. There's a town called Atal over there, and we should be able to contact with someone over there. We'll reach there quickly if we ride on a mobile suit."

"That's true…"

"Kwani's unit still needs repairs, but Ivan's "Geara Zulu" can be used. Even if we have to blow the ship to scraps—"

"You forgot one other machine."

Zinnerman spoke up to interrupt. Eh? Flaste blinked his eyes and immediately gave a recalling look, only to give a wry look as he answered, "We can't possibly depend on the "Unicorn" here."

"I let the maintenance crew inspect through, and they said that they can't remove the pilot's biometric authentication. The pilot's like that as well…"

Flaste pointed his chin at the entry hatch that was approximately 50m away. One could see Banagher Links covered with a sunshade cloth behind the dune piled up at the door, curled up there. Banagher did not detect the stares from Flaste and company as his gloomy-looking face kept staring at the sandy ground of nothingness. It was really hard to determine that he was a living person if nobody said that he was alive, and he was the same as when he was dragged out of the "Unicorn Gundam" cockpit, not seeing anything in his eyes—

He looked like he was fatigued, a common symptom amongst recruits, but the medical officer said that it was not the case after inspection. His mind

was overly fatigued, but his body was completely healthy, and he had no problems with his meals and other usual living conditions. However, he had no sense of will to live on by himself, and he would not ingest food if it was not prepared. If he was left alone, he would just sit around blankly for the entire day. It would be more appropriate to describe his symptoms as being very feeble instead of forcing himself not to live, and it was rather similar to those old-aged people that would give up easily. He made himself devoid of all sorts of concerns to seal his heart and soul, and he did not know that he was in a decline. This would be considered a subconscious self-neglect.

There were no effects no matter what they did, whether they tried to threaten him or please him; he would not resist, but he would not show any form of will on his own. He disappeared before they knew it, and would just spend the day spacing out. It had been more than 2 weeks since he was involved in the "Industrial 7" incident, and perhaps the stress that was built up within him during this period had finally reached its breaking point. However, the crew could only feel extremely irked that this brat, who was not even a prisoner, was just wandering around lifelessly even as they were forced to make a decision of life and death. Flaste looked like he felt the same as well as he added with a vexing line, "Such a bother."

"Even if the "Laplace Program" shows a new coordinate, we can't make the next move if the "Unicorn" can't move. We can tie the brat in and let the other mobile suits move it, but the coordinates are a troublesome thing here."

Flaste took out the paper with the new coordinates from his clutches as he continued to grumble, seemingly feeling that there was no point to look at it any further. Zinnerman did not raise any objections here. A seal of the "Laplace Program" was undone after the activation of the NT-D the last time, but the coordinates given this time felt like a joke. It was a place that nobody with a weak resolve could enter just like the last time, and in this sense, the hurdle here would not be something the relics of "Laplace" could match. Flaste folded the printed paper into a paper airplane, pinched it with his fingertips, "What's that and what's that, really?" and threw it away.

"We keep opening, and we see a new box inside it…are we being fooled by Cardeas Vist here?"

Despite only saying this as a joke, his eyes were filled with intense anger. Either way, there's no way Gilboa and the other men who died could rest in

peace if they did not find out the truth. Do we wait for aid that might not come here, or do we wreck the ship and find aid— Zinnerman felt that there was only one option here in his heart as he looked at the direction the paper plane Flaste threw floated to. The plane that did not ride on the wind lost speed after flying for less than 10m, and fell onto the burning hot sand.

Part 6

The fluttering sound of the paper amidst the sound of the wind moved the eardrums. Banagher Links lifted his head slightly as he looked over at where the sound came from.

It was a paper plane, half buried by the reddish brown sand. The plane got blown by the wind as its wings rustled, and gradually moved out of sight. Banagher had recently seen something similar, the paper plane Tikva once threw in the dusty town in "Palau"… no, it looked more like a glider. As he carelessly thought about that, a sharp shock passed through Banagher's body, and he exerted more strength into his arms that were holding his legs in.

You killed him. You killed Gilboa, Tikva's father. He had no intention of attacking, and you simply shot him. Tikva's pitiful for not having a father now. You and him have no fathers. You killed him, and you killed a lot a people—these words passed through his mind in the form of this shock, You're the seed of disaster, overlapping with the words Alberto said, and the body that was curled up in this scorching hot weather cooled off. The weather was so hot, and yet his body felt cold inside. His stomach felt tense, as if someone threw a lead block inside. What am I doing? Nobody needs me, even I don't need myself, so why must I stay curled up here?

The sunshade cloth was draped over his head, and he turned his eyes to the endless desert, but the blue sky that covered the faded land looked dark, perhaps because the sunlight was too bright, distorting his sight. Why is it that a light source from one point can light everything? Banagher, who grew up in colonies, looked up at the inexplicable sun, and then looked at the land of sand right on this unknown planet. We can just run through this desert, Banagher thought. The sunlight can burn the skin, blood my head, dry up all the fluids in my body, and I'll just become dust. Even the lead in my stomach and this cursed family blood of mine will be burnt to nothing. If I can do that, the "Unicorn" will never move again, the "Gundam" won't

awaken again; I won't have to kill others, I won't be killed, and the "Laplace Box" will be sealed forever—

And then what? The abnormally cold voice interrupted to end the delusions. The impulse that rose in Banagher's body quickly wilted as fatigue struck his mind. He found it difficult to think, curled back his body without doing anything and became a stone block like before. This place is really the bottom of a gravity well, Banagher admitted. His body and mind were tied to the bottom, so heavy that they were unable to move at all. Space felt so distant, and his soul was the only thing melting from his crouched body that was like dust. This is a one and only cog that can make decisions on its own. Don't lose it—Mr Daguza did say it. I don't want to lose it, I lost it unwillingly, but I really can't hang on now. If I try to put it on, my body will break apart. I just want to sit here without thinking and without asking for anything. I'll keep sitting until my heart melts completely…

A shadow crept up to him, and his sights became dark. The ends of the boots that were dirtied by sand appeared in a corner of Banagher's eyes, and he moved his blank eyeballs.

Zinnerman was standing there. His hulking figure was standing there angrily "Stand up." as he growled with a deep voice. Banagher immediately lost interest in the person who arrived, and immediately lowered his sight.

"There's a town 60km away. I'm going to walk there and get help, and you're coming with me."

Are you kidding me? a slight electrical flow passed through Banagher's mind as he lifted his eyes again. He saw the bearded face that was not smiling, and lazily looked down again. At this moment, Zinnerman's hand grabbed him by the torso, and the body, which had its center of gravity at the back, was immediately dragged off the floor.

"How long are you going to mope around here!?" The angry words roared into Banagher's ears as the sand fell from his limp swaying body. His feet would not listen as his body was supported by hand grabbing him by the chest. However, Zinnerman's hand that was holding this weight showed no signs of shaking at all.

"We'll leave after sunset. Get into the ship immediately. We need to prepare a lot of things if we want to pass through the desert."

Banagher was suddenly pushed down as he landed on his backside. The feeling of the unexpectedly hard sand rocked his mind, why? and he

wanted to say this, but the voice was stuck in his throat as he was unable to speak up. "Ah?" he avoided Zinnerman's intimidating stare as he squeezed out a hoarse voice, "Why look for me?"

"Because you look like you're the most idle."

"That's too reckless. How are we to walk across the desert?"

"I once served in Africa during the wars, so I more or less know about the desert. It can work."

"Hey, get up." Zinnerman said that as he grabbed Banagher by the chest. Banagher felt the sharp pain from the cramped muscles and wanted to cry out as he only cared about looking back, saying, "Please stop…!"

"Let me alone. I had enough. I don't want to be involved with anyone else. I don't want to be made use of."

"Fat hope. Fulfill your duty as a pilot."

"Duty? I did my duty. I rode on the mobile suit and sank a Neo Zeon terrorist. Is that not enough? How many more much I kill?"

Only this time did Banagher look right at Zinnerman in the eyes and spoke directly to him. What duty and responsibility? It ended up like this after I listened to those words. As he thought about how he would not be fooled again and intended to stand on his feet, a blunt sound rang in his mind as his world exploded.

The body that was punched aside landed hard onto the floor, and the burning hot taste of sand spread in his mouth. The face that was buried in the sand started to ache, and Banagher's body was trembling as he heard Zinnerman say, "You can deny us all you want."

"But don't you dare think of yourself as a victim and throw a tantrum at me. I can still recognize it if the one that shot down Gilboa is a pilot, but not a brat who doesn't have any resolve."

The words became a needle that was thrown, and the hands that were resting on the sand were trembling, but it was unable to remove the feeling of being punched. The lead in Banagher's stomach was burning, and he forcefully spat the sand that became dirt in his mind "I didn't do this on my own will…" he muttered as he wiped away the blood on the corner of his mouth.

"Someone else forced me to ride on a mobile suit, and things ended up like this before I even knew what happened. If you're not going to forgive me, just kill me. Don't beat around the bush and talk about something like duty; can't you just harden your heart and kill me…!?"

Zinnerman's hard fist was still clenched as he answered with his trembling eyelids. See, this man talks big, but he's no different from those guys who want the "Box". Banagher said, "You don't dare to do so anyway." Banagher said with his busted lips that were curled up.

"If I die, the "Unicorn" won't move. If you can't extract the data of the "Box", you'll just let this treasure rot. No matter how you hate me, it's impossible for you to kill—"

The second impact struck his face, and his body that was sent flying away hit the dune behind. He felt a numbing feeling in his skullcap, "those big shots may think that way, but we're different", Zinnerman growled, and Banagher stared at his bearded face.

"It doesn't matter what happens to the "Box". My ship doesn't have the room to feed someone like you who has no will to live."

The burly figure became a shadow as it moved towards Banagher, blocking his sights. The eyes of a killer were glittering somehow deep within, just like the first time, and Banagher clenched his hands together with the sand.

Banagher stared at the two black eyeballs that were not showing any light, and exerted strength to stiffen his trembling knees. He tried his best to let his trembling body stand up, and glared at Zinnerman with all his strength. Do it if you can. I'll spit my blood on you once I'm beaten down. As he was driven by this unknown temper, his swaying body was about to straighten, and Zinnerman showed some teeth on his ominous looking face.

Before he could understand that it was a smile, he was gently nudged back and landed on his backside. "What kind of expression is that?" Zinnerman gave a wry look, and this was an unexpected response to Banagher as he looked back.

"Someone who can give that kind of expression will not collapse that easily. Hurry up and get ready. The desert won't listen to any excuses humans make."

Zinnerman finished and walked away. Are you serious? Banagher wanted to open his mouth and ask, but was unable to let out a sound as his wildly pounding heart spread the feeling of this fear that came a moment later. His body that was unneeded by anyone and self-neglected continued to give the sound of life stubbornly— "Damn it!" Banagher groaned as he kicked the sand at his feet. The blood that rushed up his body caused him to recall the heat, and the large amount of sweat that suddenly started to flow out evaporated before they dripped.

Part 7

The sun that was radiating the bright white light was dyed red, half-hidden behind the dunes, and the surrounding temperature stared to feel. This was the so-called radiation cooling effect at work. As there was almost no moisture in the air, the temperature could not remain certain, and there were temperature differences of around 30 degrees Celsius between both day and night. It was hard to imagine from the scorching heat in the day, but it was not uncommon to freeze to death in the desert.

The scorching heat and harsh coldness repeated itself through day and night, and this climate reminded Banagher of the moon. It would be more appropriate to assume this as a barometric pressure suited for survival, a place without the blessing of the atmosphere. Banagher zipped up his jumper and put the cloth acting as a hood around his neck, and looked around at the endless number of sand dunes that appeared around him. He heard the sound of wind and sand blowing by, and there was nothing moving. As he waited for the stars to blink, the surroundings would probably be so silent that one would believe that this was the moon.

Is he really going to cross such a place? Banagher knelt down at where he was, and checked whether the gaiters were secured at the bottom of his jeans as he observed the group of people gathered at the airlock. The area was surrounded by dusk, and light shone from the airlock showing the backs of Flaste and the other crew members. He could see their anxious expressions, and Zinnerman was right in the middle of that group, still intending to wear the old leather jacket and the captain hat. "This map is made by the guerillas, and we can rely on them." His voice sounded extremely loud in the wind.

"We'll try to move quickly at night only. As long as there's moonlight, we'll be able to see 5, 600m around us. It's bad that we don't have a GPS for

desert use, but we'll be able to see the stars clearly, and if we use a compass as well, we'll find a way."

The Captain pretended to sound relaxed as he laid out the map, while Flaste and the rest gave obviously suspicious looks. He's not kidding now, is he? Banagher too gave a suspicious look as he managed to prevent himself from talking. He obeyed Zinnerman's words and started to check on the luggage in his backpack. It included rations, sleeping bags, flashlights, warm clothing, anti UV lip cream, scarves, sunshade clothes, a first aid kit with pesticide, and most importantly, water—and this was heavy. There was four days worth of water, 5 liters a day, and the backpack weight almost 30kg. If they wanted to cross the desert, this weight itself would be an indicator of life…

"The distance to Atal is approximately 63km. if we move quickly by night, we'll reach there in the morning 4 days later as long as nothing goes wrong. Once we contact our allies there, I estimate that we'll be able to send a rescue squad here on the fifth morning. I suppose the guerilla forces of Adrar and Tirith Zemul will take action."

"I don't think this is really a good idea…"

Flaste spoke up in place of the anxious crew. Everyone present felt that it was better to let a mobile suit punch through the belly of the shape than to make such a risk, but Zinnerman superficially answered everyone's doubts as he put on his backpack. "Take command while I'm not around." He told Flaste and left the crew.

"If there's still no news after 5 days, blow up the ship however you want. Bring the mobile suits out to contact our allies…let's move out, brat."

Flaste and the rest of the crew were attracted by Zinnerman's stare as they looked over at Banagher. Without anyone saying anything, the biggest reason why they were against having Zinnerman cross the desert was because of the person accompanying him. Banagher endured the suspicious stars as he carried the backpack, thinking, Who cares about you guys. If you have any objections, go talk to your Captain. The weight that pressed down heavily on his back caused him to miss his footing, and he frantically regained his balance as he pretended to look calm while walking over to Zinnerman.

"I'm going then. Help us pray that there won't be any sandstorms."

Zinnerman waved goodbye at everyone as he started to trek off. Flaste watched his Captain leave with a reluctant look, and then shot a meaningful look at Banagher. You better prepare yourself there—Banagher felt a chill from this cold stare, but he immediately focused on looking to the front at this desert trip the two of them would embark on. He turned his back on the setting sun that was like a ripened fruit and climbed up the gradually sloping surface to the other dune. Let's go then. As he harbored this thought, his foot got stuck in the sand, and he ended up falling forward so soon after he embarked on this trip.

Part 8

On the same day, April 21st, it was US Central Standard time, 1pm.

Augusta was raining, and the rain that was colder than rain in spring was scattering down from the dark clouds above, causing the idling walkway to be dyed a light grey color. Alberto Vist spent his time waiting as he leaned his back against the medium-sized airport control tower, looking up at the clouds that were hovering at a low place as he heard the sound of raindrops dropping on the umbrella. Soon after, a black spot appeared in the sky, and the roaring of a jet engine could be heard mixed amidst the rain. At that moment, the silhouette of a shuttle was gradually looming.

The belly of the shuttle, which was filled with anti-heat materials, lowered its undercarriage and landed on the runway lit with beacon lights. The friction on the wheels caused the rainwater to steam off, and the machine gradually slowed down as the thrust reverser boomed loudly. There were no signs of any other machines in this Augusta Research facility that also functioned as a mobile suit experimental place. Alberto waited for the taxiing shuttle to reach its apron as he got on the electric car his subordinate was driving on. The passenger step moved along at the same time as it started to move to the apron.

This shuttle that reached Augusta was a miniature one that moved to and fro from Earth, one belonging to Anaheim Electronics, and there was an "AE" logo printed on the side of the machine. It was a company shuttle used by those in the corporate-class in emergency situations, but not a lot of people would ride a private shuttle to Earth and to the Moon. The step car brought the ladder to the airlock of the shuttle, and Alberto got off the electric car, waiting patiently on this runway that was drenched in rainwater. After that, the airflow let out what sounded like a deep sigh as it

opened, and a cabin crewman who got of the shuttle beforehand was holding the umbrella at the door.

A short woman dressed in a wine red suit walked down the steps. The 1G gravity caused her to tumble, but she did not grab onto the crewman's hand as she corrected her posture. She looked down the wide runway from the top of the steps, and upon noticing Alberto's stare immediately, narrowed her eyes.

The woman was already over the age of 50, but she showed no hesitation over how to live like a woman. This woman was the wife of Anaheim Electronics' chairman, and also, the stand-in leader of the Vist Foundation. Alberto succumbed under the usual stare of Martha Vist Carbine and gulped. Martha let her loose lips remain shut, looked up at the grey sky, received an umbrella from the crewman, and started to walk down the stairs.

"The rain's annoying."

Despite the fact that engines of the shuttle were still running, he could tell that she said that her lips said those words from their shape. Alberto bowed respectfully as he got ready to welcome the Empress of the Moon.

Part 9

They were in Augusta, located in Northern America, Georgia, near the Clarks Hill Lake on the border between South Carolina and Georgia. The local Newtype research facility called the Augusta Newtype Research Institute was located beside the lake, a vast place that used to be a mobile suit experimental center.

However, the term Newtype Research Institute was taken down, and it had been a long time since the military facilities here were taken down. The land was registered under the Federation air force, but the airport in the facility was never used as an air base. On first glance, the similarly shaped empty buildings were all abandoned here. Alberto walked on his feet that ushered Martha beforehand towards the largest building called the A block. There were 6 levels in this building that was 50m in length all around, and it looked as gloomy as an abandoned hospital under the cloudy sky, awaiting Alberto and Martha who came out from the electric car.

"Just a few more amendments to the process before unit 2's testing under gravity conditions is complete. We used the combat data from unit 1 as feedback, so there's a mass improvement in space mobility as compared to the beginning."

The lobby felt very cold without the air-conditioning. Alberto followed Martha, who did not look behind as she walked, and reported the situation during the past two days.

"Captain Macias of the Senate Council came to inspect yesterday. We merely let the test pilot carry out some demonstrations, but he seemed to

be satisfied. He indicated that the UC plan must not be left out of this space forces realignment plan…"

At this point, Alberto suddenly went quiet as he stopped in his tracks, as he sensed someone moving at the corner leading to the elevator hall.

At a corner of the passage that was somewhat dim because of energy conservation, there was a black shadow popping out from a corner. That shadow moved lightly, forming the shape of a human, and became a shadow of a 4, 5 year old child as it stared right back from the corner. Those familiar eyes looked like they were about to be etched in Alberto's eyes, and he could not help but look away. Haven't you had enough already? Alberto thought as he widened his tense eyes with fear. The child who looked eerily similar to Banagher Links suddenly disappeared, and the shadow of the foliage plant placed at the corner was dragged along the floor.

He exhaled hard and moved his feet that stopped. Martha, who stopped as well, gave him a scrutinizing look. Alberto then coughed to try and hide things through and continued his report without looking at her,

"The Settlement Issues Council seemed to be on the move as well, but the High Staff Committee do support the Foundation. As the stand-in leader estimated, once we can complete the deal using unit 2—"

"You're still concerned about that?"

Martha again stepped forward as she spoke up to interrupt Alberto. He did not understand what she meant as she looked at the figure in front that never looked back.

"You're still concerned about that? Alberto?"

The sharp scrutinizing voice rang ago, and a stare that looked like it could see through everything shot over. Alberto felt a shudder on his shoulders as he took this cold stare that overlooked the shoulders "…No." he answered as he lowered his head. "That's good." Martha said as she looked in front.

"It was unexpected of the "Sleeves" to come and take the "Unicorn" away, but it was a wise decision to abandon the machine. You were correct in choosing not to take it back, but to destroy it."

The white machine fell into the scorching abyss as the traction wire was snapped—he recalled that scene and asked himself whether it was the correct decision. At that time, he merely had the impulse of wanted to get rid of the "Unicorn" from his eyes, and he did not remember making a sane decision. That was because he was scared, and he hated the eyes of the "Unicorn" pilot that were the same as Cardeas—Banagher Links, who was protected by the machine Cardeas put so much effort in making, and who appeared several times in front of him. Those eyes that could overlap his own when he looked into the mirror looked like they would reveal the sins he committed over and over again…

"Don't think about that again. Biologically, both you and he are blood-related brothers, but we are all humans. We have more important priorities to protect than blood relations, and you, as the heir of the Vist family, completed the responsibility you're tasked with."

Martha continued to speak softly, and it was unclear if she actually understood his heart. A responsibility to take down every single relative, including father and brother? in fact, Alberto felt that he was cursed, and he softly answered, "Yes."

"Besides, it is likely that he's still alive, so you will probably face him again. You two may be blood relatives, but you must not let someone who's not on your side to handle the key to the "Box". You do understand, right?"

She looked back and gave a stare, indicating that he must not fail the next time around. Alberto did not have the confidence to answer her calmly as he hurried his steps to move past Martha. He turned around the corner, walked for another 20m, and arrived at the metal door at the end of the corridor. He then took out the ID card and swiped it at the card reader.

The light indicating that the door was unlocked lit up, and the thick and heavy metal doors opened aside. They stepped through the door, and there was a bright space with air-conditioning inside. There were several sealed windows on the walls of this passage, and several white-clothed workers could be seen standing there, working. The Augusta Research Institute was announced to be closed off, and this was the area that could not be exposed to the public. Martha showed no signs of fear on her face as she advanced forward, and stepped into this highly fortified area that had much of the facility's security.

It was unknown where the antiseptic smell came from. There were no energy-saving implements within the facility, yet it felt very dark inside,

probably because there used to be experiments ignoring human ethics carried out here. It was said that the Newtype Research Institute acted under the name of a military research facility as they carried out surgical and medicinal procedures on war orphans that were helpless, creating a large number of vegetables, and was ordered to be shut down as a result. The old facilities and researchers still remained here however, only because this was an official military institute. Of course, this being a facility for the air force would not be enough reason to give it budget to carry on operating. The difference between the budget the military gave and the expenses paid for operations was provided by Anaheim through multiple 3rd party sectors.

It had been two days since he reached this place, but he really could not bring himself to like this place. He even felt a false hallucination, that someone was watching him, and when looking back, he could hear the footsteps of several children running away. There were also rumors of many ghosts, like a boy wearing a blood-stained surgical gown or the brain juices of a girl spilling out from the skullcap that had its scalp removed. There were some amongst his accompanying subordinates who would even state openly that they heard the laughter of children as well. Those useless hallucinations I saw are definitely due to the messages left inside my mind. Alberto saw the ominous shadows stuck on the wall, and started to feel a chill. He then recognized the white-clothed man in front of him and stopped in his tracks.

"I'm the facility chairman Bentner. Excuse me for being unable to welcome you directly."

Bentner said this as he reached his hand forward, and he sure did fit the image of a head of a human laboratory. His arched back, bald head and frail body that was covered with a white coat could be said to be the incarnate of a mad scientist, and as ominous as a prison warden in the Middle Ages. "Hello." Martha answered coldly without changing her expression, and used her hand to raise her hair. Bentner's outstretched hand had nowhere to go as it returned back, and his face that looked to be around 60 showed the smile of a slave bowing humbly.

"You must be tired after such a long trip. How about—"

"It's rare for me to come by here, but I do treasure my important time. Can you please tell me the current progress?"

Martha's style was to look down on those servile to her and tell them to do whatever they could do as they could. Alberto nodded silently at Bentner who gave a doubtful glance. In the past, the Federation army intended to cover everything up in and eliminate all the researchers, thinking that they could shake themselves off their misfortune. However, Bentner, who was somehow able to fight against it and protect his own position, was definitely not just a bookworm. "Excuse me, please come here." He quickly understood that the chairwoman did not come here for leisure, kept his smile, and walked first, showing his own adaptability.

"I should say that this is really to be expected of a Cyber-Newtype. Her recovery ability is really shocking, and she is basically no different from a healthy person. It is possible for her to pilot a mobile suit in another 3 days."

Bentner pressed on the nearest elevator button as he explained. Martha merely looked at the level display as she did not bother to answer.

"She's the perfect pilot for the "Banshee", and to us, a very rare test subject, so every member here is motivated. But despite the backing from Anaheim, it is hard to acquire specimens after we lost the support of the military. But asking us to continue the research is a little too…"

"What problems does she have?"

Martha spoke up to interrupt and walked in first after the elevator reached. Bentner showed a shocked look as he was taken aback by the other party, and immediately followed her, saying, "The problem is that her she is the designed genetic plan-type." as he closed the elevator doors.

"If it is a Cyber-Newtype that went through acquired adjustments, it won't be difficult to adjust her again. With the help of the drugs, we can remove the memories in spurts without reducing their abilities. But someone with a designed genetic plan itself is different. She's different from those with acquired adjustments, so she doesn't use drugs that create rejection, and her reaction to psychotropic drugs will be no different from ordinary humans. To make it clearly, she's not used to having her brain adjusted. If we force her to submit, we might break her sense of identity and make her worthless."

The elevator reached the highest level, the 6th floor, and it seemed that the wind was blowing outside. Alberto heard the thunderclap from afar and arrived on the pathway where armed guards were on standby. There were

metal gates on both sides of this passage, and this place felt more like an asylum for those severely mentally ill instead of a prison.

"So to simply put, it's a problem with the heart. She has her own soul that's unwilling to undergo readjustments again, right?"

Martha did not change her expression as she walked in front. She, Alberto was shocked inside by the term she used and stopped in front of the door with the number '12' on it. "Well, stating it like that is…" Bentner spoke halfway through, but Martha looked inside the cell without hesitation, seemingly wanting him to back off.

A bed and a window framed with metal bars could be seen in this square room 5m wide. The silhouette sitting on the bed appeared for a moment as the lightning that struck from afar lit inside, and Alberto, who was looking inside this dark room from behind Martha's head, gulped as he saw that face that looked much younger than he thought. Did she look that frail before? She felt more muscular at that moment when she immediately used her body to protect me while the assassin attacked the "Nahel Argama". As Alberto experienced some sort of pain caused by conflicting emotions, "Interesting" he heard Martha state this in a nonchalantly cold manner, and looked at her with a terrified expression.

"I want to talk to her."

Martha did not look away from the other side of the metal bars as her lips showed a smile. Alberto felt Bentner behind him gulp, and looked back at the "specimen" inside the room.

Marida Cruz did not mind the stares from outside the fence as her puppet-like face did not move, looking outside the window. However, those eyes that were lit by the lightning flash seemed to show some vigor of life as she faced the outside world. On seeing this, Alberto experienced complicated emotions in his heart for a second time.

Part 10

The dunes that were blown by the winds would change their forms from time to time, revealing the beauty of a woman's body. The gradual ridges depicted the surface of a plump waist, and an observer would not help but think that it might feel as soft as a human body.

But in fact, these stretches of gradual sand dunes were the obstacles stumbling the feet of travelers. For every step they took, the sand pile would collapse, and the little amount of physical strength would dissipate bit by it. They had not completed even one-third of the journey on the second night of the trip. Banagher gritted his teeth, trying his best to follow Zinnerman who was walking 10m in front of him. The dry air of the night blew aside his sweat, causing his skin to tense up due to the cold. The temperature was around 10 degrees Celsius, and if there were wind, the temperature the body would feel should be blown this.

He had already drank one day's worth of water, and logically, the bag should have become lighter, but he found it heavier than yesterday because he did not sleep well in the day. Whenever his consciousness was about to fade, a large number of flies would fly from out of nowhere, and the fluttering of the wings would prevent him from sleeping. The sunlight would shine in through his eyelids, unwilling to fade. The rest time would then end just when he was about to enter dreamland, and he would begin his trek again when the sun sets. The fatigue accumulated on the previous day was still on him, and he could not muster his appetite as he continued to walk and drag his lethargic body.

What about Zinnerman? Banagher pursued the figure that disappeared behind the ridge and finally stepped on the top. After seeing the scenery laid out in front of him, he was speechless.

After walking down the slope, he would have to go uphill again, and there was another dune on the other side of the dune. There was a ridge of dunes that littered the landscape, and the large ones could reach 100m tall, while the wide ones could reach several kilometers. The gradation presented by nature was so intricate it was shocking. There did not seem to be any room for humans senses to be involved with, and the overly intricate scene caused him to feel like vomiting. Zinnerman left behind footprints as he walked down the slope, looking like a speck of dust destroying these layers.

Is this nature? Was humanity born from this merciless beauty? Did they carve out thousands of years of history like this? Banagher's mind and soul that grew up in the large cylinders called colonies were shocked, and he remained rooted to the ground.

The dunes lit under the moonlight did not have any color, and the white gradients of the ridge drew a clear divide with the pitch darkness of night as the single toned world of desolation stretched down the endless

horizon. This is impossible. Anyone who wants to cross this place must be out of their mind. Banagher yelled in his heart as his unwittingly retreated, and as he stepped backwards, the sand at his feet immediately collapsed, and his body was dragged down by the sand dune below. He landed on his backside, and tumbled back due to the weight of the haversack on his back, and rolled down the dune without being able to adjust himself.

His sights started to spin wildly, and the powder-shaped sand entered his nose and eyes. He let his shoulders and stomach hit the sand as he rolled down the slope like a broken puppet, before his body finally managed to stop rolling. He wanted to spit out the sand in his mouth, but he could not secrete any saliva, and he had no strength to sprout his body that was filled with sand as he could only hear the sound of footsteps approaching as they stepped on the sand. Banagher moved his fingers that laid feebly on the sand and tried to open his eyes, seeing the tip of Zinnerman's boots in his blurry sights.

He felt his arm being pulled by the other man, and his upper body that was sprawled on the floor was dragged up completely. His legs moved on their own, trying to stand up straight, but was unable to do so even with this momentum. He bent his knees that could not exert strength, and collapsed under the weight of the haversack again before sprawling on the floor. Zinnerman too tumbled on the sandy ground and gave an exasperated look as he stared at this ridiculous scene, muttering, "You idiot, you didn't drink, did you?"

"Didn't I tell you to drink regularly even if you're not thirsty?"

Banagher's face was dragged up, and the opening of the bottle was brought right to his lips. The water that was taken in instinctively entered his windpipe, causing him to choke hard. He bent down, used his remaining strength to cough, and his face hit the sandy ground that was thoroughly cold. "Oi, pull yourself through." Zinnerman said, but Banagher pushed aside his arm, curled up his body that was having difficulty in breathing, Leave me alone. and his dry lips mouthed out the words,

"Just leave me alone…please let me stay here."

Banagher let out a hoarse voice from his throat that felt like it was stuck. After a short moment of silence, "Don't say such sorry things." Zinnerman answered, but his voice felt so distant.

"Even if I walk along with you, I'll just drag you down. Please move first, I'll try to find a way…"

"What nonsense are you spouting? What can you do alone when you can't even read the constellations? You'll just move around in the same direction and get dried up to death in the wild."

"That's fine too…you pulled me out here for this aim, right?"

"Huh?"

"You want to let me dry out to death in the desert…so just kill me…"

Banagher sensed that the bearded face was raising his eyelids, taking a deep sigh through his nose. "Really, I didn't expect you to have such thoughts when you came along with me." Zinnerman said this with a wry look as he dusted off the sand on his buttocks and stood up.

"Just like I said, this stretch is the toughest area. It'll take a week for us to make a detour, so that means we can only move through this stretch. Once we can do so, it's all flatland there on. It's just a little longer, hang in there."

Hang in there. These words entered Banagher's heart, causing him to feel a burning sense of negativity. Why must I be the one hanging in here? What right do I have? He grabbed the sand and looked back at Zinnerman's eyes that were looking down at him and moved his throat, "I am…!" that was about to be blocked.

"I rode on a mobile suit, killed people, and now I'm desperately trying to walk in this desert. How much more do you want me to work hard? What exactly do you hope that I do…!? Everyone's just caring about themselves, forcing others into despair…that's too irresponsible…"

Do what you feel you have to do, fulfill your responsibility. The words Cardeas and Daguza said echoed in his empty body dampening his sights. Even if I worked hard here, I can't save anyone. No one will end up being saved, and nobody will save me. I don't want to do anything, and I know that no matter what I do, everything will all be wasted. It's just like what my 'older brother' said, I'm a seed of disaster bringing misfortune to others.

I'm bothered even when people placed their expectations on me. I have nothing to repay you. I just feel "disjointed" from the world as I lived in a corner of an artificial colony. If there's a chance to return to such a lifestyle, I really want to return. I want to return to the moments where I didn't have

to kill anyone, not get cursed by my own bloodline, and live my life with the vague gentleness. If only I never rode on the "Unicorn". If only I never met Audrey— the water droplets that flowed down his face landed on the floor, and he grabbed the sand in his hands tightly as he heard the sound of these water droplets dripping into the dry ground. Zinnerman snorted out air as he patted the captain's hat that was covered in sand, saying with a spurning tone, "What are you hoping from an outsider unrelated to you?"

"It's already tough for those who want to live normal lives to take care of you, let alone at this moment of life and death. Even if they're just saying that they care, you should be grateful that someone's willing to talk to you."

To Banagher, these words were unexpected. He felt the lead in his stomach twirling and saw Zinnerman's face in his sights. At this point, he saw that the two eyes looking down at him were giving off a glint of light that was stronger than the night sky.

"Even if you complain to me like that, your expression isn't showing any signs of dying off. You still have the strength to fight. It's because I felt that you can stand on your own that I brought you along. No matter how painful it is, if you're a man, you should answer back to other people's expectations, raise your chest and endure until the moment you die."

Zinnerman carried his haversack again and stepped forward without waiting for a reply. Banagher supported his upper body almost instinctively, "Fight…what do you want me to fight with?" and asked. "Think about it." the back profile that answered this had already left Banagher halfway out of its mind.

"A man's life is a battle until death."

He added these words that came flowing over with the wind hit the ears and went off. Banagher raised his knees forward and brought his upper body forward as he stood on the sandy ground shakily. He stepped forward to the back profile that was leaving him, not know exactly why he had to do this. I'm an idiot. His body that realized this sufficiently stepped on the endless stretch of gradients.

He walked on the ground that would collapse whenever he stepped, climbed uphill step by step, went down again, and would then move along a towering ridge to the next dune. He did not want to lose to that back profile, and he wanted to catch up to the man; Banagher's thoughts became his pillar of support as he continued to chase silently. The

moonlight was covered by the dune behind him, and the starry light caused the dunes hidden in the darkness to appear. Nothing was moving except for the two shadows that were some distance away from each other, moving forward as they left small trails on the sand dunes. This was a world where nothing could be heard other than the sound of wind and their own breathing. It seemed that all of humanity had died off as both of them were the only ones left in the world, absolute silence surrounding them…

Zinnerman did not look back as he continued on in regular steps. Banagher let his body that was carrying the bag lean forward as he moved his own feet silently. What's with that guy? He could not see any clear goal from him like Cardeas, and he was not a by-the-book soldier like Daguza. Zinnerman was different from Frontal in that he did give off a human-like vibe, but there was some attraction from his back that caused Banagher to be dragged along for some reason. Even without looking back, he could grasp Banagher's current situation. If Banagher fell, he would return to pick him up. While he gave a mysterious sense of relief, there was some obstinate feeling from him, and he did not allow others to enter his own heart. in the end, that figure that he could not get close to remained right in front of him, even though he would not leave—

"I met the Captain at the Federation's detention barrack. At that time, I was part of the Youth Service Squad, a group of brats that would listen to the orders from anyone else in the base. Same goes for Gilboa. We're all stripped naked and had our butts inspected, and we can be said to be a band of brothers on the same boat of disaster."

The words Banagher heard from Flaste before he left echoed in his mind, and he looked at the sand that landed at his feet. During the One Year War, Zinnerman and company took part in an attack on Earth, and fought until the bitter end in Africa before being captured by the Federation. They then awaited the end of the war in the detention cells, not knowing how the war in space ended, and nobody told them what happened to their hometown.

"To the Federation, we're just demons who sent a colony crashing to Earth. The treatment we had at the detention barracks was way different from what was in the agreement, but it didn't matter. Even if we were brats back then, we're all soldiers. As long as we ate the food the army gave us, we had to bear the name of the country no matter where we went. What I could not forgive was that the Federation pointed their guns at our relatives left in our hometown."

"After the war ended, the Principality of Zeon was forced to disband and restart as a republic. However, a change in name alone can't possibly erase all hatred that was culminated since the past. To the occupying army on the republic, Zeon was Zeon. They could not end all grudges just because the war ended, because too many people died in it. While the big-shots were negotiating for peace, the occupying forces had been building up their unhappiness. And there was an increase in voices by the day, like whether they could forgive the Zeon monsters, like whether they should raze the Zeon colonies to the ground like how we suffered, until it reached a point where it was not surprising to have any riots. Kill off all these inhumane Zeons, go to Zeon if you want to snatch women. Those people grew up hearing these words during the war, and some of their brothers died in Zeon's hands. Sacrifices were needed to vent their frustrations. They needed something to vent their anger and hatred and slice it up for the public to see…the place they chose was the town the Captain's home was."

The name of the town that was chosen was called Globe. That night, there was a curfew enforced on it, and all the residents were forbidden from moving out. As everyone held their breaths and hid inside, the occupying force encircled the place and charged into the town under the preface of suppressing riots. The soldiers who went out were about to return back, so there were old people, women and children left inside the town.

The soldiers that were manipulated by the higher-ups in a subtle manner were beasts hungry for blood. During the night, they opened every single household door and did whatever they wanted. To them, it did not matter whether it was an adult or a child. The men were tortured to death, the private parts of the women were violated, and the children that were shrieking and crying were shot down, unable to cry. Armed soldiers surrounded the town, and nobody could reach their hand for support. The police and the media could only remain silent at this 'venting of frustration' both the occupying army and the Republic's government allowed.

There was no consensus on Globe being the sacrifice in the first place, but the fact remained that when the colony was thrown down to Earth, the footage of when Zeon celebrating and applauding their victory was spread throughout the world, and the residents of Globe were caught on television. The sight of the residents of Zeon smiling as they trampled on billions of corpses, immersed in a celebratory atmosphere—probably caused the Federation people watching this live telecast to gather their hatred and anger on the town of Globe that just happened to be on

television. Either way, there was none of the terms 'logic' and 'rationality' in the soldiers' minds when they ravaged the entire town, and their savage behavior after this violence easily broke down the lives of the people that built this town. They were mocked, trampled, and robbed of all their pride. More than thousands of people suffered the most cruel deaths in the world.

Those who died early were fortunate. If there were children watching their mothers being raped, the reverse could have happened in the future. No one could remain sane after such a cruel night. The festival of madness lasted until morning, leaving only counting corpses. Burnt scenes floated out from the houses that caught fire, and the stench of corpses and pee were mixed inside, remaining inside the colony for countless days. Just like how the Zeon army introduced poison gas into a colony, the town became a complete wasteland. No, it was not even a wasteland, but a used 'public toilet' for the Federation army to vent their frustrations, an exhibition of the cruelty humanity could show.

The Federation explained to the public that the tragedy of Globe happened because the residents rioted as the military was oppressing the resistance, and they had to suppress them with military force. The Republic government and the media accepted this saying and both the occupying army and the republic government had a common understanding as they accepting this, that they should permit such behavior if that kind of sacrifice could allow them to calm down. Either way, the truth was as clear as daylight even without explaining. Zinnerman and company returned back to Zeon after an exchange of prisoners, and immediately understood what happened after seeing his own hometown ravaged to the ground. They hated the Federation, hated the Republic government that became a mere puppet, and more than anything, hated themselves for being unable to protect their families.

They cursed themselves for being weak, and whenever they thought about the suffering they suffered before their deaths, their frustrations would cause them to blame themselves, until they went mad for days. To these people who lost their hometown in all sorts of ways, the only choice left for them was to fight on. "Axis", in the distant asteroid belt, took in the recently born Mineva Zabi, and this place became the hiding place for Zinnerman and company for years. After "Axis" returned to the Earth celestial sphere, they called themselves Neo Zeon and started from there, investing themselves in the two Neo Zeon Wars. There was no such thing as ceasefire, and they continued to start wars all to accept that they were still alive.

"Even till now, I wonder what will happen to me if the opposite was true. In a war, anyone will go insane. It's not rare to see photos of people smiling and showing V-handsigns even after seeing the corpses of enemy soldiers piled up one after another…but the people from the Federation are humans, and we're humans. Some things can't be forgiven no matter what people say. If anyone heard that the tragedy of Globe was filmed and still circulated in the black market, I'll want to send another colony down."

"Do you understand? Our wives and kids became toys covered with blood, and that image is filmed up and still circulated around somewhere in the world. Some sickos even feel excited by seeing that. We couldn't save them even if we heard the screams from that time. It's impossible for time to be reversed. Can you imagine that kind of regret, that bitterness that's much worse than us being chopped up to pieces?"

This was not a question that could be answered immediately. Banagher merely lowered his head and avoided Flaste's bloodshot eyes.

"We, who were given a new lease of life to act as bodyguards for the princess, spent our efforts finding the scumbag dealer who circulated the video. We discovered Marida when we were checking on the routes those bloody perverts used. As for Marida…well, I suppose I shouldn't mention. Anyway, we didn't do this out of fun."

"Zeon did launch a colony down to Earth, and it is understandable that there is ample reasons for us to die. But the hatred we put on ourselves is different from a conflict between countries. It's not about reviving Zeon and redeeming ourselves. We don't care about what happens to the "Box"; we only have two options, whether to curse the world or to keep fighting."

Therefore, don't think that you definitely won't be killed off. Flaste ended off, grabbed Banagher by the chest, and chided him sternly,

"I don't know your background, but I do know that you're the enemy pilot who killed Gilboa. Listen, I'll make you pay if you dare pull the Captain down. if you're a pilot, build your own way to live like a pilot."

A pilot is a fighting unit that had no grudges whether it is killed or killed others. Banagher compared these words to what Marida said before as he started to think. He was viewed as a pilot, and even if it was an outcome prompted out of coincidence, he had fulfilled the purpose of a pilot. Even if he was called a brat, no one was willing to play around with him. He

thought, I'm seen as being part of the situation, and I'm actually affecting the situation.

It did not happen like this because he hoped for it. It was the same for Zinnerman or Flaste or the rest. Everyone was caught in an unreasonable situation. Even if they wanted to live in any way they wanted, this world was too cruel, and humans were too helpless. Currently, he was on the border of life and death. He did not know how much he could continue walking. The body of flesh that was removed from its civilized looking skin was so fragile. Perhaps it was a mistake to think that humans were born with such a cruel nature, and an absolutely unreasonable possibility.

Even so, humans continued to live on, fought against this harsh nature, drank water, and devoured other forms of life. Zinnerman harbored such pain that could not be compensated even in death, but he still lived on. Banagher kept saying that he did not want to do anything, but he was still walking. He could stop in his tracks, but an unknown impulse he had no idea of was pushing him as he continued to walk forward without caring.

That was because Banagher instinctively knew that if he stopped in his tracks, he would be losing to this unreasonable situation. The moment he stopped and started cursing the world, his world would be shut off. Humanity used their fragile bodies to explore nature, survive and finally fly into space. This impulse that ignores everything pushes all unreasonable parts of the world, whether they were diseases, famines, discriminations', war…all the lives living on this world would have to fight against such unreasonable things, and the history of wars were past of humanity's history.

That was why they had to progress, to move forward, to keep walking straight until they could accept this, to this world that would liberate them from all unreasonable things. Even if they know that such a world did not exist, they had to continue on mindlessly, even if they had to destroy this nature around them. They had to keep shouting as part of their instincts, that they would not lose as long as they were walking forward.

And then, they had to make an endless dream. They could not allow themselves to stop, they had to desire, rush to the target they wished to destroy and find the hope that had never wilting. They had to harness the power of possibilities residing inside their bodies and believe that tomorrow would be better. A glass of water, a little compassion from everyone else, I feel like I can continue on a little longer just by knowing the suffering everyone had. As he harbored such simple and gentle thoughts…

However, living bodies were still bodies of flesh. Even if he was unwilling, the flesh had its own limits. A strong sleepy feeling suddenly surged up in Banagher, and his feet were starting to feel heavy. The shadows of night gathered from around, and his visibility quickly darkened. No, don't sleep, keep going. Even as he said these words in his heart, it was useless as the ground at his feet rose up vertically, and his hands that wanted to support his body slid along the sand. The impact that crashed into the ground became a distant echo, and Banagher could not even feel the impact of the fall as his face was buried in the sand, his consciousness drifting away.

Part 11

The cracking sounds of flames could be heard, and Banagher felt the heat touching his face as he opened his eyes.

A column of smoke could be seen rising up, seemingly mixing into the faint ink-like starry night. Zinnerman was beside him, sitting on the ground and setting a fire, and the shadows that were casted upon the rock behind them were swaying. Banagher's eyes caught sight of the marks around the shadows. These pictures looked like cow herds and people holding bows and arrows, and on a closer look, there were countless marks like this craved all over the rock wall. Perhaps these marks were left behind since a long time ago by the people living here when humanity first started to move.

The wall showed people tending to their livestock, men heading to war and women facing each other while sitting on chariots. Does this mean that this place had greenery for people to live, that there were work, wars, families and all sorts of human activities? As he laid down, Banagher looked up at the wall as he lingered in a half-dazed manner, only to suddenly see Zinnerman, who had been looking at him, right in the eyes.

He wanted to get up immediately, only to notice a blanket covering him. His body that was lying on the hard floor was completely stiff, and whenever he moved, he would feel intolerably sore. Zinnerman took up the small pot heated over the fire and poured the fluid in it over to an empty can. Here, he then handed the can over while seemingly saying this. The fragrance of the hot soup flowed out from within, and Banagher received the soup can without thinking.

He hurriedly poured the hot soup into his thoroughly cold and dry body, finding it a waste of time to wait for it to turn cold. The soup that was

heated by a real fire was different from a vessel that had a heating function, as it could warm even a person's heart. His invigorated nerves were starting to move, and there was a sense of warmth inside his body. He could feel that his body that should have used all energy and strength was trembling due to delight, pulsating. I'm not dead yet, I'm still alive. The moment he understood this, he gathered all the warmth to his nose and looked up at the sky.

The tears that remained in his eyes flowed out, and he stared at the stars that flickered in his blurry sights. This night sky that was powered by something unknown was brighter than he thought. The galaxy's arm flashed by as a river of light, causing the night sky to give a deep blue color.

"Why are you crying?"

Zinnerman threw a dried twig into the fire as he mumbled these words. Banagher continued to look up at the sky as he answered, "The stars are really so pretty…" My excuse here is really stupid, but it's not a lie. Zinnerman then snorted and looked up above his head.

The sounds of the maggots resting in the ground were quietly welling the breath of night as they were gradually sucked in by the darkness. Banagher remembered that scorpions and snakes would be attracted by heat, and rubbed his teary eyes before looking around. He saw that there was a pesticide sensor around them, and heaved a sigh of relief. It seemed that they had already climbed over the sand dunes. The surroundings were an uneven rugged rocky stretch, and he could see rocks that were in weird shapes due to many years of constant erosion. The hard and dry ground had lithic scattered all over the place, and the shrubs could be seen growing from the ground. A small figure suddenly lit its eyes and quickly disappeared into the darkness, probably a mouse living in the desert or some other organism.

There were organisms living in this place that even humans had already abandoned a long time ago. They continued to endure the harsh conditions, followed their impulsive will to live blindly, and continued to look for prey all just to continue their daily life. Don't they find this world unreasonable? Banagher looked up at this rocky wall that was most probably left behind by people of the past, and tried to pull through his thoughts that were not exactly thinking. Only humans were granted the ability to draw and to think. If this intelligence was the reason why humans felt that things were unreasonable, perhaps there was no other organisms

who were caught in the cycle of cause and effect more than humans. If modern people could live with nature like those people who drew the wall painting—

"I feel like the saying that the Earth will be polluted is a hoax when I stay here."

Zinnerman looked up at the clear starry sky as he suddenly spoke up. Feeling unexpected, Banagher stared the side of his face.

"But in fact, the sky here was a lot dirtier than before. It's said that deserts would expand every year right until where Dakar is. This is a negative consequence of developing Earth again, and also a result of the abnormal weather caused by throwing down colonies and meteors…but these things probably didn't matter to Earth."

The wind blew through the cracks between the rocks, releasing the sound that resembled a human voice. Zinnerman did not look at Banagher's face as he naturally continued,

"The meaning of protecting Earth is just about protecting the ecosystem humans relied on. This sentence can be established as the price of global warming, desertification, and Earth being polluted by chemicals. If humans can be considered to be the ones creating everything, the trash and toxins produced by humans can naturally be seen as part of nature. If humans are the only ones who can't live, the likelihood is that nature is trying to achieve a balance. To Earth, it probably doesn't matter whether there are any organisms living on Earth or not."

Banagher, who nearly died at the hands of the desert, could empathize with this statement. Living together with nature—this kind of nature was probably a fantasy humans had after being pampered by civilization. He could only lower his head as he felt amazed by how shallow his thoughts were.

The older generations of humans who struggled against the harsh conditions instinctively knew about this. Nature will never show any mercy to humanity, so humanity created civilization to live on, and used the system called society to protect themselves. But as time went by, this system got overly complicated, and humans ended up having to live for the sake of maintaining the system. Humanity then launched wars and continued to develop, let the economy grow…until they ended up making it hard for them to live, reversing their priorities.

Once a fetter is set up, the task of protecting the fetter itself would become something the adults had to deal with, and this would cause them to lose their ability to view things from an objective standpoint— Banagher heard the words Daguza said before amidst the wind as they entered deep into his ears.

"That's why humans tried to look for this new world in space, but the system still remained on Earth. What the system demanded was that the exceeding population was to be removed from the ground. In the end, a group of people were dumped into space and created a different system there."

"It was Zeon. They brought hope to the Spacenoids who were basically abandoned and gave them a new system, indicating a new direction to live…naturally, the system on Earth was rejected. Two systems that originated from different sources couldn't coexist. One side had to succumb. This was established and proven by history by people of the olden times, before the Federation's system was set up."

Zinnerman looked far away between the stars where his hometown was and kept quiet. Banagher felt that the vague parts in his mind were becoming words, seeping deep into his mind, and stared at the man making the fire brighter. Zinnerman then glanced over "What? I'm not suitable for such things?" and asked, hiding his embarrassed expression as he pouted. "No." Banagher answered as he looked away from that unexpectedly amicable bearded face.

"I feel so amazed that you can arrange your thoughts so clearly, it's amazing…my history studies will be more decent if I was taught this way."

"That's because nature turns everyone into philosophers."

Zinnerman said with a comfortable voice and laid down on the ground. Banagher gave a wry look and stared at the empty can he drank from. "But…" he tried to turn the words in his heart into a voice.

"But, looking at history, humanity managed to create a united government in the Federation and created a world where billions of people could stay in space. I guess that's just a fantasy to those in the old ages, isn't it? Doesn't humanity also have this kind of possibility? It should be possible for humanity to unify these two thoughts and create a new system…"

Someone believed this before. Banagher did not hope that the speech the First Prime Minister of the Federation made as he was crushed together

with "Laplace" in space was just a speech. Zinnerman did not move his body that was using its arm as a pillow, "That was established with many sacrifices." and said with a sigh.

"The Federation didn't view everyone as equal. There're many oppositions they shot down and fought. That grudge still exists on Earth. It's not going to be easily removed just like that."

Zinnerman showed his hatred of losing his wife and child because of the unjustness of history, and his face looked like a demon for a moment. Banagher was not willing to continue looking at him as he immediately lowered his head and said with a very inaudible voice, "That was really too sad…"

"Yeah, it's sad. We lived on to abandon our sadness…so why did it end up like this…"

Zinnerman's muttering face was no longer like a demon, but the face of someone who was tortured unreasonably by sadness as large as a mountain, but still wanted to live on as a human. It was also the face of a human who experienced pain because of knowledge and blood, and yet could show gentleness. This man is probably someone gentle. He doesn't know how to deal with the cruel reality and can only let the devil reside in him—that's really sad. Banagher's chest that was telling him this was shuddering, and tears of various sizes welled up in his eyes, silencing him. He laid down on the ground, his back facing Zinnerman, and he used the blanket to cover his sniffling sound.

Zinnerman gave a sharp stare right at Banagher's back. "I know!" Banagher said without looking at the other man.

"You want to say that a man can't cry in front of others, right?"

He rubbed his eyes, "it depends on the time and occasion" only to hear a quiet voice, and turned to look at Zinnerman.

"It's ugly when someone cries out of self-pity, but it's different if tears are shed for others. I won't trust a man who won't cry no matter what happens."

After saying that, Zinnerman snuggled his body into the sleeping bag and did not move. "We'll leave before dawn." This voice rang beside in Banagher's ears before he was about to enter that were about to enter the silence.

"We have to at least make up time for lagging behind. Rest well. Many illnesses are caused by a lack of sleep."

The back profile that looked like a bear swayed on the other side with the fire. Banagher had an exceptional impression on that back as he closed his eyes.

I can understand many things by thinking about it. This thought caused Banagher to immediately forget about the lethargic self he showed for the past few days, and he muttered to himself that he should first cross this desert. However, the astonishingly powerful sleep monster leapt at Banagher, and in a moment, he fell into a deep slumber.

Part 12

However, it was not easy to make up time after lagging behind on a journey in the desert.

The result of spending twice the amount of time expected to cross the sand dunes was that the relatively easy schedule they originally estimated was debunked. By the time the 3rd day ended, they cleared more than 30km. After using up 3 quarters of the estimated time, the fact that they only covered half the distance was right in front of them.

In the desert, delaying their journey would cause dehydration, the most severe situation. It was said that the limit of moving in a desert without drinking was 4 hours. Once the limit was exceeded, humans would be unable to move, and they could only wait as the fluids in their bodies get evaporated.

There was no water source in the middle of this journey, and of course, they could not hope for rain. Even though they saw several dark clouds on the horizon, the water would evaporate before they landed. On the 5th day, the water they rationed to the maximum was left at less than 500ml, and the bag that was originally heavy became exceptionally light. This light weight was basically equivalent to the amount of life they had left—the sunshade that was draped down from their shoulders covered them, and Banagher saw the faded looking sky as he touched his forehead that became rough due to his skin peeling. The skin felt completely different from the border of cloth. There was still some form of original skin color and feeling within 1cm from the line, and it felt like he was in a form of happiness called oblivion. To a bystander, the color on his forehead was

definitely divided in half, and the skin under the cloth was like a baby, not knowing the fatigue of someone at his limits, and not knowing thirst.

The sunset that had already left the horizon for a long time was scattering its evil heat rays diagonally. Banagher's body required rest soon, but the back profile of Zinnerman that was walking in front showed no signs of stopping. He would look around from time to time, check the compass and the map, and continued to move beyond several rocky areas suitable for resting. If they stopped here, they would never move again—and Banagher had this sense of danger as well, but he did not feel that this was the only reason why Zinnerman would care about moving forward. During this time, he never saw Zinnerman check the GPS coordinates. Zinnerman did not say anything, and Banagher did not have the courage to ask him, but it was very likely that the GPS malfunctioned due to the heat.

No matter how long they walked, the similarly shaped rocky hills at the horizon were the only things that could be seen, and surrounding them were the wide and flat dry ground that was like the bottom of a pot. Without a landmark, they might not be able to walk straight even with the help of a compass. People would exert more strength in the leg they were more comfortable with, and it was very likely that they would end up leaving a long arc on the sand without knowing. Looking at the map, they were probably not too far from Astal, but there were still no signs of any towns on the horizon, probably because they deviated from their course. Banagher stared at Zinnerman's back that was showing some anxiety as he merely felt a chill in an instant, and moved his legs with his blank mind. This was the only good thing about the desert. All doubts and anxiousness would be evaporated as sweat, and would not stay in the body. The hot wind that blew by would create some form of assistance, and everything that could be considered thoughts would flow out from the pores.

The wind that blew from the front was called Khamsin, a dry hot dusty wind. When the low pressure occurred in the Mediterranean or Europe, the hot air would flow in from the southwest into the Sahara. They would thirst to death if they did not hurry up, and if they hurried up, they would end up using up their water. Perhaps Zinnerman was in a state where he could not make decisions as well. The hot air blew onto his face like a hairdryer, and Banagher walked along this hot pot base, his body feeling completely hot. The completely parched tongue seemed like it became a sponge. This wind is so hot! The wind was constantly increasing in strength, blowing the heat that was enough to steam into the nostrils—

A black shadow appeared in the white vision, and Banagher lifted his head. Zinnerman, who stopped, let his body lie prone on the dry floor. He stared at the distant horizon of hills, not moving at all. The silhouettes of the rocky hills were shaking gradually, perhaps due to the effect of mirages, and it seemed to be rumbling like a tsunami.

No, that was not it. it was really rumbling. A reddish-brown block-shaped item was rising up from the horizon, gradually expanding as it became a vortex. That object could be seen gradually rising, slowly moving towards Banagher and Zinnerman. It was not the silhouette of the hills afar.

"A simoom…"

Zinnerman muttered. At this moment, the reddish brown vortex continued to increase in size as it spread towards the boundaries of the horizon they could see. The noise from the Simoom brewed across the land, whipping up a sand wall that was several hundred meters in height, sweeping the land like a flood ready to engulf the world. Zinnerman, who stood in a stunned manner, then grabbed Banagher by the arms, "Over here, hurry!" he said as he started running.

"If we stay at where we are, our skin will be eroded by the wind. We have to find a rocky place to prone down for cover."

Both of them dashed towards the rock formation they could see on the other end as if their feet were about to be tangled up. At this moment, the force of the Simoom continued to increase, and the dust that blew upon their faces and hands started to become as sharp as rasp files. Being torn to shreds by the wind; there was a sudden sense of realism in the saying, and Banagher dashed while seemingly trying to run past Zinnerman. The Simoom—the falls of sand and wild winds continued to grow until it could nearly reach the sun at the top.

The skies were darkening, and the boom that rang with the Simoom caused the ground to rumble. Banagher and Zinnerman continued to run as they dashed into a small rocky area for cover. Both of them sprawled themselves onto the ground without any time to breath, and the Simoom that were far hotter than body temperature struck the rock as the dust hitting the top let out cracking sounds. Their faces felt hot, and they would have difficulty breathing if they had not looked away from the wind.

"Use the water to dampen the cloth and cover your mouth and nose! Or else the sandy-wind will suffocate you! Close your eyes, and do not open them until I tell you to do so!"

Banagher could barely hear Zinnerman roaring voice. He undid the sunshade cloth, used the little water left to dampen it and covered the lower half of his face with it. His mouth instinctively took in the water on the cloth, and before it could enter his mouth, the hot air that was over 50 degrees blew the cloth dry. The dust that blew into the rocky ground continued to pile up, and as his body was about to be buried in the sand, he turned his face around slightly to look at the Simoom that was looming towards him.

It was a bloody-colored mix of sandy clouds. The sun had already disappeared, and there was nothing that could be heard other than the sound of the wind covering the organs. He saw Zinnerman lunge right at him and cover the head, only to end up seeing the sand being lifted off the ground. Banagher closed his eyes, and his body that was devoured by the torrent of Simoom and sand froze.

His hands that were scratched by the sand were hurting, and the wind of death came blowing over with a reddish-brown color as if it was about to roast all the organisms, blowing over the 2 bodies that were lying prone on the floor mercilessly. Banagher was terrified of his body being lifted off the floor at any moment, and heard his heart bumping loud. Zinnerman, who was covered behind him, had his heart beating in unison, and Banagher clearly felt that the sounds of two lives resisting death were spreading through the outer world.

The sounds overwhelmed the sound of the wind, bursting through the roaring atmosphere and passing through the sky in the distant place. Banagher did hear this sound in the "Unicorn" before—so that is the sound of my heartbeat being amplified by the machine? At this point, he realized this fact amidst the last bit of his consciousness that was still left. Was humanity obeying this sound and fighting against the merciless nature all this while? Humans gathered to protect their weak individual selves, established societies and developed the outer shell called civilization before finally suppressing the world? Is this groundbreaking power of life a crime? Is the long history of wars leading up to the Universal Century just a record of senseless destruction? No, this throbbing was telling him this. It's too early to give an answer. We're still a group that's growing. Don't end the trend.

Dad, Mr Daguza, Mr Gilboa, I've built my life off their, and I'm not alone now. I have to live, I have to live on, I have to show the power and gentleness the people with knowledge and blood possessed.

The world rumbled, and the sound of the atmosphere being abused was moving far apart. What entered the bottom of his consciousness were the two throbbing sounds that overlapped each other. Banagher, who was buried by the Simoom, clenched his fists.

Part 13

It was darkness in complete silence. The seemingly frantic flapping of a bird's wings broke this silence and darkness, causing a weak light to appear.

Banagher opened his eyes that were originally shut and looked over at the sound. He saw a pigeon, leaving footsteps on the sand as it strutted on. It stopped, stared at Banagher, tilted its head, and then continued on without being too wary. Banagher moved his body that felt like it was sealed in wax and tried to pull his head that was nearly buried in sand. Swoosh, as the sound of sand fell, Zinnerman's arms that were draped over him landed on the ground weakly.

Zinnerman once said before that pigeons were a sign. As pigeons would not move away from a water source, it meant that there was a town or an oasis nearby if they spotted on. Banagher looked around the desert that was devoid of wind and shook his head. He then turned his eyes beside him before the sand on his hair was shaken off, and then reached his hand towards the unmoving Zinnerman, wanted to check if the man with a beard stained white by the sand was breathing or not. The pulse was clearly beating into the fingertips pressing on the carotid, and as he heaved a sigh of relief, the sound of the pigeon suddenly flapping its wings caused his eardrums to rumble. It flew to the sky that was removed from the threat of the simoom, blocked the sun shining down for a while, and then vanished on the other side of the rocky ground.

Banagher undid the mask cloth that was covered with sand and took in fresh air. The sand entered his windpipe, and he coughed, but there was no sign of saliva dampening him. He could only care about spitting the powder-shaped sand in his mouth, supported himself off the rock and straightened his legs. He stared at the haversack that was covered with sand, controlled his swaying feet, and tried to get over to the other side of

the rock to observe. The falls of red sand had subsided, and as he looked at the horizon that clearly divided the clear sky and the ground. At that moment, he felt his mind going blank.

After blinking a few times, he reached his hand out for the mouth that was blankly agape. He could feel the rough feeling of the cracked lips and the sound of the sand shaken off the hair, and once he realized that it was not an illusion, he was unable to believe his own eyes. He scampered back to the cover provided by the rock and shook Zinnerman, who was lying on the ground, several times, Captain, calling out in a barely audible voice. After a few times, Zinnerman suddenly opened his eyes and abruptly raised his large body that was buried in sand.

After looking around, Zinnerman turned his still seemingly unfocused eyes at Banagher, who in turn dragged him by the arm without waiting for him to move his mouth. He tried to support the large body that nearly tumbled, probably because his feet unable were unable to exert strength, and pulled and carried him to the other side of the rock. Zinnerman too opened his mouth in shock after seeing the horizon on the other side. He blinked his eyes that were staring at a single point, used his hand to wipe his face, patted off the sand on his beard, and leaned his neck forward while lying forward.

His face suddenly curled in a smile, and the voice that sounded like coughing echoed deep within his throat. After that, the sound that was spat out with the sand became a muffled laugh, before becoming an extremely loud laughter that echoed through the desert. The captain sees it too. It's not a mirage. Banagher's body finally confirmed this as he lost strength in him, and immediately collapsed onto the ground. Zinnerman, who continued to laugh, patted Banagher's back hard, causing him to nearly fall forward. As his nerves connected within his tense face, he too started to laugh as he sensed that his face muscles could move.

He then patted Zinnerman on the back hard, letting his laughter mix in with the other man's gruff laughter. How long has it been since I laughed out loud like this? This sudden thought was overwhelmed by the two men's laughter as Banagher continued to laugh with all his strength. A pigeon which may or may not be the same one as before flapped its wings from another rock and flew to the blue sky on the other side of the horizon.

At the horizon it flew towards, there was a simple stone construct surrounding its edge, and the obvious greenery of coconut trees could be seen shining under the sunlight. Astal ignored the laughing duo as its

scenery that probably never changed for hundreds of years appeared at a corner of the desert, clearly indicating that their journey was over.

Part 14

3 days later.

The fusion reactor rocket engine that was asleep for a week awoke, and the thrusters on the side of the ship let out a roar. A large amount of sand came rising out from the white-hot jet flames, blowing aside the hill of sand buried in the bow, and the "Garencieres" that was lying in the desert rose gradually.

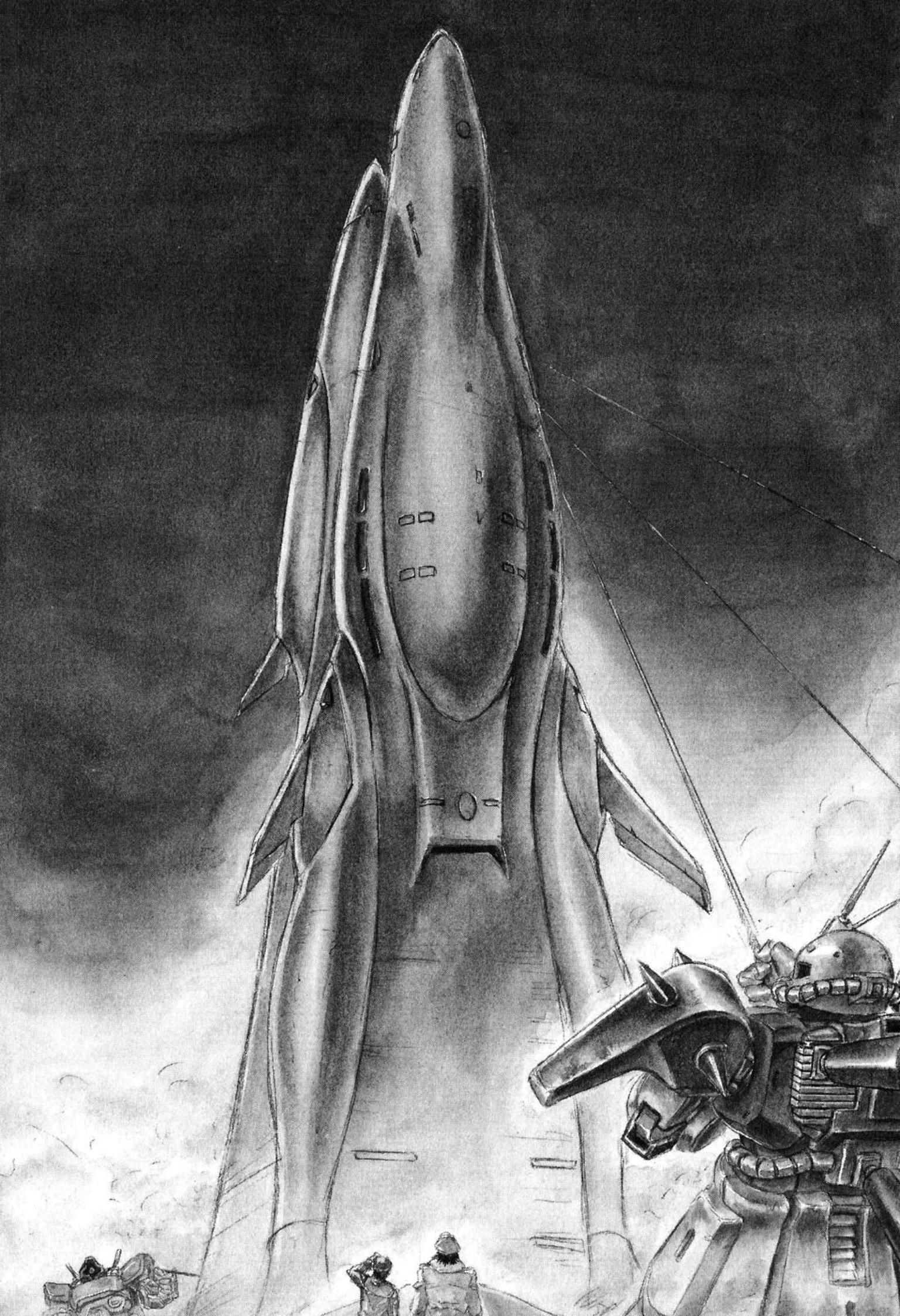
The sand clouds and dust covered the ship body that was 112m in length, and the hot wind could be felt from a 1km away. Banagher faced this storm that was stronger than the simoom, put on his goggles and covered his mouth with his hands. He could see the three wires tied to the bow of the "Garencieres" from beyond the raging sandstorm. The three giants that were originally on standby were were all desert mobile suits that were dyed a brown color, and they were moving, each pulling a wire to drag the bow of the "Garencieres".

The machine with an armored silhouette was a Zaku-type, and the short and stocky machine with a hover inside the skirt was a Dom-type. All war museums would display these two machines, so Banagher was able to distinguish between them. They were both 1st generation mobile suits, and could be considered relics from the One Year War, but they could be used for manual labor that would be the equivalent for hundreds of men in this large-scale heavy machinery lifting. The giants that were tortured by the sand and dust trampled on the ground as they dragged up the spaceship that was like a giant whale by the portside, and the aft that was moved along was dragged out from the sandy hill as it was revealed. The aft turned towards the large hole left at the side of the ship as the "Garencieres" turned away, but this time, the wire at the aft was pulled up, and the large body of the "Garencieres" started to retreat.

There were also 3 mobile suits pulling the aft, and two of them had bodies of a caterpillar tank at the bottom, looking really strange there. The "Zaku tank" that had a "Zaku" upper body, and the arms were swapped to the easy magic hands, giving the vibe of a large and heavy construction machinery. The "Zaku tanks" were actively digging, and the "Dwadge" mobile suit that was slightly modified from the "Dom" pulled the

"Garencieres" backwards as its bow was about to be lifted up. The aft was pulled to the edge of the ole, and the bow was lifted until the ship was tilting about 30 degrees. It then went past a certain point and fell into the hole due to its own weight. As it was about to fall into this 25m hole, the aft that was acting as support was immediately lifted vertically, causing a deep buzzing that rang throughout the desert around them. The thick cloud of dust that gushed out covered the "Garencieres", and there was the sound of cheers and applause around them.

"Alright, good work!" Zinnerman let out a delighted call to the wireless communicator. Banagher waited for the sand to subside before taking off his goggles, and looked back at the "Garencieres" body that was lifted vertically. The VTOL ship landed perfectly under gravity conditions, and looked like a rocket ready to launch into space. Once the fuel it required was filled, the "Garencieres" should be able to launch whenever it wanted to.



It had been 2 days since he barely made contact through the phone in Astal, and the Zeon remnants and the people from Mauritania. The "Garencieres" was finally pulled up with strengthened wires attached based on the ship's calculated toughness and a dug hole, a result of the work of mobile suits that worked tirelessly. "Amazing…" Banagher could only exclaim with honest amazement. Excluding the part that was sunk in the pothole, the "Garencieres" that stood in the desert was still 90m tall, about the height of a 40 story building, and one would think of the large Tower of Babel that appeared in the Bible. It seemed Zinnerman had the same feeling as well as he looked up at his ship a while after his contact with the wireless communicator. His face was saying, "Now we can get out of this damned place", and he was filled with emotions as the word relieved would not be able to describe it completely.

"I want to thank you. If not for you, I might have collapsed out of fatigue on the way."

That face suddenly spoke up calmly, causing Banagher to feel shocked. Banagher thought about how since he mentioned it at this point, they had not talked to each other. "Since when…" he felt his face heating up as he immediately answered, and his stare escaped towards the mobile suits that were walking loudly.

"I didn't do anything. All I did was to pull you down."

"Not exactly. It feels different to have someone I can talk to on the way. Your stubbornness is really quite an eye opener."

Zinnerman smiled once he met Banagher slightly in the eyes. It seemed that all the suffering they went through paid off as well, and Banagher felt doubtful about his own feelings as he lowered his head. Behind them, Flaste seemed to have heard their conversation, "Man", as he shrugged his shoulders.

"There goes the captain's bad habit again. Is the Garencieres going to have a new member?"

Flaste showed a wry grin at Banagher, and it was not full of spite like the previous few days. These unexpected words entered their hearts, and Banagher looked back at Zinnerman's face in a flustered manner. Zinnerman himself avoided the stare as he glared at Flaste, saying, "Is it fine for you to dilly-dally around like this?"

"They're guerillas, but they're an organization basically made up of illegal residents. Watch carefully and don't let them wreck the ship."

"Okay okay okay, I'll try to be the demon supervisor… THAT "ZAKU" OVER THERE! DIDN'T I SAY THAT IT'S TOO EARLY TO RELEASE THE ROPE!?"

Flaste yelled into the wireless communicator as his face really became that of a demon supervisor as he ran right at the mobile suit that was moving around the sand. Banagher stared at the back profile that looked really carefree; and carelessly thought that they might be able to get along. However, he again felt a sense of doubt with this sense of belonging he seemed to have found. "Every unit is to hurry up with the checks. We'll leave the desert tomorrow." Zinnerman spoke behind Banagher, who looked up at the "Garencieres" that looked dazzling in the sun.

The "Unicorn" is sleeping inside there. I suppose we'll be searching for the "Box" once we are ready to move out. Logically, the Federation army won't sit back and watch this. Since there're many mobile suits mobbing, they've probably grasped our movements. More than half of the Zeon remnants are guerilla organizations with illegal residents, but they're not to be underestimated. If these people assist in the search for the "Box", it's not hard to imagine that Earth will be caught in a commotion again.

So, what should I do at that moment? Banagher let the sky enter his eyes as he recalled the crew members of the "Nahel Argama" that felt exceptionally distant. And then, a pair of emerald eyes suddenly appeared in his mind. Audrey Burne—the girl called Mineva Zabi was on Earth as well. She was definitely bothered and hesitant somewhere under this sky.

I really want to meet. The thought that rose from deep within clung onto Banagher's heart, and as he clenched without much of a aim, the sound of a jet engine was mixed in together with the sound of the wind. Banagher immediately got into a defensive position as he looked around, and saw a small machine appearing from behind a sand dune.

It was an old VTOL carrier, and was similar to an old Cessna-class as it flew over Banagher's head as he was watching. "Don't worry, that machine contacted us." Zinnerman said from behind, and Banagher looked where it flew. The VTOL carrier whiffed up sand and dust beside the "Zaku Tank" at the mobile suits the remnant army sent over, and landed with refined movements on the sandy ground, in front of the "Desert Zakus" that were

tied in wires. The hatch on the side of the machine opened, and a person clad in black got up from the pilot seat.

The slender figure swayed amidst the mirage as it was covered in black cloth. Banagher saw that ethnic Arabian attire on television before… Is that a local? He stared at the silhouette that approached, identified the color of the eyes that were revealed between the gap of the clothes, and gasped, as the emerald eyes similar to Audrey's were right in front of me.

"You're Captain Suberoa Zinnerman, right?"

The silhouette ignored Banagher, who gulped, and asked with a clear voice. "That's me. Who're you?" Zinnerman answered, and the visitor removed the cloth below her nose.

"I'm Loni Garvey. I'm here on my father's behest."

Her brown face showed the same sparkling eyes as Audrey, and Banagher felt that she was of a similar age as his. He reflected on the beautiful-sounding name, and harbored a pressurized feeling while staring at the side of the girl's face. Beside him, Zinnerman widened his eyes, "Father…I see, so you're Madhi Garvey's daughter?" Loni suddenly smiled and said,

"My father wants to meet you. Please come along with me."

"It really doesn't matter, but where is Mr Madhi?"

"He booked a hotel at Dakar."

Zinnerman immediately showed a change in expression the moment he heard these unexpected words, "…Sound doesn't sounds like we're talking about business here." In response, Loni kept the smile in her eyes. Banagher had a premonition about this and closed his jaw slightly.

"We heard of the information regarding the "Box". The next coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program is Dakar…it seems that my father set up an appointment there to discuss with you."

These words caused Banagher to recall what he forgot in his mind. The guide leading to the "Box", the Laplace Process, had showed a new coordinates—and while Banagher turned his head inadvertently, Zinnerman did not look over at him as he turned his tense bearded face at Loni, saying "I understand, please wait for me to get prepared", before leaving the place. Banagher felt that something was falling out of his grasp,

but was unable to say anything as he watched the other man leave. "Are you the pilot of the 'breaking horn'?" At this moment, Loni asked, and Banagher's shoulders shuddered in shock the moment he heard it.

"'Breaking horn'?"

"Isn't that the mobile suit you're piloting? I heard that it'll split its horn, and the machine will become a "Gundam"."

Loni showed her white teeth as she said that, and her adult-like expression which had a childish glint caused Banagher to gulp.

"You're young, just like what I heard. If possible, you should come along?"

"Me too…?"

"You're a Spacenoid, right? It's not like you'll lose anything if you visit Dakar. That is the capital of our enemy…the Federation government anyway."

Loni turned around without waiting for Banagher to answer. Banagher wanted to argue that he did not think that way, but his voice was stuck in his throat as he could only watch Loni's lean and petite figure. The new coordinates shown by the Laplace Program was at the capital of the Federation government, Dakar. He could not comprehend the meaning behind this, but he knew that things were spiraling downwards as he looked up at the "Garencieres" lifted before him. The dusty and sandy wind blew by, teasing his body for being unable to think of a next step.

Chapter 2

Part 1

Marida Cruz was pushed hard by the back, and nearly fell as she barely managed to stand upright. The door was then closed, and the loud sound rang behind her.

There was darkness all around her. From the echo, she knew that she was in a rather wide place. Marida Cruz was not so reckless as to make a careless move, and she first closed her eyes, took a deep breath, let her eyes get used to the darkness, and scanned the place. There were no windows or anything similar inside this room, and she could see that there was a firefighting installation lamp. It was dark and hard to tell, but the ceiling was shockingly high. Is this a mobile suit hangar? The moment she thought about that, the handcuffs locking her hands let out a slight sound, and she felt them fall off.

(Ple Twelve)

The handcuffs that were remotely removed dropped onto the floor, and a woman's voice rang through the darkness. Marida's body jerked as she used her sight to track the source of this sound.

(That is your name, right? Answer me. You should obey your master's instructions.)

The voice that echoed throughout was mixed in with the darkness, striking Marida's heart and soul. Is this a new kind of experiment? Marida recalled the checks she went through for the past 10 days as her body and even her mind were cruelly investigated, and she inadvertently clenched her fists that were free. The continued use of drugs in the experiments caused her head to hurt, but she felt that her body had recovered to the point of adapting to the 1G gravity. She was only wearing a thin surgical tunic, but her movements were rather unrestrained.

If they had any intent to check on her body functions, it would not be a bad idea for her to move as much as possible and treat it as rehabilitation. Marida exerted strength on her legs that might turn limp if she relaxed, "You're not my master." and answered with a calm voice. At that moment, there was a flash that came from the front, seemingly with a voice, and her sights were dyed completely white.

Marida inadvertently raised her hands to block and narrowed her eyes to stare at the source of light. Her vision that recovered several times faster than an ordinary person showed two silhouettes with their backs facing the light. She could see the silhouette of a woman and a short stocky man with the many lightings instruments behind them, walking towards her. Is the man Alberto Vist? Marida thought secretly as she stared at the duo that were undefended, not wielding handguns or tasers, and her body froze as she took the stare that was several times more intense.

The woman's blond hair looked rather dazzling with the light against her, and she stared right at Marida. "It's dangerous." Alberto said as he tugged at the woman by the sleeve, "It's fine." but was shaken aside by the woman who answered this. Her feet that were wearing the high-heeled shoes stood about 3m away from Marida.

"This girl can't protect herself on her own without her master's instructions."

Just like what she heard at first, that voice with a heavy pressure surrounded Marida. The woman did not look away from her as her lips that had lipstick on curled up, saying, "Isn't that right?"

"If that's not the case, it's impossible for her to be tortured till such an inhumane state, and she can possibly escape whenever she wants to, right?"

The woman lowered her stare at Marida's stomach, her pale and skinny face showing no signs of pity. If the woman had read through the results of the checks, she would definitely know that Marida's body was "incomplete" in some sense. At that moment, Marida deeply felt the humiliation that caused her body to tremble, but she immediately turned her lips into a smile, "It seems that I'm being misunderstood here." and said to the woman with a restrained tone,

"I am a Neo Zeon officer now. I have a duty to protect myself as a soldier. I don't need a master to instruct me."

"I can choose to take you as a hostage and escape from this disgusting experimental facility." Marida expressed this meaning with silence as she darted her eyes to look at the dark space in front of her that looked like a hangar. "Impressive." The woman answered as she gave Marida an unwavering stare.

"But you sure are pitiful, having to come up with such a reason to protect yourself."

"Pitiful…?"

"That's because you're trapped by the logic of men. Don't you feel that we women should live more freely?"

The testing eyes of the woman relaxed slightly, and she smiled as she stepped towards Marida, who inadvertently backed away.

She was similar to the people Marida saw in the filthy Red Light district filled with sour stench—and she definitely could not allow herself to let her guard down against these people who would smile in such a way. They would first let the other party relax before going rough. Marida was able to sense the fear almost instinctively, and she gathered her concentration on the woman's actions under her emotions. However, "I am Martha Vist Carbine." the voice rang, shocking her.

"I'm not a soldier, and I'm not a researcher here. There's something I want to ask of you."

The woman's tone was different from before as it had a business-like flair. She reached her hand forward, and Alberto, who waited on standby like a shadow, approached her, and handed the notepad terminal over. Then, the woman who called herself Martha showed what she was doing. There was a 3-panel display of a mobile suit, and Marida's stare was fixated on the display before she could even think.

It was the silhouette of a Federation-styled machine; and the head that formed its features and the unique structure of this machine were even more unmistakable to Marida. "This is…" Marida gasped as she saw this, and Martha did not look away from her once as she said with a hard and stern voice, "We call it the "Banshee"."

"I hope that you'll become its pilot."

The face that said was vastly different from those of the residents in the Red Light district, and looked like a powerful elite who had established her authority. Marida could not believe her instincts at first, and looked cautiously at Martha.

"I suppose you understand very well that this isn't a machine that a pilot can use. Only a completed Cyber-Newtype like you will be able to accomplish this, and you can definitely fulfill its capabilities to 100%...or even more."

Martha closed the terminal and handed it over to Alberto behind her. Marida felt an intimidating chill from the determined look deep within the cold light in her expression.

"The problem is that you are too complete, and it's hard for us to carry out adjustments on you. However, I feel that a pilot like this is able to become the pilot of the "Banshee". It is not in my interest to put in a puppet whose memories can be swapped easily. What I want is…"

The skin of a powerful elite was shed away, and Martha again showed a smile that was hard to comprehend. What exactly is with this woman? Marida's face felt a chill as she saw the finger that was as thin as a lath approach her, and she forcefully waved it aside.

"I said that I'm a Neo Zeon officer. There's no reason for me to help you."

"That's just you trying to convince yourself that. Your soul actually wants to fly somewhere else…"

"Even so, I don't want to fly in the place you provide. You might as well readjust me or interrogate me if you want me to help you."

This woman is dangerous. Marida was able to sense this as she felt an irritating poison on her that would spread to everyone related to her. "Y, you, you should watch you mouth there…" Marida immediately gave an antagonistic look at Martha while ignoring Alberto who said this with an agitated voice. At that moment, the smile disappeared off Martha's face, and she bellowed, "You shut up!"

Alberto's silhouette could be seen with the backlight, his shoulders trembling. At the next moment, Martha's expression then broke into a smile as she stared at Alberto that said, "you should understand, right?"

"This is a conversation between women. We have to listen to what she has to say, right?"

Martha's stared at Alberto and his outstretched arm, and patted down his abdomen to the lower abdomen. This alone cause Alberto's strength to be sucked away from Martha, and as he cringed like a dog with its tail between its legs, Marida immediately looked away from them.

Their relationship was not just that of superior and subordinate, and they were not just relatives. Marida could sense some sort of twisted rotten

presence of a man and a woman—and Martha quickly shot a heinous stare over that was about to pierce her, causing her to look in front in shock.

"This girl's instincts as a woman are enhanced too? What a troublesome woman…!"

Even though you're just a created being. Martha gave such an unexpected tone from her expression and raised her right hand above her head. The hand that was raised did not swing down at her as this time, the lights in front of Marida went out, and the ones at the back lit up the dark and dim hangar. The object that was shrouded in darkness appeared in front of Marida's eyes, causing her to be unable to breath for a few seconds.

The indigo colored machine that looked like a gathering of darkness had its limbs lying weakly, and it had a wrecked monoeye and a burnt black head. It was definitely a mobile suit, but the curved profile clearly indicated that it was not a Federation mobile suit. The two elegant flower-like large binders on its shoulders and the refined profile on the front end of their toes were part of a product of civilization not created under Earth's gravity—what would be called the embodiment of Zeonism appeared right in front of her eyes. After the war, the Zeon remnants that escaped to the asteroid belt built this machine to preserve their memories of their country. In a way, it could be viewed as a symbol of Zeon. There was paranoia and nostalgia in this abnormally shaped machine…

"This is the mass-produced "Qubeley", a machine all of you piloted."

Martha said. Marida's heart beat her chest wildly, and she was unable to breathe easily as she clutched onto her tunic.

That's right, that's the machine I, we rode on. It can be considered part of our bodies, and it should have been destroyed with my sisters, so why did it appear here? Whose machine was it? Marida felt puzzled. The machine serial number on the left torso was burnt black and unidentifiable , and the serial number at the legs could not be seen as they were blocked by the shadow of the toes. The binders on its shoulders were sagging weakly, and the giant leaned on the wall as it slumped down. Marida carefully examined the giant, and her sights were laid on the cockpit hatch. She stared right at it, not moving at all. The force of the explosion was enough to cause the hatch to explode, but the ejection pod showed no signs of shooting out. The machine did not take a direct hit, and the dim cockpit that was opened looked completely intact. Maybe there might be other survivors—

Suddenly, she felt goosebumps, and there was a sense of disgust rising up in her. Impossible. Her body that was crying this out started to tremble wildly, and she hurriedly looked away from the machine in front of her. She did not know why her body showed such a rejection that was so strong she could not believe it. Perhaps there was some other lifeform like her existing on this world, and for some reason, Marida felt disgusted by this biologically.

It felt like a nightmare becoming reality. As she was driven by this suffocating fear, she subconsciously backed off. No, I won't be able to remain as myself if I stay here. I have to leave this place as far as possible. I have to hurry and get away from here. She thought.

"Look closely."

Marida got grabbed by the arm, and her body that was being forcefully dragged entered Martha's clutches, and her chin was held as she was forced to face the machine.

"That's how you look. You're still inside the cockpit of that machine. Even if you want to act as the human called Marida Cruz, your soul is still imprisoned in there."

The dark opening of the cockpit entered her eyes, but she was unable to close them. She could shake the hand off if she wanted to, but her body could not exert strength at all. Stop it! Her own intent was unable to become a voice, and she could only face her separate identity helplessly.

"Do you know why that's so? That's because you're a product of men's logic. You were created by men, who only know how to fight until their heads bleed, as a tool of war. You're created from a woman's womb, so don't you find it unnatural?"

Marida was sweating, and her heart was beating faster. That's right, I'm just a tool. Once I lost my purpose for battle, I could only be used to satisfy men's lusts there was a thought that brewed in her body, shocking her so badly that she started to twist and struggle. Martha's hand however remained unmoved as her thin fingertips that were pressing Marida's face spread their icy body temperature onto her.

"But no matter the origin, it doesn't matter. You do exist as yourself after all, and there's no need for you to restrain yourself to fulfill men's logic. Let me bring you out of that machine."

Martha's icy cold fingertips went down from the face to the throat, and then stroked past the curves in front of the chest. Marida felt like her strength was sapped away completely as she tried her best to stand straight.

"The world outside is interesting too. There won't be anything that will restrain you, and you can use your own strength freely. As long as I have this strength of yours, it will be possible to restructure this world. Come with me. Let's walk out of this dark place and save this world that follows men's logic and is heading to its doom ."

The lips that broke into a smile curled up, and Martha showed a grudging look in her gloomy eyes. The "Qubeley" that had its monoeye blown off overlapped with her face, and Marida could not help but let out a voiceless scream.

Part 2

The club for the tee shot swung down, and the unique sound of a hard ball gliding through the wind as it passed through the sky highly. The ball that was sent flying flew above the fairway entered the blue sky, and the eyes could not find it.

To an outsider, this shot was nicely hit, and there was a little applause from the crowd. The man understood that this should be a form of etiquette, but he did not understand golf at all, and he had no intent of mixing around with the crowd just like that. Bright Noa stared at the back of the man, Ronan Marcenas, standing at the tee ground, who picked up the tee and

handed the club to his caddy. Ronan seemed to notice Bright's stare as he exchanged some words with the elderly man at the tee ground and showed a smile while keeping a sharp look on Bright.

"This way, please."

Patrick Marcenas, who was standing beside Ronan, seemed to notice his intent and whispered. Once he heard the news from the Senate Council, the son-in-law went right to the dock at Sasebo to welcome Bright, not forgetting to introduce himself as the public secretary as he led the other man as someone working behind the scenes. Bright understood that Patrick was showing respect to him, and he did not show any signs of actual contempt under his polite and attentive appearance, but he felt uneasy about this overly exaggerated method that was used. Leaving aside this, there was also no reason why he had to meet Ronan, let alone wait for him on a golf course.

Ronan, who was wearing a pink polo shirt and a visor, withdrew himself from his golf buddies and sat on the passenger seat of the cart. With the overly serious look from Patrick behind, Bright walked towards the man, and adjusted the tie he was unused to wearing. He continued to remain still, partly to annoy. Ronan stared at the dazzling greenery on the course, "Sorry to make you come all the way here." and spoke up first.

"I wanted to invite you to our house, but unfortunately, the outside world is sticking its eyes too tightly on us."

"No…what would you, as the chairman of the Settlement Issues Council, have with a soldier like me?"

Bright restrained his tone, but still expressed his intent. Ronan moved his face slightly and gave a sharp probing look on the other man. "You don't play this?" after asking that, he turned his sights to the wide golf course.

"This isn't popular in space."

Bright felt that his answer was not appropriate, but he had nothing else to answer. At that moment, the sound of the wind could be heard as the next player swung the next shot, and Ronan applauded courteously as he said with a wry look, "You're really an honest man!"

"It's good to know that you're a man just like what they said, but at this point, I really have to ask you to play along for now. I hope that you'll call me as if you're familiar with me. The car's waiting at the clubhouse."

The sharp glance briefly showed the majesty Ronan had as a heavyweight politician, and he then, he showed a casual smile as he got up from the golf cart. At that moment, his fat body swayed slightly as he nearly tumbled onto the ground with his knee. Bright wanted to reach out his arm to help, only to see Ronan's fat face look right back at him and wink with a smile. Having understood that the 'skit' had started, he frowned. "What's wrong?" the other players asked as they showed their concern.

"It's fine, don't worry. I've not been feeling well this morning."

"That won't do. Do you want to head back first?"

"I guess, since I managed to pull quite a lead in the last round…"

With the caddy supporting him, Ronan sat on the golf cart. Bright did not look at the back of the man as he exchanged looks with Patrick, did not look at the other players who seemed like influential figures as he left the tee ground.

There was an impressive looking clubhouse after they went by the lush green carpet of the 7th hole. To soldiers, who did not have much hope in standing out, there were not many chances for them to walk amidst Mother Nature, let alone step onto a member-only golf course. Bright refused to sit on the cart together with Patrick, who invited him on, and decided to walk

to the clubhouse as Ronan, who would reach back earlier, would need some time to change clothing. Since there were eyes from the 'outside world' watching, Bright determined that it would be best if they did not move at the same time.

Bright was invited to ride on the private jet at the Sasebo factory located in the Eastern half of Asia, and more than 6 hours passed before he reached the golf course in Atlanta on North America. The radiating and dazzling light that was shining down here gave a sense of appropriate greenery, and it felt completely different from the light humid air in the Far East. The green fields on the golf course were lined up neatly like how it was in a colony, but they did not give the feeling that they were able to hide the climate of the landscape. This lifeforce that could not be restrained was Earth's characteristic, and as Bright understood that he was amongst this, his unhappiness over being summoned here out of a sudden was more or less quelled. Thinking back, he realized that he had been moving between the dark ship bridge and the docks ever since he came to Earth, and did not manage to walk under the sun properly for once. He viewed this as a temporary solace; that it was not a bad idea to bask in the forest of a high-class golf course. To him, who was in the latter half of the 30s, a lack of exercise was an issue he could not take lightly.

But once he takes a step out of this place, he would have no choice but to understand the intention why Ronan summoned him. As the commander of the independent force Londo Bell, the politicians would view him as a pawn that could be summoned easily. Since the other party had arranged this private meeting through a minister of the General Staff, there had to be some reason why the other party took the trouble to look for him. The situation was such that they had to keep it a secret from the media and even the stares from the government—either way, he hoped not to be ferried to the Marcenas mansion forcefully by being stuffed into the trunk. As he played around with this imagination that could not be considered a joke, he strolled past the turf that was mysteriously trimmed neatly. The strong sunlight of Southern USA caused his head, which was still not used to the jet lag, to hurt somewhat.

Part 3

At this time, there were quite a few ships equipped with Minovsky Particle Engines. An I-field was a forcefield that was created through the Minovsky Particles that were formed by the engines, and the Spacecraft had an I-field that covered the bottom of the ship, lifting the Minovsky Craft through

the recoil caused by the conductive material. All spacecrafts could operate within the atmosphere through this product of Minovsky physics. In other words, the era of 'space battleships' flying in the skies of Earth had come.

However, except for a minority, those spacecrafts lacked the ability to return back to earth. Even if they could use the Ballute to enter Earth, they could not leave the gravity field with their own thrusters and enter space again. That would be due to the insufficient output from a Minovsky Craft. Once it landed onto, it would require an external force like a booster or a mass driver to send it back into space. As they resembled the Earth orbital fleet, operation flexibility and costs were issues that were commonly deemed necessary for improvement as soon as possible.

In the end, there was a short-term goal to develop low input high output Minovsky crafts that was basically achieved the previous year. This engine that was the basis for the new generation was first installed on the flagship of Londo Bell, "Ra Cailum", and was to be tested under gravitational conditions. The commander of this ship was also the commander of Londo Bell, Captain Bright Noa, and most likely, Bright's personal experiences played a part in his nomination. During the One Year War, there was a spacecraft with a Minovsky craft on it that had the ability to return to Earth. It was one of the few exceptions— the Pegasus-class assault landing carrier "White Base", and after the war, this ship was hailed as a symbol of the Federation army's victory, and under such conditions, Bright was promoted to Captain.

A young man who was almost 20 years old was made a candidate officer due to the circumstances of battle, was ordered to command the first mobile suit mothership that Federation had, and finally became a crucial member of the final counterattack. These heroic exploits highlighted the end of the great War, but to him, this was simply a result of coincidence. It was coincidence that the port was attacked by the Zeon forces, that all the important crew members, including the captain, were killed; it was also coincidence that he led a few lucky survivors, some refugee civilians inside the ship, but were able to break through the enemy forces as a single ship and attracted the attention of the Zeon army; and it was a coincidence amongst coincidences that the prototype mobile suit that was recently completed at that time, the RX 78-2 "Gundam" was able to create astounding accomplishments, to a point that the entire Zeon army called it the "White Devil". Without these coincidences, the High Command of the Federation military would not have set their eyes on "White Base", and Bright would most probably be deployed to other positions. If he was not

forced to lead the ship alone as bait, he would not have ended up being a crucial figure in the final battle, and the responsibility that rested on him at this point would naturally belong to someone else.

But in fact, the reputation of "White Base" had spread throughout the land. The ex-captain was nominated for this experiment because the mass-production plan of new Minovsky crafts with equivalent capabilities was began. Thus, Bright secretly wondered that his life was controlled by the coincidence that happened 17 years ago, as a man like Ronan caught sight of him and invited him to his private residence to talk. He was not stuffed into the trunk, but he held his breath for almost an hour in the limousine that had tinted glass on it. He walked through the doors of the Marcenas' residence, and finally met Ronan face to face with the afternoon sun shining into the office. Patrick waited for a short while before heading back to the election firm, and nobody else came in after the old butler served tea. The atmosphere in the office that had the flair of long history this political family had felt really heavy with only 2 people, pressing down on his mind and body that had no affinity for politics.

However, the greenery of trees that could be seen through the windows were stunning, and Bright could only concern himself with looking outside the window before Ronan sat down on the sofa opposite. The verdant forest that surrounded the mansion was different from the thoroughly protected greenery of a golf course, radiating a charm that seemed like it would swallow the entire land fully if it was left alone. Bright recalled that his wife once mentioned that the sunlight had its own flavor. There was light shining inside the colony, reflected off mirrors, but they did not have any flavor. In contrast, one could smell the unique flavor the sunlight had on Earth, and she did mention that it was a presence even science could not determine that Earth became a nursery of life. No matter how they recreated an environment similar to Earth, it would be impossible for them to create Life even after a billion years—

"Your son is studying Botany in High School, right?"

It seemed that Ronan detected Bright's feelings as he sat down on the sofa in the office and spoke up. Feeling somewhat panicky in his heart, Bright turned his eyes to the front and answered, "Yes, you do know." as he seemed like he was stumped for words.

"I sent someone to investigate before. This stretch still has some vegetation that was from the old centuries. If you're interested, you can

bring him along here. I can recommend a job for him if he has any intent to become a vegetation inspector."

Ronan's stare showed no other intent, but these words clearly showed the clear disparity in identities between them unconditionally. Bright sensed that the other man was really intending to pull him over, and answered back with a cautious voice "Hm…"

"You have a daughter at home as well. Your wife was the former steering operator of "White Base", and I heard that she's a direct relative of the president of Yashima heavy duty Company."

"That was all the in the past as she gave up on the right to take over."

Bright's tone sounded like he wanted to interrupt, and seemed to clearly show Ronan that he had an overly clean life. Ronan gave a wry smile and continued, "If we mention about your exploits, Captain, you were made the commander of "White Base" at a young age, and became the captain of a military shuttle later on. During the Gryps Conflict, you joined the Anti-Earth Union Group and clashed against the infamous Titans numerous times. Your name had spread far and wide during the 2 Neo Zeon Wars, and now you're the commander of Londo Bell…I never expected you to have no ambitions for politics even though you have such talent."

"Talent?"

"Looking at your experience and popularity, Captain, the public and organizations will embrace you. No matter how dire the area is, you will definitely be elected as long as our political party is supporting from behind."

Ronan showed a smile and closed his mouth for the time being. Bright did not expect the other man to flatter him, and could only take a sip of red tea.

"Even though that kind of response from you is worthy of recognition…well, that's good. It's because you're such a person that I want to request something out of you."

Ronan opened the document file beside him and handed it over. Looks like we're getting straight to the point now, Bright thought as he briefly browsed through the file that was not considered thick.

It seemed to be the data of a space merchant ship the ship management authority had, and it contained the specifics of the shipping company.

There were photos of its registration that were submitted, some battlefields, and what looked like a photo of the ship in question rushing into the atmosphere included inside. It was hard to tell, but one could see something like a mobile suit on the red-hot ship body.

"This is a disguised merchant ship of the "Sleeves". It landed on Earth approximately 10 days ago."

Ronan said, and Bright looked back at the photo of the merchant ship called the "Garencieres".

"Currently, the army, navy and air force are all searching for it. I hope that your ship can join in their search."

The test-ship "Ra Cailum" did not receive any orders to mobilize, but Bright had already heard from the Senate Council of the news about Federation army fighting against Neo Zeon in a skirmish, causing the relic of "Laplace" to be destroyed. Bright could not help but lift his head, but could only hold in his words and shut his mouth the moment he heard Ronan continue, "I have another condition."

"I hope that you can find it faster than any other squads searching for it and act according to my orders. Of course, I will try my best to allow you to move as and when you please, and I'll send any information I get to you first."

"In other words, you want to use the "Ra Cailum" for your personal use?"

This is ridiculous. You're basically acting like a warlord here. Bright did not restrain the disgust he had immediately as he put the closed file onto the table. Ronan then narrowed his eyes, "I heard that when Earth is in crisis, Londo Bell is a squad that can make decisions on its own and take action." and immediately continued to say.

"I hope you can understand that now is the moment. This is an operation we have to hide from the internal government, and I can't leave it to an officer who might mistake this as a military duty for promotions."

"I'm really troubled that you overrate me as such. I'm just someone who stepped onto an unorthodox path coincidentally, and in fact—"

"that's because you're the commander of a Newtype squad, and as a soldier, this title caused you to be looked over based on pragmatic reasons. Am I right?"

These words passed through Bright's chest, and Ronan's stare at him felt exceptionally sharp. Bright could not answer immediately as he secretly clenched the fists on his knees tightly.

"The names of the "Gundam" and "White Base" are still well known today. After that, you became the captain of the Gundam-type mobile suits mother ships, so it is not inconceivable for the Federation to think that you're the commander of a Newtype squad. You are reliable, but looking at your nature, you are a double-edged sword that can form a threat to the Federation…that's most likely what the Senate Council appraise you as, that if not used well, you might end up hurting them, and it might not be an exaggeration to say that you're similar to a nuclear weapon."

"A nuclear weapon, is it…?"

Bright could not help but give a wry look the moment he heard this exaggerated description of him. If "Gundam" pilots through many generations who had Newtype abilities could be seen as a coincidence, it would be a coincidence that he was in charge of him. But no matter how much he tried to explain, he could not overturn the results that were public to the world, and he could not gain Ronan's agreement. This experience was something he clearly understood.

Most importantly, Ronan was clearly hoping that he, who separated himself from worldly affairs, would be on the same page, "If you show too much of your abilities, you'll end up inviting disaster, and your situation is an example of this." Bright could hear some form of compassion from his tone as he stared at the face of this politician in front of him.

"If you're willing, I can recommend you to Central…but I won't bother saying such opportunistic words since you most probably won't wish for it. However, the problems caused by this disguised merchant ship have something to do with "Industrial 7" and "Palau". As the commander of Londo Bell, I suppose you'll be concerned about the safety of the "Nahel Argama", right?

The moment Bright looked forward, a powerful hit struck him hard. The "Nahel Argama" itself was entrusted a mission from the Senate Council, and its whereabouts were a mystery to its original affiliation, Londo Bell. Even as Bright questioned the current situation, the Council would only say that all details were classified and would not reveal their whereabouts. The High Council too remained silent of this, and any attempts to gather information through the political route were completely useless. The

situation was suspicious enough for him to catch that something was amiss, and he wondered if the ship had anything to do with the recent terrorist attacks, but Ronan told him that everything he thought had enough was true.

I see, so this is what he's planning. Bright himself noticed him he was completely baited as he glared over. Ronan however did not mind as he continued with a calm tone, emphasizing, "Since I don't want to feel that I'm using a hostage on you, I'll tell you everything."

"The "Nahel Argama" is delayed on Earth's orbit, and it's something the Vist Foundation pulled through the Senate Council. Have you heard of the Vist Foundation?"

"I did hear of rumors…"

"They're also looking for where the disguised ship is. If we can find this disguised ship first, we'll be able to have an advantage over the Vist Foundation. This will not only ensure that the "Nahel Argama" can return to its original squad, but also clear out all the cadres in the Senate Council who are allies of the Foundation. Only a soldier like you can carry out this kind of work. Do you understand what I mind?"

"I do understand that this is a chance to reverse the fortunes…but what's the problem with that disguised ship?"

"The "Laplace Box"."

Ronan immediately lost his smile the moment he said these words. Bright swallowed the shocking words in his heart as he looked back at the face in front of him.

"That disguised ship has an item that was called as such. It'll be best if we can ensure that item, and if there are difficulties, I hope that you destroy it. I allow any forms of actions taken for this aim."

Ronan looked back at him, and his eyes that were not showing any glitter showed no doubts that he was not joking. Bright vaguely understood that this was not some bother that was saddled with for no reason, and looked away from Ronan.

The conservative sector of the Federation and the Vist Foundation had already ingrained themselves deeply inside the Senate Council, starting a secret battle over the "Laplace Box". If he interfered, he would end up in

this savage war of politics. While it was not difficult for him to apologize and refuse, how would he be able to bring back the "Nahel Argama" if he refused? He, as the commander of a non-mainstream force, was rather popular amongst the Defense Ministry Senators who were basically his employers, so if he made use of this relationship—no, the Vist Foundation would immediately know this and block his actions through some means. Politics was a profession based on building relations, and there were no politicians who did not owe others favors. If he started to interfere, the government would start to count favors, and his avenues of investigation would naturally fade out. Once a transaction happened while a soldier could not interfere, the truth would always be hidden.

Simply put, the "Nahel Argama" had treaded into a ditch, and he could not ensure the safety of the crew, let alone let them return. Am I to follow the political route I have no hope in, or do I approach this situation with the mindset of jumping into this ditch as well? Bright sensed that he could not make up his mind, and looked back at Ronan, who did a little guess through his eyes, lowered his head and said as he got up, "Oh yes, I have someone I want you to meet."

Ronan took up the phone on the table and spoke into the receiver, "Call him in." A few moments later, there was the sound of knocking as a young man walked into the room, shocking Ronan. He was not concerned about the deep grey officer uniform the young man was wearing, nor was he concerned about him standing with the cap tucked under his armpit, but that for some reason, the stiff-looking brown eyes gave a similar impression to that of Ronan's.

There was an ensign lapel pin glittering below the boyish-looking face, indicating that he was recently assigned. "I'm Ensign Riddhe Marcenas." The young man raised his hand to salute, and on hearing that, Bright recovered as he stood up to salute before looking over at Ronan. "As you expect, this is my incompetent son." Ronan said this while giving a wry look, and soon looked away from that young man's face as he sat down on the sofa again.

"You might think of it as spoiling my own son here, but can he ride on your ship? He's actually a pilot of Londo Bell."

The tense handsome young man did not look at his father as he merely stared at one point. At this mention, Bright remembered that he inadvertently heard from someone that the son of a Senate Council member was assigned to a squad in Londo Bell. He searched his memory,

recalled the name of the squad he was assigned to, and hid the wavering in his heart as he stared at the boy's face. "Ensign Riddhe…I remember you're assigned to the "Nahel Argama", right?" he asked as he glanced over at Ronan.

"Yes. I'm currently removed from the squad, and I'm now on standby." Ronan ignored this answer from Ensign Riddhe as he showed a vague expression to Bright. Does he want his own son to check on me? Leaving aside how Riddhe managed to leave the "Nahel Argama" alone, Bright understood again that things were set up too perfectly, and endured the sign in him as he stare back at the ensign in front of him. The brown eyes were showing a form of tension different from nervousness as Riddhe too looked back at Bright's face.

"We're also testing the new model mobile suits. There's no other mobile suit for a pilot on the "Ra Cailum" left, you know?"

"Don't worry. The Senate Council sent a prototype mobile suit for me. If there's space on the deck, please allow me to use it."

Even the mobile suit is assigned? Bright could not even raise the strength to be impressed as he slumped back onto the sofa. He looked over at Ronan, who looked certain that he would not refuse, and could not help but sigh before looking up at Riddhe, who was standing upright. Riddhe was not looking down at a superior officer, which was considered a rude thing, as he continued to stare at a corner in a tense manner.

Riddhe was neither facing Bright nor his father. He looked like he was facing something as he desperately tried to stand upright. He looked so tense that he would collapse anytime, hiding the inner weakness within him—right, all the young men who piloted the "Gundams" over the previous generations had this expression. Bright swallowed this unnerving imagination together with the cold tea as he looked back at Ronan. The pillar clock rang, and the vague chime slowly stirred up the atmosphere inside the room.

Part 4

And just like how it arrived, the limousine with the liquid smoke function on its side glass showed the appearance of the visitor in it as it passed through the main door. Mineva felt the tension engulfing the mansion ease up as she let out a soft sigh as she left the window.

Please do not leave this room during this time. It had been an hour since Dwiyon notified here in an apologetic manner, and though they were not so cautious as to lock up the door from the outside, it seemed from the number of men that were sent to patrol around that this visitor must be of some distinct background. Was he a soldier, a policeman, some official from a public security organization, or a politician? Either way, the person that arrived would definitely be someone who could recognize her if they met, and something that will definitely involve her was gradually running. At this point, Mineva realized that when she was wasting them, the people in this mansion were already taking action, not listening to her views as they followed the logic the Federation had.

I want to leave this place. No, I have to leave this place. This hazy anxiety in Mineva started to take shape, and she grabbed onto the chest of her blouse. She had a basic idea of where the security in this kind of mansion and the people patrolling outside were located. Though it was not impossible for her to leave, what should she do immediately afterwards? Even if she wanted to rely on her allies on Earth, she did not know how to make contact with them. Another issue she had to consider too was whether it was appropriate for her to approach the Neo Zeon camp. She knew that she would just be bringing about chaos, and yet she could not do anything—however, was there any other place that would accept her at this time?

It's pointless to panic now. If I stay here, I'll be able to meet the Central figures of the Federation. The logic that had been preventing Mineva from taking action for the past 10 days rose in her mind, but even so, as she refuted in her mind, the knocking echoed through the air inside the room, and Mineva raised her head.

She tidied herself and said with a calm voice, "Please enter." She thought that Dwiyon would be the one telling her that she could head outside, but the one standing outside the door was an unexpected face. Why is it that you're only showing up now? She could not restrain the grudging thoughts in her mind as she immediately turned her face away from the visitor.

"Sorry, can I come in?"

Riddhe looked like he understood Mineva's expression as he asked with a stiff expression, forcing a smile. Mineva felt some apprehension in her heart as she saw this grey officer uniform she had not seen for a long time, "This is your house, you know", and answered as she looked towards the window. She could not restrain her anxiety as she opened the window,

letting the wind outside blow into the room. Riddhe walked into the room with a bitter expression that was plainly shown, and turned his hand behind to close the door.

"I have to return to my position in the army. I'll leave the house tomorrow."

The lace curtains that were swaying with the wind blocked Riddhe's face that suddenly spoke up, and Mineva turned her silent stare to the other end.

"I'm assigned to the flagship of Londo Bell. More or less, I suppose I'll be sent to Africa. This was what I talked about with the commander…"

He spoke in a vague tone, and after that, he lowered his face as his fists that were dangling beside his legs were clenched tightly. "I'm really sorry" he then added, and Mineva sighed secretly in her heart as she saw the body standing in front of her being the embodiment of helplessness.

"I'm the one who said such big words about bringing you here, but I can't help in any way…but this is what I can do now."

Riddhe finished with this unexpectedly forced tone as lifted his head. "What's going on?" Mineva asked as she sensed that there was a surge in the atmosphere of the room.

"The Marcenas family and the Vist Foundation…are like two mirrors facing each other. I only learnt in the past few days that our family lived for so long through such a sorry manner…"

"Sorry…?"

"My family may use some despicable methods to prevent the "Laplace Box" from being revealed, even if it means using you as a hostage."

Riddhe spoke up and turned his face away. Mineva felt some vague presence surrounding the room starting to take an actual shape, pressing down on her shoulders, and she turned her face towards Riddhe, unable to say anything.

That night, when Riddhe hugged her and bellowed, "I actually brought you to such an unthinkable place, the real meaning of the words he said was—

"To prevent that from happening, we have to get the "Box" before the Foundation or Neo Zeon, or destroy the key of the "Box"."

"The key…the "Unicorn"?"

Mineva barely managed to swallow the name Banagher down her mouth as she spoke. Riddhe looked like he did not want to consider this issue as he looked away, not answering her doubts.

"So…can you become a member of our family?"

In contrast, Riddhe said this without turning around to look. Mineva did not understand what he was saying to her as she frowned.

"How about you abandon Zeon and the Zabi family, and become a member of the Marcenas family? In that case, my dad will—"

To Riddhe, the last words were probably something he did not expect. His eyelids twitched, and he seemed to recover as he went quiet and lowered his eyes that were once facing Mineva.

"…Even if it's just a formality, this meaningless war will end like that, and you'll be free."

"Do you feel…that can be considered freedom?"

Mineva too lowered her sights, her heart feeling the sand-like bitterness. These words sounded too tragic to both the speaker and the listener, and even though they were just a few connected words, she could understand that her body and mind were gradually being contaminated. Something very important was starting to fall off, unable to be retrieved again—this kind of disappointment spread in her heart. Why must I stay here? Why did I come here? This feeling of wanting to cry out loud caused her to clench her fists tightly. Riddhe remained silent, unwilling to stare at Mineva's eyes.

Standing over there was the Federation officer who convinced her to break the deadlock and come to Earth. He was a stranger who was indoctrinated with something, who understood something, and who spent the past several days destroying himself. Mineva had nothing to say to this stranger, and she felt helpless, like she was abandoned in the vacuum. The reason for her to continue remaining here had vanished completely. I have to leave this place before my body and mind are clouded—

"…How to put it? Well, I…this man here seemed to have become a member of the Marcenas family."

Riddhe muttered and turned away. "Sorry, forget what I just said." As he said that, he went towards the door, and Mineva watched him leave

silently. Suddenly, she saw Riddhe's back stop in its tracks as he turned his face slightly to her.

"No matter what happens, I'll definitely protect you. I just hope you can believe in this."

Riddhe did not wait for Mineva to answer as he opened the door and walked out. She felt that these words sounded despicable, but she could find no words to connect with the Riddhe in space. She did not say anything as she watched him leave. No matter how he would explain it, that line sounded like a marriage proposal. Once the door closed, Mineva had this thought in her mind as she felt shame and disappointment lunge at her again.

It's not that Riddhe's a bad man. No matter who it is, I don't wish to deal with something major in life like this. Mineva understood that this was a childish form of anger from her as she leaned to the window to breathe the air outside. The forest that surrounded the residence was thick and dark, and the sense of dead-end despair was forced into her eyes.

Part 5

Despite growing up in completely different environments, he unexpectedly felt a sense of familiarity from Loni Garvey. He saw her from afar, standing in the shadow a building that was like an abandoned place, arguing with a middle-aged man who looked like a bad guy, and felt that he could understand why he thought this way.

If they wanted to enter the capital of the Federation government, Dakar, they would have to be sufficiently prepared. Not only did they have to let their vehicles get inspected when they were interrogated, but they also needed an ID card that would act as a passport. Loni landed the VTOL carrier in the desert on the borders of Dakar, and ferried the group of people to the city neighbor. At this point, she seemed to be carrying out negotiations for not only Zinnerman's fake ID card, but also Banagher's. He could not hear their conversation, but from the ugly expression on the man, who looked like someone doing underground business, Banagher could imagine him raising 3 fingers at the other man, angrily asking Loni what was going on. "She sure got patience." Zinnerman muttered on the back seat, but Banagher ignored him as he continued to peek at Loni, who was fighting alone, through the window of the car. After about 10 minutes of

negotiates, the worker looked like he finally admitted defeat as he backed off, and Loni took two ID cards back the car.

She undid the shawl that originally covered her face, and put the slightly short mantle onto her shoulder. Her long-sleeved shirt and tight pants covered her skin, and as she revealed her slightly wavy black hair, her clothing did not feel as thick and heavy as before when she was completely covered in a sheet of cloth. "Sorry to keep you waiting." Loni said as she sat down on the driver seat in a very dexterous manner, and Banagher felt really flustered for some reason. As Loni reached for the front passenger seat to reverse, Banagher deliberately moved his body away from her as he looked outside the window. Unknowingly, several children were gathered on the cracked road, giving looks that could be described as ominous instead of curious.

Amongst the shadows that started to gather on both sides of the building, there was a young boy of around 12, 13 years old, seemingly the leader of the gang. He spat at the window, giving an extremely ominous looking stare. Banagher instinctively sensed that he would take action, and gave a meaningful stare at the driver seat, saying, "Miss Loni…" Loni silently turned the steering wheel and let the bumper hit the large trashbin on the roadside, pushed the gear lever forward and stepped on the gas.

The vehicle immediately accelerated as it rushed down the road. At the same time, the children started throwing stones and empty cans at the vehicle, and the blunt impact sounds rang in the vehicle. There were small figures appearing at the road in front, and there were children in running shirts and pants, throwing stones at the vehicle. It was unknown if anyone was throwing stuff from the windows of the buildings down the streets as there was a pot of plant that was thrown onto the windshield, causing him to cringe, "Don't worry, it's bulletproof glass." But Loni said this without changing expressions.

She nonchalantly let the vehicle accelerate and turned the steering wheel to dodge the children, not causing any danger. Banagher saw the emerald eyes that radiated an adult like glow, and again realized that she resembled his mother a lot, just like he thought. He stared at the profile of the children that were becoming smaller on the window behind, and the cheers of local accents and profanities gradually faded away. As the last piece of stone hit the windshield, the vehicle passed through the alley in the next moment as it arrived on the main street.

The trashbin that was sent flying away rolled around, letting out a sharp screech on the dusty tarmac. The children remained in the alley, unwilling to come out onto the main street as they knew that this was not their territory, and that there would be a terrible judgment awaiting them if they let the hoodlums ruling the main street lose face. Banagher thought about how those children were most likely illegal immigrants who did not even get the chance to attend school, and as he recalled their ominous expressions, he seemed to sense the scent of his hometown.

In that old colony he stayed in, the town he grew up in was one of absolute desolation, and even the stench of the sewers would spread from the common ducts. If his mother did not have that determination not to be influenced by the rest and maintain her composure to her surroundings, Banagher too would probably become one of the children throwing stones outside. If he started to work with people who had the same mindset as him, and continued to fight for territory, his will to leave the desolated place would have decreased. If that were the case, he would not have the chance to see the poverty zone on Earth—

"You're pretty used to it."

Loni said as she activated the windshield wiper. On hearing that, Banagher heard his heart beat wildly.

"This isn't the first time you're here?'

"Yeah…I grew up in a colony, and it feels the same here."

"Oh." Loni turned away her surprised stare as she answered, looking in front as she did not pursue further. The side of her face showed a earnest sense, and Banagher could not breathe for some reason as he looked away to ask, "What I'm more concerned is, is this good for you?"

"I'm referring to your dress up. I heard that women from Islam can't show other people their skin."

"There're several sects amongst the Muslim believers in Islam; all sorts of people in fact, from the orthodox sect that follows the teachings word for word to the liberal sect that adapts according to their environment. The former has more or less died out completely, and speaking of which, if I'm an orthodox, you'll have to be careful if you see my looks."

"Why?"

"You'll either be killed or forced to marry me. Only one of these two options."

These direct words entered Banagher's chest, and he knew that his embarrassed face was turning red. Sitting behind, Zinnerman sneered as he brought his face between the driver and front passenger seats.

"This young lady's father is the chairman of Garvey Enterprises, and wants to enter the Central command of the political and commerce world through electricity generation. It's impossible if he doesn't act a little more civilized."

"That kind of person's also a Neo Zeon supporter?"

"Isn't there a saying that the enemy of the enemy is my friend? Ever since the War, the Garvey family had been assisting Zeon. Those who are more aware of intelligence know this. the beliefs is a different thing as compared to business. The enterprises that bought electricity from us cheaply won't care about where the amount they paid will go to. As long as politics are supported by those enterprises, the Federation government won't do anything to us "Descendants of Dubai"."

"The "Descendant of Dubai"?"

This name proves that the grudges mankind has will not disappear easily… I see it."

There were tall buildings gathered in the far distance as they headed down the road lined with buildings that had dirty roofs on both side. Banagher forgot Loni's slightly hazy look as he brought his face to the window to look afar.

The skyscrapers looked exceptionally dazzling when basked under the sunlight, and the buildings that were engulfed by the sand surrounding them felt very different from the surrounding dusty buildings. The silver skyscrapers did not look like they fitted in with the blue sky in the background, and it looked like a palace of glass that was beyond this world. He could see 3, 4 of them…and if he went closer to look, he might see even more. They're not just 100m tall, right? Anyway, this is something that can only be seen on Earth. Banagher showed a stunned expression as he stared at the skyscrapers amidst the clouds in the distance. There would not be any of such majestic skyscrapers in a colony, which was restricted by the range for the centrifuge effect.

As Banagher stuck his face on the window, Zinnerman too showed a sharp glance at the group of skyscrapers. Loni however looked in front as she said,

"That's Dakar, capital of the Federation government."

Part 6

The city of Dakar was located on the Westernmost side of Africa, just off the peninsula of Cape Verde in the Atlantic Ocean. This had been an important trading cove in the Atlantic region ever since the old age, and had prospered as an important place of commerce for the West and Africa. Also, the course of the toughest automobile racing event in the world, the Dakar Rally was located here, making this place more famous.

On the other hand, Dakar had been a slave trading region during the past middle region, and it was said that this place sent more black slaves to the West than any other port. However, this seemed to be a rumor that was made after Dakar became the capital of the Federation government. Ironically, after hundreds of years, the trading port that shipped out black slaves this time became the capital of the Federation government that forcefully controlled the population by sending people to space—not withstanding whether that could be read as a malice of history, the fact remained that those unhappy with the government would raise this point to cause trouble. The vehicle ferrying Banagher and company entered the city from the coastal road on the south side and head off to the plateau area in the middle of the city. The hook-shaped south peninsula of Cape Verde could be seen, and it looked like an independent cap from the plateau. The landscape that surrounded the sea was covered with tall buildings, and the bustling scene was so astounding that even Manhattan before the war could not compare to it.

Actually, it was after the war that the Capital was set up here. After losing their capital during the One Year War, the Federation government decided to move to Dakar as part of the revival plan. They used the official residence in the self-government zone of Senegal and the administrative facilities, and spent several years moving the offices of the capital to this place. However, this action showed that their underestimated the environmental impact caused by the colony thrown down on Earth. The desertification that came from the western side of Sahara was already starting to devour the Eastern side of the city, and it was said that in a 100 years afterwards, Dakar may end up in a desert. After that War, the flames

of war swirled in this place again, during both the Gryps Conflict and the Neo Zeon War, and the government had no time to steady itself as it started plans to relocate the capital again. However, the plan to move the capital to Lhasa in Tibet was really an illusion that appeared for a fleeting moment. During the Second Neo Zeon War that was also known as "Char's Counterattack", the target of the colony drop was Lhasa.

As the Central parliament hall was in its final phase of movement, the mining quarry colony "5th Luna" that was moved from its orbit landed on Lhasa, destroying them both. The senators from the Central council managed to detect Neo Zeon army's intentions, and had already escaped from Lhasa before the unknowing civilians could. To the Federation government, though the anti-Federation sentiments would rise as a result, it was really fortunate of them to be able to save their human talents in Central. As the plan to move to Lhasa was still in place, they decided to move the capital back to Dakar immediately, and the vast capital sum that was originally planned to be moved to Lhasa was moved back to Dakar completely. As a result, this new Manhattan of the Universal Century had a sudden explosive-like rush of constructions, tall buildings that were built on the plateau area, and became a pavilion on sand…that was what Loni explained to Banagher.

Dakar had a landscape that was surrounded by the sea and the desert, and the skyscrapers definitely contained more than just halls and all sorts of enterprises. There were also high class hotels there and shops of all sorts of retail down the streets. Of course, it was also necessary to have residential areas for those in the service sector, schools and hospitals as well, and these facilities were all moved to Pointe des Almadies. The central functions of politics and economy were gathered at the plateau, but even so, the scene in front of him just looked too packed. Banagher looked up at the skyscrapers, and had the same feeling as when he went to visit an outer planet. Half of the skyscrapers were still in construction, and the large cranes stood tall in the sky, looking to go even higher. The desert was spreading to the city, but there was still so much land, so was there a need to actually cluster everything in this area? The Earth is so vast, yet people have to gather these tall buildings together—

"They're like the pillars supporting the sun…"

As far as Banagher could remember, he had never seen such tall constructs other than the pillar supporting the artificial sun in the colony. He could not help but mutter, and both Loni and Zinnerman gave

meaningful smiles, which caused him to realize that he sounded poetic. He did not intend to deliberately explain this, "This is really weird, you know?" and said this as he pouted.

"They built the buildings so high because they want to get closer to space, right? But those people aren't willing to leave Earth."

"They never intended to look up at space. They just wanted to look down at Earth. Earthnoids are like that."

Zinnerman said. In that case, won't those who enter space be able to look down at Earth completely? Banagher instinctively thought of this, but at the same time, he understood that his reasoning was completely wrong in the first place, so he turned around to look at the main street called Pompidou Street. The luxurious boutiques, jeweler shops, and slightly stylish looking open-aired cafes looked completely different from the desolate slums from before that were about to be devoured by the desert, and it was to such an extent that one would wonder whether they could find even the slightest speck of sand here. The people heading up and down the streets were dressed brightly, and even if he was mistaken, he definitely saw children dressed in running shirts. The sea surrounding the city could making the fish market a tourist attraction, and it would not be strange to see those involved in the fishing business on the streets, but Banagher just could not see those kinds of people. Is there a checkpoint to inspect on the dress code when people walk in and out of the streets?

The moment he thought about that, Banagher felt that the city lacked a sense of life, and felt a chilling sense from this scene that was filled completely with an artificial presence, and he expressed his thoughts to Loni. Loni however chuckled, "Only Spacenoids can express such thoughts, huh?" and said this.

"There's no real separate regulation for this, but that they naturally avoid coming out. This is a common theme for the cities under management. Each block is arranged neatly like a chessboard, and the way people live will have to change according to their whims. It should be more detailed in a colony, right? In that place where everything's artificial, people will wish to live a messy life—"

"And those living in the harsh natural conditions will wish to live in the orderly cities under management, right…so they're basically hoping for something they don't have?"

"That's right. The middle of these two extremes is probably the most suitable environment for humanity, but humanity doesn't know how to restrain themselves and stop midway."

The vehicle drove past the streets, and the skyscrapers gradually vanished behind. The wide line of sight showed a green stretch full of trees, the only exception being a wide plaza that was empty. There was an oval-shaped park in the middle of the plaza, and there were police cars deployed around the park. Banagher managed to make out the words 'Prime Minister Office' from the road sign, and suddenly felt a little thirsty. What then appeared in front of him was a group of office buildings that were not too tall, simple and steady looking with a relief at the tip of the triangle, making the place look like a temple-like construct. There were guards standing in front of a white building that was most likely the prime minister office, and the building that stood in front, lined around the ring-shaped road and took approximately 200m worth of land was—

"That's the parliament hall…"

"That's right. That's the headquarters of the Federation government, the place where all the representatives from every country on Earth is gathered for Central Meetings."

Loni's malt-colored skin showed a slight sense of tension as she continued, "It's also, the new coordinates given by the Laplace Program…"

Zinnerman looked like he had difficulty breathing as he silently looked up. The group did not head off directly to the hotel where Mahdi Garvey was waiting, but took a detour on the roads in the city to check on the situation around the parliament house. Banagher's interest in sightseeing faded away. He felt his stomach become heavier due to tension, and looked up at the building that could be considered the symbol of the Federation government. There was a white rectangular building that was approximately 30 levels tall amidst the 6 level buildings lined down the stretch. It did not try to cover or boast the tremendous authority it boasted as it showed its face that lacked empathy towards the sun of Africa.

Part 7

On a normal working day, it would not be difficult to enter the parliament hall. Even without a prior appointment, one could visit as long as they asked for permission at the registration window of the Lower House. They would have to follow the guidance of the security personnel in the

buildings, but the courtyard of the parliament hall was in fact an open place, and one could take as many photos as they wanted. They would also need to proceed through two checkpoints, one for luggage checking and one for metal detection, but one could say that entering that place was as easy as entering a park or a plaza.

In fact, there were surveillance cameras set up all over the place to watch the visitors, and if there were anyone who would cause the slightest suspicion, there would be security personnel rushing in to surround them with sub-machine guns. On this day, it seemed that there was a primary school attending this place for a social studies lesson, and there was a scene of students of around 7, 8 years old facing the front courtyard, led by a female security guard as they moved along. However, the armed guards who were standing around caused the atmosphere to feel rather weird. Had it always been like this? Or did the recent terrorist attacks caused them to strengthen their security? Banagher could not tell which was the correct, as he looked up at the central corridor that was 3 levels tall. He climbed up the stairs, and saw that there was a set of bronze doors on both sides of the First Prime Minister bronze statue. Each door weighed 5 tones, and it was said that these two doors would only be opened during a Senate election or when a newly elected senator entered for the first time. Normally, they would enter from the two corridors on both the left and right side of the Upper and Lower House. The security was tight as there were poles set up on the corridors with surveillance cameras on top of them, foldable barricades and guards on standby. The security personnel that were equipped with bulletproof vests and sub-machine guns looked as serious as Daguza and the other ECOAS members.

The surveillance cameras would turn randomly, quietly noting that it was not a mere decoration. Since I'm caught in such an uproar, maybe my appearance is recorded amongst those that needs to be watched. Banagher tried his best not to look at the cameras as he would mix around with the children or other visitors deliberately. At this moment, Zinnerman tapped him on the shoulder lightly and reminded,

"You'll look even more suspicious like that. Walk properly."

After whispering this, he immediately started to turn his head around to look while pretending to be like a country bumpkin. Since Zinnerman's face was not exposed, I guess I should be fine. Banagher convinced himself with this illogical reasoning as tried his best to look natural. But at this moment, he started to be concerned with the sounds of the jet engines that

would appear and disappear from time to time, and looked up at the blue sky lit by the afternoon sun quite a few times.

He could see two flying machines passing by above the central corridor, about 10 levels above the central building from where he was standing. They rose to about 1km in height, and these wingless machines that glided through the atmosphere with their round lifting boards, looked like alien hovercrafts that people imagined a long time ago. "Those aren't fighter jets, they're transformable mobile suits." Zinnerman muttered softly, and Banagher felt a little frightened within as he chased after where the machines went. Those machines seemed to hover above parliament hall regularly, and they could not be seen after they went behind the silhouette of the building.

If those were transformable mobile suits, the reason why there were so many empty lands around the parliamentary hall would be self-explanatory. This showed that the security management did plan for them to land in front of the parliament hall and establish a defense line before anything happened. Of course, the forces deployed on the ground would immediately take action and respond according to the enemy's attacks. Banagher did see a patrolling GM mobile suit on a hovercraft when he went down the road along the coastline. Most likely, there might be tank-shaped mobile suits hidden underneath.

"If we try to barge in here directly, we'll be peppered with holes here. It is possible if we attack from above, but…"

"The "breaking horn" mobile suit can't determine the situation in front of it if it can't stand here."

It seemed that Loni had known about the data. "That's right." Zinnerman sighed and admitted.

"Petty tricks can't fool that "Gundam". Maybe we have to cover it with some hood and drag it along with a trailer…?"

Banagher looked at the armored cars laid around the parliament hall, and even he could understand that this plan was not practical. The coordinates indicated by the Laplace Program was right at the point he was standing—the courtyard of the parliament hall's middle corridor. "It seems that my father has his own thoughts regarding this." Banagher heard Loni's words from behind, walked away from the duo, and looked up at the sky.

It's hot. Even though it's not as maddeningly hot as the desert, the hot air mixed with the sea breeze is dampening the skin, and it feels like I'm in a steamer, waiting to be cooked. I can't think of anything if I stand here. No, just standing here alone shows that my mind is not working properly. To think that I would be standing together with soldiers of Neo Zeon, looking up at the Federation's parliamentary hall, planning an intrusion that's no different from a terrorist attack…

But that was not all he was thinking. He, who wanted to understand the situation, who wanted to understand how important he was to this situation, truly existed, and if there was a need to take action, he would probably be willing to do it. The mentality Banagher would not have a few moment ago was sprouting inside him. That's because I want to know the answer, Banagher affirmed in his heart. He wanted to know what was hidden inside the "Laplace Box", and he wanted to know Cardeas' intent for opening it. Would it be just like what Alberto said, that he planned everything to create chaos of war? Or was there some other motive? As long as he could not get a clear answer to this doubt, Banagher would not know how to proceed.

That was why he was willing to help search for the "Box". But if a battle was started because of it—It seemed that it was free time for the children, and their excited cries rang in his eyes as he suddenly felt dazed. He was surrounded by the hot air, gravity and the children running around. He put his hand on his dazed head, and as he arrived in front of the stairs of the central corridor, his eyes were caught by the stone tablet in front if it.

Below the feet of the first Prime Minister's statue that overlooked the courtyard, there was a hexagonal flat surface that reflected the sunlight, a large object that was 1m in length on every side. There were small words carved on this surface, and on a step below it, there was an explanatory level. Banagher stood at the bottom of the steps, staring at the explanatory words, "That's the Universal Century Charter" only to look back in shock after hearing this voice. Loni approached Banagher's back and looked up at the stone tablet.

"This charter that was announced together with the Change of Eras speech is the basis of the Federation government. To you Spacenoids, it's a curse that decided your fate for the latter 100 years."

"Curse?"

"Look at the 9th line there." Loni pointed at the multiple lines on the stone tablet and continued "All space cities, as self-maintaining bodies of the Federation, are to fulfill their own functions, and their basic authority is to be given to the Central government…the other articles are only stated briefly. Don't you find this one especially detailed? The space administrative plan the Federation set is all based around it. It's not too much of a stretch to say that all the battles that started since the One Year War was based on this."

On a closer look, there were numerous names on the clause, and all the representatives of each country, with the signature of Ricardo Marcenas, the First Prime Minister, being on top. A remote laser would sign the signatures on the stone tablet together with the handwriting on the writing pad, and it was signed on the night the change of eras would happen, in the prime minister's residence of "Laplace". Looking at the explanatory pad, this charter was established in the residence, and was planned to be released to the entire world during the change of eras. Banagher recalled the things her learned in primary school and glanced at Loni's face.

"In the early ages, when the colony was completed, when it was proven that humans could live in space, everything was perfect. That's because Spacenoids are seen as pioneers that created a new world, and never thought about what would happen afterwards. But after people were forced to move, when each Side was large enough to form a country, they finally realized that something was amiss. The Spacenoids did not have any rights to elect the chief of the Sides, let alone the Senate Council. No matter where they went, the sides were not deemed as countries, just self-governing bodies…everything was planned right from the beginning."

The emerald eyes that were like Audrey's gradually had a dull look on them. Banagher felt the intimate feeling disappear off her face, and could not help but look away from her.

"The Federation abandoned the extended population in space to allow Earth and humanity to live on. They not only killed humanity, but also our God. Because they said 'say goodbye to the century of Gods'."

"But the Federation never banned religion itself, right? There're all sorts of cultures all over the world that's maintained, and the First Prime Minister never denied the existence of Gods…"

I believe that a healthy representation of the human spirit would be to ascend to a higher plane, to give laws to ourselves, as we set higher bars

for ourselves.—the words he heard from the ghost in the debris of "Laplace" overlapped with the bronze statue in front of him as he argued. "That's true. Listening to the speech alone, I do believe that Prime Minister Ricardo was a person with liberal thinking." Loni answered, but her expression showed no sign of relaxing.

"That's why he was assassinated, probably by the people who belonged to the Federation government as well. This stone tablet is a copy, the original was blown up together with "Laplace"."

Banagher recalled the tragic and silent devastated scene he saw inside the debris of "Laplace", felt a chill in his stomach, and kept quiet without saying anything.

"Mosques and Churches do remain. If you go to the Southern islands, you'll only see villages of thatched cottages, and there're a lot of people who followed their old customs. But that's just a remnant left behind to preserve the old flair, and it's no different from an attraction in a theme park. Those who think that they could avoid the suffering of the migrants just by putting on exotic clothes can't even brag about their tribe's culture and pride. Just like the Spacenoids now."

"What does that mean."

"The souls of the people on Earth are bounded by gravity, and all of humanity should have moved to space…that was what Char Aznable said when he occupied this parliament hall 9 years ago. Do you have any activists around you who believe in these words even at this point and work hard for it?"

"Just some down and out activists…"

But even amongst the children, those guys just look defeated. Loni looked towards the Banagher who mumbled vaguely, "There're still cries for self-governance ever after the War, but after two Neo Zeon Wars, those cries should have faded completely, right?", and added this vicious line.

"Everyone lost their drive, and felt numbed by the control of the Federation. That goes for the cities on Earth as well, but I feel that those living inside the colonies would become lazy. It's like they're broiling humans."

These merciless words caused Banagher to sense an agitation of a Zeon follower. "Sorry, I didn't have any intent on blaming you." Loni added this

line as she spoke to Banagher, who unknowingly frowned, and looked up at the stone tablet.

"The fact remains that without a powerful organization like the Federation, humanity would have been vanished from Earth a long time ago. However, it had been almost a 100 years since humanity accepted space as their living place. Spacenoids can't stop caring and accept the Federation's rule; those that needs to be changed must be changed."

"Even if…people shed blood for it?"

Banagher did not get any response to his question. He stood beside Loni who gasped slightly, and turned his stare that had nowhere to go back to the stone tablet on the steps.

In order to pass the boundaries of race, religion and country borders, this artificial god called the Federation gift its 10 commandments of the Universal Century to humanity—as a price, some felt like the Gods they believed in was killed, just like Loni; while some like Zinnerman turned to a God of a new era that was born amidst the population abandonment called Zeon. God, hopes, possibilities, anyone could call it however they want. Marida said before that without light, humanity would never live on. Did the Federation rob the light off many when they went through the process of creating a world government? Did they build this stone tablet out of guilt? This stone tablet sealed off the possibility of change humanity planned, restraining them in the name of a shackle. This stone tablet that could barely be lifted by a mobile suit actually created a cover over the world 12 billion people lived in. The owners of the voices showed the distant future, but they could only leave behind a stone tablet that regulated the world…

Gyah! There was a cry from Banagher's feet, ending his time of deep thought. There was a girl who tripped on the way up the stairs, and though she did try to support herself with her hand, she landed hide on the steps. Her petite body froze, and she started bawling all over her face. As Banagher started to back away due to the crying, "Oh my, it hurts, doesn't it?" Loni said as she immediately reached out to help the girl.

"Show me your knee…un, this should be fine. This big sister will clean up the stained area, okay?" Loni said this as she took out a handkerchief to press down on the girl's wound and pat away the dirt on the girl's clothes. Banagher saw her point at the bronze statue to attract the attention of the girl, took out an antiseptic spray from her bag, and quickly sprayed the wound, and he was mesmerized as he watched how she did all these so

easily. "That's okay, don't fall down now!" She said as she patted the girl on the back. The girl nodded and scampered off like a rabbit, and Loni, who watched her leave, suddenly showed an intimate presence on her face again. Banagher felt that the chilly atmosphere was rinsed off, and he felt that Loni was dazzling, not because she was a female.

"You like children, don't you?"

As he spoke, he suddenly thought that the girl should be about two years older than him. Loni however turned her unsuspecting look as she answered,

"Of course. Children are like blocks of possibilities. I want to have around 10 of them."

"10…!"

"That's considered a kind of resistance, I suppose. The greatest resistance a woman can do to prevent their race from being wiped out is to bear more children."

Loni showed a slightly bold smile and left the scene. So she too has such a wonderful thought. Banagher felt a soft breeze enter his head as he saw the back of Loni walk off with a nice posture. Zinnerman, who had been standing beside unknowingly, pointed his bearded face that must have felt stuffy, "Try pursuing her!" and whispered to his ears.

"Those words aren't something that can be said to anyone. I guess she must have an interest in you."

Banagher knew that his face was blushing, and it was not because of the surrounding temperature. "Now's not the time for this!" Banagher pouted as he said and chased after Loni, with Zinnerman snickering behind. It seemed like it was time for the children to return home as the teacher's whistle rang from afar.

Part 8

Goreé Island used to be a slave trading port, but had become a tourist attraction at this point, and the Empire Hotel was built on the coast where Goreé Island could be seen from. This hotel was 150 levels tall, and had more than 4,000 rooms. The construction and lodging fees of this building were higher than those in the same industry in the city of Dakar which was

bustling with business and resort hotels, and it was considered a hotel of the highest calibre in this city.

In one of the suites on the top floor, Mahdi Garvey was waiting in front of them. They were led in by Loni, and walked into the living room that had glass walls on two sides, and met Mahdi with the bright light shining from behind.

"It's been a while, Zinnerman. Shall I call you captain now?"

The man, whose back was facing the blue sky outside the window, was seemingly dressed in a high-class suit as he opened his arms wide. The first impression Banagher had of him was that he was younger than expected. Banagher imagined that the chairman of a large corporation to be in his sixties, so he thought that the other man would look similar to Cardeas in some way. However, Mahdi, who stood in front of him, was only around 50 years old, and his tense and ferocious looking face could be passed off for a man in his forties. Banagher felt that it was because of the eyes. Mahdi who had a moustache near his mouth, showed fierce eyes, and his brown skin looked rather dazzling. A sharp expression alone would not be enough to describe Mahdi's cold expression, and this caused the profound outline of his face to look younger than it actually was.

"Just call me captain. Fallen heroes can't do anything even if they try to show off."

Zinnerman answered. Both sides shook hands as Mahdi merely showed smiles on their faces. He looked past Banagher and stared at Loni, who was standing at the door "It's been tough on you, Loni." he spoke, and Banagher could sense that Loni was standing straight behind him.

"Abbas and Walid are waiting for you. Head back first, I'll follow immediately."

"Yes father." The voice rang, and the sound of the door opening afterwards. Banagher exchanged glances with Loni as she left the room, and her smiling farewell face passed through his chest. "Are you the pilot of the "breaking horn"?" Mahdi asked, causing Banagher to look back frantically.

"Yes…"

"In other words, you're the living key of the "Box". Welcome."

He continued to remain unsmiling as he immediately looked away. "Sorry for choosing this western-styled room, but please relax." Even if one were to ignore the sarcasm in these words, Banagher felt a sense of antipathy that Mahdi did not say his name, and did not look like he intended to introduce himself.

"There's a lot of things we can talk about, but there's not much time left, so let's talk about the current situation."

Mahdi poured the ice coffee provided by the room service into the glasses, and handed them to Zinnerman and Banagher who were seated on the sofa. At this point, Banagher noticed that there was something like a small knife hanging on his waist as he sat down on the sofa.

"The "Breaking horn"…it's called the "Unicorn Gundam", I suppose? Did you secure it?"

"Yeah. The "Garencieres" has completed its repairs. Once we're refuelled, we'll be able to fly anytime."

"Good. We can begin our operation then."

"What operation?"

"An attack on Dakar."

Zinnerman's hand that was grabbing onto the glass tensed up, and he glared viciously at Mahdi, who curled his lips up, "Don't show such an expression. I don't want to get people to do suicide terrorist attacks." he smiled wryly, saying,

"It's just temporary, but I have a plan to suppress Dakar. You just have to remain in the air and let the "Breaking horn" land. Once the target reaches the coordinates, the unit will show new information. That's how the Program is designed, right?"

"That is right…but I'm not the only one who can decide. I hope that I can be given some time to discuss with the higher-ups first."

"If you're referring to Full Frontal, I've already obtained his agreement. He sent in reinforcements, including pilots. There are 3 brand new aqua units."

These words were probably unexpected to Zinnerman, and Banagher could tell that he gasped and showed no signs of speaking up. "The "Sleeves" had never taken action on Earth all this time, but they're really

generous this time. It seems that the value of the "Box" has to be taken seriously. Mahdi continued as he showed a firm glance at Zinnerman."

"That's hard to tell. It's dangerous to casually determine like that."

"Everything will be clear as long as we get that."

"If we attack Dakar from the front, the Federation will definitely not remain silent. It'll become an all-out war."

"That's probably true."

"They won't keep a closed eye on you either. Is it really alright to crush the company like that? You want to waste the inheritance from Dubai for a "Box" with contents you have no idea of—"

"That inheritance is left for such a moment. I've waited long enough."

Mahdi kept his smile as he stood up. Leaving behind the shocked Zinnerman, he walked towards the glass window wall and sighed as he looked like he could not restrain the feelings he had for a long time.

"I'm not the only one who had been waiting. My father and grandfather had been waiting too, and they died without being able to wait for this moment…"

There was a long wide arc intersecting the sea and the skies, reflecting the not-so-bulky frame of Madhi. Banagher felt that he could understand why Earth residents' liked tall places.

"My ancestors knew that it was a matter of time before the oil resources would run out, and set a 100 year plan to build the economy city of Dubai. Once we broke free from the economy that relied on Dubai, Dubai would have given Arabia eternal wealth, but it was ruined by the White men's (Franks) planning—all because they viewed it as a lair for separatists."

The unfamiliar term 'white men' rang, and Mahdi showed a self-mocking smile as he glanced at Banagher, who went quiet like Zinnerman did and looked back to the other side.

"Those white men always use the same methods. First, they appease the royalty who loved to show off and made them agree to unfavorable investment conditions. Once the economy worsens, they would devour the other part. The white men had already planned this ever since the moment they set up the Earth Federation…no, even earlier than that. They want to

force Arabia and the Islam community into despair and force the entire race to bankruptcy."

He turned his sullen stare to the outside of the window as he put his hand on the small knife's hilt attached to his waist. Banagher did see that kind of arched-shaped blade before. If I remember correctly, it's called a Shamshir—.

"The terrorist explosion on "Laplace", the clearing of the separatists, the collapse of Dubai, everything was part of the Federation's scenario. The Garvey family which is associated with the Abu Dhabi royal family preserved the resources even the royalty did not know of, Dubai's inheritance, and continued running till now. We built a solar generator in the desert, and even mixed into the civilization of white men with the title of Muslim…"

Mahdi held onto the hilt of Shamshir tightly, and his expression got sharply as he turned to Banagher and Zinnerman. As he bore the weight of the term "Descendant of Dubai", he continued with a suppressed tone,

"This is to repay the white men that control the Federation. Now's the time to take action."

"But we have no idea whether the "Box" really exists in the first place!"

"It doesn't matter as long as it's a chance that can cause something. That's what an omen is about."

There was a kind of hardened feeling that would not accept other people's suggestions, and it became a form of wind pressure, shaking Banagher as he sat on the sofa. What shook him were not Mahdi's words, "I heard that the Vist Foundation protecting the "Box" never expected it to be leaked." Mahdi then continued as he looked to the window again.

"Rumors has it that the "Box" was released due to the sole discretion of the Foundation's leader, Cardeas Vist, but I can understand his intent. I've met Cardeas before, and that man is an enterprise leader born in the military. He feels that war and economy is all the same in the aspect of how people are killed. If this was his doing, we can tell that the "Box" really exists. Don't you feel that he would spend effort planning the coordinates?'

"What do you mean?"

"The debris of "Laplace", and then Dakar…both are places that showed the guilt and filth of the Federation. The road to the "Box" passes through these places, and that means that Cardeas was summoning people. He wants to use our anger, let us rise up, and topple the Federation. Once the people who receive the "Box" start to rise up, the military industry will prosper. Anaheim Electronics and the Vist Foundation controlling it from behind the scenes will be the ones benefiting from it.

From his tone and expression, it was obvious that the man would not accept any other forms thoughts. Banagher recalled Alberto's words as he listened, and while he thought that it was logical in some way, he looked to his inner heart that was unexpectedly calm, Is that really the case? and tried to ask himself.

During this journey he wanted through, he felt that there was an intent to help others to understand reality. Because of this, he could hear several rumors he had never heard of up till this point. He understood that debating on something through one-sided logic would be unreliable and dangerous, and he had to doubt adults like Mahdi who would speak in an arbitrary tone. These were things he understood in the process up till this point.

Zinnerman continued to stare at Mahdi with a silent expression. Banagher did not understand what kind of relationship they had during the war, but their relationship was probably not one of equal footing as they would make it seem. To Banagher, Zinnerman was simply keeping his ground while considering that the Zeon remnants were still being supported by the Garvey Enterprises, and Mahdi understood this well enough to continue talking on his own. He observed the man called Mahdi Garvey, and noticed that the hand on the Shamshir had a rugged-looking watch for military-use. For some reason, his temples started to pulsate again.

The Shamshir that represented the racial pride of the Middle East race was coupled with a watch that looked like it was given by the Federation. He knew that the man had to wear a suit when facing the political world, but these two things were different and just did not feel like they matched up, and Banagher could not trust someone who did not care about this. Why is it that a man who has such racial pride under a suit must use such superficial western things to decorate himself? It's weird. Something doesn't feel right.

"Is that so?"

Banagher's mouth moved before he could notice it. He ignored Zinnerman, who turned around in shock, and stared right at Mahdi's face.

"Everyone will have different thoughts after going to such places. I don't think it's just to trigger wars, you know?"

Don't say it. Zinnerman nudged him in the flank with an elbow. Mahdi however merely showed a moment of impatience in his eyes as he twisted the lips under his beard, "Shocking, to think that the key would actually talk." He said as he showed a smile, and Banagher decided to hate Mahdi for not viewing him as a human.

"Then, let's hear what the key has to hear. What is Cardeas' true intent when he handed the "Box" and wanted someone to go through so many detours."

"To make humanity understand what happened in history, and know the reality that caused such developments. That's what I feel."

Banagher too felt unexpected that he could say such words so simply, and he could not help but touch his temples. It was not pulsating, and a thought came from Banagher's mind, this isn't what dad planted into my mind. "Oh?" Mahdi answered as he narrowed as he answered.

"If the "Unicorn" determines that the pilot matches it, it will open a path to the "Box". Cardeas Vist said that before. The "Unicorn" doesn't have an ability or disposition, but something much gentler. I think it can be called a heart…"

"Heart? Are you saying that the machine has a system can detect the heart?"

"I can't really be certain. To put it, sometimes, it'll amplify my emotions and reflect them on the system."

Mahdi gave a doubting look, wondering if the boy was out of his mind, and turned his stare over to Zinnerman. "I've seen it a few times too. That's not an ordinary Psycommu machine." Zinnerman answered, and Banagher felt encouraged by these words as he gave Mahdi a stare again.

"I can't imagine what kind of thing this "Laplace Box" is, but if that's really something that can change the world, we have to act cautiously about it. I think the processes are testing the intention of those who want the "Box". If we can't understand the reality and the history that led us to this point, we

naturally won't be able to think about the future. The "Unicorn" interacts with the heart, and it's definitely because it wants to check the thoughts of the pilot…"

"You might be making sense if it were a key that's for kids. However, that's not the case in reality. You became the key out of coincidence."

Mahdi interrupted with a stern tone as he turned around. "You may be right, but adults don't necessarily understand everything correctly, right?" Banagher argued back as he inadvertently got up from the sofa.

"Everyone, adults and children, will express themselves in ways that are beneficial or hope to see everything that is beneficial to themselves. But power alone isn't enough. What the "Unicorn" wants to say is…"

"That's enough, Banagher."

Zinnerman's voice had some intimidation within it as his voice echoed within everyone's ears, and Banagher did not continue. I spoke too much, Banagher regretted as he sat back onto the sofa like a puppet with snapped strings. Mahdi let out a sigh and removed his hand from the Shamshir. The cold sound of the hilt and the scabbard hitting each other could be heard in this well air-conditioned room.

"Sorry for not teaching him probably."

"You've recruited a local soldier after all. You've sure been busy there."

Mahdi looked back at Zinnerman with a stiff smile, and turned to look at the glass window again. His back looked smaller than before, and Banagher could see an overlapping image of Alberto on that back. The backs of those who had no choice but to bear the destiny of the family, and though they were forced into a corner, they could only bluff their way through—

"I'm not asking for a return here, but Frontal gave another mission."

After a short moment of silence that could calm the inner heart, Mahdi suddenly mentioned something else, "He wants me to look for Her Highness Mineva Zabi. Right now, all we know is that she landed on North America. We're still looking into other information, but news is that the one that let her land on Earth is Ronan Marcneas. She's mostly likely with with."

Banagher and Zinnerman looked up with shocked expressions on their faces. Did they manage to meet safely? Banagher immediately recalled the name Riddhe Marcenas, and Zinnerman, who stood beside him, mused, "Ronan Marcenas…the chairman of the Settlement Issues Council?"

"That's right. He's also involved with the Federation space army's reassembly plan. This Ronan is also planning to use to chance to capture the "Box". He's currently sheltering Her Highness so as to prepare for a clash against the Vist Foundation…I did hear of something suspicious during my investigations. It seemed that the subordinates of the Vist Foundation have made contact with the Newtype Research facility in Augusta."

"The Newtype Research…?"

"It's still unconfirmed, but it looks like they have a Cyber-Newtype as a prisoner. Do you have any idea who it can be?"

Zinnerman's face showed an obvious change. Marida Cruz rode on the Foundation's shuttle and went to Earth together with Alberto—"Those crazed scientists in the research facility got themselves a rare experimental specimen. It's like a sheep being fed to the wolves." Mahdi continued, and his expression obviously showed that he knew what sort of response Zinnerman would have.

"I am aware of my anxiousness here, but you just happened to be the one who landed on Earth together with the "Box" that can topple the Federation. Naturally, I feel that this is an omen."

Mahdi gave Zinnerman enough time to understand and accept this as he quipped with a formal tone. Banagher felt that this voice was to be expected, but Zinnerman did not lift his face that was looking down.

"The direction this situation is developing is prompting us to move. You haven't forgotten the tragedy of Globe, right? At this moment, Her Highness and your subordinate may be going through the same thing."

Zinnerman finally lifted his face as he glared at Mahdi, and then lowered his silent stare onto the floor. Right in front of them was a man who only cared about solving the problem at hand, and he would make use of other people's weaknesses without hesitation for the sake of promoting his stand. As Banagher felt disgusted by this, Mahdi did not look over at him, "My preparations here are complete" he quietly added.

"All that's left will depend on what you do next. Will you help us?"

Mahdi had his back facing the sky that was starting to lose its details, and his sharp, sly eyes were glittering. Zinnerman put clasped hands on his knees, and did not say anything as his unwavering face showed the deep bitterness within him. Banagher himself clenched his helpless fists.

Part 9

One could see the fishing port beside the medina area as he moves along the coast of the plateau to the north. The scenery of the fishing port itself had never changed, but to the Spacenoids who only knew about the artificial coasts in the colony, it was a mesmerizing scene that had an

Earth-like flair. There was a saying that stated that both fish and water were both dependent on each other. The fishing port relied on the visitors that arrived everyday for a living, and naturally, there were cafes and restaurants linked here. The selling point of such shops was that they could cut up the fish that was just reeled in and send them to the kitchen while fresh. It was said that enterprises and government agencies would bring people to this place for reception.

The flight Loni let Banagher and Zinnerman ride on would only take off in the night. They had refused the invitation for a meal, and left the hotel Mahdi booked a long time ago. At this point, they were at the open-aired café at the medina area. The sun was gradually setting west, and the reddish sunset was approaching the horizon constantly. The sun that dyed the sea golden at evening showed a different kind of beauty from the scenery seen in the desert. Though Banagher was not used to the sound of the sea breeze at first, it felt soothing to him at this point, and the rustling of the trees felt delightful. He could not stand the fishy stench, but it was natural to smell the stench of death when consuming other lives for food. In the colonies, where there were handling plants from farming to processing, fish were a source of protein that were killed off first.

He could see a mobile suit flying over on a hovercraft from beyond the fishing boat masts located on the port. The large machine, a Federation machine called the "GM III" that was built with a streamlined straight frame had an assisting booster equipped to its backpack, and looked like it was stationed to protect the capital. From Banagher's position, the way it laid itself out on the hovercraft did make it look like it was windsurfing. I'll have to fight it if I attack Dakar, right? Banagher could not sense any sense of realism as he muttered in his heart. He then looked over at Zinnerman, who was seated opposite him. Zinnerman had gulped down the first mug of beer that was served almost instantaneously, and the second mug was almost empty. His facial expression that lost all sharpness was looking at the other end of the horizon. His eyes showed no signs of being tipsy, but it seemed like he was a dampening shadow in this bustling café.

"…Well, I'm sorry for what happened just now?"

Banagher never talked to the other man right in the eyes after they walked out of the hotel. Mahdi hit the weak spot, and he was worried about whether he would be able to keep his calm as a captain. Unable to get rid of his doubts, he spoke up a few minutes later, and Zinnerman then turned his eyes sharply at him.

"I talked too much in front of Mr Mahdi because I got too ahead of myself…"

"No. What you felt was correct."

Zinnerman again turned to look at the horizon, and he sounded unexpectedly calm. Banagher held his breath as he looked back.

"When we entered the atmosphere…the "Unicorn" approached the "Garencieres" on its own like a living person. You should have already lost consciousness by then. It did not move like a machine. I guess it responded to your heart."

Heart. Zinnerman showed a slightly troubled expression as he mentioned this term, and continued,

"That's a sub-consciousness deep within you that even you can't reach…I guess. Even though you sealed your heart, that machine still detected it. It knew that you wanted to live, that you still have strength to live on. The "Unicorn" is driver by such a will. There has to be some form mechanical logic within it like how the Psycommu started controlling it on its own."

Zinnerman gulped down the beer in large mouthfuls, played with the empty mugs, "In fact, the guy inside is someone who can't die no matter how many times you try to kill him." and added on with a bitter smile. The captain's still the same as usual. Banagher felt relieved as he asked, still feeling a little shocked inside, "So you brought me to the desert to confirm this?" Zinnerman however merely gives a thin smile, not saying anything at all.

"…Will you assist in Mr Mahdi's operation?"

After a moment, Banagher raised the question he was most concerned about. The smile disappeared from Zinnerman's mouth.

"Mr Mahdi said that he wants to suppress Dakar. That means he'll attack this city, right?"

"Yeah…"

"Don't do that. Since we know where Miss Marida is, why don't we go save her? If it's Audrey…Princess Mineva, she'll—"

"We can't just go after we say so. That's how it is in the military."

Zinnerman interrupted with an anxious tone as he put the beer mug back onto the table. Banagher saw that he looked as serious as a professional soldier, and could only keep quiet.

"…Hey, Banagher, do you want to come over to our side?"

Zinnerman stared at the empty mugs as he mumbled this time. At this moment, Banagher heard his heart beat loudly.

"You want me to join Neo Zeon?"

The response was silent. Banagher felt that his throat was suddenly stuck, and he felt unable to breathe as he lowered his face that could not answer. "You don't want to?" Zinnerman asked silently.

"It can't be helped, I guess. We're the terrorists who wrecked the colony you lived in."

"…That's not it. I too killed Mr Gilboa and other pilots. I'm not going to assume things on one side's values, but I'm going to try and understand it a little."

Something inside my heart was changing when I talked with Mahdi—no, even earlier than before. Banagher said as he faced this kind of emotion, while Zinnerman showed him a deliberate sharp stare.

"Right now, I can't just stay in the safety zone and critique. I'm part of the situation, and I have to take responsibility. But this isn't something I can accomplish by joining one side…"

Banagher could not form his thoughts into words as he clenched his hands that were on his knees. Daguza and Captain Otto did talk about the term "responsibility" before, and this troublesome term would bind him up, making him unable to respond and even force him to become evil. However, if he could not bear its weight, he would not be able to do anything in this world. If he did not want to become a helpless bystander, he had to prepare himself to take the role of a protagonist and take up the responsibility that came with it. On this premise, even if it showed only a little effectiveness, he would find a possibility to improve the current situation and bear the weight of the world—that was definitely want Cardeas wanted to express. What he wanted to teach was that if one wanted to do something, he has to find out what was something he could do, and then try to get as much ability to approach that target as possible.

"I'm still not too sure of what I should be doing…but someone once told me to think about how to use the "Box" for a good outcome. Maybe that's something I should—"

Zinnerman suddenly raised his hand and called the waitress beside him. "Another beer please. For him." He said with a nonchalant look on his face as he pointed at Banagher, wanting him to continue talking. "I'm still underaged, you know!?" Banagher then gave a shocked expression right back as his momentum was worn out.

"Just drink. Today's a special day."

"What's special…"

"You've become an adult. There's no punishment from celebrating a little anyway."

A warm smile Banagher had never seen before caused him to feel some warmth in his stomach. He felt embarrassed, and thought that he could not look back anymore as he turned his stare to the sea surface that was dyed sunset.

Audrey's definitely looking for something she can do to stop this meaningless war on the other end of the horizon. Anxiety and excitement raced in his heart as he suddenly thought, What about Ensign Riddhe? I hope he can proceed smoothly there, but—

Part 10

It had been an hour since he went from Cape Canaveral in North America to the West Indies islands. As he flew in the skies above after travelling for 1,000km, Riddhe discovered the battleship that was to be the destination.

"Is that it…?"

He switched the all-view monitor expansion cursor to the target and let the CG correct the visuals. The smart-looking ship had a simple bridge on it, and it was definitely the "Ra Cailum".

The flagship of Londo Bell departed from the Eastern side of Asia, and reached the skies above the Atlantic Ocean after moving over half the world. Riddhe stared at the profile that resembled a "ship" more than the "Nahel Argama", and understood that his heart was not fretting as he took care to adjust the speed and height of the machine. The "Delta Plus" that

transformed into Wave rider form moved its main wings slightly, drew a long arc of a jet stream in the air, and the machine's silhouette that resembled a plane started to fall in height.

The "Ra Cailum" was located 500m above the ocean, and though he understood the concept behind it, he still felt intrigued by how this ship looked like it was floating above the sea. Since it could maintain a low speed of 300km per hour, one could see that the functions of the Minovsky Craft were working well. Riddhe estimated the relative velocity of his machine that was flying at subsonic speed as compared to the ship, checked that the estimated time of arrival had no change, and sighed slightly as he opened the visor of the helmet. He rubbed his eyes that were bleary due to a lack of sleep the past few days, and the sharp alarm-like sound rang inside the cockpit.

Riddhe then closed the visor and grabbed onto the control sticks again. The automatic sensors caught sight of 3 machines approaching from the "Ra Cailum" as the window expanded in a corner of the all-view monitor. The 3 machines that could be identified on the window were giving allied signals, and they were equipped with subflight systems (SFS). They were 1,200m above the water, and the relative speed was 0.8 Mach. The SFS used standard Base Jabbers, but the "Delta Plus" could not identify the mobile suits on them from its records.

"No matching data…is that the new "Jesta" that was mentioned before?"

Riddhe stared at the humanoid machines that were colored medium blue, and recalled the name of this new model when the "Ra Cailum" was undergoing testing. At this moment, the detail that was in a V formation suddenly scattered, causing him to hold his breath. The expanded windows chased after the scattered machines as it formed three blocks and started searching through the all-view monitor. With the slightly dim evening sky as the backdrop, the oval-shaped Base Jabbers let out short jet streams, and the giant detail that was above entered Riddhe's eyes for a short moment. They were GM-type mobile suits, but their shoulders and legs were equipped with thick protruding armor, and each part had large thruster nozzles. One would naturally think of a smart refined figure when the advantage of a GM-type is mentioned, but these were as massive as American Football players.

The massive mobile suits were piloting the unmanned SFS as their transport carrier, approaching rapidly. The two mobile suits that flew first went in the opposite direction of the "Delta Plus", and Riddhe frowned at

this. They were being too close if they wanted to pass by, and the actions those two mobile suits did shock him. As the trio pass by each other, the two "Jesta" actually stepped off the Base Jabbers and leaped into the air.

"What…!?"

The two mobile suits looked like they were trying to get in the way of the "Delta Plus" as they lit the thrusters on their backs and legs, crossing each other in the sky. It was impossible for a non-transformable mobile suit to be able to fly in the sky, except for the ship that had a large Minovsky Craft on it. They intertwined in the air for a moment, and immediately went straight down, covering the all-view monitor. Riddhe hurriedly lowered the height of the machine, but the smoke the two mobile suits created was mixed in with steam, covering his eyes, and the "Delta Plus" was swaying unsteadily in confusion. Once they finished their stunt-like zero distance intersection, the two machines landed on the other Base Jabbers and flew towards Riddhe who pushed the control sticks to the maximum.

It was common to have such aerial transit training where they would practice how to switch Base Jabbers, but normally, they would practice leaping from top to bottom, so the switch between two mobile suits side by side was definitely not normal. Riddhe stared at the two mobile suits that were moving far away, but the lock-on signal that rang next caused him to tremble. He saw the other "Jesta" get above him without him knowing, raising the beam rifle, and aimed at the "Delta Plus" from the Base Jabber.

"What are these guys thinking…!"

Riddhe immediately let the machine tilt sideways to escape from the opponent's shot path. At the same time, he saw the two machines behind him quickly spin around to surround him from both left and right sides. In the midst of this tremendous G-force, he activated the open channel of the wireless communicator.

"To the approaching allied forces, this is Romeo 008 of the Nahel Argama Squadron, Ensign Riddhe Marcenas. I'm transferred to the "Ra Cailum" and headed to your ship now. Please make a way for me."

There was no response. The two machines that tailed the "Delta Plus" from the rear left and right sides gradually pulled their distance. Since there was a mobile suit waiting for him in front, Riddhe could not accelerate to shake them off. "You guys should be hearing this, right? Hurry up and answer!" The two mobile suits on the sides looked like they were laughing at this

agitated Riddhe as they leaped off the Base Jabbers again, crossing in the air to bring confusion to the machine. The front of the waverider sank down, and the alert indicating a loss in speed flickered on the display board.

Riddhe managed to adjust the machine, only for the remaining mobile suit to point its beam rifle at him from above. He understood that he was being toyed with as he clicked his tongue at this perfect coordination, and felt blood rush to his head as he glared up at the "Jesta" that had the serial number U007 on the shoulder. "IF you want to fight…!" He uttered out these words and glared over at the two machines that were sticking to him closely. The left side was U008, and the right was U009; and after checking the serial numbers on the shoulders, he guessed that the mobile suit that was working alone was the leader suit, deliberately slowed down and let the two machines glide pass.

It seemed that both sides felt that Riddhe was scared as they adjusted their speeds cautiously, intending to switch over for the third time. The moment they jumped off the Base Jabbers, Riddhe pulled the control stick and let the "Delta Plus" transform into its mobile suit form. The silhouette of the waverider immediately broke down, reforming into a human-shaped unit as it let out a thin layer of steam. Riddhe lit the thrusters to negate the air resistance that was coming in from the front, and charged right at the "Jestas" that were about to cross in front of him.

He broke through and caught up to the U009 that was about to dodge, and as he saw the main camera on the GM-type visor. He then let out the throttle to its maximum, and planned to let the "Delta Plus" step on the back of the "Jesta".

(You dare to use me as a stepping stone…!)

The angry growl of the pilot rang through the communication channel. Riddhe used this stepping momentum to touch on the Base Jabber the U009 planned to land on. The left arm of the "Delta Plus" grabbed onto the grip of the platform while its right arm drew out the beam rifle. The universal-use connector lit its matching signal, which indicated that the Base Jabber was controlled by the "Delta Plus".

The U009 was used as a stepping stone and lost control of the Base Jabber as it felt down to the sea 1km below. The U008 connected to its Base Jabber as it immediately turned around to look for the leader's U007 unit. He trailed the jet steams crossing in front of him and pointed his rifle at a cloud behind him. At the same time, the lock-on alarm rang. (OK, that's all for now.) The voice from the wireless communicator rang inside his helmet.

(I've more or less understand your ability, Ensign. It looks like you didn't get the special treatment for nothing.)

The U007 that pointed its gun at the "Delta Plus" beforehand raised it back. What is this guy saying? Riddhe was unable to understand the situation immediately as he kept his reticule pointed at the "Jesta" that was above him. Another alarm could be heard from another direction, and he frantically raised his mobile suit. Riddhe saw the Base Jabber of the U008 rising up form below and pointed his gun over. At this moment, the voice could be heard from the U007's wireless communicator (Stop it, Daryl!)

(But Leader Nigel…! How can we let others look down on Londo Bell's Tri-Stars—)

(We're being looked down upon because this is the extent of our abilities. Go get Watt's "Jesta" back on board. We still have to go through our training tomorrow even if it's soaked in seawater.)

(Roger that!) The U008 pilot yelled back as its Base Jabber went down to the sea. So they're the legendary Londo Bell Tri-Stars? At this moment, Riddhe did not feel really emotional as he stared at the "Jesta" the man called leader Nigel was piloting. The U007 was half-squatting on its Base Jabber, and it raised its left arm to a horizontal level, surprising him.

The mechanical arm reached over to him, seemingly welcoming him. A black spot could be seen floating in the sky, and it was the silhouette of the "Ra Cailum". This seemed to indicate that the welcoming party was over. Riddhe confirmed the personal mark of three stars shot through with an arrow, and sighed at the thick-skinned action. He let the "Delta Plus" get off the Base Jabber, turned away from the SFS that started to wheel away on its own, transformed into the waverider and lit its thrusters.

The Daryl and Nigel units that took back the U009 that fell into the sea followed up. Riddhe felt stares of antagonistic intent and curiosity as he opened the communication channel with the "Ra Cailum". The premier large battleship was merely a black spot in the sunset backdrop, and he felt a sense of unease when he saw the scene of this place that would become his mothership.

Part 11

The large and white ship frame of the "Ra Cailum" had a catapult deck on both port and starboard sides that were unified with the ship. It was about

as old as the time of establishment since Londo Bell was formed, and could be considered a newly built model. The long and narrow ship was inferior to the "Nahel Argama" in terms of quality, but it was almost 500m in length, and could hold 12 mobile suits.

This "Ra Cailum" once led the Londo Bell fleet opened a defense line during the Second Neo Zeon War that happened 3 years old, and managed to prevent the space asteroid base "Axis" from falling onto Earth, indicating its activeness to the world. It was said that the fleet that was half-decimated took a large sum for repairs, and the reason why this ship continued to be the flagship of Londo Bell was mostly due to political considerations. The Neo Zeon War could be seen as one where both sides suffered heavy casualties before everything ended, and thus, the Federation government had to brag their army's victory and hailed the "Ra Cailum" that saved Earth as a symbol of victory.

The fact that Captain Bright Noa was the ship captain during this war should probably be a big reason for such political considerations. The man himself may not have such ambitions, but this young commander of "White Base" was hailed as a hero of the One Year War, and after more than a decade, this hero was hailed as a symbol of the war's victory. Ever since he took over as Fleet Commander, he was given an exception of a personnel order to continue as a ship captain from the Senate Council deliberately. That was because he wanted to remain distant from the Central government, and because they felt the danger from the title of "Newtype Squadron Commander". Perhaps these two thoughts created a coincidence that created this outcome.

If that were the case, there would not be a more troublesome 'guest' than Riddhe himself on this ship. He was taken in by the "Ra Cailum", and before he could even take off his pilot suit, he was summoned to Captain's room. Without changing his expression, he gave a bitter laugh at how he was thinking about he, who hated politics all this time, would be considering the other man's political position…

"Today's training didn't include "Jesta" anti-water properties, right? Lieutenant Nigel."

Bright did not look over at Riddhe who said this as he stared at Lieutenant Nigel Garrett, who too was summoned to the Captain's room for questioning. "Yes, I'm really sorry." The Tri-Stars leader seemed to understand that the actions of an ace pilot were not restrained by rank. His still posture was wavering somewhat, and his glittering eyes under the

slightly long bangs were very calm, not hiding the thought that it was part of his job to listen to a superior officer's lecture. For a 27 year old soldier, Nigel's expression was extremely reserved, and he not only had an aura of coolness and elegance for a man, but also a sense of arrogance, seemingly the most trusted pilot. But basically, he had a sense of bottomless presence to him.

Perhaps Bright was already used to seeing such things as he did not look like he minded while sitting in front of the table. Like the "Nahel Argama", the Captain's office was squared, 5m a side, and besides Riddhe and the Tri-Star leader, there was First Officer Meran, who had been giving a pessimistic look right from the beginning. Riddhe recalled Squad Leader Norm saying that the mothership and a pilot had to have a married-like camaraderie. If the pilot were to misbehave, the defense line of the mothership would be affected; and if the crew members of the mothership hated the pilot, the pilot would have nowhere to call home.

"They met Ensign Riddhe's "Delta Plus" during flight training, and with Lieutenant Nigel's suggestion, the Ensign agreed to take part in the training, and during the mid-air transit, Sub-Lieutenant Watts lost control and caused the Uniform Nine to fall into the sea…is the truth different from what I said, Ensign Riddhe?"

Nevertheless, First Officer Meran continued to frown with his thick eyebrows as he said with a gruff voice befitting of his hulking figure. Riddhe intended to speak up, but Sub-Lieutenant Watts Stepney went forward to say, "I didn't make a mistake." causing Riddhe to remain quiet. The round-faced Watts did not know that he was in a completely opposite position from Nigel. It seemed that Watts was the most impulsive amongst the Tri-Stars, and he was the one who looked for trouble with Riddhe first when he got on the ship. Things managed to end quietly before this because Nigel yelled at him, but Riddhe probably would expect another surge of emotions from him.

"I operated it just as per normal. It's because—"

"Sub-Lieutenant Watts."

Sub-lieutenant Daryl McGuinness, who was standing beside Watt, interrupted him as he spoke up, saying, "First Officer Meran is asking Ensign Riddhe here."

As the infuriated Watts calmed down, Daryl did not look at anyone else in the eyes as he merely looked before. His relatively thick Latin blood and curly hair matched each other, giving him a carefree presence, but this man was not to be underestimated. Daryl merely felt that this was not something they could deal with, and unlike the simple-minded Watts, he had another kind of danger to him. Riddhe held back from sighing and turned to Meran, answering, "What you said is the truth." No matter what, Riddhe's thoughts were no different from the other two members of the Tri-Stars. He too wanted to get away from this place as fast as possible.

Of course, the one who asked most probably knew that this was not the truth. He stared at the emotionless Nigel, and then turned to the unkempt faces of Daryl and Watts, "It's great to be so passionate about training." and sighed as he said.

"However, the "Jesta" is a crucial machine in the Federation space military reassignment plan. You'll only add to the troubles if you go out of control and ruin the results of the tests, and besides, we'll probably be called in to take part in a real battle in the future. Do you understand? This is an opportunity you've been waiting for so long since you couldn't make it to the Neo Zeon War, right? What do you intend to do if the machines can't move in the middle of a crisis?"

It seemed that it would truly be troublesome, as Nigel and company showed a slightly frozen expression. It was true that 2, 3 years ago that they broke a new training record through their own unique attacks, and became famous as the Tri-Stars of Londo Bell. If they could not prove that they could use their skills in actual training, their fame at this point would only be a fleeting image—perhaps the trio were anxious over this.

"That's enough, Meran. I don't intend to pursue things further, but you people are to try and appease the engineers of Anaheim as much as possible."

Bright said that as he got up from his chair. . "Yes!" Nigel and company stamped their feet together and answered.

"Same thing to the deck crew. You're to clean up the seawater on the deck."

"Yes…" The trio showed a cloudy expression on their faces. "Is there a problem?" Bright then asked to confirm as he narrowed his eyes at the Tri-Stars.

"Clear up what you began. That's all. You can go."

"Yes!" The trio's response echoed through the Captain's room, and Riddhe sensed that they turned behind together from beside. Daryl pulled Watts, who was giving a heinous stare, by the shoulder, and retreated from the room. Finally, Nigel passed through the door. "Lieutenant Nigel." The door was half-closed the moment Bright spoke up.

"What's your appraisal of Ensign Riddhe?"

"He passed."

Nigel simply answered and did not look at Riddhe in the eyes as he closed the door. Not knowing what expression to give, Riddhe could only look back at Bright. "Please excuse me then." Bright nodded at Meran who said this as he looked back at the monitor panel. He waited for Meran to leave the room, and let out a soft sigh.

"You sure had a violent welcoming party, Ensign Riddhe."

"Yeah…"

"Our course will change course to Africa. The report states at the Zeon remnants hiding in the Sahara desert are starting to move aggressively. If it has something to do with the disguised ship, we may end up fighting immediately after we make contact."

Bright hid the smile he showed for a moment as he called out the satellite visual of the Western Sahara on the monitor panel. He continued to use his eyes to stare at the movements the Zeon remnants made for the past few days as he continued.

"Securing the "Laplace Box" is our utmost priority, but we probably won't have that kind of freedom. Better tense up and work well if you want to be a pilot of this ship."

Bright merely said this. Riddhe original thought that the other man would go more in-depth with the conversation as he gave a surprised expression, "Yes." He stared at the back that was silently prompting him to leave, made his decision and spoke up, "Can I say something here?"

"What is it?"

"No matter my origin, I'm a pilot of the Federation army. I hope I won't have any special treatment."

The reason why the Tri-Stars would pull such petty tricks on him was because news of him being given special treatment was spread through the ship. He was already mentally prepared about being viewed as an irritant, but he could not stand being treated as a troublesome VIP and being unable to do anything. He stared at the back that had no intent of looking back at him and continued to emphasize with a restrained tone.

"I've been through battle before. Please don't remove me from dangerous missions just because I have to keep watch—"

"DON'T BE NAÏVE!"

Bright turned around to let out a roar that pierced through the pilot suit, causing goosebumps on Riddhe's skin. Bright turned back to say as he stared at the eyes on Riddhe's stiff body, "This thought itself shows that you view yourself as a privileged person. If you want to be a normal pilot, go help clean the deck." He pulled his black hair that was a little unkempt on the side and turned to the numerous obituary photos hanging on the war.

"I've seen a lot of pilots who believed that they won't die in battle. However, people will die when it's time to die."

There were photos of pilots who served this ship in the past, but were unable to return as they vanished on the battlefield—Riddhe followed the stare that was fixed on the photo of Lieutenant Commander Amuro Ray, and felt that his mouth was blocked as he looked back at Bright. Bright's face showed a mere moment of anguish before he showed the expression of a commander as he turned his calm stare at Riddhe.

"No matter who you are, I've never thought of giving you any special treatment. If there's a need, I'll naturally call you in to work, but you must definitely come back. If you can do that, I'll recognize you as an ordinary pilot."

Bright finished these words and sat back in front of the table without waiting for Riddhe to answer. In the face of these words only a commander who faced countless battles could say, Riddhe was overwhelmed by the weight of the words as he wanted to argue back You don't say? He quietly clenched the hands clinging onto his thighs.

I have no intention of dying. Right now, I don't have a reason for that, before I can redeem the crimes of this cursed bloodline of mine— he muttered in his frozen heart, "Yes", answered, and saluted. Bright had no

intention of lifting his head as he continued to stare only at the document on the table.

Part 12

Riddhe walked out of the Captain's room, and the first thing that entered his eyes was Nigel, who was leaning on the corridor wall. He stared at the leader of the Tri-Stars who gave a silent stare, sighed and said, "I understand."

"I'll help clean the deck. Please tell the leader that I'll be there to help out."

Nigel was merely the captain of the Tri-Stars, and the mobile suit squadron of the "Ra Cailum" itself was run by another Commander. The other party was the ace here, but he had no intention of letting another man who did not know about the circumstances tell him off here. Riddhe passed by Nigel, who did not say anything, and intended to head to the mobile suit deck, "You're too rigid." but a voice caused him to stop.

"Your heart and body are so rigid and tense. It's rare to have a talent like yours. You'll just end up wasting it in the end."

He saw through me. Riddhe unconditionally felt this sense of defeat. The sunset shone in through the ship window, and Nigel showed Riddhe an eagle-like stare. Riddhe instinctively looked away and said, "I won't cause trouble for you." After that, he left the scene, but Nigel moved away from the wall and spoke,

"You're a rookie who doesn't even know the meaning of the word team? Well, us Tri-Stars do whatever we want, and there's no need for us to give you suggestions, but I'll shoot you down from behind if you dare to pull the Ra Cailum fleet down. You better remember that."

Riddhe turned around to look over his shoulder, and Nigel did not let go of this opportunity as he said that viciously. So he's still wary of me. He reaffirmed this sense of exclusion from the other man and convinced himself into thinking that this would make this easier, and said sarcastically, "This is a good ship!"

"A well-experienced captain, a united mobile suit squad; don't you find this ideal?"

"Your sarcasm ain't half bad there. Are you saying that us idiots who only know how to train are having a group orgy or something?"

"I didn't say that. I just feel envious, because I'm…"

I can't get into your clique anymore— these unexpected words sank into Riddhe's stomach, and he kept quiet. Nigel eased up on the killing intent surrounding him as he gave Riddhe a surprised look. He sighed and turned his face to the communication panel on the wall.

"You should know this already, don't you? The "Jestas" were machines that were created to support the UC plan."

The communication panel would normally show the footage captured by the external surveillance cameras. Riddhe, who heard this for the first time, stared at the side of Nigel's face that was starting at the sunset sky.

"The Tri-Stars were originally piloted to be test pilots of the UC plan, but it was interrupted halfway through, and we ended up having to use the support machines."

They were machines developed to work with and support that "Unicorn"—if that was the case, it would explain why the "Jesta" that had endurance and manoeuvrability would have different specifications from a mass-produced machine. He suppressed the throbbing in his heart as he turned towards Nigel.

"When the plan was interrupted, the "Sleeves" started to be more active in their movements. Now the entire army is desperately searching for a disguised ship that dropped onto Earth just because both sides once fought in space. In the end, even us Londo Bell is called in to help when we can't even do anything. It's obvious why we're all becoming crazy here, isn't it? If the product of the UC plan is taken away by the "Sleeves", and if it were hidden on that disguised ship—"

"I don't understand."

He had no confidence that he could keep a straight face at all. In response to Riddhe's quick response to end things, Nigel said with irony, "Me too."

"A pilot doesn't need a brain to look at everything. Even if the people up there are all idiots, we can only trust their decisions to fight. In this sense, I feel that our luck is rather good."

"You're talking about Captain Bright?"

"Yeah. Besides, he's someone who made his career leading "Gundams" up till this point. He's not going to be swayed easily, so you better man up."

Nigel never stopped viewing Riddhe as an outsider throughout, and he left these words as he left the front of the communication panel. It can't be helped. If a supervisor sent over from the Senate Council is pretending to look like a pilot here, I'll show that kind of attitude too. He looked back at himself for having come so far, and suddenly felt a cutting pain in his heart. "It's not that simple." He said as he showed a slight smile on his face. Nigel stopped and again shot a stare full of killing intent from beyond the shoulder.

"That's because our enemy may be that "Gundam"."

He ignored Nigel, who gave this surprised expression, and looked at the crimson red sky on the communication panel. He was referring to that mobile suit that could open the grudge 100 years ago, the "Laplace Box", and the boy who was chosen to be its pilot, Banagher Links. I feel you're a man of your word. He shook off that voice from his mind as he stared at the sea that was dyed sunset, and a rich color that looked like it was burning intensely caused him to feel dazed. The speed of the "Ra Cailum" was the same as when he arrived, and the sea that was like blood flowed in front of his eyes without end.

Part 13

(…The test results for the "Zee Zulu" are rather positive, and the pilots respond very quickly to it. They heaved a sigh of relief when they know that they'll be assisting you in battle, Chairman Mahdi.)

The masked face spoke on the monitor, and Loni did not feel that it was the face of a human. The nose bridge and the lips under the mask were too refined, and the thick blond hair reminded her of a puppet. Am I seeing a complete artificial image here? she felt some goosebumps as she stared at Full Frontal, who was calmly smiling. "This is the strategy you set." and heard Mahdi answer beside her.

"Once the plan to suppress Dakar is complete, our comrades around the world will take action. At that time, the chance to save her Highness Mineva will probably appear. It is my sincere wish to be able to be of assistance to the revival of Zeon."

(Those are reassuring words. As you know, we lost our ability to fight on Earth. I'm really delighted that you're able to go beyond your belief of religion and accept us residents of space.)

The delicate choice of words caused Loni's father to smile in front of the console. Loni and Mahdi were the only ones in the chairman's room where phone calls were forbidden, located in a corner of the port facility that belonged to Garvey Enterprises. In the midst of this darkness, where the only light was the reflective light of the monitor, Mahdi again shot a sharp stare at Frontal. "To me, you aren't pagans, but children who lost their God." He said as he opened his arms hidden under his white Arab Thawb .

"We've inherited the Highest blessing from the last prophet, so naturally, we have to help you. Islam opens its arms to all of humanity."

(I understand. I'll pray for the success of this operation. Insha'Allah.)

"Sieg Zeon."

Frontal's smiling face was the last impression as the communication was cut off. At the same time, the room was lit up, and the light shone on Mahdi, who was sat on the leather chair, and Loni, who was sitting diagonally behind him. At this place, they had no need to care about the stares of others. Mahdi was dressed in his Thawb and a bright striped Keffiyeh, but his expression was giving a subtle message, showing that he wanted to rinse his mouth.

That was the kind of response to be expected from a straightforward man who had to go through such social etiquette that defied his heart. Loni recalled the expression her father made when he said Sieg Zeon, and gave a bitter smile on her face. "How about it, Loni?" on hearing Mahdi's question, she lifted her face.

"Do you think that is the son of Zeon Deikum?"

The reason why her father let her accompany him when he contacted Frontal was to affirm this. Unlike her two older brothers that were born to different mothers, Loni always had a mysterious instinct. She put her hand on her temples covered by the Hijab, "I don't know." and answered honestly.

"The man Char Aznable will change the way he appears according to the times."

"Makes sense. I've never met Char before. Perhaps that is a descendant of Zeon who wanted to use the mask to become an idol…"

Mahdi obviously despised people who used such little tricks more than the idol worship that was a taboo. "Never mind. These are small things before the big things. For now." He said that as he got up from the chair.

"Since the past, there were common Muslim landmarks on Africa, and the Federation government arrogantly built its capital here. Most sins would lose their meaning in front of this great sin. The Federation view those against them as terrorists, and continues to allow this opposition to exist so that they can maintain their army. In this sense, we're the same as Neo Zeon…no issues with the feeding of information to those Federation rats, right?"

"Yes. With regards to the spies in the Intelligence Branch, I've already sent 4 sets of fake information to fool the enemy regarding our actual fighting ability, and I haven't revealed them to the "Sleeves" pilots and the mechanics."

"That's good. Frontal will definitely take action on us based on the developments. Whether it's the "Box" or her Highness Mineva, we know too much about the sleeves."

"White men only know how to play tricks…do you mean that?"

"That's right. This kind of logic works on Zinnerman too. The ones I can really believe are my relatives."

Mahdi put his hand on Loni's shoulder and showed the smile of a father. Loni felt a realistic sense of expectation as she stared at her father's eyes from the front. However, not all white men were bad, and she recalled the warmth the boy called Banagher showed as her closed lips twitched. Mahdi did not seem to notice as he used his military diver watch to check the time and retracted his hand from Loni, saying, "It's about time.".

"Let's head to the port. Who knows what will happen after tomorrow."

Those were heavy words. Loni nodded silently and forgot about the moment of hesitation as she followed her father out of the meeting room.

Part 14

The port of Garvey Enterprises was the only clear grey artificial construct located 1,500km north of Dakar, on the coastline in the Sahara region. There was a solar generator located 10km inland, but the mirrors that littered the desert looked as lonely as ever. The collecting mirrors that were

gathered in a ring would absorb the sunlight and convert it into electricity through the accumulator; and after that, a microwave electricity generator system would pass the power to those that signed on for its services. The large amount of heat created when the sunlight was gathered could also be used on the treatment of harmful wastes, and one main trait of Garvey's solar generators was that they could be used as waste disposal fields too. This port that was connected to the highway linking to the generator was an avenue of waste gathered from all over the world, and there were no issues about the ships entering and exiting this port being called garbage ships.

There were several Jin-Pole and Gantry cranes placed at the pier, and behind them was a treatment plant with a canopy above it. It had been a month since the incinerator was shut off from operations, so only the tugboats owned by Garvey Enterprises could be seen at the pier. Loni left the office building together with Mahdi and walked into a treatment plant that looked no different from a shipping warehouse. It was different from the other treatment plants that a ship could be docked directly in this pier that was covered with a canopy—the large figure of the "Shamblo" could be seen from the pier in the midst of this endless darkness in this place which resembled a large sea cave.

The red sunset was shining in front the entrance at the front, showing the mobile armor that was mostly submerged in water. Abbas and Walid were busy with the inspections, and they only noticed her after she stepped onto the boarding ramp. She saw her brothers break off from the mechanics and run over here. They had Keffiyahs wrapped around their foreheads, and she met them in the eyes before climbing the rest of the ram and stepped on the armor that was the shoulder of the "Shamblo". The speakers fixed in the canopy rang as the rearguard Walid climbed down the ramp, and the familiar Arabic words rang through the container hangar.

Allahu Akbar. Allahu Akbar. Loni heard this vague voice as she immediately kneeled down. They had to do 5 prayers every day, but Loni missed out on one as she had to guide Banagher. The mechanics at the pier too knelt down to face the distant Mediterranean Sea, the Holy Land of Mecca. Loni put her forehead at the armor of the "Shamblo", more focused than usual.

There was a harbour in the hangar, and the exit was it was facing the East as its back faced the Atlantic Ocean. This day might be the last day she could face the Holy Land under the sun, and nobody knew whether she

could do so tomorrow. As she thoroughly understood the meaning behind these words, she prayed for an umpteenth, and found a mysteriously long shadow on the harbor.

The mechanics knelt down, and the crouched figures were scattered all over the place. The shadows that stood were the "Sleeves". These few Neo Zeon pilots that were sent over by Frontal with the marine-use "Zee Zulu", and they did not object to living together after these few days. They looked down at the mechanics sticking their foreheads to the floor, showing a slight sneer on their faces. The practice of prayers during the week had become a rare sight in recent times, but there was no reason for them to accept the mockery of those who did not believe in God. Loni glared at the men angrily, "Don't mind." But she heard Madhi say this beside her.

"We can give space to those people. Just focus on increasing the number of Muslim Sons on this land. You have to give birth to many cute grandchildren for me, Loni. And you too."

Her father continued to pray as he did not look back, and his back could be seen appearing in the dim light from the sunset shining through the window. "Yes." Loni answered together with her brothers as she leaned her forehead onto the armor of the "Shamblo" again.

There are no Gods other than Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of the real God. Please come and pray, please come and get saved. Loni regurgitated the prayer that had become part of her psychology as she stared at the back of her father again. Back when her mother was still alive, the back of the father she looked up to seemed like a mountain, and the sight back then overlapped with the current scene as it vaguely warmed the body and mind for the upcoming crusade.

Part 15

Marida walked down the dim night road, and the street lamps showed its unsteady lights as it showed the street trees in front of her. Her hands, legs and body felt extremely heavy. Where am I going? Why am I still walking? Her dull brain thought as she lifted her face, and she saw pedestrians walking around with heavy footsteps.

Everyone's wearing mourning clothes. Marida thought as she noticed that she was dressed in black too. Where is this place? Who am I? She brought her hands to her face, and she could not feel her face, which troubled her. However, she could not stop, and could only continue on in the darkness.

The stretch of street trees finally ended, and an open grassland appeared in front of her, littered with countless gravestones.

It was a stone cold graveyard. Marida was amidst one of the rows of men lined beside the coffins. The people looked exceptionally tall, and the coffin obviously had someone important in it, but she could not see it, and could not get close at all. The coffin would soon be buried if she did not hurry up.

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust…the stock eulogy a pastor would give started to ring as the coffin supported by ropes started to descend slowly into the grave. The loud pumping of the heart was like another animal altogether, and the breathing was rushed as the ripping-like pain caused her to twist her body. Marida sensed that her body and mind were separated; she was forced out of the woman in mourning clothes, who moved into the crowd. The black hat was knocked off, and the girl did not care about the blond hair that was scattered and tied as she jumped into grave, sticking onto it.

"Daddy…! Who did this to you!? Who killed you? I won't forgive those people who killed you, those people who looked like they don't know anything. If this is how the world is like, I'll hate the world. I'll use everything in my power to change the stupid world men created…!"

The girl stood at the bottom of the grave, clenching her fists till they were white as she looked at the adults looking down at her, cursing them. Is that Martha? Marida stared at the girl who was of a similar age to hers as she muttered, and at the next moment, she was grabbed from behind and restrained onto the floor.

Several hands were grabbing onto her limbs, and the hand that was reaching from above grabbed her mouth. The tunic was removed, and she was bared before she could even struggle. And then, the heavy warmth that entered her abdomen caused her to feel despair.

Ahh, it's coming again. That thing is coming in again. That filthy man thing is stabbing into me. I have to hang on. Marida told herself in her mind. Her slightly raised breasts were being rubbed violently, her thighs were opened to the limit, and it sounded like it was her responsibility. She asked herself, But for what reason? Is it because I'm the only one alive? I'm not created for this in the first place. Even if my sisters and I are clones of the same person, my soul should be able to experience pain—

"There's no need for you to endure."The girl who resembled Martha spoke from behind the men lunging at her. Marida heard that voice as her body experienced the pain of being ripped open.

"Go resist them, snap the necks of those men. You have this kind of power."

I can't do that. It's impossible for me. Marida could not move her suppressed limbs as she gave Martha a pleading look. Please help me, tell them to stop. Unknowingly, she reverted back to being a 10-year-old girl, and her restrained body was struggling as Martha gave her a cold observer stare. No, you have to find an answer for you. I have no interests in the weak that forced themselves to submit. That kind of woman is only a mere tool for men. The eyes that said this silently was dazzling beside the men's shoulders. Marida again tried to exert strength on her limbs. I can't move. My joints feel like snapping if I try to move them now…

"No good, is it? Why don't you just wreck yourself instead of succumbing to them? You might as well destroy everything instead of letting those stupid rules bind you. I want power to destroy the rules men made. I want to dominate those men who only know how to fight till the bitter end and rebuild this world. We have this kind of authority, and you have the power I want. Go and fight, fight those people restraining you, fight those people who robbed the "light" of the world from you. Let those men who destroy each other kneel in front of the women who gave birth."

"Light"—the only light that existed in this artificial body. The icy cold light of the abortion apparatus appeared in her mind, and she exerted strength in her limbs. She pushed aside the hands clinging onto her, and grabbed the neck of the man reaching his hands at her. The force pushing at her waist got weaker, and as the man was forced to bend up, the fingers pressing into the throat felt something hard. Kill them, take them down. Make those people who took the "light" suffer. Marida was prompted by the voice in her mind as she crushed that stiff feeling.

Crack. A blunt sound could be heard from the fingertips as the man's neck dropped weakly. Marida got away from below the man before his spit and blood flowed out. Her shoulders were heaving up and down due to panting, and she looked for the other men. The men who restrained her and treated her violently unknowingly disappeared. There were male corpses lying all over the floor, and Martha could not be seen.

What appeared in Marida's sights instead was a naked girl who looked to be around 10 years old, lying beside the corpse of a man, reaching her hands at the back that could not move. Master, get up. Why aren't you moving? On hearing these sobbing words, Marida turned her eyes to the man she choked to death in a terrified manner. Suberoa Zinnerman's face appeared there, his mouth bleeding, and his eyeballs popping out of their sockets. His eyes were widened as he laid down amidst the pile of blood, wearing that usual old leather jacket and holding the captain's hat tightly in his hands.

"Master is broken."

The girl who had the same appearance as Marida lifted her tear-stained face. Impossible, this is definitely a lie!! Marida clutched her head as she ran around screaming. She broke away from the deep darkness and ran about the place without knowing where was up and bottom. No matter how she ran, the darkness showed no signs of fading away, and only the sense of killing remained on her fingers, gradually intensifying that sense of realism.

Part 16

The scream that was let out with utmost strength sounded like it was going to pierce through the soundproof glass, and the hands that were held down by metal cuff onto the armrests were opened wide. The eyes were widened in shock, and the fingers were convulsing, reacting in a way that should not be considered simply physiological. There was a switch of fear and despair in a human's mind, and if the electric charge continued to flow there, this kind of radical response would occur. One would even be reminded of a certain kind of machine—

The mind and soul could only be described as a little consolation, and the emotions humans had would have to be decided by the little differences in the electric flows inside the brain. The grotesque treatment of the brainwashing device would directly change the existence of the person itself, even vivisection would not compare to it. The headgear that was filled with electrodes were fastened onto Marida's face, and her eyes were becoming allow as her face was twisting in pain. Alberto could not help but look away from the soundproof glass that sealed the place, and it seemed that the researchers at the console of the control room did not expect her to show such an intense expression as they went pale. The monitor indicating all sorts of lifesigns was giving off an alarm, and Martha Vist

Carbine was the only one with a calm expression as she stared at the specimen in the operating room, "How is it?"

"Her temperature and pulse are showing critical values. It might be better to inject some amobarbital and continue at regular intervals."

"The hypnotizing effect seems to be weaker than expected. We have to stop now and take a short break. Watch the blood monitor, the half-life of the drug effect in Newtypes can't be estimated accurately at all."

Facility Chairman Bentner heard the reports from the researcher, and answered with a stern expression. Alberto secretly heaved a sigh of relief, "No." but it was for a fleeting moment before Martha commented,

"If we stop now, we'll have to start again, right? I don't have such time left. Tell them to continue."

"But the specimen will collapse in fear by itself…"

"I don't care. If this little thing can cause her to collapse, it means that there's no worth in getting her."

She said this as she stared at the face of the specimen that continued to try and call out without being able to let out a voice, and nobody could argue with her about this. Bentner balanced the possibility of losing such a precious specimen and the possibility of losing his position as the facility chairman as his eyes dulled. "Continue the experiment." The instruction rang through the control room. "But…", the researcher looked back to question, "Just continue." But Bentner told the researcher off as he started to operate on the console himself.

Marida's limbs were still fastened onto the chair as her body started to arch up like it was electrocuted. The researchers gave her a stare, checking the response in her eyes, but had no intention of wiping away the saliva rising from her lips. Alberto saw Martha's unmoved expression as he opened his mouth, but could not say anything as he lowered his head. He immediately turned around and stepped towards the door of the control room.

"Where are you going?"

Martha suddenly said without looking away from Marida. Shocked, Alberto stopped in his tracks.

"You mustn't run away. You have to look at her properly. That's the kind of respect you must show to her."

These words came as a surprise to Alberto, "Respect…?" Alberto parroted the words in his mouth, and Martha did not look at him in the eyes as she continued,

"This is her battle against me. If you have any intention of taking over the Foundation, you have to watch this battle until the end. You have to see for yourself how people turn rogue."

She looked like she found her other side from the other person as her face gave a self-mocking smile while she stared at the operating room. Martha suggested that the content of the hypnotism was to be based on herself. Another mental state was corroding her own—and if Marida was showing such a rejection because of the clash between those two, Martha would undoubtedly be fighting against her. Perhaps this was a tussle where both parties betted on their own existences. Alberto did not have the courage to look back and leave as he stared at Marida inside the operating table. Her body was like a puppet controlled by electricity, convulsing continuously as her direct and strong-willed eyes were gradually losing their light. That delicate body that stood up for him would become another thing with the same skin…

What's with this maddening pain that's scratching at my flesh? Alberto put his hand on his throbbing chest as he turned his bothered stare to the floor. He was not reluctant about seeing the process of someone changing, but he did not want to see Marida change. These intangible words form a doubt in his heart, and he looked back at Marida behind the glass. She was in utmost pain, but her lower chin could only be described as beautiful, and a throbbing that was stronger than before immediately passed through the hand he pressed on his chest.

Chapter 3

06:06

The port of Dakar was located at the North-Eastern area of the plateau where the political and economic hub was. The port was completely filled with harbor facilities, and the grey seawall continued to extend to the neighboring Hann Bel-Air industrial zone. Including the artificial pier that formed a harbor, the water body stretched on for more than 30km, and there were only more than 200 ships moving within the harbor. The Dakar port was not some eye-opening large port, but it was a major base of production and energy generation filled with Gas Complexes and metal, chemical plants built on reclaimed land. To the locals who had enterprises coming in, it was an integral facility for logistic functions.

The average water depth of the harbor was 50m, but as a part of the seabed was dug up artificially, most of the water depth was around 25m. The block that was 100m deep from the pier was a relic of a "refuge trench", built for the Federation army spaceships to dock—the absurd strategy to let the marine ships have the same density as spaceships and sink them to prevent enemy bombardment was acted here. In fact, most of the ships that once sank into the sea could not be used, and had no chance to be used in the refuge trench of Dakar's port. However, the chiselled-out stretch remained as they were, and the submerged waterway leading to the port weaved under the sea like a giant snake. As for the security level of the capital, these completely useless facilities became relics with negative effects that caused blind spots. They could only let the sea's radar network, the Sound Surveillance System (SOSUS) gather here.

On May 1st, the SOSUS detected a strange source of sound, and Dakar, which was in the Greenwich Meridian, was at 6.06am. two mobile suits, the RAG-79 "Aqua GMs" that belonged to the Federation navy, submerged to the bottom of Dakar's port located 100m at the wharf wall, and started to clean up the sludge that piled at the bottom of the sea. They landed, activated their sensors to maximum output, and started to move to the port in the sea.

The machine of the "Aqua GMs" had jet units all over the place, and the shoulders that also functioned as ballast tanks were as high as the head. For a GM-type mobile suit that was lean and streamlined, this "Aqua GM" looked rather crude in its silhouette. It was built hastily during the War, was

hardly improved on, and was not really easy to pilot. The massive block-shaped body had old-looking colors on it, but the Federation had no better amphibious mobile suits. The spaceship with the Minovsky Craft installed was flying in the sky above, and mobile suits gained wings called SFS at this point, so this amphibious mobile suit that could attack the enemy from underwater lost its advantage for a long time. The weakened Zeon remnants would naturally be unable to extend their forces to submerged motherships if it did not factor in the weakness of it not being easily usable. The Federation itself had half forgotten about it too.

But no matter the kind of machine, there would be people who would put their hearts and efforts in developments. One of the "Aqua GMs" that landed on the port of Dakar was piloted by Captain Feido, codenamed with the Call Sign Harpoon 1. He was a pilot of the amphibious mobile suit ever since the One Year War. The Zeon amphibious mobile suits had launched raids on the coast many times, cutting ship supplies, and terrorized the seas on Earth. At this point, they had disappeared, but the underwater was a world that could not be surveyed easily even by watching, a place filled with natural Minovsky Particles called water. Even if the "GM III" rode on the Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) to stand guard, some situations require diving underwater for a response. This confidence caused the pilot to give up many chances of changing vocations and retraining as he continued to be an amphibious unit pilot. To him, this was a rare opportunity for him to prove his point. After the Federation navy submarine "Bonefish" met its demise, the tale of an Atlantic Ocean monster "Sea Ghost" suddenly became very realistic. Many used to see it as a malfunction of the SOSUS, and they did not even have any antisubmarine measures at that time. However, that attack was detected extremely close to Dakar, and was determined to be the doing of a Zeon submarine.

It would take some time before the allied submarines that departed would arrive here. If there were really an enemy unit submerged, there would be no doubts that the diving team's mobile suits would be the only ones that could deal with it. Feido stared at the LCAC hovering over his head, let the "Aqua GM" charge right at the port and descend to the seabed 150m deep. The amount of light was such that it was impossible to see a hand stretched out in front with the naked eye, and all the all-view monitor CG could determine were the sunk ships and reefs. Feido used the night-vision camera and sonar to determine the situation in the sea, and activated the optical fiber communication channel once the "Aqua GM" called Harpoon 2 landed behind.

The communication was carried out by active sonar that started to spread. The sonar from Harpoon 2 started to let out a sharp echo in response to Feido's unit that was flickering its light from the visor, and the unit then used the jet units on its back and waist to stamp off the seabed. The machine was holding a torpedo missile launcher in its hands, and gradually floated like a diver, swinging its arms as it swam over to the other side of the reefs that overlapped the "Water GM". The water surface that looked like an aurora would not even let through the light of a star, and the machine immediately merged into the veil of thick seawater.

The pinger on the sea surface would let out sounds at regular intervals, creating a perimeter on the sea where the Sea Ghost was. Also, one could discover a sonar buoy that was casted down for the anti-submarine machines. There was a tanker that was veering greatly to the left, and it definitely changed course because of the LCAC that was on patrolling requesting it to change its course. There were not a lot of ships that were entering and exiting the port, but there was a need to work together with the coast guards and regulate the transport inside the port completely, if the raid would only end after noon. Once the enterprises and media express their unhappiness over the economic loss, the first party to be affected would be the navy. Feido did not have the time to even curse as he let his unit navigate towards the open sea.

The "Aqua GM" machine became a lot lighter as it released the seawater from its high pressure ballast tanks. The machine left behind a trail of water flowing as it left the seabed. The "rescue trench" dug during the war and the seabed that could be seen appeared in his eyes, and he spotted a black shaped object moving out from the shadows of a sunken ship.

It looked like a mobile suit, but it was not a GM-type. The machine had arched surfaces all over it, and its head was located in its short and stout frame. Its relaxed arms were not holding any weapons, and in fact, given the shape of the hands, it was impossible for it to "wield" any weapons. The end of the arms that looked extremely fat looked like a class when viewed together with its head, and the silhouette of that thing which looked like a shelled crustacean was practically—

"…No way."

That silhouette was reminiscent of the Zeon Repulic army's "Z'Gok" amphibious mobile suit. Is it a remnant of the War? Feido could not even confirm what he just saw as he stared at the ghost-like figure. It's impossible for such a thing to appear in this age now. I don't know if there's

really a Sea Ghost at the bottom of the sea or the dead souls of those who should have died off in the War—but everything is planned too perfectly. Feido tried to convince himself with a bitter smile, but something leaped up from behind the "Aqua GM", rocking the cockpit with a tremendous shockwave.

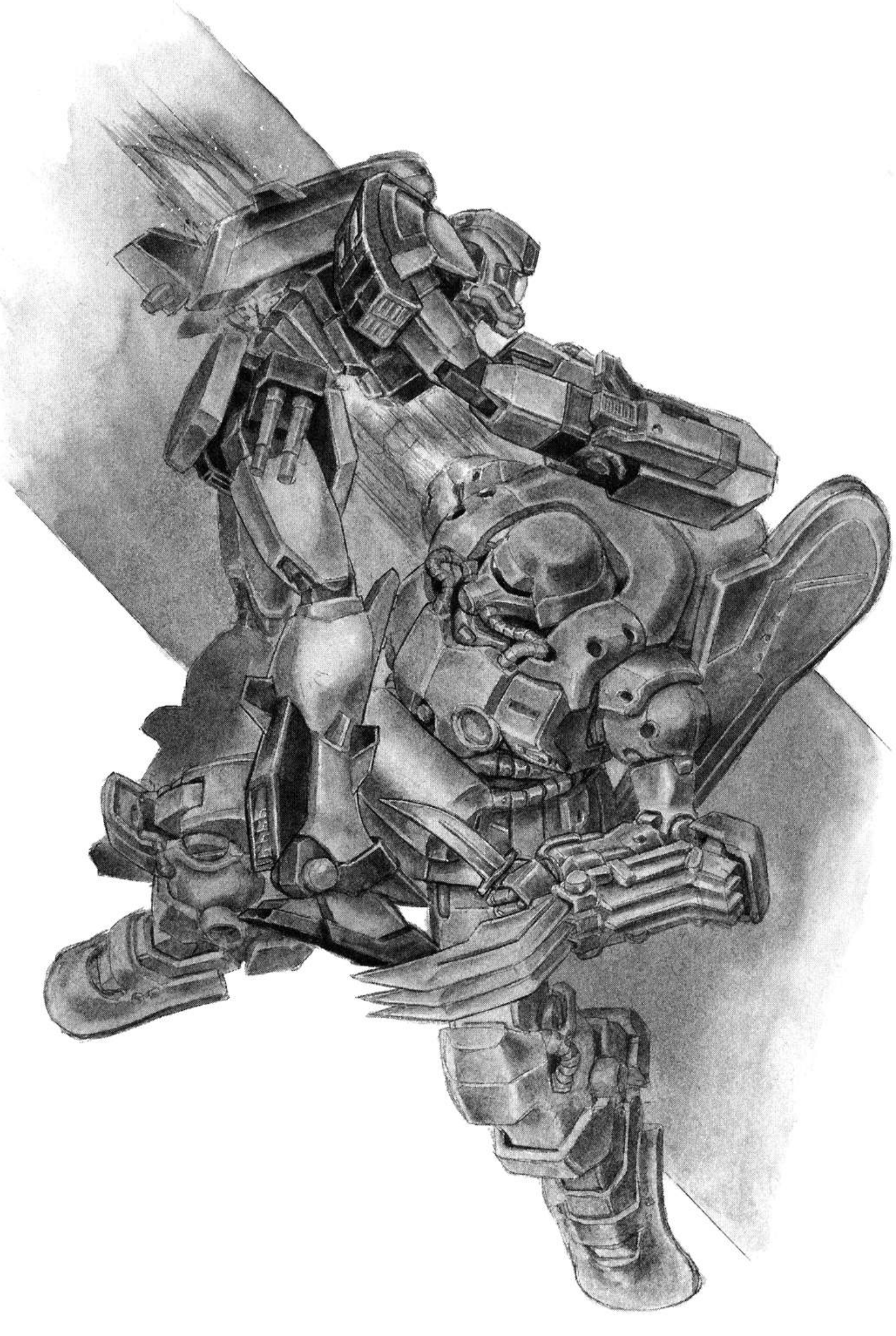
"What's that…?"

The mechanical hand that had 5 fingers reached over from the back, covering the main camera. The vision of the all-view monitor was covered by something, and Feido immediately pressed the message button of the pinger to report this emergency.

The Harpoon 2 will immediately realize something was amiss once it hears the soundwaves that moves 4 times faster than in air. Even if I'm to be sunk here, I should be able to leave it to him. That was what Feido planned, but the active sonar of the machine remained silent as the sonar communicator could not take effect. That was because the arm of the "Aqua GM" that was suppressed from behind covered the sonar signal located on the mask.

The right arm of the machine was completely restrained too, and he could not fire the torpedo launcher that was equipped to its arm. Feido tried his best to move the "Aqua GM"s left hand and pull the beam pike from the waist. He considered the fact that the beam would be negated in water, and that it would only release the beam when making contact with the enemy armor, but the beam pike fell to the bottom of the sea before he could make use of its abilities. The enemy wrecked the pinger, quickly raised its other arm, and used the heat knife to stab through the cockpit of the "Aqua GM".

The macromolecular compound ceramic-type blade broke through 3 layers of armor and reached right into the cockpit. Feido's body was first sliced in half by the blade, and the blade that had electricity charged through let out an intense heat. The cockpit that was burnt together with its pilot let out a small explosion, and the cracks of the armor let out several bubbles and conducting liquid. The frozen body of the machine fell forward, and an arm reached out from behind to support the "Aqua GM" that had become a corpse before it could make any unnecessary noises. The mobile suit—the "Zee Zulu" let the enemy machine lie down on the seabed as it bled out conducting fluids and lit its head to signal its allied machine.



It raised the heat knife it was wielding in its hand, and its 3 sharp claws built on the side of its forearm provided a contrast to it, creating a crab-like silhouette on the machine. The black shadows that received the signal were of the same structure started to move, and though they looked similar to the amphibious machines Zeon made in the past, they were just a form the "Zee Zulu" possessed.

The basic structure of this machine was not too different from the main line of mobile suits "Geara Zulu" Neo Zeon used. However, the "Zee Zulu" looked vastly different once it was equipped with claws for close combated and vest-shaped diving equipment. The ballast tanks latched around the neck made it difficult to see the actual outline of the head and the body, while the fins on its legs made it look extremely big on its ends. It was humanoid and yet not humanoid, and was an oddly-shaped machine that could be called a demon in the sea—it inherited the genetics of the amphibious mobile suits Zeon had. The "Zee Zulu" moved out from the blind spot created by the sunken ship, and used the reefs as cover as it quickly approached the other "Aqua GM". The moment it made contact, it used its sharp claws bent as a hook to rip through the abdomen of the enemy unit.

The pilot of Harpoon 2 did not manage to understand what was going on as the "Zee Zulu" immediately used its claws to rip the cockpit together with the pilot inside. It ignored its allied unit that was planning to take the next action as it let out a signal from its pinger. The large amount of soundwaves with different frequencies from the Federation mobile suits was released from the sea spread through several kilometers, and a 3rd "Zee Zulu" received these sounds through the SOSUS sonar receptor.

The 3rd "Zee Zulu" used its heat knife to club the cable of the sonar receptor as a response, and let its fin feet leave the floor. The machine moved to the port, and soon after, the reefs behind it started to rumble and create a large amount of dust that slowly floated up. The large black mass looked like a floating shell, and the artificial object showed the glow of its monoeye at the center, revealing its true identity as it followed the "Zee Zulu" and approached Dakar.

The Sea Ghost—the "Shamblo" hovered above the sonar receptors that were not working as their cables got cut, and showed its actual body and started to move forward. The sonar receptors on the sea would not detect the sound of the MHD propeller units moving forward, and the machine would not be affected by the perimeter of the pingers. The pingers were set

beyond the range of the SOSUS so that the sonar receptors would not be overly burdened.

Of course, the controllers of the SOSUS would immediately realize that the cables were snapped, but it would be too late by the time the navy understood the situation and arrived. Dakar was right in front of the "Shamblo", and Madhi Garvery grinned as he stared at the edge of the "Refuge Trench" on the main monitor. It was so easy for an enemy to invade Dakar, the capital of the most powerful organization in history, the Earth Federation government.

"It's about time."

Madhi said some unnecessary words. He looked down and saw his 3 children that were wearing pilot suits, Abbas, Walid and Loni. He was wearing a helmet with the corporate logo of Garvey Enterprises on it. The 17 opened leaves of the palm branch were surrounded by a circle, and the logo was designed off the bird-eye's view blueprint of Palm Island, an artificial island that was built on the sea off Dubai. The consoles and seats of the cockpit had the same picture on them as well. The construction of the "Shamblo" was assisted by Zeon, so they had to show the logo of Zeon on the surface. This little logo however showed the real heart of the "Descendant of Dubai" quietly.

The "Shamblo" followed the 3 "Zee Zulu" and transformed into cruise mode as it approached Dakar. The pot of Dakar basked under the morning sunlight, reflecting it off the surface, not detecting the monster rumbling underwater.

06:20

The 3 main thrusters installed at the tail of the ship took the momentum released by the fusion hybrid engines and let out a rumbling sound. The hot air that was whipped up caused the sand and dust to rise, covering the body of the 112m ship that stood vertically, and the "Garencieres" finally started to move.

The ship was merely ascending slowly at first, and after several seconds, the unique triangular prism broke free from the exhaust and the dust storms and rose into the skies. The ship entered the blue sky vertically like a rocket that was launched a long time ago, creating a slightly tilted pillar of cloud in the Sahara Desert.

The "Garencieres" was not equipped with a Minovsky Craft, and could not move freely under gravity and rise in the air. Like an ordinary spacecraft, it could only lift itself through its streamlined body and fly without losing its speed. The "Garencieres" blew by the clouds and drew a long arch as it entered the stratosphere, tilting horizontally in a gradual manner as it continued its flight. The G-force that struck the ship gradually lost its momentum, and the bodies that were pressed down on the chairs were finally regaining their sense of up and down. Zimmerman heaved a sigh and relaxed his hands as he moved them away from the handles of the captain's seat. Sitting at the navigation seat and steering seat were Flaste and Alec, and they too relaxed their shoulders as they turned back to their respective consoles.

"Current altitude is 9,800m. Fusion cores are in good condition."

"All hands, remove acceleration guard. We'll be flying horizontally. Estimated time of arrival in Dakar is 0800. Mobile suits related crew, standby. Deck crew, start inspecting the ship and check all parts and tools under gravity conditions carefully."

Alec continued off from Flaste and used the microphone to pass the message through the ship in a stiff tone. This man's steering skills were the real deal, but he continued to show a tense expression, probably because he could not accept the fact that he was taking over for Gilboa. Don't be nervous. Zimmerman wanted to speak up, but he immediately kept quiet after noticing that his mouth was dry. He took a sip of drinking water, and muttered in his heart, I really have no right to tell other people off here. If I'm not tense, I won't even think of crashing into the capital of the Earth Federation—

"A little more than an hour before we reach Dakar…it'll be easy if we're just going there."

Flaste probably sensed Zimmerman's feelings as he let out these words. It had been two days since they got back from Dakar, and as the ship was busy with the preparations and resupply, he did not have time to talk, but there was no doubts that he had suspicions regarding this operation. "Looks like you have something to say?" Flaste, who was looking at the water, glanced behind from the navigation seat, shrugged and said, "I have nothing to argue about this."

"But it's a big thing to attack Dakar. Once the compromise with the Federation is broken, we might have a 3rd Neo Zeon war if it's not dealt

with properly. Instead of saying that it doesn't feel realistic, I really can't guess what Frontal's thinking as I look at this situation …" "The lead in this operation is Madhi Garvey. We just have to drop the "Unicorn" above Dakar and let it land safely on the parliament hall. What we can do after that is to wait for the Laplace Program to unravel its seal."

Of course, we can't just remained relaxed like this. Flaste avoided the sharp stare from Zimmerman, "I understand here." and continued.

"We can understand that they deliberately chose to take action during Congress recess so that the Senators supporting Zeon would not be affected. However, didn't Lord Madhi say that he wanted to destroy all the power on Dakar? Even if that guy's titled the "Descendant of Dubai", he's a big shot who hasn't tasted military food before. Who knows whether we can believe in what he plans to do…"

"That's why we need to assign escorts for the "Unicorn" and give it weapons to launch. If things go bad, we can drop the machine and retreat immediately—"

"Nope, if Madhi's daring to say that, it means that he has a powerful ace up his sleeve. We might end up being controlled if we let an outsider handle that."

Just like how the "Unicorn" ended up controlling Banagher. Flaste threw these unexpected words, causing Zimmerman to be caught off guard, worrying him inside. Flaste sensed his silent expression and sighed before turning back to the console, "And Frontal never met with Madhi directly, right?"

"We also have to consider the intentions of those hiding behind the back of the Republic, right? To what extent are those guys willing to help Neo Zeon? I don't think that the Republic has the power to withstand the Federation's counterattack before it gets broken up…is the value of the "Laplace Box" really worth using the entire Neo Zeon for exchange?"

He expressed his doubts too directly, and even Alec beside him turned an uneasy stare over. At this point—no, it was because it was at this point that they had to check whether they were on stable footing or not, and everyone had this kind of thought. Up till this point, both sides had been detouring around to avoid a certain predicament, as everything would end if they met up directly. At this moment, the situation was right in front of their eyes. Zimmerman looked at his chest that was hiding its

indecisiveness and bit his lips tights to prevent himself from saying what he really thought. He then answered with the callousness of a commander, "I can say that what happened before already showed the value of the "Box"."

"The Federation and the Vist Foundation are having bloodshot eyes while chasing after it. No matter what's inside, it's worth exchanging for one or two capitals. However, what we have to take note of is—"

"Banagher's side, right?"

Flaste answered first, showing his unhappiness over this superficial answer in his eyes. "…That's right." Zimmerman answered as he looked away awkwardly.

"He's willing to listen to the instructions now, but it's going to be hard to tell what will happen when he witnesses Dakar being attacked. If he's really intending to fight, our forces alone won't be enough to stop him."

Zimmerman said this and went silent with a concerned feeling. He brought Banagher along to the desert and treated him like a crew member just to prevent this aforementioned situation; Flaste knew about this, and the main crew members were notified as well. There was no such thing as unpaid kindness in this world. The "Unicorn" would move according to the heart, the pilot's mental state and open a way to the "Box". Thus, it was all the more reasonable to try and pull him over to their side…but am I really doing all that for this?

He could not tell. Zimmerman never had pure intentions in the first place, and he admitted his own hypocrisy as he darted his stare out of the window to look at the dull-looking blue sky. He would be in for a long time if he expressed his own doubts about this operation, but he did not have the thought of objecting to this in his heart. Banagher was not the only one being fooled; all the crew members on this "Garencieres" were the same. He fooled the grudging flesh and souls, and even though it had nothing to do with the revival of Zeon, the first person he fooled when he chose to enter the battlefield and run away was himself, not anyone else.

Whether it was Zimmerman or Madhi or even possibly Frontal, that lie was starting to break due to the series of incidents surrounding the "Box", and that was why everyone was starting to panic. It did not matter whether the "Box" truly existed or not, they just needed to create an opportunity. It was just like what Madhi said, they waited too long. We're tired of waiting, we

have to take action before we forget, even if we will have to meet with the ugly battles they kept avoiding, even if that path of blood repaid upon blood will only lead to destruction—

"Well, I don't think we have to worry about that guy."

Flaste suddenly raised a relaxed voice. Zimmerman recovered from his deep thoughts and looked up.

"That guy has completely believed in you, captain."

Flaste's eyes had a hidden honest light that reached the soul, completely different from his casual tone. We believe in you too, captain. Zimmerman could not stand his expression that was saying this as he looked away. The white sun that just rose looked overly dazzling to his eyes that were deprived of sleep.

06:35

Anyone would look larger when lying down, whether they're humans or mobile suits. The mobile suit deck tilted 90 degrees inside the "Garencieres" that was flying horizontally, and the machines that were docked inside naturally fell onto the floor, held down by the restrains. The "Unicorn" that was lying horizontally on the hangar looked mighty, and could be aptly described as a giant.

"I put two beam Gatling guns on the left arm's mounting rack. It uses a special connecting frame, so the aiming and firing operating is combined together. Of course, the operating of the shield won't be affected."

The mechanic Tomura, who had been assigned to maintain the "Unicorn" ever since it was taken back, said this. It seemed that it did not matter to him who he was talking to as long as it was about machines, so there was no sign of any awkwardness on his face. His 30+-looking face was lightly sprinkled with moustache, and Banagher could see a splitting image of Takuya on him as he stared at the "Unicorn" that was equipped with the Beam Gatling guns. The Gatling guns were originally meant as an additional armament for the "Kshatriya", and at this moment, they were mounted and attached to the forearms of the "Unicorn". The long barrels that were mounted together caused the machine to look rather bulky. A total of 8 gun muzzles were pointing out from the shield, showing an intimidating presence, and anyone would imagine the devastation they would have when they were used.

In the end, he was still forced to take part in the battle due to the circumstances. He planned the landing at the Central parliament hall to unravel the seal of the Laplace Program. It would be Madhi Garvey's job to suppress Dakar, and the chances of the "Unicorn" being involved in the battle were not high, but it was impossible to tell without actually being at the scene. Banagher adjusted the collar of the pilot suit and covered up the suffocating feeling rising up in him, "Won't this make it heavier?" he raised his primary concern.

"Logically, you should be able to adjust through the AMBAC settings. If you don't want to use a weapon that's too heavy, do you want the rifle—beam magnum? It has only 1 shot left, and you can just leave it here. However, it might help the balance of the machine. Well, the power output of the "Unicorn" does make things easy."

Banagher looked at the personal beam rifle that was hanging on the equipment rack at the other side of the hangar, and felt his heart sink somewhat. The Magnum cartridge could unleash the energy of 4 normal rifle shots in a single shot, and though the power would more or less be negated under the atmosphere, one would wonder what consequences would there be if it was used in the city. As he gulped, Tomura patted him on the shoulder and gave a bitter smile, saying, "Don't think of it as such a serious thing."

"Bringing it along is just a precaution here. Your guards Ivan and Kwani are both veterans, and there's nothing to worry if you listen to their instructions. Besides, the battle should be over once you reach Dakar."

The nonchalant voice caused Banagher to remember the face of another veteran mobile suit pilot, Gilboa. Tomura and the other crew members would not actually show that they were mourning over the absence of Gilboa, at least in front of Banagher, and he did not know whether they were being considerate about him, or that war would cause emotions to numb gradually. "I'm not really concerned." He simply said this as he stepped onto the ladder leading to the cockpit. He reached the platform that was extended out of the cockpit and turned his stare that was saddled with heavy emotions he could not leave aside at the "Unicorn".

"It's weird. I didn't think Neo Zeon weapons fit so well with Federation mobile suits."

"That's because both sides are of universal specifications. The mounts are interchangeable too."

"Both sides can find a common ground here, so why can't they stop fighting?"

"During the course of a war, this is the only aspect of technology people become familiar with. The manufacturer's the same anyway, so it's more efficient to unify the specifications."

"So this is for Anaheim Corporation's convenience?"

"And for on-site convenience too. It's helping now, isn't it?"

Tomura answered from behind the handle of the platform, and his face was telling Banagher that it was pointless to think too much into it. If there were an economy that could live only by war, would it not be obvious to make everything efficient? Banagher digested on this bitter understanding as he climbed down to the cockpit at his feet. He ducked his head into the seat that was facing up, and attached the back of the pilot suit with the attachments. The standby power source was activated, and the CG image of the "Unicorn" equipping itself with the Beam Magnum appeared on the condition window.

He knew that it was stupid of him to ride a Neo Zeon ship and wait for the launch, but he had to do this in order to reveal the true identity of the "Box". He let his finger slide onto the touch panel of the display board, checked the position of the cockpit he had not rode on for a long time, and suddenly stopped once he detected Daguza's scent.

The assistance seat beside the linear seat was still inside the all-view monitor, and nothing showed that Daguza was once here. If the battle hasn't ended, what will happen if I end up having to fight the Federation? No matter what excuse I find, it'll be against what Daguza hoped to do, isn't it? No matter how he questioned himself, Banagher could not find an answer, and he clenched his fists tight. The atmosphere shook the ship, creating a rumbling sound that breezed by his ears. It was telling him that he was gradually closing in on Dakar—

06:40

At this point, petroleum resources were declared to have been depleted since a long time ago, but though the tankers that travelled across oceans had virtually disappeared, but this did not mean that tankers themselves lost their importance. Natural gas were as depleted as oil fields themselves, but there were still unstable gas hydrate veins even after a

long time since such mining technology was devised, and the natural gas that was extracted from these parts continued to be used as raw materials for the chemical or urban gas industries. The method of using pipes to transport it directly, and also the method of transporting liquidised gas by ship had continued on since the old age, and this kind of work was handed by the companies shipping the Liquefied Natural gas (LNG). Amongst the ships that were moving to and from Dakar, a ship approximately 200,000 square meters was considered the largest-class of "guests", and such large ships that were easily mistaken for space motherships when viewed from afar would often move around the industrial area.

The "Zeus IX" was affected by the marine navigation controls the Federation navy implemented, and had to make a huge detour as a result. It was one of the LNG ships. The flat hull that was common for a tanker had a thin low-temperature heat sink that came with membranes, and the squared storage tank that was like a huge container exposed a little part on this open-aired deck. It was 350m in length, but the total number of crew members, including the captain, was less than 15 due to the grace of automation. The liquefied gas the ship was carrying would be sent to a LNG chain located in Bel-Air industrial area, and this was one of the necessary procedures required in the automated process when the gas is to be transported from the tanks to the containers. As long as they dock the ship onto a sea berth, the port's facilities would take the necessary measures.

It was 6.40am. The "Zeus IX" docked at Dakar's harbor 20 minutes later than expected, and it arrived at the 23rd sea berth the LNG chain designated. The tugboats, which were equipped with buffers at the bow, positioned themselves on both bow and stern as according to the instructions of the maritime pilots, which were sent from the harbor management, and the large tanker that had a capacity of 200,000 tonnes was silently nudged into its sea berth. At this phase, the docking was practically complete. The captain stared at the backs of the sea maritime pilots that were skilfully doing their job, and heaved a sigh of relief. However, that was before the tremors under his feet came about, shaking the bridge.

The feeling of colliding into a reef came from below as the impact struck, and the ship felt like it was being gouged over and over again as the tremors continued. The "Refuge Trench" here was originally meant for spaceships, and was 100m in depth, so there was no reason for the "Zeus IX" to meet any reefs at this point when its draft depth was 21m deep. The

captain's feet were tangled by the continuous tremors as he rushed to the window in front. He saw that the tank on the open-aired deck was alright, and was about to designate someone to carry out safety checks, but at that moment, something from the outboard appeared at the edge of his sights.

That object sliced through the sea surface, and as a large amount of water flowed down, it raised what looked like "claws". It had sharp "claws", two on top and one at the bottom that could bite, reminiscent of a raptor's foot. It was impossible to measure using the scale of heavy machinery, and the large "claws" that was no less than 30m long when completely appeared sliced down onto the open-aired deck, letting out a huge boom at the scene as the metal sank in. The captain inadvertently covered his ears and saw the "claws" sink into the broadside and pierce through the tank on the deck. The handrail of the broadside was twisted, and the nickel-iron alloy that formed the tank was ripped through like paper. The volatile gas immediately escaped from the crack, and a white steam covered the entire open-aired deck.

Once the LNG that was stored below -160 degrees Celsius became volatile, the moisture in the air would freeze, and the extremely cold gas that was heavier than air would remain around. That kind of low temperature caused the "claws" stabbed into the tank to freeze, creating a thin layer of ice around the surrounding sea surface, but this level alone was not enough to slow the movements of the "claws". It discarded the ice columns that was made of frozen seawater, and stabbed deeper into the tank, opening a large hole as if it wanted to rip it out together with the portside. The gas started to leak at an explosive rate, and as it made contact with the outside temperature, it got less dense, becoming white steam clouds that covered the "Zeus IX".

At this rate, the bridge and everyone inside would be frozen together. The siren rang loudly, and the captain immediately ordered everyone on the bridge to evacuate. He had already left the window that was starting to freeze, and the other crew members were intending to escape from the bridge, but none of them could escape outside.

It was unknown whether it was due to the sparks were created due to the ripping of the wall, or that the owner of the "claw" deliberately triggered it. No matter the reason, the "Zeus IX" that was covered in steam let out intense heat at a certain point, causing the gas that reached its kindling point to burst into flames. This kind of flame would burn slower than oil, but

the crimson-red flames still covered the ship in an instant, prompting the liquefied gas that was stored inside to ignite as well. The liquefied gas vaporized completely, and the gas body expanded to several hundred times as it burst through the tank, penetrating through the double-layered hull that surrounded the tank. The "Zeus IX" had a large scale explosion from inside, and the large impact caused a shockwave that spread into Dakar.

The expanded flame caused the tugboats around it to be crushed and overturned immediately, and the tip of the fire slowly rose to the skies in a slow motion-like manner. The shockwaves created a mini-tsunami that struck at the wharf, and the loud sound of the explosion reached the center of the city, but no one could understand the situation immediately. The ones to take initial action were the Dakar patrol squad mobile suits stationed at the harbor; they immediately got into battle formation once they witnessed the mushroom cloud that rose and started to approach the place where the explosion took place.

The two propulsion propellers roared, and the bottom of the LCAC broke the waves as it mowed forward. The RGM-86R "GM IIIs" that were lying on the LCAC readied their beam rifles and fired. Once they got news that they lost contact with the diving team, the pilots responded quickly and intended to search for the enemy units that seemed to have enter the harbor. However, these people that were attracted by the burning tanker did not know that there was an unexpected situation happening, ready to strike them.

The plateau region opposite the Bel-Air industrial zeone had a row of waterfront warehouse. If one were to look over from the place where transport trucks would not stop at, the burning remains of the tanker looked no different from a red-hot tong offshore. At this point, the sea surface off the uay was rising, and the large "claws" showed itself with a large amount of water. The "claw" swung down at the neighboring port, the gantry cranes used for lifting cargo were knocked down like paper, and the three sharp blades immediately sank into the concrete ground.

The flexible robot arm supporting the "claw" let out a tremor from its armor, and the main body that had been submerged underwater all this time was starting to rise up. The sea surface rose again, the "legs" that were attached to the arms appeared on the surface, and the "head" with the monoeye, the "body" that had the silhouette of a living being appeared in order. Once all the parts were shown, that hill-like large body was covered

by the sun, and the harbor that was stabbed in by the "claws" was covered by a short moment of darkness. The seawater rained down like a waterfall, the object used its massive mass that was several times more than a ship to crush the harbor, and it used the outstretched "claw" on its other leg to stab into the wharf and climb onto land slowly.

The large leg that resembled an elephant's stabbed through a truck together with the wharf, and the air-cushioned rear that resembled a hermit crab shell rumbled. The "claws" that were brought in together with its legs underwater moved with the help of its flexible robotic arms that were like independent arms, and the reddish-brown color of the machine machine matched its appearance, giving the vibe of a lobster. The armor that extended sideways from its groin was reminiscent of bat wings, and the head that was protruding out from this gap was giving off the flair of a reptile. The image all the parts gave was of bits and pieces, but that mysterious combination felt like a mad chimera—the "Shamblo" that had transformed into its land form pushed aside the Jin-Poles in its way as it landed, and the sharp claws that were fixed on the flexible arm swung down at the waterfront warehouses.

The roofs over the waterfront warehouses were crushed easily, and the sharp claws punctured the containers inside deeply. The flexible robot arm pulled its leg forward, crushing the remaining warehouses as it moved forward. This large body, which had a maximum height of 32m and more than 70m in length, would bring about a carpet bombing-like destruction on the ground just by moving forward. With the assistance of the air cushion at its rear, the "Shamblo" trampled over the waterfront warehouses that were leveled and started to advance to the center of Dakar.

To the "GM III" squadron that was moving over the sea to the burning tanker, it looked like a mountain range made of steel moving. There was less than 4km from there to the parliament house at the plateau area, and there was no need to second-guess what the enemy's objective was. They hurriedly turned around and rushed over to the object that looked like a mobile armor. However, their movements were detected by the "Zee Zulu" squad hidden underwater.

The three "Zee Zulus" readied their combat claws on their forehands and approached the LCAC hovering over the water. Both sides crossed paths, and the claw easily stabbed through the bottom of the LCAC that was made of vulcanized rubber as it tumbled and stopped working. The machine lost its balance greatly as it was pulled down by the inertia of 40

knots, and the "GM III" that were knocked off the LCAC fell into the water. The non-amphibious mobile suit would not drown, but there was no reason for it to function properly in the water. While they were confused, the pilot frantically tried to identify their positions, but what appeared in front of them were heat knives that swung straight down.

Once the "Zee Zulu" stabbed its heat knife through the cockpit of the "GM III", it immediately pulled back and moved away from the bubbles and conducting fluids. The other "Zee Zulus" dealt with their prey and submerged underwater again to wait for any enemy forces that would arrive next. Everything happened underwater, and some time would be required before the Dakar defense squad could grasp what was going on and take appropriate action. The burning tanker and the sunk LCACs were merely the results of an unknown situation at this point—and the "Shamblo" did not care about that commotion as it moved its oddly-shaped silhouette to the plateau area.

The large body triggered a quake, and an emergency siren rang through the streets. That buzzing sound finally rang through the speakers all over the city after several years, creating a commotion on the streets that were still sleepy in the morning. Sirens that had a tinge of a looming disaster shook the air in Dakar.

07:02

"You're saying Dakar's attacked by the enemy?"

While the news to activate the anti-air surveillance branch was to be announced, he was in the captain room, washing his face to wake himself up. Bright rushed into the bridge and asked loudly, and once he heard First Officer Meran answer with a serious expression, "It's a report from the Senate Council", he felt like his breathing was blocked.

"An air raid? How many enemies are there?"

"I don't know. The Senate Council itself doesn't seem like it grasped the situation either. Our satellite link with the Dakar security is cut off too."

Minovsky particles—no matter whether they were scattered by either ally or foe, the scale of battle was definitely abnormal. This is definitely not a trivial matter, he exchanged looks with Meran who said that, and turned to look at the navigation screen behind him to roughly estimate the estimated time required from their current position to Dakar. It had been more than 20

minutes since the "Ra Cailum" received the report of a launch exhaust from what looked like a VTOL ship and head off to the Western Sahara. The battleship that was still in the process of accelerating had already passed over the Libyan desert, and there was still less than 5000km distance left before they reached Dakar. If they considered the accelerating and decelerating, it would be approximately an hour later before they reached Dakar. It was impossible to shorten the time further due to the ship's acceleration functions under the atmosphere. Even if they moved towards space first before rushing down to the atmosphere, they would end up moving over Dakar at this distance. So we can only rush over to Dakar directly in the sky?—

"All hands, get to second alert. Mobile suit squad, standby."

Bright's lips moved before he could make a conclusion. There's no time, and there's no need to wait for instructions from the Senate Council. Get to the scene first and confirm the situation. The Londo Bell Task Force was granted an unconditional authority to do as they please during an emergency intrusion on the Federation government. "Our ship will now head to Dakar. Hurry up on plotting the shortest navigation course, equip a booster onto the Base Jabbers and get them onto the catapult decks together with the "Jestas" on standby." Bright gave the orders he could think of immediately as he sat on the captain's seat at the middle of the bridge. The ordinary bridge length of a "Ra Cailum"-class was more 15m, and the breadth was 6m strong, forming a horizontally structure. There were 8 crew members under the navigation branch, and soon after the alarm rang, two duty staff members that were on standby to assist during an alert situation rushed to the scene, and the bridge was filled with activities that were somewhat tense.

"Depending on the situation, we may open the battle bridge. All departments, check the circuits!" Meran yelled with a gruff voice and showed a battle-hardened face he had not shown after 3 years. No matter how much they educated, it was impossible to create such an atmosphere during training. Bright sensed that the fatigue he endured for the past few days was cleared off, "What are they planning…" as he mused to himself. For the past 2 days, the "Ra Cailum" rushed over to the Middle East, merely to detect the movements of the Zeon remnants forces. However, their bases that were scattered in the desert showed no signs of movements. It was unknown where this enemy came from, either from above ground or from below. "Does it have something to do with the VTOL

ship that was reported?" Meran, who was standing beside the captain's seat, added on uietly,

"If the exhaust fumes detected in the Western Sahara is from that "Garencieres"…"

"That is a possibility, but I don't think it has the capability to take down Dakar. If the "Laplace Box" is on that ship, the logical thinking would be to return to space first."

"I heard that "Palau" was abandoned. Is it possible for those "Sleeves" to launch an all-or-nothing attack after losing their base?"

"Those men of the man who called himself another coming of Char aren't that simple-minded…we lost the initiative, I guess."

These excessive words caused Meran to frown. Was the entire series of incidents starting from "industrial 7" related to this assault on Dakar? It was impossible to discern with just the information Ronan Marcenas provided. There should be a more complicated and deeply rooted reason that existed behind these incidents, just like the "Laplace Box" term that was filled with mystery. He knew that as long as he could not approach that core, he would become a chess piece that was easily to manipulate, always dwelling outside the situation.

He wanted information. This information he wanted need not be filtered by principles or benefits. A she thought about this, he remembered the faces of several people he was familiar with. "EWA, Uniform 011 is going to launch." The voice of the communications operator rang, "Tell them to hurry up." and Bright immediately answered back instinctly.

"There might be a need to continue. Tell the pilots to remain on standby and get ready to launch."

"Understood. Informing mobile suit team."

"Control room, your response is too slow. What are you doing!"

Once the situation began, his body that was used to responding started to move. He roared into the wireless communicator of the bridge as he observed the movements of the crew that had become dull after approximately 3 years, and endured the anxiety in his heart as he looked forward. I have to get the correct information before I get manipulated. As

the ship rumbled due to the acceleration, this thought quickly fastened itself within Bright's heart.

07:09

The shoulders were equipped with electronic units large enough to cover the head, and the EWAC "Jesta" looked like a headless machine as a result. The EWAC that was equipped with large sensor machines on the mounts located on both arms looked really amped up as it left the mobile suit deck first; it passed through the air lock linked to the catapult deck and vanished from their sights.

The catapult was equipped with a Base Jabber, and the mission of the EWAC machine was to ride on it, head to the frontlines to collect information to send back to the mothership. The Base Jabber the mobile suit was riding on had a speed of less than 1 Mach, but if it was externally equipped with a booster and stood on the catapult deck, it would reach Dakar faster than the battleship that would have to spend time accelerating and decelerating. Even if it reached the place earlier by 10 minutes, this precious distance alone would be enough to determine the fate of the battlefield.

There would be a burden felt inside the ship that was accelerating would move, as if the body was moving up a slope. The airlock was released, and the mobile suit deck that was removed from its pressure state lacked sufficient oxygen. Thus, Riddhe saw the EWAC leave through his helmet visor. He immediately ran towards the wall of the catwalk and used the gondola of the hangar to slip into the cockpit of the "Delta Plus". The reason why he ended up diving in and ended up landing diagonally on the linear seat was because he was used to zero gravity conditions. He was wrapped tightly by his own pilot suit, and could not help but have the wrong impression that he was in space.

"Watch it! There's gravity here!"

Sergeant Hanna poked her upper body into the cockpit, let their helmets touch, and lashed out at Riddhe. She, who was assigned as the personal mechanic officer for the "Delta Plus", was considered an expert mechanic on the "Ra Cailum". Her face lacked makeup, and the blond hair that was tied backwards lacked charm, but Riddhe felt that there was nothing to be picky about when it came to a woman he was working with, simply because she did not take special care of him just because of his

background. "Roger that!" he shouted back, and grabbed his hurting neck as he pulled the display board in front. The power was already activated, and the all-view monitor showed the majestic sight of the vast mobile suit deck and the RGM-96X "Jestas" lined on the deck.

Including the EWAC machine that launched and a machine that was docked at the overhaul space, there were 12 mobile suits in the ship. They moved the "ReZELs" and the "Jegans" they had away and switched them with unproven new models, simply because this voyage was limited only for experimental frames. He saw that the crew of the "Ra Cailum" were like him, troubled over this unexpected situation, and could only fight back desperately. As he suddenly thought about it, he pondered, What is the enemy planning by attacking the capital this time? (Uniform 001 to all units.) As Riddhe thought about this, this voice from the wireless communicator caused him to prick his ears.

(Once the frontline determines the situation, Solton's squadron will launch first. Based on the developments on the battle, we may let Dalton's squadron move all. All machines, maintain current position and remain on standby.)

Uniform 1—Commander Solton, who was the mobile suit squad leader on the Ra Cailum, had a voice that sounded overly clean. Riddhe could not help but lift his head, and he stared at the face shown on the communication window. Solton's squad that included Nigel and the Tri-Stars had 6 machines together, and Dalton's squadron that was led by lieutenant Commander Dalton had 6 machines too. Riddhe however did not belong to any squadron. (Everyone grasped the traits of the "Jestas"? There're people who lack actual combat experience though…) Solton's voice continued on, and Riddhe frantically yelled, "Please wait!"

"Who's commanding my Romeo 008?"

(The Romeo 008 is excluded from the order. Please wait on standby inside the ship.)

"Please let me join in too! I won't be able to fulfill the order the Senate Council told me to do directly if I remain inside the ship."

On the other side of the communication window, Solton's sharp nose still looked very distinct from behind the visor as he turned his ferocious looking stare over. Riddhe could sense the stares of the other people who were listening through the wireless communicator, but he could not bother

himself with this. No matter what the objective of the enemy was, the attack on Dakar was most likely related to the "Box". If he could not get himself involved in this, there would be no point for him to stay here.

(This notification will not change. We have a limited number of Base Jabbers. The leading suad doesn't have the room to let you join.)

"The "Delta Plus" is a transformable mobile suit. It should be able to fly on its own even in gravity—"

(I said that the notification will not change.)

Solton's cold voice indicated that this was the final straw. Riddhe could not spit on the words he swallowed, as he understood that the other man was not trying to make things difficult for him. They could not let an unknown new member join the squad, as there were be a level of uncertainty in the battle. As a commander, Solton made the correct decision, but Riddhe, who understood this, planned to fulfill the duty of his "family". He again sensed this pain that was cutting him inside out as he was ripped by the two sides to him. At this moment, he head a voice interrupt, (Captain).

(There are 6 Base Jabbers, and the Base Jabbers for the leading squad has to return to the mothership before Dalton's squadron can launch. Considering this, if we use the Romeo 008 as a substitute for the leading squad, we can leave one of those Base Jabbers behind.)

Nigel barged into the communication window, showing an expression that was hard to determine like usual. Solton too recognized the ability of the Tri-Stars, and this debate caused the atmosphere to show signs of wavering through the wireless communicator.

(In contrast, one of those won't have to come back. Maybe the leading squad alone can carry out an independent attack from both air and ground.)

(But…)

(If we can leave the Base Jabber to the squadron launching later, the machines that are in charge of battle can continue to remain in the air. If we look at how we can assure our communication—)

(I understand. Then, Romeo 008, launch with the leading squad. The Tri-Stars are to watch over you.)

Both sides clashed during the "welcoming ceremony", so there would be no problem for a new member to be left to the Tri-Stars. Solton showed his flair as someone with battle experience as he quickly changed his conclusion, (I'll notify everyone of the specifics later. That's all) he left behind these words and disappeared from the communication window. Riddhe lost the chance to thank him, and looked at the window. Nigel's eyes could not be read, What do you mean by this? and he cut off his communication window from Riddhe's sights as Riddhe could not get a response.

(Don't be mistaken.)

What replaced it was Watt's voice that came from another channel. (We haven't recognized your skills yet. Leader Nigel's just caring about efficiency.)

(Yeah, but you still owe us a favor. You better tell us what direct order the Senate Council told you directly.)

Daryl too spoke from another channel. These people were originally test pilots for the UC project, and this was most probably a pressing issue to them who were involved in the truth in this incident. Once he vaguely understood this, he let his body sink deeply into the linear seat. If I can tell people about what's going on that easily, I won't have to go through so much trouble. He grumbled in his heart, and a rumbling shook the bottom of his belly as the cranes and trolleys on the deck started to tremble.

The sound came from the EWAC machine that was to launch first, and the Base Jabber that was ferrying it lit its booster rockets. The catapult that followed the linear trigger let out a unique operating sound, and once the two sounds overlapped, the boom from the booster rocket gradually moved off in the direction of the bow. The next moment after it was launched, an extremely loud noise comparable to that of an explosion came from the other side of the partition wall, and Riddhe seemed to see an illusion of the Base Jabber letting out a long trail of exhaust. It was moving faster than the mothership that was moving beyond supersonic speed, flying right at Dakar with a bullet-like trajectory—

Hope you can reach there quickly. Riddhe recalled the scenes of Dakar when his father brought him there in his younger days, and could not help but clench his fists.

There was a residential area in the plateau area where the political and economic hub existed. Most of them were official residences for high-class cadres, but some of them were clustered residences for several enterprises, meant to be used as dormitories, and these houses formed a quiet condominium zone amongst the elites in Dakar.

It was because the area had both the functions of a living area and a working area that the morning was late. There was less than 2km from this place to the office buildings, and it was possible to attend work on time even if they left their homes at 8.30am, if they were using public or private transport. Thus, every family would normally wake up after 7am. However, this day was different, as there was an emergency alarm that rang before 7am, forcefully waking up the residents from their slumber.

(We'll continue to provide you the latest news. The military is currently defending Dakar harbor. An evacuation order is given to the plateau area, and all residents there are to evacuate from the area. Those within the affected areas, please continue to keep your televisions and radios on and evacuate as calmly as possible. You should reduce the amount of luggage you have to the bare minimum…)

Something sounded like it landed nearby, causing a quake which shook the windows of the buildings nearby, and the announcer that looked tense when speaking became fuzzy on the screen. The satellite television could not receive the signal, and noise was the only thing that could be picked up from the portable televisions and radios. A housewife who was watching to the news was married to a husband working in an ocean consultant industry located in the plateau area. She gave up on identifying the words on the screen that was telling them to evacuation and left the television. She took out the firefighting pack from her stuff and slung I over her shoulder. All the residents of Dakar were tasked with a responsibility to have a firefighting pack ever since the time when they were occupied 9 years ago, but she never thought that the day would come for her to use it. She let her 5 year old child carry a child-use pack and quickly stuffed a change of clothes and bottles into the bag. "HURRY UP!" she lashed out at her husband who was at the washing basin. "I KNOW THAT!" her husband yelled back while looking half-asleep.

"Don't tell me this is a fire drill?"

"Why would such a sound be made during a drill? Here, hurry up too, Mitch!"

The son, who was studying at a kindergarten in the city, was staring at the live television feed, giving an expression that showed that he did not understand what was going on at all. He saw black smoke coming out from the harbor from the telecast and even pointed at the television nonchalantly, saying, "Ah, it's Pointe Bernard." The housewife carried that little body and walked towards the corridor. They were living on the 25th floor of this high-rise condominium, and the housewife frantically reached her hand for the door, thinking that if this were to keep up, it was likely that the elevator would stop working. At this moment, the loudest explosion at this point echoed through the surroundings, and the floor of the floor rose by several centimeters.

The sound of the utensils breaking and things collapsing immediately rang afterwards. "WHAT'S GOING ON!?" her husband came running to the window, and the housewife carried her child as she got to his side. They opened the window that continued to shake and arrived onto the veranda. The view of this veranda was not really good as there was a high-rise condominium that was of the same height as it, however, the roof of the condominium on the opposite side was letting out flames and smoke that rose up. It was a paranormal-like scene they had never seen before, right in front of their eyes. The black smoke rose, and the mushroom cloud expanded in space as several fireballs gradually expanded all over from the bottom of this fire. The fireballs drew a high arch as it landed right in the middle of the city, and the housewife witnessed one of them flying right at them.

Something thin and long that was burning let out an expanding trail of black smoke "What the?" "The hand…?" this conversation she had with her husband became her last money. "It's a hand!" the child that was being carried called out, and it was too late by the time the family intended to leave the veranda as that object the condominium they were living in directly.

The "GM III" let the explosion snap through its arm as it passed through the upper levels of the condominium, crushing several floors of different levels as it got itself anchored deeply into the building. The artificial fingers were buried under the rubble, and dust mixed with glass fragments exploded out, covering the entire condominium. Two mobile suits flew above this condominium, seemingly trying to blow the dust away, but this had nothing to do with the people who were crushed together with the buildings.

The 6 "GM IIIs" that were moving in pairs continued to leap as they rushed off to the harbor. Whenever they landed, the asphalt would show cracks, and the fusion rockets jets on their backs were creating hot winds as they lifted these large bodies. The front "GMIII" turned its back on a truck that was blown aside due to the wind pressure and landed on the Boulevard de l'Arsenal. It immediately hide inside the blind spot of the building and raised the beam rifle it held in the right hand at the street. There was an oddly-shaped mobile armor landing at the direction where the gun was pointed.

That mobile armor could be described as either a prawn or a hermit crab as it wriggled its body and reached its large claws in front in an intimidating manner. Even if it were a wide street, it was impossible for any building to remain unscathed when this mobile armor passed by. After it climbed past, there was a path of charred rubble from the harbor to this point, and also a large hole that showed the explosion of a mobile suit. It remained for a short moment before it swung its unexpected agile claws to crush the building. The "GM IIIs" retreated to the intersection room together with the scattered rubble.

They could not approach the enemy easily. There was an opening at the armor near the groin, and it was the nozzle of a spreading mega-particle cannon that the "GM IIIs" feared. As long as it glowed, the artificial light would cackle and devastate the scene, causing the surrounding buildings and roads to be melted and blown apart.

"It's hard to tell from its appearance, but it's flying really quickly. Don't stand forward too much!"

"Anyway, lure it out of the city and force it back to the harbor!"

That was a code the "GM III" pilots had. As the first pilot head off to attract the attention of the mobile armor, the other 5 machines would use the opportunity to scatter and surround the enemy before aiming the beam rifles from the blind spots of the buildings. Unlike the "GM IIIs" that could easily dodge past a 6-level building, the full height of this mobile armor was approximately 10 levels tall, and the width it occupied was more than twice that of a building. When extended fully, the full length of the sharp claws would likely reach 100m, and it was more difficult to miss it. However, the beams fired by the 6 "GM IIIs" did not hurt the mobile armor at all.

The mobile armor opened the container block shutter protruding from its back before it was surrounded, and fired small objects into the air. 10 of

such objects that looked like shells came sputtering out from the container block. When seen from afar, these objects looked like flying bullets, lit their vernier thrusters and used their thrust force to remain in the air.

That objects that looked like small balloons started to open up 3 prongs, showing parts that looked like flower petals, radiating a mirror like glow. The reflective bits surrounding the mobile armor looked like they had a will of their own as they quickly moved around to block the mega-particle beams that flew in from all directions. Like a mirror reflecting light, the beams of extremely hot particles were reflected at the speed light, causing the straight beams to be twisted and deflected off into an unexpected direction.

The beams that were deflected pierced through the buildings, roads and the cockpits of the "GM IIIs". Two "GM IIIs" were hit directly by the beams their allies fired, and lost their functions as they collapsed into explosions of flames. The scattered armor shrapnel blew the street lights, and new black smoke rose up the streets that were already filled with smoke.

"It deflected the beams…?"

By the time the squad leader realized this, the surviving subordinates were already firing their beams with reckless abandon, causing two more "GM IIIs" to be crushed by the deflected beams. The reddish-brown machine frame was surrounded by the lights of the explosion as the mobile armor continued to move forward as if nothing happened. The reflective bits acted like small fish that surrounding the big fish as they swayed around in the air together. Its monoeye was flickering amidst the gap of the part that suspiciously resembled a head. The squad leader let his emotions explode within him as he detected that inhuman monstrous stare from that stare. He landed on the road and let the machine draw the beam saber. The "GM III" fired its beam at the mobile armor to hold it off, and charged right into the enemy's clutches.

"You bastard!"

He would have a chance of winning as long as he could break through the defensive line of the bits and duck inside the mobile armor. He darted in a zig-zag and raised his beam saber to hack at the mobile armor, but the sharp claws that moved quickly were faster, and the "GM III" was crushed before it could even retreat. It was grabbed by the claws that were of the same height and raised high, becoming a humanoid hammer smashing buildings on both lef and right side. The machine was thrown into the air

twice, thrice, and finally slammed into the ground headlong. The head of the "GM III" was crushed headlong as it was slammed to the ground at supersonic speed, and the squad leader who was thrown off the linear seat had his neck broken as he died immediately. However, this was nothing to the mobile armor. It casted aside the "GM III" that became a wrecked puppet and raised the claws, using them as shovels of a bulldozer as it destroyed the buildings in its way while moving forwad.

The dome-shaped hover that formed the tail supported its large body, and the two mini-Minovsky Crafts located between its legs created an I-field at the feet. The overly massive claws could move on its own flexibly through the recoil against the ground, and the "Shamblo", which obtained the power of the Minovsky Crafts that would really take effect on the ground, proceeded forward like it was shaking on ice, using its large body to crush the buildings in the office area. To the people that were finally starting to evacuate, it looked just like a steel "monsters", and this level of panic and confusion that could not be triggered by a mere air raid dominated the plateau region. Buildings would fall whenever this body that looked like a small hill moved, and the storm of dust created a brown turbidity on the streets. The waterfall of rubble and glass rained down on the people who did not know where to run to, and the vehicles that were crushed by the pressure from the explosions slammed into the show windows of the department stores.

The pilots of the TINCOD II, Federation fighter jets that launched from Dakar's air base, witnessed that hellish scene from 1000m above. All transformable mobile suits were sent to the factories for inspection, and the Dakar air defense forces did not have any forces other than the TINCOD II. The pilots were planning to assist from sideways as they sortied, but the situation in front of them defied all expectations they had. The first line of mobile suits that should be standing their ground were wrecked without a trace, and the mobile armor that took nay a scratch continued to proceed on.

(The beam weapons aren't effective on the target. Permitting the use of air-to-ground missiles. Stop the target in its tracks.)

"But, the evacuation…!"

The pilot could not help but exclaim as he witnessed the ferocity of the mobile armor from the canopy. He could see the public wriggling through the ranks from behind the dust and smoke that remained. There was less than 200m from the rear end of the group to the target, and there were

quite a few people who could not run away in time as they remained at the target's feet. There was no need to imagine further the effects of the bullets, but the anti-air defense bureau's order was not to be overturned.

(Our utmost priority is to prevent the target from approaching the parliamentary hall. Begin the attack.)

There was no other choice. There were also residential areas on the way to the parliamentary hall. The pilot immediately closed his eyes and casted the colors of the countless clothing from his sights, "Affirmative, beginning attack", and pulled the control stick. The TINCOD II rose in height together with its allied machines and fired the air-to-ground missiles from below its wings.

The array of missiles rained down from the two machines that followed, and the shells rushed to the mobile armor, dragging several trails of white smoke. At that moment, the mega-particles cannon of the mobile armor let out a glow, and the reflective bits that were hovering around were dyed with the same color. The beams that should be fired in all directions were fired at the bits, and the reflected beams bounced off the bits, creating a net of light. The light of light became a barrier of lightning that sparkled greatly, causing the missiles that flew in directly to be covered with a layer of hi-heat particle membrane.

The fireballs continued to expand, and the explosion-like smoke covered the mobile armor. The wind pressure crushed the glass of the surrounding buildings, and the people and vehicles that could not get away in time were blown away like toys. However, the target did not look to be damaged in any way. The missiles were shot down before they could reach the mobile armor, and were exploded.

"A beam barrier…it's using that as a barrier!?"

The fighter jet passed by from above and abruptly turned around once it flew out of the harbor. The pilot took the G-force that struck tremendously and switched the weapon control to the Vulcan guns. If the barrier is created by reflected beams, it should not be able to maintain it for a long time. I'll continue to fire and break through the barrier, and if I'm successful, I might be able to shoot a bit down. The pilot thought of this strategy in less than a second, gave an indication to his allies, and turned his reticule on the heads-up display to aim at the back of the target. The moment he placed his fingers on the trigger, the mobile armor suddenly turned around and quickly lifted its thin and long head.

The head that looked like that of a snake's split down from top to bottom, and the cover on both left and right sides split apart like a large snake opening its mouth wide. The mooneye of the mobile armor let out a mysterious glow, and the large caliber mega particle cannon let out a spark for just an instant before a thick beam flew right at the fighter jet squad that was approaching.

The mobile armor head, which was supported by a snake belly-like construct, continued to fire the beam from its mouth as it tilted slightly to the right. The beam that moved together swept the sky like a fan, and the fighter jets that were not designed to be armored were crumpled like paper planes in the face of this mega particle beam that could match an enemy's cannon. The TIN Cod II that touched the belt of light was instantly bared from its armor, and the pilots were cremated before they could identify the light. The 2 fighter jets that were hit directly were nearly charred completely, and the machines that lost their original shape remained in the air. The remaining two fighter jets were knocked off by the impact, and ended up crashing inside the city before they could press the emergency escape function.

The fighter jets that crashed exploded immediately, causing a new fire to rise in Dakar. Mahdi Garvery stared at the black smoke that filled the screen on the wall, and could not help but laugh. The "Shamblo" has fulfilled its projected capabilities, and even if all of Dakar's forces were gathered, they can't cause any damage to it. The Federation military that thoroughly believed that there will be no large-scale skirmish is so fragile here.

Abbas is in charge of piloting, Walid is in charge of searching the enemy, and Loni is in charge of using the psycommu to control the reflective bits and set an iron-wall defense on the "Shamblo" . There's no need to worry about the controls of my three children. With the bits barrier around, the "Shamblo" is unmatched in anti-air capabilities. Dakar's mobile suits aren't worthy of fear, and the "Zee Zulus" are holding off the enemy reinforcements from the sea. The Federation won't be able to handle this unless they drop a nuclear missile or a Thermobaric bomb, but they can't possibly have the guys to use these weapons in the center of the capital.

"Location 147, a fighter jet squadron is closing in again."

"There're mobile suits in front too. There are mobile suits gathered around the parliament. 6 GM-types and for tanks."

"Anti-air!"

Abbas and Walid reported, while Loni's clear voice was mixed in. The sharpness of the senses caused the psycommu function to increase, driving the hatred the reflective bits had for the enemy. Mahdi felt satisfied by how the bits would deflect the enemy beams like organisms gathering and scattering over and over again, and stared at the high-rise building of the Hotel Empire that was beyond the swirling flames. The building that was 150 levels tall looked exceptionally tall, and this skyscraper, which represented the Western civilization, ignored the hell right below its eyes as it stood tall looking like it had nothing to do with its surroundings—

"Abbas, turn the machine to 178."

Mahdi suddenly had a violent impulse within him as he ordered. "Attack target, Hotel Empire. Prepare to fire the main cannon."

The three people seated at the front jerked their shoulders. "The hotel, you say?" Abbas was the first one to turn around and ask, and Mahdi, who saw Loni widen her eyes too, argued back, "That's not a hotel, that's a symbol."

"It symbols the civilization of the white men who stained our Muslim territory and devoured this Earth to the brink of destruction."

"But father, that is a place unrelated to the battle. We'll just end up flaming the hatred others have of us if we meaninglessly increase the damage."

Loni ignored her two brothers who were unable to speak up as she got up from her seat and gave a tense look at her father. Mahdi took her stare "Loni, those people used to mock us." and said silently,

"A barbarians who'll only imitate the white men on the surface, but is still hanging their knives on their waists…that's how those people viewed me. Whether it's the receptionist, the door, or any guest that brushed by, I can tell from their eyes even if they wouldn't say it. Those people sold their souls to the society of white men, no matter the color of the skin. To those people, we're just caged animals, pitiful beasts that are reared in the zoo to exchange for the self-satisfaction of a multi-cultural society."

Am I crazy? Mahdi asked himself in a corner of his mind, Then let me go crazy. and then answered his own question as he looked away from the speechless Loni. Father, grandfather, Loni's mother, they all died in despair and hatred. I could only keep living to vent the regrets of those souls. I interacted with top-class education and culture in those white

men's society, and continued to be an alien that hated them. I tasted the feelings of bitterness, deceit and infidelity, I lived through such a life full of oxymorons, and it's to be expected that I'll lose my mind, but it's all for this day. What should I do if I don't unleash my madness? Who's the one causing me to go mad!?

"The white men killed God and dumped the excess humans into space. They built their own private club on this planet. That arrogant tower that mocks God has to be destroyed. Attack!"

The "Shamblo" opened its mouth again and exposed the mega particle cannon as it lifted its head. Once the bits deflected the enemy shots, the high-output beam caused the surrounding air to ionize, and the torrent of light flew in a straight line, and struck the Hotel Empire direct.

The beam pierced through the building in the center, and the 53rd to 59th levels were burned through as the beam immediately cut through it. This alone caused several hundred people to be vaporized when they were evacuating, but the mega-particle beam that lasted for 2 seconds did not just fire through the beam, but also caused a sweeping devastation at that angle.

The beam that pierced through the building swung from left to right, causing the ugly charred black trail to be scattered on the exterior of glass. The Hotel Empire was sliced through horizontally, and 3 quarters of its volume was burned off as another 7 levels of space was hollowed out—naturally, Hotel Empire was divided into 2 with the vanished part as the border.

The dust continued to rain down like a landslide, and the higher levels that lost their support started to tilt down slowly. It continued to tumble and break up before finally lying horizontally on the ground in the form of burning hot dirt and dust that was several thousand tons, covering the group of skyscrapers below it. The rubble, glass, humans that were mixed together hailed down from above, and the surrounding buildings and streets were crushed under the debris. The original shape of the surrounding buildings were gradually breaking up, and the higher levels that barely managed to maintain the shape of a high level ended up leaning on them, causing the buildings to crush under the pressure, creating a loud shattering that rang through the city.

The tsunami of dust covered all roads that could be considered roads, and devoured the people who were overcome with fear as it continued to

expand. The "Shamblo" remained in this brown fog and turned to where the parliament hall was. The mouth that opened looked like it was going to swallow the sky, and the silhouette of a monster roaring appeared from behind the dust.

08:13

(Is everyone seeing it here!? The Hotel Empire just collapsed! It sounds like a pillar supporting the land collapsing. The dust and hot air are blowing over here…!)

"There's a live telecast from Dakar now!" a certain someone called out. It had been 10 minutes since the "Garencieres" reached the battlezone, and they completed a check on all areas before they launched.

About 10 members were on the mobile suit deck, scattered in a corner. Banagher saw that the two escort pilots were joining in, and left the cockpit of the "Unicorn" to head to the last row. The communication panel on the received the signal of the live television feed and aired the footage. Banagher saw the image of the skyscraper that was taken from above the sea. The entire city looked like it was burning, and over there, half of Dakar's skyscrapers were already razed to a sea of dust—

(Who's starting this kind of attack, and for what reason? We do not know the full details. Unconfirmed reports have pointed out there was a logo of Neo Zeon on this weapon called a mobile armor…ah, it's firing its beam again! Is that a Federation mobile suit exploding? It's so loud. I don't know if I should stay here and report the news for long…)

The noise that got stronger drowned out the words afterwards, and the light of the explosion that radiated on the panel could not be seen. It was a miracle that they could receive a television feed on the television feed when the Minovsky Particles were scattered around. The crew remained silent, and as the crew gulped, Banagher too stared at the breaking footage that was taken from Dakar. One could see a new mushroom cloud blowing up from the other side of the noise. He understood that the high-rise building that was sliced in the middle was the Hotel empire where he had his meeting with meeting. The trail of destruction carried on from the harbor like a tremendously large bulldozer, and at the front of it was an abnormally shaped object that was giving off light…if seen from above, that mobile armor looked like a beetle with its wings opened. It trampled

everything in its path and caused the horrifying devastation to expand. All of that could be seen on the panel.

What is going on here? The streets he walked on with Loni, the city beside the sea where Zimmerman gave him a toast, all these things were gradually disappearing like they were being erased. It was like "Industrial 7"—no, even then, he could feel that both ally and foe were trying to keep damage to the minimum. This however had no signs of it. That machine was destroying and destroying over and over again. It looked like it was deliberately raising hatred, maximizing damage and showing itself off.

"Isn't this too one-sided…?"

"Is that the machine the "Descendant of Dubai" is piloting?"

The crew muttered with pale expressions. Tomura stared at the movements of the mobile armor, looking completely speechless by this scene of curb-stomping. Is this what it means to attack Dakar? Is this the doing of the man called Mahdi Garvey? Banagher felt his heart beat wildly as the blood rushed up to his head, making him dizzy, and he clenched his fists. That's the job I've been assigned? I have to wait for Dakar to be leveled under this destruction and let the "Unicorn" land on the desginated coordinates? Is this the "situation" that I admitted I'm a part of?

I can't accept this. I won't accept the people who allowed such a thing, or the me that thought I understood the situation and let others arrange for me to enter. Banagher took a step back from the wall of people surrounding the communication panel, looked up at the "Unicorn" that was quietly lying horizontally, and moved away from them.

He moved from the mobile suit deck and head down the corridor leading to the bow. He endured the urge to remove the pilot suit and throw it away, used his hand to unlock the airlock, and dashed down to the bridge at the end of the path. Something's definitely wrong here. This should be something unexpected to everyone. He continued to convince his throbbing chest as he arrived in front of the cabin door glowing with red light, and barged into the bridge in a lunging manner.

The "Garencieres" bridge that had 3 fixed crew members was only as wide as a passenger aircraft pilot room. The captain's seat could be seen right beside the door as he entered, and the navigation and steering seat were a step below, lined side by side with each other. Banagher used his hand to block the light that immediately shone in from the front, and looked at

Zinnerman who was seated on the captain's seat, looking rather surprised and looking away immediately afterwards. Banagher realized that there was something unnatural about him, and was about to call out, Captain , but his words were stuck in his mouth.

The monitor image on the console was airing the live telecast from Dakar. Banagher saw that Zinnerman was not willing to turn his face to look at him, and passed through the door. "The optical sensor is reacting! A ship-class!" Flaste said, and a shocked Banagher looked over in front again.

"Coordinates 302, approximately 600 distance. Class…seems like a Ra Cailum-class. Target's currently dropping in height. Looks like it intends to enter Dakar by the coast." The block-shaped noise was shown on the ceiling screen, and there was the silhouette of a ship after CG correction. A white ship could be seen moving through the clouds, and even Banagher could tell that it was a Federation spaceship. "Is that the Londo Bell flagship?" Zinnerman mused, and Flaste turned to him and asked, "What do we do?" Zinnerman then turned to glance at Banagher, and answered,

"We better not take action. That "Shamblo" mobile armor has an iron wall-like anti-air defense. It's impossible for them to approach Dakar easily even with reinforcements."

The stare that met for a short moment turned away immediately, and Zinnerman continued, "Notify Mahdi first. A laser communication probably won't work even in this situation. The sight of Dakar covered with dust and black smoke was in front of his eyes. He knew—he knew the truth about Mahdi's operation, and that I would come here. Banagher felt like he was toppled over by the pressure of that stubborn face, but continued inside the room. The automatic door closed in behind him, indicating that he could not retreat, and the sound rang sounded exceptionally loud.

08:15

"…That's right. The enemy has a powerful cannon and an anti-beam weapon. It's suicidal to approach from the air. You have to stop it from the Base Jabber."

The G-force weakened as the deceleration took part, and they could witness Dakar directly on the visual from afar, 5 minutes away from where they were. Bright affirmed the destruction that was more thorough than whatever he had expected, and he gave this order with a suppressed tone.

Squad leader Solton was on the monitor panel as he answered anxiously, (Can we use the ship's cannons to hold it off and create an opening for the mobile suit squad to attack it directly?)

"No. The enemy has created a mirror barrier that can deflect mega-particles. If we carelessly fire our cannons at it, the city will be destroyed by the deflected shots.

There was the term "reflector bits" in the ship database search engine. That was a psycommu weapon used by the Federation army during the Gryphs Conflict, and there were signs that this technology landed in Neo Zeon's hands thereafter. Leaving aside the logo printed on the mobile armor, was it possible that Neo Zeon was the one doing this? The EWAC machine that left first could not even approach within a 10km radius, and Bright felt that something was amiss as he stared at the vague visual from afar and frowned. The "Ra Cailum" was in first level alert, and inside the bridge, Meran, who just finished making contact with another end, stealthily handed a piece of handwritten piece. Bright received it, "We've just made contact with the Dakar security squad." and then spoke into the voice receiver.

"They'll send over the hovers used by the mobile suit. Solton squadron is to ride on those and approach Dakar by sea."

(That takes too much time…!)

"But we're forced to do so in the first place. The information shows that there are enemy marine mobile suits hidden underwater, so you have to split up, land outside the city, flank it from both sides and lure it out of the city. Looking at how it's attacking, I'm guessing that the enemy is definitely aiming for the parliament hall."

Once they could identify its objective, they would be able to set up a formation to surround it. The mobile armor had to destroy all obstacles in its way, so it was not moving too quickly. (Are they intending to hold the parliament hostage?), Solton asked, and Bright answered, "I don't know. There should be a break in the parliament." However, he was flabbergasted by something abnormal. Right, there's no point in occupying an empty parliament here. There's no consistency in this strategy. The enemy's just attacking to destroy over and over again—like it's trying to release the grudges it held within for years.

As expected, this is obviously different from what Neo Zeon used to do. It is plausible that they would send a colony or asteroid crashing down to destroy its target, but it's not their mindset to trample onto a city directly while hearing the cries of those near them. But why? Bright questioned his mind that lacked information, and ended up slowing down in his decision-making completely. He gritted his teeth, (Please allow me to make a suggestion!) but another voice rang, causing him to lift his head again.

(Please let Romeo 008 head to the scene first. If it's the transformable "Delta Plus", it can attack independently even when fighting alone. I can lure the enemy's attention before the main forces land.)

Ensign Riddhe appeared on the communication monitor and stated his own opinion. Bright was overwhelmed by that concentrated expression, and lost his opportunity to chide off the other party for arguing as he immediately answered, "You'll be shot down!" However, Riddhe did not show any signs of fear as he answered, (I'll let an unmanned Base Jabber follow me too.)

(We can use the Base Jabber as a shield, and I'll retreat before it gets shot down. I'll then transform into the waverider and attack from low altitude. As long as I use the buildings as a shield, I should be able to hide from the enemy's eyes.)

That sounds reasonable. Bright immediately made this decision, "What do you feel, squad leader Solton?" and asked through the open channel. In response, the mobile suit squadron leader Solton answered, (With regards to Romeo 008, I wish to let you decide, captain.), his voice filled with an emotion that was beyond anxiousness, one of astonishment, and Bright could tell that he was hinting that another pilot was to be summoned into this call.

"Lieutenant Nigel, are you listening? What do you think?"

(He's a load that can't coordinate with the squad, so isn't it good that he does whatever he pleases?)

Nigel did not show a change in his subtle expression, but it seemed that he had already prepared an answer. Those words were harsh, but he would only use this tone when an opponent he recognized was involved. "There's also need to send someone to guide the landing forces." Bright confirmed Meran's expression as he said this, snorted out, and held onto the receiver of the wireless communicator again.

"Alright, we'll have Ensign Riddhe head down to the scene first. However, your mission is to scout. Don't proceed too deeply."

08:22

The hatch of the starboard catapult deck was opened, and a strong wind blew into the bridge with a terrifying roar. The decelerating G-force was barely felt, but the "Ra Cailum" ship was still approaching at supersonic speed. The catapult decks on both sides looked like they were elevated, and the sound of them clattering continued to ring into the ears. Riddhe isolated the sounds that came in through the armor from his consciousness as he held onto the control set. The "Delta Plus" that was moving used its arm to grab the handle of the Base Jabber, and several indicators were lit on the display board.

(Path is clear. Romeo 008, prepare for launch.)

The voice of the communications operator rang. It was the meticulous voice of a man. How's Mihiro and the rest of the "Nahel Argama" doing? Riddhe suddenly thought of this, but felt that it was pointless to think too much as he shook his head. (Lord Ensign, don't be anxious.) Nigel then spoke up, causing him to lift his eyes that were looking down.

(I'm being honest here. I won't be able to wake up well if you die in battle.)

"I understand. Dakar is a place I'm familiar with. I'll go over to prepare the way first."

(The capital's like your backyard, huh? As expected of the prince of a Senator.) Daryl uttered som sarcastic words from another channel. (We haven't settled our battle against you, so don't die off on us first.) Watts too interjected, "Understood." And Riddhe answered. Hating words could be considered a form of mental stabilizer. Looks like I'm more suited to being a pilot. Riddhe harbored such a bitter and hurtful feeling as he immediately casted them away and turned his tense face to the front again.

"Riddhe Marcenas, Romeo 008. Launching!"

The Base Jabber gently floated towards the lateral slip facing the outboard, and left the mothership with the headwind blowing. The "Delta Plus" that was clinging onto this Base Jabber lowered its posture, and Riddhe tried his best to endure the wind pressure that was stronger than what he expected. He saw the "Ra Cailum" move away from him in front as he

proceeded to lower his height, and as he overlooked the coastline of Cape Verde, he let the machine glide down to a low height of 50m above the water. The mothership that was moving off of the coast of Dakar became a cloud as it vanished without a trace, and several trails of black smoke remained on the Cape, entering his sights.

As he looked over from the other end of the horizon, there was black grime that remained at a intersection where the sea, sky and earth met. It was smoke that was rising from the burning Dakar—exactly how much damage was caused? Riddhe let the shock from the sea below steady himself, and flew around the coast of the Cape at a speed less than supersonic. In less than 2 minutes, he reached a place where he could witness the devastation for himself. This Universal Century Manhattan obtained massive funding and an amazing amount of prosperity ever since the capital was moved for the second time, and at this point, the place became a large cremation field—the skyscrapers were giving off smoke like charcoal, and the landscape was full of rubble as they formed this scene.

The prevailing winds that blew by the skyscrapers brought the smoke to the sea, and it was impossible to tell where the fires were. The scattered dust was spread all over the plateau area, and the vestiges of destruction that lasted from the harbor to the city center were indistinguishable. The razed rubble and beastly trails were 100m in diameter and 2km in length, and they looked like trails of tractors moving down the corn fields. The tumbled buildings were crushed over each other, and the mobile suits that were exploded and ripped apart could be seen all over the place.

The scenes of the brand new capital that he walked down with his father, hand in hand, soon after it was moved here, was no longer to be seen. Riddhe took in air from his nostrils and suppressed the blood surge that was rising up his brain as he continued to let the machine fall further and fly right at the Bel-Air industrial zone. There was a gas complex and a chemical refinery plant on this reclaimed land right in front of him, and he chose a roundabout method to enter the city. Where's the enemy mobile armor that caused such damage? He stared at the gaps between the group of buildings, and the moment he saw a new fireball of explosion from beyond the smoke, the reddish-brown object that rumbled at the base of the skyscrapers appeared in his eyes.

"Over there…!"

Riddhe's first impression was that it was larger than he expected. He compared the enemy unit to the buildings, and guessed that it was almost

twice the height of the "Delta Plus", while the maximum length of its claws could match a medium-sized ship. Are those shining around it the reflective bits mentioned in the report? He stared at the floating objects that would change how they glowed according to the angle, and wanted to use the expanded window to catch sight of them. at that moment, a chilling feeling caused him to pull his control stick.

Riddhe sensed that the mobile armor that had its back facing him was twitching slightly, moving its monoeye viciously. The moment after he let the Base Jabber rise up in height, the mobile armor let out a glow, and a deep bellowing sound that was like thunder raced past the ankles of the mobile suit in the air. The veil of dust was blown apart, and the cackling flash surrounded the gas complex below his eyes. Immediately, there was a burst of red flames as the liquefied gas tank was immediately blasted, but he did not see the outcome. The machine took the impact from the shockwaves as it endured the hot air that blew from the front, and Riddhe let the machine rush into the huge wall of fire that expanded in front of him. He heard the rumbling sounds of the hellish fire, and before he could experience any goosebumps, he let the "Delta Plus" move away from the Base Jabber.

The "Delta Plus" became a free-falling object for just a moment before it transformed into a waverider that passed through the black smoke and rose up. The mobile armor let out a beam, crushing the unmanned Base Jabber into dust. The explosion created a chain reaction; Riddhe let the waverider turn towards the city center while the gas complex that was in a sea of fire and smoke as a cover, before the machine rushed through the skyscraper.

The "Delta Plus" that transformed into a waverider was not as fast as the Base Jabber. Riddhe used the road two blocks away from the mobile armor, used the buildings as a cover, and let the machine glide through the place with a low altitude of 30m. The vehicles on the road were blown aside by the shockwaves, and the glass of the buildings on both sides of the road was shattered, none of which were left behind. Riddhe let the "Delta Plus" move 500m away from the mobile armor before transforming it into the mobile suit form to land on the ground. The machine took the effects of the acceleration as its feet were sunk deep into the asphalt, and it glided for another 200m before it finally stopped.

The silhouette of the mobile armor raising its large claws could be seen on the other side of the buildings that were intertwined. The "Delta Plus"

wielding the beam rifle kept its posture down as it continued to dash through the buildings, and then lean its back on a department store facing the intersection point. The large buildings collapsed onto the roads, and it would take less than 30 seconds for the enemy to close in onto the roads before the 2 blocks. If he fired from extremely close range, the bits would probably be unable to respond in time. The "Delta Plus" poked its head out from the back of the building like it was peeking out to look at the surroundings, and Riddhe spotted the silhouette rumbling on the department store wonders. The two figures, probably an old man in charge of cleaning the department store and a lady, looked like they were utterly terrified of the 20m tall giant as they backed away.

There's still some who're unable to run away in time? Riddhe could not understand what he saw immediately as he stared at the faces of the two people on the expanded window. A loud boom from a fired beam rang nearby, causing Riddhe to look forward in surprise. There was a "GM III" that crashed into the opposite building and retreated backwards, firing the beam rifle in its hands wildly as it fell down on its backside. That "GM III" saw the head of the large mobile armor swing down the large claws at the intersection point in front of the two blocks, and fired the missiles from the launchers docked on its shoulders.

Riddhe was unable to stop the other party in time. The missiles that were fired without careful aim hit the buildings along the streets directly, causing the exploding flames to rise up continuously. He saw one of the missiles fly through the glass window of the department store and explode deep inside the building. The wind pressure and shockwave that came from within blew the outer wall of several levels, and he could clearly see the old man and the woman caught within the exploded rubble.

The "GM III" continued to fire its beam rifle wildly at the road covered with dust and smoke. Riddhe grabbed the arm of the mobile and pulled it to the blind spot of the collapsed department store. (Khairul was killed…!) as the pilot continued to ramble on, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING!?" Riddhe used the communication channel to yell out at him,

"Why are you using missiles at such a place!? There're still people in the city!)

(But we can't let that guy approach the parliament hall…)

"For the sake of your pride, you…!"

Before Riddhe could finish his lashing, he again felt a bone-chilling intent on his back. He instinctively stepped on the pedal, and at that moment, something that looked like a shining mirror appeared in the blind spot of the department store, and the light of an electrical discharge immediately filled his eyes.

The reflective bits took the beams fired by the mobile armor and deflected the mega-particle shot into the cockpit of the "GM III". Despite having left the scene just a moment before, the "Delta Plus" still could not dodge the shockwave caused by the explosion of the "GM III" completely, and the machine was knocked into the outside signboard of the building before collapsing onto the floor. Riddhe was barely able to maintain his consciousness due to the protection of the linear seat's shock absorbers, and he immediately used the vernier thrusters to get the "Delta Plus" up. After that, the building beside it scattered in an explosive manner, and the large claws of the mobile armor approached its head like it was covering the roof.

It was simply impossible to believe that something of that massive size had such agility and quick vision. The head of the mobile armor appeared on the other side of the collapsed building, its monoeye glowing through the smoke. Riddhe screamed and tried his best to light the main thrusters. The "Delta Plus" was able to fly up due to the power boost from its legs, and once it dodged the attack of the claws, it transformed into the waverider. The large claws that missed crushed the ground, and the scattered fragements embedded themselves into the bottom of the waverider as it escaped.

"Don't joke around…!"

Riddhe dodged the mega-particle cannon that could let out a salvo, and as he let the machine turn, there was a physical shot that came from another place, hitting the mobile armor. The "Guntank II" squad, comprised of machines with complete semblance of tanks on their lower bodies and humanoid-looking upper bodies, started to launch cannon strikes in the direction of the parliament hall. The 120mm low recoil cannons that was equipped on both shoulders let out a flash of fire, and the cannons that came from many directions caused the mobile armor to be lit with shots. The bits that surrounded the mobile armor glowed together, and the beams that came flying from all directions burned the surrounding buildings and pierced through the "Guntank IIs". It was just explosions, scattering and falling happening, and tragic wails could be heard as the people, who were

scampering around and could not escape in time, were eradicated by the collapsing rubble and flames the next moment. No matter the age or gender, all forms of flesh that were human in shape were immediately turned into scraps of flesh.

"There's no reason for them to die because of such a thing…!"

If this is a tragedy caused by the "Box". Riddhe let the machine transform, duck low, charge forward and squeezed the trigger of the beam rifle to its maximum. The beams that were deflected by the bits ripped apart the dust, grazing past the head of the "Delta Plus". The machine then stood on the road in front of several blocks and started firing again. "Get over here!!!" he did not care that the reflected beams grazed past his shields as he let the "Delta Plus" leap up again.

"I won't let you kill anyone else. Just make me the only victim of the "Box"…!"

The beam rifle continued to let out shots, and the beams that were reflected back in less than a second shook the machine. Riddhe continued to launch his attacks fervently as he forced the machine to retreat back to the coast. Anyway, I have to let the mobile armor retreat to the city and buy time for the civilians to evacuate. How long can I last? His mind that was thinking about this could not work at all, and the "Delta Plus" continued to shoot in a suicidal manner as it danced around the skies above Dakar.

08:40

The Federation mobile suit continued to launch suppressing fire in despair as it intended to lure the "Shamblo" away, probably to let the civilians evacuation. Banagher could tell that it was the new model mobile suit he met during the battle of "Palau", Ensign Riddhe's "Delta Plus".

Is this the same model, or is Ensign Riddhe the one fighting? as he stared at the visual that was filled with noise, This isn't the time for me to stand by and watch Banagher made the conclusion and turned to leave the bridge of the "Garencieres". But just before he could press the open switch of the automatic door, "Where are you going?" Zinnerman asked, and Banagher felt his heating body shudder and respond.

"I'm going to sortie in the "Unicorn". There's no reason for such a situation to continue if I can just unseal the Laplace Program, right?"

He kept his voice down as he avoided facing the other man. If he had seen the other man's face, Banagher would probably start lashing out. He intended to pass through the door directly, "No you can't", but after hearing the stiff response, he stopped in his tracks again.

"You'll be shot down if you launch now. Wait till the cleaning is complete."

"Cleaning…there're people who're unrelated to this dying out there!? These are hundreds we're talking about here! Do you feel that's right!?"

"This is the strategy. There's no such thing as right or wrong."

Zinnerman did not look away as he said this with conviction. Banagher was overwhelmed by the powerful stare in front of him as he thought for a moment, Is this really the case?. He exchanged looks with Flaste, who too glanced back, and though Flaste wanted to give Zinnerman a grudging look, he could only look forward in a futile manner.

These people knew that such a thing will happen. This is too weird. This is wrong. Banagher shook off Zinnerman's sharp stare and decided to head through the door this time. However—

"Don't go."

An icy feeling passed through Banagher's back as a voice of refusal rang. He looked back and saw Zinnerman's still-unwavering eyes and the muzzle of the handgun he was holding in his hand.

"Captain…" Alec muttered as he got up from the steering seat. Flaste merely looked over from the back of the chair, not showing any signs of intervention. Banagher was frozen by the muzzle pointing at him as he felt the strength seeping out from below his belly, and he murmured, "Are you serious…?" Zinnerman answered back in silence, the automatic handgun in his hand remaining unmoved.

He could sense a completely incompatible sense of fortitude from Zinnerman's eyes, just like what he felt from Madhi. That fortitude became wind pressure that swayed Banagher's body. The sad eyes he saw in the desert and Dakar, the eyes that were filled with hollows that pitch dark like an abyss; Banagher did not consider which true feelings the other man had were. He looked back at those black eyes, reaffirming that those were two aspects Zinnerman had. A new explosion appeared on the monitor again, and a white flash scorching the city gradually expanded—

The industrial zone in the sea of fire let out a thicker veil of smoke, the collapsed hotel debris was covered by smoke, and at that moment, Nigel Garrett sensed danger rising up from his feet.

"It's coming…"

The "Jesta" unit 7 looked down at the sea surface flowing below and raised its beam rifle to get ready. The driver piloting the float ferrying the "Jesta" on the water surface did not sense the pressure coming from below the sea, merely thinking off getting by this sea surface that was smothering with smoke and onto the coast of Dakar. If I get distracted by this guy with such a normal response, I won't be able to sense what I can sense. Nigel looked back through the all-view monitor, and looked at Daryl and Watt's units that were following behind. He saw that their "Jestas" were being tense as they laid prone on the floats, putting the beam rifles at a position where they could fire immediately, and affirmed that his sense was not wrong.

There were six LCAC transports the Dakar security sent. After launching 10km off the coast of Dakar from the "Ra Cailum", Solton's squadron rode on the LCAC that were on standby above the sea, and took two different routes to approach the coastline. The team led by Solton landed on the north side of the industrial zone, while the Tri-Stars led by Nigel moved inland through the southern Bernard cape. They deliberately avoided reaching the harbor directly as they were wary of the enemy forces hidden within the harbor, which would intercept them. However, they would not have to work so hard just to make a detour if they could escape just like that. The enemy had already sensed that that they were approaching, and they were waiting in ambush underwater. The water depth was 40m deep, and this would be the most probably place the enemy would launch their attacks.

"Daryl, Watts! That's it for our boat ride. Air transit!"

On hearing their leader declare this without warning, (Roger that!), both men answered back as their voices rang through the wireless communicator. (What are you planning to do!?) Nigel heard the LCAC driver yell out. "Line up with the friendly units. Scatter immediately after we leave." After he said that, he let the machine get up.

The LCACs that were practically rectangles lined up about 100m away from each other. The "Jestas" kneeling on the platform were holding onto their beam rifles with both hands, and let the personalized shield resting on their backs to appear on the side of their left arms. Nigel stared at the 1km stretch of sea beyond him and let his sense expand around to grasp the sense of pressure at his feet. The incoherent pressure that was dissolved into the sea gathered at one point and started to let out a sense of killing intent. It feels like there's an icy cold knife object on my back. This is—!

"Let's go!"

Nigel yelled and stepped on the pedal. The thrusters on the back and calves lit up together, and the three "Jestas" leapt from the LCACs at that same time. These LCACs that were ferrying lumbering tanks in the old ages would not topple because the mobiles suits leaped off like this. Nigel was boosted by the high-output of the thrusters as he leapt 300m into the air, and he saw a black shadow gradually floated up from below the LCAC.

The Neo Zeon amphibious mobile suit did not expect them to rise up, and hesitated just when they were about to attack the LCACs. Daryl and Watts leapt up, and as they crossed over at Nigel unit's feet, they raised their rifles at the same time and fired at the black shadows. The mega-particle shots that passed into the sea surface caused the seawater to rise up, and the enemy with two jet units on its back could be seen on the sea that parted. Nigel immediately aimed the reticule at the target.

"Over there…"

The transmitter trigger moved along with the index finger of the "Jesta", and the rifle let out a beam. A light was shot down from above, piercing through the cylindrical jet units on the back and the abdomen of the enemy unit hidden in the sea. The flash that immediately expanded caused the mud on the seabed to be scattered, and the shockwaves that became supersonic caused the water on the sea surface to vaporize. The seawater rose due to the explosion, and as the large water pillars stood on the sea, a deep sound reverberated through the air and immediately spread towards the coast of Dakar.

We got rid of one here. Nigel piloted the machine that became a free-falling object and landed softly on the LCAC. He turned his back at the raging pillar of water as he examined the coast. Daryl and Watts units were crossing through in the air, and before they landed on each other's LCAC, Nigel had already seen a water bubble at a corner of the coast. The enemy

amphibious mobile suit looked like a fisherman landing on the shore as it was dripping water, facing the water. The next instant, it lit its thrusters, and the machine started to climb up the cliff facing the water.

The enemy mobile suit leaped up as it abandoned the ballast tanks on its abdomen, and folded the claws on its arms. This alone caused the short and stout silhouette to change. It resembled a Zaku-type humanoid machine, removed the waterproof case on its shoulders, and drew its beam machine gun. The large mega-particle bullets rained down from the cliff, causing the LCAC to be surrounded by several thin water pillars. "Don't stop! Get up there immediately!" Nigel yelled as he fired a suppressing shot of beam before jumping onto the coastline.

The machine landed on the shallow beach that was 5m deep in water near the Bellard cape that had a natural view, and fired its beam rifle again. The enemy unit used the cliff that was approximately 30m tall as a shield, squeezed the trigger to fire back, and hid behind the cliff. The LCACs ferrying Daryl and Watts used this opening to land, and the bottoms of air cushions rolled up the shore. "We won't be able to use the LCACs from here on. Everyone scatter." Nigel instructed as his "Jesta" continued to trample on the sand of the shore and approach the cliff.

Daryl and Watts' units got off the LCAC and aimed at the cliff as they scattered sideways. How many of the enemy units are still in ambush? Has Solton's squadron landed safely? The radar could not work at all due to the Minovsky particles, and Nigel stared at the rising smoke on the other side of the cliff as he gave hand signals to Daryl and Watts' units that were hidden in the blind spots. The "Jesta" pointed its left finger at Daryl's unit, and then pointed at its main camera again. Once Daryl received the instruction to scout and started to take action, Nigel put the stock of the beam rifle on the "Jesta" shoulder tightly.

"You better hang in there, Lord Ensign…"

Nigel muttered as an inspiration as he let the machine crouch low and move. The sounds of the battle going on in the city caused the air to let out tremors interruptedly, preventing anyone from hearing the sound of the tide.

08:46

The intangible killing intent floating in the air would sometimes form a breeze. That would be the premonition of an enemy's attack. Loni closed

her eyes and gathered her concentration on the "wind" that blew, and imagined herself reaching her hand at the direction of where the wind came from.

The psycommu picked up the imagination in Loni's mind as it reacted with the reflective bits, prompting a defensive net to be cast on the left side of the "Shamblo". The reflected light pierced through the roof of the buildings, chasing the enemy mobile suit that transformed into a fighter jet to dodge. This person is different from the rest. Loni muttered subconsciously as she bit her lips. The other enemy units were just attacking without a plan, but this transformable mobile suit was radiating a clear pressure. It was planning to lure them away, and the embodiment of this strong will formed a strong wind that blew into Loni's skull.

She opened her eyes and saw the opposing machine on the main screen. She stared at the lean humanoid profile that transformed into a mobile suit again, moving into the blind spots between the buildings, identified the civilians gathered at the cross junction, and gasped. It had been almost 2 hours since they landed, but she did not discover any organized retreat in the first place. The civilians that were evacuated were forced by the overly messy actions of the Federation mobile suits, and could run about helter-skelter. They, who were running to different directions, ended up meeting at the intersection while escaping and crowded around. The police officers holding loudhailers tried to stop them, but there was no effect at all.

That transformable mobile suit was fighting on its own to protect the evacuating civilians. It was firing meaningless merely to change the course of the "Shamblo". Loni felt a pain that reached her mind as she understood this, and put her hand on her helmet. She discovered a school bus that was unable to move amongst the vehicles. It was the same as the one she saw in front of the parliament hall, and the crying girl who fell down was on it—

"Father."

Loni shook her head that was starting to hurt more and more as she turned her eyes behind. "There're too many civilians evacuating in front of us. Let's head to the coast and attack from the East side. That transformable mobile suit pestering us will quiet down after that.

"No. The "Shamblo"s energy isn't infinite. We don't have the leisure of detouring around."

Mahdi sat on the captain's seat as he continued to stare at the screen, not budging at all. Then, why did you carelessly use up energy to fire the main cannon at the hotel? "However…!" Loni raised her pitch, but once she met her father's unexpectedly calm eyes, she swallowed the latter half of the words she wanted to say.

"Loni, we've detoured for far too long. We have to choose the shortest route from how. This will help to become an example for those rebels who plan to follow our path in the future."

As Mahdi said this, "There're tanks coming from the front", he heard Walid report, and immediately changed expressions again, and looked like he did not remember anything he had said as he turned to focus on the screen. "Destroy them", his expression immediately twisted, and the "Shamblo" lifting its long narrow neck reverbed through the cockpit block. Loni felt the rhythm full of madness on her back, and inadvertently thought of getting up. "Loni, focus on defense." However, Abbas said this, causing her to gasp.

"Father's right. If we continue to take physical hits, even the "Shamblo" won't be able to hang on."

There's no way back now. She saw her oldest brother state this silently in his eyes, saw the two "Guntank IIs" that were closing in from the other side of the intersection path, and could only return back to her seat reluctantly. The cannons on the shoulders were giving off little sparkles, and the "Guntank IIs" fired the smoothbore shots. Loni closed her eyes to let her consciousness merge with the psycommu installation. The reflective bits appeared in front of the body, and the fired mega particle shot was deflected. The massive body of the "Shamblo" was then covered with a tremendous flash from the arrays of beams.

The smoothbore shot that touched the screen scattered, and black smoke rained on the array of light that cackled. The ionized air deflected the air, bounced off the surrounding rubble, and knocked aside the school bus that remained stuck on the road. The body of the bus looked like it was kicked high up by a giant as it slammed into the ranks of civilians, and as Loni stared at this scene from the corner of her eyes, she peremptorily closed her eyes. That transformable mobile suit fired its suppressing shots laterally. What are you doing!? How many people must you kill before you're satisfied? the firm anger became a "wind" that struck Loni, causing her hurting head to be burdened further.

What am I doing? this thought rose within her consciousness, causing the psycowaves to deviate slightly. However, the bits that learned how to deploy themselves did not slow down. The lights from the deflected beams were excoriating her through her eyelids, and she was struggling in the midst of the system.

08.47

"…I do not remember tying you and bringing you up here. Logically, you could have chosen not to wear that pilot suit. The reason why you thought that this shouldn't happen is because you lack imagination."

The "Shamblo" was flashing on the monitor in the background, and Zinnerman said this as he turned his back on it, the gun and his stare remaining unmoved. Those were the eyes of someone who had killed someone before, the same eyes he had when they first met—stone black emotionless eyes that were devoid of expression. He felt that it was a lame argument, and as he was about to trip over, he eked out words from his trembling voice, "Did you predict this before it happened, captain?" Zinnerman answered, "That's what it means to suppress the city." His voice echoed through the cramped bridge of the "Garencieres".

"Is suppressing just to attack unnecessary places and trample on those escaping!? This can't even be considered a war! It's just a venting of hatred…!"

The black eyes that were reminiscent of black Go stones shuddered slightly, and the mouth that was covered by the thick and hard beard showed signs of being speechless. Banagher recalled, That's right. This man never squeezed the trigger when he first pointed the gun at me. He just said "Leave the kid alone" and didn't do anything else before he left.

The other man was not someone who could not empathize with him. His heart was wailing too. "Captain, please tell them to stop." Banagher pressed on as he took one step closer to Zinnerman.

"You too know that man, Mahdi, he's not normal. If this keeps up, Dakar will really be destroyed completely."

Banagher stared at his wavering eyes , and took another step to close his distance with the gun. Zinnerman sat on the captain's seat, not budging at all.

"You should be able to see the world more clearly than someone like him, right? If you want to say that this is war, why did you bring me to the desert? Why do you want to save Miss Marida? She's calling you master not because she's a Cyber-Newtype, captain. Her soul was saved by you, just like me, so that's why she—"

"SHUT UP!"

A blunt impact hit Banagher on the face, and his body flew out and slammed into the wall. Banagher could not fall as the bridge was too cramped, and as he ended up sitting on his backside, he saw Zinnerman standing furiously, away from the focus of his vision.

"Don't talk as if you know everything. I was concerned about you because you're the key to getting the "Box". Besides, it'll be more convenient for the future if I pull you here."

The voice of the words the other man said echoed in Banagher's brain that rang endlessly. You're lying. Just when Banagher was about to let out this voice, it melted within his mouth, and he turned to look at Flaste on the navigation seat. Flaste sensed some awkwardness as their eyes met, and did not say anything as he looked in front again.

"You just said that this isn't war, huh? Open your eyes and look carefully. This is what happens during a war. There's no philosophy, no reputations, no pride. All it has are people killing others and people being killed."

Zinnerman grabbed the collar of the pilot suit as he forcefully pulled Banagher up and slammed him onto the console. Banagher put his hands on the monitor, saw the black flames swirling in the air, and could not help but look away.

"It's considered a good thing to kill off someone immediately like that. There are people who died in more cruel ways, who were tortured when they were alive, until their deaths. What's wrong about unleashing our rage? Our war hasn't ended in the first place."

"This reasoning…is no different from the Federation army that razed the Zeon towns!"

Zinnerman stumbled in his words, but Banagher did not have the time to observe the other man's expression. Another flying punch flew right at his face, and he ended up falling on his backside for a second time. His slightly concussed brain was ringing, and a strand of snot dripped onto this

floor. This seemingly became an opportunity as he felt the heat sensation in his body fading off, and his lower body that wanted to stand up lost its strength. Banagher did not even have to look at Zinnerman, who stood dumbfounded, and the blood droplets that were mixed with saliva dripped down his lowered face.

He lacked imagination, and he had no answer to that. There would be deaths when suppressing. He lacked this sense of surreal in his heart, but he managed to make it all the way to this point—No, that's not it. 100 people dying is too many, but it can't be helped if 10 people dies. Banagher had this thought somewhere in his heart, and allowed himself to be part of the situation. This is to identify the true identity of the "Box", this is to fulfill the responsibility I have to do; he was ready to say these words in his heart, but he ended up viewing things from his own perspective, and took action as a result.

However, Zinnerman was different. He knew right from the beginning that it would end up like this. He joined this operation under this premise, and at this point, he still wanted to fulfill the role he was assigned. Even if the operation was overboard in some aspects, it was the responsibility of the Neo Zeon higher ups, who accept the proposal from Mahdi, and he had no need to be criticized. The military was an organization that ran in such a way, and Zinnerman was a soldier right down to the core. Banagher understood that he saved the "Unicorn" and showed concern to him as part of his job. The fatherly affections he had for Marida was also to use her as a fighting strength. He endured hardships in a fallen military organization, harboring his hatred for the Federation in his heart. If there was a need, this man, who should not be underestimated, would become cold and cruel—but if that was the case, why was he so agitated? Why were his eyes, his words stabbing into his chest, and hurting him so painfully?

He kept saying that it was the truth, but in fact, he could not agree to it either. He stated those words that were not his true intent as his real thoughts, and kept torturing himself inside. He had to bear the responsibility as a soldier and the responsibility to take care of the "Garencieres" crew. If he did not bear them, he could not do anything, but once he bore the responsibilities on his soldiers, he would attach thoughts that did not match his heart onto himself, and would even have to kill off the voice inside him. He knew that this was a sad thing about humans. He could not feel comfortable with his heart that could not kill off the last glimmer within him—

"Those who are sad…live on with their lives to abandon that sadness…Those who can truly say such words in their hearts have the right to punch others. I'm willing to be punched by that kind of person."

Banagher himself did not understand what was going on as his words came out from his mouth. He wiped away the trail of blood on his lips as he looked up at Zinnerman, who twitched his eyebrows.

Cardeas, Marida, Daguza and everyone on the "Nahel Argama" were the same. They were restrained by their past, limited by their organizations, but those people chose to leave their own wills as a mark thoroughly. It was because he accepted their support that he could remain here. As he supported himself off the wall, he let his staggering body stand up, clench his fists, stared at the other man, and said, "You don't have the right to do that now."

"If you want to punch someone, GO PUNCH YOURSELF!"

As he yelled out loud, Banagher used the momentum to swing his right fist. Zinnerman immediately dodged this attack, but his hulking body hit the console at the back, and as he looked like he was going to trip, Banagher immediately went forward to swing his left fist. The bearded face was immediately hit with an uppercut, "You brat…!" and Zinnerman growled as he swung the handgun grip down. However, Banagher used this opening to get into Zinnerman's clutches and slammed his head into the other man's belly with all his strength.

Zinnerman grunted as he dropped the gun from his hand and fell onto the floor on his backside, probably because he was hit in the solar plexus. Banagher immediately got onto the other man and started swinging his hurting fists onto the bearded face that was restrained on the floor.

"You're just lying to yourself, as if you knew everything…! You understood very well that this is just a blatant massacre of innocents! It can't make up for anything…!"

After taking 3 punches, Zinnerman was bleeding from his mouth as he suddenly widened his eyes. He grabbed the arm that was about to swing the 4th fist down, and yelled "YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING, BRAT!". The bear-like arm strength easily lifted Banagher, and as Banagher was raised helplessly, Zinnerman used his sole to kick into the his stomach. He was sent flying behind, and the back of his head hit the floor hard.

"You want me to forgive the Federation? What kind of joke is that? Do you know how it's like for someone who used to have a wife and a child? I can't even exchange my own life for theirs, let alone the world! They're unique gemstones in this world, the gemstones who taught me everything about the meaning of being born and living on! Do you know how I felt when they were tortured to death!?

I can't even lie to myself here! I'm waiting for this moment. And I even want to help out there…!"

"But that's why…! You can't drag other people to hell just because you've seen hell yourself!!"

Banagher spit out the blood in his mouth as he stamped onto the floor and slammed himself into the other man. "You stubborn brat!" Zinnerman grabbed Banagher by the chest, who was then slammed to the war, but he started kicking at Zinnerman's vitals wildly. Zinnerman held back from letting out a voiceless scream as his bruised face gradually filled Banagher's sights. His large body fell backwards, and he was dragged down by Banagher as both of them tripped into the narrow space beside the captain's seat.

Both of them were grabbing each other by the chest, restraining each other as they twisted and tumbled around on the floor. Do what you feel you have to do, continue saying "Even so". Banagher was driven by the words throbbing inside his body as he wanted to gnash at Zinnerman's throat. "Flaste! Don't just watch, hurry up and get this guy off me!" Zinnerman pushed Banagher's chin away as he growled, and from the corner of his eyes, Banagher could see Alec frantically getting up from his seat. However—

"Sorry, I'm a little busy right now. Please try and figure out a way yourself."

Leave them alone. Flaste seemed like he was hinting to this as he said calmly while holding back Alec. "You…!?" Zinnerman growled as he lost his strength in his hands, and Banagher swung aside the hands that were choking him below. He slugged hard at the surprised bearded face with his fists, and got onto the hulking man who tried to sit up again. Zinnerman grabbed the armrest of the captain's seat, and barely avoided falling backwards. He let out an ambiguous howl and reached his trunk-like thigh at the other person.

Banagher got kicked hard in the stomach as he took a counter, and his body flew 2m away and crashed hard into the wall. He could not breathe and could only open his mouth wide as he fell limp, sitting on the floor limply. Even though he wanted to get up, he could not exert strength in his legs, and his body was aching like his heart. He bent his body down as his shoulders were rising up and down, panting. Zinnerman's round belly was huffing too, and his swollen face glanced at the ceiling.

The two people's panting remained in the bridge, and the sound of the engine gradually swallowed it. Alec merely gave a short glance from behind the back of the chair, while Flaste did not bother to look over. Banagher was unable to tell which parts of his body were aching at this point as he stared right at Zinnerman in the airs and used his arms to forcefully support himself off the floor. He endured the sharp pain that was piercing through his skullcap and gradually leaned his back on the wall, "I don't know…I really don't know…" and allowed his trembling throat to let out a vague hoarse voice.

"The pain of having a wife and child killed…what's right, what's wrong…I don't know at all…"

He could not argue back "even so". He did not have the right to talk about others this way as he was unable to really understand others. As he understood this all too clearly, Banagher gritted his teeth and forced his numb knees to stand up. Zinnerman did not wipe away the blood on his lips as he turned his eyes, right under his swollen eyelids, at Banagher.

"However, it's not right to stop my soul from feeling…just because I don't know…just because there're too many sad things."

This is a one and only cog that can make decisions on its own. Don't lose it— We lived on to abandon our sadness. Banagher used these words his heart heard as his pillars of support as his feet stepped onto the floor again.

"I have a heart that can empathize with other people's sadness, and I don't want to forget about that. I want to be someone who can take the sadness…just like you, captain."

Zinnerman widened his eyes, and their eyes met for less than a second. He might start shooting at me from behind the next moment. Is it good? Banagher reached for the switch button of the automatic door before he

could answer his own question. He held his breath and walked out of the bridge.

He took in the external air that blew into the corridor, opened his eyes that were closed temporarily, exerted strength in his abdomen, and took a step forward. The sound of the automatic door closing rang, the stares on his back were blocked, and the only thing left was the corridor in front of him, dyed in red light. Zinnerman did not use the handgun; If he had minded about that, he could have shot Banagher whenever he could, but he did not do so. Was it because of the key to the "Box"? Banagher endured the questions that rose up his heart, accepted the reality as it happened, clenched his fists and ran out.

The "heat" that was growing from within his body was suppressing the throbbing pain and spread through the entire body. Once he passed through this dim corridor, he would be able to reach the mobile suit deck where the "Unicorn" awaited.

08:50

The giant claws supported by the flexible mechanical arm were raised and swung down with force. The head of the "GM III" was crushed as it rolled onto the road, and it was crushed to bits by the incoming large claws like scrap metal.

The mobile armor looked like a giant elephant that could trample over humans as it lifted its head, letting out a metallic roar. Another "GM III" ran out from a blind spot of the building, and drew its beam saber as it fired the missiles docked on its shoulders. The missiles hit the array of beams and exploded into fireballs; and the "GM III" leapt up and swung its saber overhead at the mobile armor. However, the reflective bits field would not waver just because of this level of attack.

The machine was caught by the flashing high-heat net, and its limbs were trembling as if they were electrocuted and fell backwards. The "GM III" knocked away the vehicles abandoned on the road and grinded away several tens of meters. Riddhe glanced at the friendly unit that was damaged as he fired a beam to restrain. He grabbed the "GM III" by the arm and pulled it into the blind spot of the building. The mobile armor then swung its large claws down, crushing the road the two mobile suits originally were.

(Are the reinforcements from Ivory Coast…?)

The voice of the "GM III' pilot rang through the communication channel. "You're wrong here, but reinforcements are reinforcements." Riddhe answered as he let the "GM III" shoulder rest on the shoulder of the "Delta Plus" and picked him up like he was carrying an injured person. As he moved to the street on the next block, the pilot continued with a hazy voice, (You're the only one here? Where're the rest?). The "GM III" tripped on its way and knelt down on the road. "Pull yourself through!" Riddhe angrily chided.

"The landing team will be here immediately. Hurry up and retreat while you can still move."

Riddhe said as he loaded the last energy cap into the beam rifle. From behind the building, he glared at the mobile armor that was whiffing up dust. The Ra Cailum squad still had not contacted Riddhe, perhaps because they were distracted by the aqua mobile suits lying in ambush in the coast. The mobile suits of Dakar's security had mostly retreated, and they were preparing a final defensive line around the parliament hall. At this point, there was no way they could prevent the assault of the mobile armor, and they could not guide the civilians who were unable to run away in time. However, he could not retreat from here and let the enemy hasten. I can still go on. Riddhe thought in his heart as he stared at the lights of the alerts indicating malfunctioning conditions all over the machine, let the thoroughly battered "GM III" lean on the building, and raised his beam rifle that had only 8 shots left, and used it to aim.

(The balancer is not working. This machine can't make it…)

The "GM III" reached its arm over to pull the hand of the "Delta Plus", seemingly trying to call out to RIddhe as the pilot's voice rang. For some reason, Riddhe felt a chill in his heart as he looked back at the other machine.

(There's a hospital in front. We can't let that guy move forward…you still have shots in your rifle?)

"Yeah…"

(That's good. I'll try to slide over to that guy's feet. If I can get in, fire at me.)

Ridddhe sensed that the cracked main camera of the "GM III" had the warmth of a human stare overlapping it. "This…! I can't—" Riddhe gasped, but that pilot emphasized calmly, (You have to do it.)

(It'll be great if that explosion can open a hole in that beam screen. Listen. Don't hit the generator directly.)

Once he gave this instruction, the "GM III" that was standing with the support of the "Delta Plus" stepped onto the street, but it was obviously staggering. "Wait…!" Riddhe yelled, but the pilot did not care as the "GM III" lit the thrusters on its backpacker and charged headfirst like a bullet

(Joule…listen to your mother's words…!)

The pilot's shout rang in the midst of the noise, and the beam sabers it drew on both its hands let out beam particles. The mobile armor that arrived at the intersection point turned its monoeye savagely, and spotted the "GM III" that was charging right at it. The reflective bits that quickly formed a defensive array let out a reflection of beams.

The right arm of the "GM III" was blown away with the beam saber, and the left arm equipped with the shield was gradually ripped from its shoulder. But even so, the "GM III" continued to charge in and rush at the array of beams, and the almost charred machine ducked beside the feet of the mobile armor. The severity of the damage was such that the wireless communicator was filled with more noise than before, and the signal was suddnely cut. The mobile armor skipped trampled the stiff frozen "GM III" and continued to proceed forward as if nothing happened. Having witnessed this scene right in front of him, Riddhe's fingers that were on the rifle trigger were trembling.

"You bastard!"

He again ended up witnessing someone dying again, and after shaking aside the hesitation with the voice he managed to squeeze out from his stomach, he squeezed the trigger. The mega particle shot came surging from the "Delta Plus" beam rifle, hitting the side of the mobile armor's as the barrier could not make it in time. The beam that should have hit the "GM III" directly and cause an explosion that should scatter the array of bits was deflected by the large claws right before it hit, becoming scattered particles

An anti-beam coating. That object had not only reflective bits to reflect the beams, but also an anti-beam coating that could negate mega-particles. Its defense for its blind spots could be said to be completely perfect. As this sense of despair passed through Riddhe's back, the large claws came swinging down at lightning speed, filling the sights of the all-view monitor.

The machine that was intending to retreat floated up from the ground, and a tremendous lateral G-force struck the cockpit. The wall of a building came falling onto him at a startling speed, and right when he could not help but close his eyes, an explosive impact and boom surrounded the "Delta Plus".

The machine that was trapped by the mobile armor's claws ended up thrown into the buildings on the street. A dust cloud then appeared from the shattered building, and the machine that was picked up together with the rubble was slammed into the building on the opposite end. The arms supporting the linear seat swayed and cackled, and Riddhe's head was buried into the air bags ejected from the display board. However, just before he could support his body, a new impact lunged at him. The mobile armor pulled the "Delta Plus" from underneath the rubble, raised the claws holding the suit above its hair, and slammed it to the ground with the help of gravity.

Riddhe immediately lit the thrusters on the back, but it did not manage to decelerate significantly. The back of the "Delta Plus" was slammed hard onto the road, and the machine was half buried in the cracked asphalt. The large claws grabbed the lower half of the machine to restrain it, while the other claw rose slowly over the head of the "Delta Plus", showing its malice that it was trying to dice it up as it opened its sharp blades. Riddhe sensed that his body was going to be crushed by this impact and scattered apart as he gritted his bloodied teeth.

Is this the end? I can't do anything, I'll die here without being able to save anyone. As Riddhe's concussed mind eked out these thoughts, How annoying, he muttered in his heart that felt everything was unrealistic. Dok, a familiar brainwave entered his mind, and he sensed that his body was shaking in resonanace.

Dok, dok. The brainwaves that were released entered his forehead, and the skin that was covered by the pilot suit gradually stood on its hairs. Those waves were resonating with his heartbeat, with time and space—Riddhe looked past the large claws of the mobile armor and saw a bright glow from the other end of the dust. The source of light that was high up in the sky seemed to be slowing down, and the light and waves were gradually strengthening.

That guy's coming. Riddhe instincts were connected with the visual, numbing his body that was restrained on the road. He did not look at the

face of the dead god right in front of his eyes as he stared at a spot in the sky that was dyed brown by the rising smoke.

08:53

The hatch on the starboard was opened completely, and once the steam that was caused by the air pressure difference rushed all, the all-view monitor was covered with a thin layer of fog from top to bottom. From the clouds, he could see the ground 7,000m below, and the streets of Dakar were giving off ink-like black smoke.

Even from this point, he could still see the trails that indicated that the "Shamblo" passed by. He saw the pitch black trail of destruction that followed the grey city, and gulped his saliva before grabbing onto the control stick he felt familiar with. The belly of the "Garencieres" flying horizontally dropped down, and once the restrains of the hanger were released, the "Unicorn" would fall down like a bomb. The air flow that was surging from the cockpit hatch rumbled, and the mechanic Tomura yelled with a voice no softer than it, (Are you really going to do that!?)

(There's still a battle going on! You'll definitely be shot down if you go down now!)

(It doesn't matter. Whatever the brat wants…right, captain?)

Flaste said while imitating Zinnerman's tone. The visual network was not connected, but Banagher could tell that he was laughing dryly. He too curled his lips up, but his face immediately gave off a sharp pain, and he applied some anti-inflammatory spray on his face again. As he endured the pain on his face and blinked, Tomura's voice rang (That's what the higher-ups said. Are you alright, Banagher?)

"Yeah. Mr Tomura, everyone on the "Garencieres"…and the captain. Thank you for taking care of me."

No one responded, but Banagher felt that this was fine as he closed his visor helmet. There's no need for any more words. I've already accepted what I should accept in my heart. (What's with that tone there!? Stop saying such ominous things!!) Banagher ignored Tomura's doubtful voice as he looked at the streets right below his eyes, and then reported that he was going to leave the ship through the wireless communicator, which Zinnerman was probably listening to.

"Banagher Links, "Unicorn Gundam", launching!"

The restrains holding down the limbs were removed, and the "Unicorn" was ejected from the "Garencieres" as it left. The white machine passed through the clouds, and as it became a free-falling object that ripped through the air, the G-force that struck heavily forced Banagher down onto the linear seat. The height meter value drop continuously, and the details of Dakar shrouded in black smoke were gradually becoming clearer.

There were dust filling the air, crushed buildings everywhere, and wreckages of debris scattered all around. The piled up rubble were giving off heat, and there should be countless corpses buried underneath. The people who had never dreamt that they would die on this day originally had their own plans, and at this point, they became rubble of intellect and blood—the swirling black smoke was rising from there, and to Banagher's eyes, it looked like it ha da consciousness. There were two different auras coming out in equal parts, a side doing the killing and a side being killed, forming a chilling layer that engulfed the "Unicorn" in it, seemingly showing the resentment of the people who did not die in peace.

Dok. Such a pulsation resonated, and Banagher felt the "heat" in his body awakening. It was the pulsation of the "Unicorn"…no, it was the pulse of the machine that accepted the heart of the pilot and amplified it mechanically. To anger, to hate, to beat the enemy; those are the emotions rising within me. The machine wants to use my heart as the core of its explosion; it's making a pulsating feeling that wants to control me with the system…!

"That's right, I should be angry. This is too unreasonable."

Banagher subconsciously said this as he licked his bloodied lips. Dok, the pulsating rang as the "Unicorn" responded.

"You're built for this. You have to fight in the face of unreasonable things. But don't get devoured by anger."

The burning sensation seemed to respond to Banagher's thoughts, and the burning sensation that was swirling in the stomach started to shake. I can't let this emotionally-driven heat, this heat born out of a yearning heart, I can't let it extinguish. However, I can't let myself get devoured by it. I can't let it fade, I can't let myself drown in it, I have to let it become part of my body. If this is something born within my body, there's no reason why I

can't pilot it. My heart has a path that heads down the path between light and darkness—

"I'm not the key to the "Box", I'm a living person. I'm fighting against something unreasonable too, I'm someone who hopes to drive possibilities forward, and you're the machine that's in charge of amplifying the power for that kind of person.

If you understand a human's heart, you can empathize with the sadness inside my heart. "Gundam"! Lend me your power…!"

Dok, Dok, dok. The pulsating accelerated, and the display board that was dyed red showed the NT-D sign. Banagher felt a sharp pain in his nose, and his heart that was beating with it started to increase in rate. He closed his eyes, imagined a large wave coming right at him, and once he opened his eyes, he removed his hand from the control sticks.

The dual-eyed sensor looked like it was responding to the eyelids that opened as it slid open from below the face mask. At the same time, the full psycoframe glowed as it expanded, and the lone horn on its forehead gradually formed a V-sign. The "Unicorn" opened its shield to withstand the air flow, let its freefalling frame turn around, and "transformed" through its own will as it extended its limbs in the sky. The phosphorous psycoframe lights outlined the "Gundam" in the middle of Dakar's sky.

The restrains on the headrest held down the helmet, and the drugs used to weaken the anti-G forces were injected into the body. He felt like he was dipped in some thick fluid, and a second felt like it was extended to ten. As he felt his heartbeat slow down, Banagher told himself, It's alright, I can hang on. He looked at the height meter that dropped past 2,000m, and then stared at the landscape that was closing in rapidly. He had already grasped the location of the "Shamblo" and the situation of the "Delta Plus" caught within. He could clearly interpret the trajectory in which his machine would fall down from the atmosphere.

He held onto the control stick and transferred the necessary imagination he needed to the intention automatic system. The psycommu and psycoframe picked up the signals as they moved together, and the machine flipped in the air as it whipped out the beam Gatling gun. The two 4-barreled Gatling guns let out large beam pellets before Banagher could even squeeze the trigger, and the hot torrent of light rained down on the "Shamblo".

The "Shamblo" could not evade the screen of beams in time as it twisted in agony, and there was a white machine letting out a red phosphorous trail as it flew above it. The "Unicorn Gundam" leash is definitely in my hands. Banagher decuded calmly as he continued to squeeze the imaginary trigger. The large body of the "Shamblo" let out a tremendous flash as it was covered by numerous bullets of light, looking somewhat scared.

08:54

The mega particle shot that passed through the reflective bits grazed the armor, and the cockpit block was shaken intensely for the first time. The light filter could not block the intensity completely as this flash filled the screen completely, and this overly dazzling light caused Loni to look away inadvertently. She heard Walid say with a screaming like voice, "It's the "breaking horn"!"

"It's too early for the "breaking horn" to mobilize! No, why is it attacking u!?"

The "Shamblo" felt Mahdi's wavering as tilted forward. The large claws left the ground, and the transformable mobile suit broke free from its restrains and left the scene. An attacking consciousness was formed as it fired a beam—Loni realized that she did not have the time to detect this "wind" that was formed, and as she witnessed the transformable mobile suit leave, she focused on the new enemy that was approaching from the sky above. She had no time to digest the meaning of the term "braking horn" as she tried to focus on operating the psycommu controls, "Mahdi Garvey!" but an angry yell caused her to widen her eyes.

(The seal of the "Box" will be opened immediately. It's pointless to keep fighting, so make everyone retreat!)

She recognized this voice. The name of a boy called Banagher Links appeared in Loni's mind, and she looked back at the captain's seat behind her. "The "Gundam" with the "breaking horn"…is the key of the "Box" talking here? Mahdi murmured as his face was gradually filled with anger.

"Then why are you getting in our way? Did Zinnerman give that instruction!?"

(This isn't anyone's instruction. I said that it's meaningless to fight on. If you don't retreat, I'm going to use the power of the "Gundam" to prevent you from invading further!)

The voice of the boy was significantly different from back then as it rang, and at the same time, the white machine descended in front of the "Shamblo". It whipped out the two beam Gatling guns equipped on its left arm, just like what it declared, showing a will to become a wall. That was definitely the "Gundam" she saw on the news footages many times before. An intense "wind", far different from mere antagonistic intent alone, blew over, and Loni looked back at her father's face again. "How's the communication with the "Garencieres?" Mahdi asked Abbas, "No response," and once he got this response, he cursed, "That Zinnerman betrayed us?" and slammed his fist onto the console.

"…It doesn't matter. Destroy the "breaking horn", that "Gundam"."

Walid turned his surprised look over, and from beside him, Abbas showed a shaken expression at his father. "But that machine has information on the "Laplace Box"…!" Mahdi then glared angrily at the oldest brother who argued back, "SHUT UP!!" and yelled as he turned his bloodshot eyes at the screen.

"That's just a verbal agreement we had with those aliens. Since they intend to stop us, we must break through them. We must move forward and rip that "Gundam" to bits with the "Shamblo" claws…!"

The man saying this had a hideous face, and the body sitting on the captain's seat looked exceptionally small. Loni felt that there was something released in her chest. Is this a crusade? Even a boy like Banagher is going to fight against us. What exactly are we doing? The questions she had no answer to gradually appeared in her mind, and continued to pull the consciousness in the psycommu back into her body of flesh. The expanding mega particle cannon of the "Shamblo" took her father's agitated emotions, and that pressure spread out from within, chiding the thoughts linking Loni and the bits.

08:55

The ionized air got ripped, and the radial beam that fired like a needle was curshed by the surrounding buildings. The white mobile suit immediately let itself retreat, stopped its thrusters approximately 300m away, at an intersection point, and turned around without slowing down. The machine that was reaching supersonic knocked aside the vehicles on the road, and the atmosphere that was ripped apart became steam as it dragged a white trail.

"The "Unicorn Gundam"…Banagher Links?"

Riddhe stared at the white trail that was imprinted amidst the dust, and turned his stunned expression to the unexpected intruder. The key to the "Laplace Box", the product produced by the UC plan, based on the legendary white mobile suit as the blueprint, the machine that could be said to be the culprit behind everything saved him again—

The "Unicorn Gundam" scattered the psycomframe's phosphorous light and stepped onto the road as it raised the beam Gatling guns in its hands. It looked like the machine was toying with the mobile armor, but the barrier set by the reflective bits would not allow any fatal damage on it. The "Gundam" beam shots were deflected, leaving black bullet holes on the building it used to stand on, and the lines of fire were scattered right at it. The "Gundam" used the I-field on its shield to neutralize the attacks, but it continued to slow down as it took the recoil, allowing the mobile armor to use its expansive mega-particle cannon.

That machine can pride itself on its near instantaneous maneuverability under zero gravity, but now, it's trapped by the thick atmosphere. Riddhe shook his head, told himself to leave his thoughts behind, and let the transformed "Delta Plus" waverider make an emergency turn. The "Unicorn Gundam" was caught by the beams and tangled up, before its back was slammed into the wall of the building. The mobile armor did not let go of this opportunity as it turned around at a shocking speed and lunged its large claws at its enemy. The "GM III" from before was lying at the feet of the mobile armor, still barely able to maintain its original profile—Riddhe saw the light reflected from its main camera and squeezed the trigger of the beam rifle without hesitation.

The beam that was shot down from diagonally above passed through the "GM III", turning the machine into a bright orange fireball. The shockwave that expanded caused the surrounding buildings to collapse, and the winds from the explosion filled all the streets. The massive body of the mobile armor immediately tilted sideways, and as it was surrounded by flames, it lifted its head, letting out a creaking metallic sound. During this moment, Riddhe did an emergency landing with the transformable mobile suit "Delta Plus". Its thrusters flared up once it landed, and glided along the ground like how a hover walked as it grabbed the arm of the "Unicorn Gundam" that was buried under the rubble.

"Jump on! This isn't an opponent you can handle head on!"

(Mr Riddhe…!?) he did not listen to Banagher's replying voice as he pulled the "Unicorn Gundam", checked that the other machine could stand on its own, and let its main thrusters flare out. The "Delta Plus" machine jumped up, and the "Unicorn Gundam" then lit its thrusters to follow. Both machines escaped from the scene, and the large mobile armor claws let out a biting sound as the beams scattered all around crossed the sky shrouded in black smoke.

Both machines, which barely managed to escape the perimeter created by the beams, landed on a main road located two blocks away. Riddhe examined the large frame of the mobile armor that was blocked by the buildings that stood, and checked that the hover unit at the rear end was damaged. It's caused by the explosion of the "GM III", which means this guy;'s not immortal. Once we can break through the barrier of beams, we can defeat it. Now, the problem is how to make the bits collapse.

At that instant, an idea flashed in Riddhe's mind. He looked at the "Unicorn Gundam" that landed beside him on the monitor, and then looked at the personalized beam rifle it was wielding in its right hand. After that, he placed the manipulator hand of the "Delta Plus" on the other machine's shoulder, saying through the wireless communicator "We have to break through at one point" as he summoned the map of the plateau area on his window.

"If we combine your firepower with my mobility, we'll be able to break through its stomach. Can you use that beam magnum?"

(There's only one shot left.)

"Then that means that we have only one chance. Get on me. Once the waverider approaches the enemy, fire the Gatling gun at it, and once the bits are held off, fire the beam magnum at it—"

An icy feeling entered his heart, erasing the latter half of his words. He broke off contact and let the "Delta Plus" leave the scene, while the "Unicorn Gundam" retreated back. At the same time, the mega-particle cannon that was fired tore the buildings, causing dust to expand and scatter.

(Mr Riddhe…!) Banagher's yell was drowned out by the noise, and Riddhe yelled back "Talk later. Let's go!" as he let the "Delta Plus" transform into the waverider. The fighter jet saw the buildings blow up blow him and did emergency turns to dodge the mobile armor attacks and drop down in

height. The "Unicorn Gundam" leapt off from the roof of the building and got onto the waverider, causing the body of the latter to tilt greatly to the side.

Riddhe tried to raise the machine before it lost its speed and veered between the mobile armor. The "Unicorn Gundam" knelt down and lit its main thrusters on the back, causing the waverider to accelerate with the thrust from two machines. It dodged the beams closing in from behind and circled behind the remains of the Hotel Empire. Once it made an emergency turn again, the "Unicorn Gundam" riding on it let its body tilt in the same direction as the waverider, grabbing onto it like a snowboard. The two machines completed a near 90 degrees turn while tilting parallel to the ground, passed through the array of skyscrapers and charged right at the mobile armor.

I really get along with this guy instinctively. Riddhe hid this bittersweet reality inside his heart as he went full throttle and let the machine remain as low as possible. The "Delta Plus" flying through passed through the gap between the buildings, and the "Unicorn Gundam" on it raised the beam Gatling guns on its left arm to the front. Now's the time, the timing was in perfect unison with Riddhe's silent thoughts as the 4 barreled guns spun and fired mega-particles, firing a thin line of light bullets diagonally above the mobile armor. The reflective bits array reflected it off, radiating flashes everywhere. The bits moved quickly, tracking down the beams, and gathered at a spot above the mobile armor; at that moment, there was a momentarily opening at the hover unit of the exterior that looked like a hermit crab.

Chance. The moment Riddhe called this in his heart, the large body of the mobile armor suddenly spun, causing the scattered rubble to scatter dust in an explosive manner. The mobile armor immediately turned 180 degrees around, opened its mouth, and aimed its mega particle cannon at the two machines. Riddhe pulled the control sticks, and the mobile armor let out a thick belt of mega-particles. The cackling scorched air charged right at the machine, and the scattered particles that came with the shockwave burnt the flying armor below. The building below the beam path was melted until nothing was left, and the waverider barely managed to escape from the scorching hell as the rubble exploded into the sky like a volcano.

(Damn it…!) Banagher's groan rang through the wireless communicator. They just missed by a little, and Riddhe too gritted his teeth as he glared at the mobile armor that was moving away below him.

"Can't we just get rid of it easily…!?"

08:57

The "breaking horn" rode on the transformable mobile suit in its fighter jet form and dodged into the blind spot of the building. The feeling of the "wind" gradually faded, and Loni held her breath as she looked for the two overlapping machine silhouettes. Both presences became one as the two mobile suits summoned a "wind" that caused the reflective bits to sway slightly. "They keep dodging…!" Mahdi, who sat on the captain's seat, grumbled.

"It appeared from that Neo Zeon ship, and now it's fighting alongside a Federation mobile suit. This "Shamblo" won't be sunk by that bat-like "Gundam"…!"

Mahdi ignored Abbas, who was handling the controls, and operated the main cannon as he got ready to aim. The "Shamblo" moved gradually, and the cannon finished loading its second shell before tracking the enemy unit that flew away. Loni wanted to speak up and stop him once she saw that the Trade Center Building was in its path, but Mahdi had already squeezed the firing button of the main cannon. The "Shamblo" again let out a scorching light, and the ionized air caused the flash to fill the screen.

The Trade Center took a direct hit and gradually melted, while the hole that pierced through its upper layers expanded gradually. The construct of the upper levels lost their support as they tilted sideways and plummeted, and it took no more than 10 seconds for it to fall onto the ground. The Trade Center, which took up one-third the entire field of vision, became a flaming torch was broken into two, and the fallen constructs caused a tremendous amount of dust to rise up like a tsunami. Loni looked at the countless humans that fell together with the rubble and heard the sounds of flesh hitting the ground and bouncing off. The blunt sounds echoed in her mind, and she shuddered as she felt the flying hearts seemingly enter her helment.

No matter the gender or age, all the people in the tower were wrecked, and became filth that was not even in humanoid shape. It's still not working time yet, the people inside the buildings should have time to evacuate. Loni tried to convince herself logically, but the sound of humans being wrecked continued to ring, and the screams and wails of their final moments in life, the agonizing groans over being burnt alive swarmed up

on her. It hurts, it's hot, help me— several thousand voices rang. Loni could hear the crying of that girl who fell in front of the parliament hall too—

"You can stop now, father…!"

Loni undid the attachments on her collar, took off and threw aside the helmet that was connected with the psycommu function. Once she did that subconsciously, she suppressed the disgust she could not shake off as she looked back at the captain's seat behind her.

"The "breaking horn" is right. It's pointless to keep fighting. Let's go back."

Her two older brothers' shoulders shuddered, but she ignored them as she stared right at her father's eyes. Mahdi first showed a stunned expression, "What did you say…?" before giving off a savage stare, and Loni could not help but get up from the seat installed with a psycommu inside it.

"We should have expressed our thoughts sufficiently. I learned that Allah has a merciful and understanding heart. if we continue to massacre, we'll be defying God."

She climbed up the ladder beside the seat and approached the captain's seat. "What are you doing? Get back to your seat." Mahdi growled, but Loni ignored him as she approached.

"There are women and children on the Federation streets too. Father, please show mercy…"

"Shut up! Did you forget how your mother died!?"

Mahdi swung aside the hand that intended to touch his shoulder and turned his knife-like sharp stare at Loni. She was pushed aside by the arm that forgot to hold back its strength, and her back slammed into the wall behind her.

"Your mother killed a Federation soldier in the midst of the chaos after the war. She killed a despicable soldier who intended to rape a Muslim female in a refugee camp. The jury was completely one-sided, your mother was sentenced to death, and I couldn't do anything to save her. I could only let your mother die all just to protect the trust of the company, all just to protect the cursed inheritance as a "Descendant of Dubai"!

I endured everything all for the sake of this moment. I'm going to use this "Shamblo" to wreck the parliament hall and prompt all the Muslims to rise

up. Our family's tragic wish will be fulfilled soon, and now even you want to betray me?"

The tears rolled down his suddenly widened eyes, dampening his face. This isn't father. It's impossible for such a man to be my father. Loni thought, but felt that this might be the first time she was seeing her father's true state, and felt an indescribable disappointment expanding in his heart. She felt like the moment when she heard news that her mother died, when the world she was looking forward to was cut away from her, when she felt like she was abandoned in the darkness—and at this moment, she thoroughly felt the sense of depression that could not be described when she lost a relative.

The back that looked as tall and large as a mountain whenever it stood in front of her during worship no longer existed. Loni lowered her head, leaned her back against the wall, and turned her determined-looking face at Mahdi again. As he quickly wiped his tears, Mahdi did not meet his daughter in the eyes as he said, "The barrier will weaken. Hurry up and head back." As she stared at this father of hers, she reached her hand out to her ankle.

"Father, please stop."

She pulled out an automatic handgun from her ankle holster, raised it to her chest, and pointed it at the helmet in front of her. "Loni…" Mahdi growled as his eyes shuddered, his 2 black iris meeting with Loni's.

"Mother doesn't hope that you do this. We're just letting the hatred and sadness we have spread across the world."

"You…you pointed a gun, at your own father…?"

The rage rising through the pores caused his expression to twist, scattering dust upon the obsidian-like eyes. Loni was unwilling to look on as she yelled, "Your soul's already swallowed by this machine!" and looked away from her father in front of her.

"Please turn back to normal and become the usual father—"

"SHUT UP!"

Mahdi yelled as he reached his hand out to Loni, holding an automatic handgun as well. On seeing that gun, Loni saw her father squeeze the trigger, and her sights was suddenly occupied by the flash.

She did not hear the gunshot, and the impact that exploded within her chest sent her flying to the wall behind her. The flash vanished, and the gun muzzle gradually appeared in her sights again, showing smoke swirling from it and lighting her father's crying face. Her sights tilted to the side, becoming blurry, and her horizontally slumped body leaned beside the captain's seat.

"Father, what did you…!" "SHUT UP!" the voice of this angry outlash slowly faded, and Loni's vision that finally recovered started to darken. She used the last of her consciousness to turn her stare to the main monitor.

The "breaking horn" —the "Gundam" that had the name of the legendary beast, could be seen flying in the midst of the sky stained by mirages and smoke. The person causing that refreshing "wind" to blow definitely won't make such a mistake. He probably won't be restrained by the twisted and rigid ideas, and can snap the fences restricting people with that iron will of his. Even if he's slandered as a bat—no, that's not a bat. It's an actual existence. It's flying easily in the middle of the world divided between enemy and allies, and it will head back to the horizon of possibilities sooner or later. Unicorn, this name really fits it completely. It's a sacred and noble thought instrument.

I finally got to meet you, but this is the only thing I can do. I'm sorry, Banagher… Loni's fading consciousness mused, and she closed her eyes. She could not hear the argument between her father and her brothers, and the clear silence descended upon her body that was lying horizontally.

The surge of emotions became a poignant agitation, causing Banagher's chest to resonate as it shook his bones and flesh. The machine in front of him was giving off a thought like a hot air blowing through the desert—

"Miss Loni…is that you, Miss Loni?"

Banagher did not understand the reason. However, he could be certain that he was not mistaken with this feeling. Loni was calling him, telling him loudly, take down this machine, take down this thing that's making people walk down a wrong path. He stood in front of the "Delta Plus",looked down at the massive body of the "Shamblo" from beyond the smoke, and could only frown as he saw how the enemy unit stopped due to some mysterious reason. (The bits are moving strangely!) It seemed that Riddhe too had this sensation.

The bits remained around the "Shamblo" that slowed down, and had nowhere to go as it remained in the air. The power that protected the "Shamblo",the pressure that could deflect all interference disappeared. It can work, Banagher erased the feeling he had from Loni in his mind that concluded this and yelled back, "LET'S GO, MR RIDDHE!" The "Delta Plus" lowered its height immediately and flared all the thrusters gathered on its back.

Banagher too stepped on the pedal, and the "Delta Plus" that obtained the thrust from the "Unicorn Gundam" charged right at the "Shamblo". The rapidly-approaching danger caused the "Shamblo" to shudder, and the trails of beams immediately expanded upon the two machines flying at low height. Banagher saw the reflective bits start to move again, and subconsciously let the "Unicorn Gundam" left hand reach in front of him. The hard pressure from before is gone, we can take it down. He gathered his consciousness instinctively and closed his eyes, while the "Unicorn Gundam" that responded to the thoughts suddenly opened its five fingers.

The NT-D sign flashed, and the psycoframe increased in brightness. An invisible wave was released from the opened hand, and the reflective bits surrounding the "Shamblo" were shaken as if a strong wind blew by. The bits li their vernier thrusters, but could not resist that invisible pressure in the end, and were scattered away like they were bounced off.

Several bits lost control and flew away in an awry manner, while several others hit the surrounding buildings and were taken down (The barrier's broken…!) Riddhe's voice rang into Banagher's ears, and Banagher opened his eyes.

"The main cannon's coming! Pull down!"

The shockwaves knocked down the street lamps on the road, and the "Delta Plus" immediately flew down at low altitude. Banagher stared at the rows of buildings flying on both sides and switched the weapon to the beam magnum that was left with one shot. The "Shamblo" quickly turned around to fire the mega-particle cannon in its mouth at the two machines. "Charge right over there!" Banagher shouted as he put his finger on the trigger button.

The "Shamblo" main cannon let out a burst of light, and the wild winds of shockwaves and scattered particles grazed over the two machines'head. The "Unicorn Gundam" raised its shield to protect the machine and its right hand to aim the beam rifle as it ripped through the heat wave. The mouth was hot due to the aftereffects of the beams, and there was a Neo Zeon crest below it, on the chest, the source of the madness that would cause people to stray from the path. Perhaps Mahdi and Zinnerman were both going crazy because of that madness. That kind of negative pressure, born out of human intellect and blood, existed in his body too.

"I can see it, Miss Loni…!"

Loni's body was spread wide open, telling Banagher where she should aim. The eyes that were of the same color as Audrey's, similar to his mother, were guiding him. His fingers shuddered for just a moment before he calmly squeezed the trigger of the beam rifle.

The last round was ejected, and the mega-particle cannon that was compressed with 4 times the energy of an ordinary beam rifle was fired. It went through the body of the "Shamblo" directly, burning through the cockpit block, and tore past the hover unit on its tail. The lingering fragrance from Loni vanished, and the "Shamblo" that exploded from within let out black smoke from its mouth. I can hear Mahdi screaming, as he thought about this, the "Delta Plus" went over the head of the "Shamblo" and passed by behind it.

A chain of explosions was triggered within, and once the gaps on all the armor were letting out black smoke, the beetle-like head of the"Shamblo" sunk weakly. The large claws supported by the flexible mechanical arms tensed up in a struggling manner, and the hover units that were floating above the ground slightly touched the road surface. The "Shamblo" had ceased to move completely, and the large remnant was exposed amidst

the rubble. The lingering smoke was like a hill surrounding the machine, covering the end of the "Descendant of Dubai".

09:06

"The enemy machine has stopped?"

The images taken by the EWAC machine 3,000m above in the sky could be distinguished, but were definitely not clear as it had been dodging the enemy's attacks. Bright stared at the screen and focused on the silhouette that looked like a mobile armor as he heard the response from the EWAC machine pilot, (Looks that way. It seems that the "Gundam" got rid of it.)

"Gundam". Bright repeated this name he was very familiar with and let out a breath from his nose. The enemy units hidden along the coast were most likely dealt with, Solton's squadron had landed onto the Dakar, and the bridge of "Ra Cailum" was gradually reverting back to its usual calmness. He sensed that the killing intent had vanished, looked away from the mobile armor that seemed to be silence, and stared at the back of Meran, standing beside the communication operator, "What about the coordinates of the ship that released the "Gundam"?"on hearing this question, Meran turned his slightly black face to the other man, "Positive 087, currently leaving gradually." And said this with a slightly meaningful voice.

"Perhaps it is that "Garencieres". Do we pursue after it?"

Meran then walked towards the captain's seat and said with a voice only Bright could hear. If it were the mothership of that "Gundam", the chances of it being the case is very high. The mobile suit that acts as the key to the "Box" in the UC plan—the "Unicorn Gundam" was taken by Neo Zeon, so why did it stand up for our side? Is it because it's a "Gundam"? Bright pondered for a while, came up with a childish conclusion to his own question, and answered the other man "No, there's no need." He turned his stare to the front.

"Check the damage on Dakar, and come up with a strategy to aid them. Is the "Gundam" still there?"

"Yes. It seems to be moving alongside Romeo 008."

"Good. Get Ensign Riddhe to secure the "Gundam", and send our landing forces there."

Anyway, this is all we can do for now. Bright ignored Meran, who was facing the communication seat, and narrowed his eyes at the black smoke that remained parallel to his sight. Even though the battle has ended, the flames lit in Dakar won't vanish immediately. The mobile armor is less than 1km away from the parliament hall and can logically create tens of thousands of casualties, but it finally stopped. What intentions does it exactly have for attacking Dakar? What intentions did the "Unicorn Gundam" have for stopping it—he put his hand onto his head as he could not comprehend what was going on at all. "We're still not connected to the Senate Council's communication channel?" Bright spoke to the communication operator, but a short approach alarm rang, and the operator then shouted back, "A hi-heat source coming in from positive 093!"

"It's giving off a signal identifiable from our side, but the affiliation is unknown. It's currently headed to Dakar."

"Reinforcements? What's the status with the laser communication?"

While the bridge was in the midst of a commotion, "No response" the communication operator's voice rang. "Continue to call the other side. Air surveillance, don't slack off!" Bright glanced over at Meran who angrily growled, and then turned his stare to the radar screen. The identification serial code starting with DO-DAI is certainly the serial of a Federation-use mobile suit transport carrier, but the heat source of the mobile suit riding on it is blinking an unidentified code. It's an allied machine, but this flying object with unknown nature and motives still came to Dakar after so many delays—

The killing intent that vanished once before caused Bright to feel his hairs stand again. He inadvertently clenched his fists and looked at the black rising on the other side.

09:09

(Romeo 008, do you hear me? Solton's squadron is currently approaching you. Secure the unknown Gundam-type. If it has any intention of resisting, use whatever means you want. Secure the Gundam-type mobile suit—)

The voice from the communication channel was filled with noise, and Riddhe's originally elated body and mind calmed down thoroughly. He cut off the communication screen that only had a voice, and panned the sights of his main camera to the left. The "Delta Plus" that landed on the

wastelands of rubble moved its head and stared at the body of the mobile armor that was giving off thick smoke from within. The eyes that were reminiscent of a human were glowing from beyond that veil of smoke, and the V-shaped blade antenna showed its silhouette as the "Unicorn Gundam" slowly revealed itself as it approached Riddhe.

The psycoframe that was revealed from its armor was fading in brightness, and the red reflective-like glow covered its body like tattoos. Riddhe looked back at it again from close range, and he found that the Gundam-type head looked as life-like as a human wearing a helmet—the eyes were showing a calm glow, seemingly expressing the feelings of the pilot within it as well, and his mind was secretly incensed by this.

This is the mobile suit with the key to the "Box". As long as this guy doesn't exist, everything wouldn't happen. If I can just not understand the fate of my "family", I won't have to bear this burden on my shoulders and sit in the cockpit like an ordinary pilot. If this guy didn't appear in front of me, if Mineva can become an uninteresting woman—regret and anger fought each other within him, expanding, causing him to forget the feeling of the way he managed to link up well with the machine in front of him. The thrill when they were accelerating for each other as they raced caused all his senses to sharpen. If only I can remain at that moment of ecstasy.

(Are you Ensign Riddhe?)

The metals bellowed as they touched each other, and the voice of the pilot rang within the interaction window. The "Unicorn Gundam" was touching the "Delta Plus" on the shoulder as it opened the communication circuit. The excitement had calmed down, and the other side seemed to have calmed down too. Riddhe lifted his head slightly and saw Banagher Link's face on the communication window.

(I never thought that I would meet you here in such a way…is Audrey alright? Did you make contact with the "Nahel Argama"—)

Banagher intended to lean the body forward as he talked. However, Riddhe did not look at the other party's face. He held his breath and fulfilled what he had to do at this point.

The "Delta Plus" shook aside the hand resting on its shoulder and pushed the "Unicorn Gundam" aside. The "Gundam" tripped, and by the time it managed to steady itself with the AMBAC, the "Delta Plus" was aiming its beam rifle at the abdomen.

(Mr Riddhe…!?)

"I've received an order to capture that "Gundam". Get off that cockpit, Banagher."

Luckily, the visuals on the communication window were cut off the moment the interaction channel was removed. (Mr Riddhe, why…!) Riddhe merely let Banaher's outcry chide his ears as his hand holding onto the control stick was trembling.

"Don't call me as if we're close with each other. Without you, things wouldn't end up like that…!"

(Why's that so? Mr Riddhe, Audrey—)

"You and the "Gundam" are obstacles preventing this Audrey you speak of—Mineva from living peacefully. Get off!"

My chest is going to break open. At this rate, I'll go crazy too—just like this mobile armor that lies dead in front of me. Riddhe lowered his eyes and waited for Banagher to answer in a prayer. I feel you're a man of your word. I'll leave Audrey to you. The boy with such strong-willed eyes actually used those words to lay a curse on him and bind him, and though he hoped that the other party would step aside after realizing what was going on—

(I don't want to.)

The other person rejected RIddhe's selfish thoughts, and the expected answer rang within his ears. He widened his eyes, gritted his teeth, and pointed the beam rifle.

"Don't make me burn you alongside the cockpit!"

(I won't get down. I won't hand the "Unicorn" to you when you're talking like this, Ensign Riddhe. Please tell me, tell me the reason!)

The "Unicorn Gundam" took a step back and turned its duel-eye sensors, replicating the eyes of the pilot, at the "Delta Plus". Having spoke up, the other party turned its defiant stubborn eyes right at Riddhe, whose finger on the trigger was trembling as he turned away from the "Gundam"that had a human-like face.

Squeeze the trigger, Riddhe told himself in his heart. The"Box" definitely mustn't be opened. You should have heard of the truth. You can't let the

"power that can topple the current world" be released. Nobody has that right. Even if you don't take it back, the secret will be secured if you destroy the "Unicorn Gundam" here. Everything will end like that, and you can return back to your original life. Nobody will blame you. The other side of the scale is the fate of the world, any act is allowed, even if Mineva—

No. This answer that flashed through caused his hand holding on the control stick to shudder, and he sensed how cold the sweat he was giving off was. Mineva won't forgive me, and I won't forgive myself, even if I, a part of the 100-year lie, is already tainted beyond hope— he looked down and opened his tense hands. The lock-on signal vanished, and the "Delta Plus" arm raising the beam rifle dropped weakly.

"…Go."

I'm an idiot. He mused in his heart that felt neither regret nor relief as he moved his finger away from the trigger. The "Unicorn Gundam"shuddered, and Banagher let out a troubled voice, (Mr Riddhe…)

"Go! The Federation reinforcements will come over immediately. You must leave Dakar before it gets surrounded. If you drag on, I'll—"

The words he should continue on were covered by the sharp approaching alarm. He immediately checked the coordinates and looked up and the sky together with the "Unicorn Gundam" that was in a defensive stance.

The smoke was blown aside by the wind, and there was a white plane flying by for a short moment in the blue sky. Something small, the size of a fingertip, was already over their heads, adding wings to the rectangular machine, It appeared under the sunlight, and the humanoid figure shown from there entered Riddhe's eyes.

The mobile suit that had its limbs spread wide open fell down quickly like it was parachuting down. The bright morning sun lit its streamlined profile, and the golden lone horn on its forehead was radiating. That machine was pitch black, and it was flickering strongly under the bright sunlight, absorbing everything in—

"A black…"Unicorn"?"

The eyes hidden by the facemask let out an attacking flair. Riddhe unconditionally moved and let the "Delta Plus" fall back, while the "Unicorn Gundam" retreated at almost the same instant too. The scorching beam came a moment late as it broke the road surface. That beam caused the

surrounding rubble to vaporize, shake the remains of the mobile armor, and the explosive flash and shockwaves expanded right near where the two machines were.

That's not an ordinary mega-particle shot. Is that the same type as the "Unicorn Gundam" personalized beam rifle—the beam Magnum? Riddhe dodged about in the midst of the scattering rubble, brought his machine to the blind spot of the mobile armor, and aimed at the descending black machine with its beam rifle. The black "Unicorn"-like machine lit its thrusters, spun around in the air, and dodged the bullet path at a speed unfitting a free-falling object. The beam Gatling gun of the "Unicorn Gundam" spewed out a bunch of beams and expanded a line of mega-particle fire at where the black "Unicorn"was landing, but this action did not managed to restrain it. The black "unicorn"opened the shield on its left arm, created an I-field, and parried aside the fire from the Gatling guns without missing one.

There was a golden light radiating from the shield that opened to form an X-frame, and a golden glow appeared from the opposing armor, causing Riddhe to feel a chill. It has the same structure as the "Unicorn Gundam",and its psycoframe glows as well—the black-based machine with golden patterns ducked into the blind spot of the building, and as Riddhe inadvertently moved there, its roof was crushed. The mega particles that wrecked the two levels pierced the side of the "Delta Plus" feet, while the heat of the asphalt being vaporized and the shockwaves lunged at it at the same time. The "Delta Plus" was knocked aside with the rubble, and its back was slammed into the buildings that were collapsing.

The dust rose, covering the machine that was sunk within the building wall. The black "Unicorn" did not care about the "Delta Plus" that was stuck, landed on an unscathed roof, and turned its dual-eye sensor under the facemask at the "Unicorn Gundam". Its arm quickly raised the beam rifle and aimed at the "Unicorn Gundam" kneeling on the floor. Riddhe saw this surreal scene of two "Unicorns" facing each other, pulled the control sticks that were not reacting, "RUN AWAY!" and yelled with all his might,

"IT'S AIMING FOR YOU, FALL BACK!"

The collapsing rubble hit the machine, robbing the sight off Riddhe's all-view monitor. The veil of dust covered the silhouettes of the two machines, and the last thing he managed to see were the red and golden lights rising out before the deep darkness shut off his sights.

On a closer look, the black "Unicorn" that was falling at around the 20th level did not have a lone horn. The multiple long horns were lined down the middle of the head, creating the look of a horse mane or a rooster's crown. The long horns were giving off a golden glow, lighting a bright color on the fully black machine, and also added some excessive decoration on the motionless face under the facemask.

The eyes glowing under the black facemask were looking at Banagher, radiating a sinister presence that was no difference from arrogance. Kill, the "aura" expressing this intent passed through the armor and came right at the cockpit. Banagher instinctively squeezed the trigger of the beam Gatling gun. The mega particle shots that were fired rapidly blew apart the roof of the building, causing new dust to sputter from there, but the black "Unicorn" seemed to have prepared for this as it jumped off the roof, lit its thrusters flare, flew into the sky, turned its back away towards the sun, and suddenly opened its limbs.

The limbs expanded from within, and the armor gaps showed a golden glow. The skirt armor on the waist and the armor on the shoulders lid apart, two beam saber grips rose from behind, and the mane on the head split down the middle. The long horn that had multiple spikes broke in half, and the multi-blade antenna reminiscent of lightning decorated the forehead. At the same time, the facemask spun half a round upwards, and the golden color surrounded the dark dual-eye sensors appeared like eyes.

""Gundam"…!?"

There were no other words to explain. That was a black "Unicorn Gundam"—no, a "Gundam" like a lion, with a mane that formed a V-shape, radiating a golden glow. It landed and stepped onto the asphalt ground, and then went all out with its thrusters, going at an equivalent output level as that of the "Unicorn". The black shadow ripped through the smoke and charged over, filling Banagher's eyes as he could only widen them in shock.

"Fast…!"

The intention automatic system did not respond at all, and the difference in mobility was too great. The "Unicorn Gundam" took the slam from the black "Gundam", was sent flying several meters away, and crashed into a commercial building surrounded by glass. A large around of glass rained

down, almost burying the machine trapped in the building, but the black "Gundam", which stopped its thrusters, charged forward again. Banagher fired his Gatling gun to hold the opponent off and let the "Unicorn Gundam" get up. The black "Gundam" kicked the road and agilely dodged the shots before jumping up and kicking into the back of the "Unicorn Gundam", whose right arm was restrained before Banagher could look back.

It was slammed into the tenant building, and while it was picked up, it was slammed into the building on the other end. The weight of the 30 ton body was multiplied with the speed, and the building that took the weight of the "Unicorn Gundam" immediately exploded and collapsed. The impact the machine took caused the linear seat to rattle, and Banagher felt his internal organs shaking as he let out a yell, unable to bear the pain. The corroded psycowaves prompted the machine to respond, and the "Unicorn Gundam" got up on its own and reached its hand for the beam saber on its shoulder. However, as its hand held onto the grip, the black "Gundam" had already snuck right in front of the "Unicorn Gundam" as it delivered a kick to the abdomen at a lightning quick speed.

Banagher's world was suddenly twisted, and the shock absorbers could not absorb the impact completely as it shook his head. His helmet attachments fell off, his body was ripped off from the linear seat as it laid onto the display board, and after that, his sights were blocked by the air cushions that suddenly appeared. His chest felt a pressure reaching his lungs, and his consciousness was gradually fading away from his body that could not breathe. The "Unicorn Gundam", which took this powerful kick, knelt down, knocked aside the vehicles on the road as it spun, and did not get up as its white frame remained still on the asphalt plain, unable to get up.

The black machine stood with the sun behind, and the "Gundam" which looked like a lion turned its emotionless stare at the "Unicorn Gundam". Those human-like eyes seemed to overlap with a certain person he was familiar with. Is it my imagination?" As his consciousness faded, he looked at the eyes of that black "Gundam" and called out the name of that person from within his throat.

"Miss…Marida…"

The darkness intensified, and his remaining consciousness was slowly devoured. The icy cold darkness that led to hell was like the armor of the black "Gundam", surrounding Banagher and sending him to a lulling unconscious abyss.

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