

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM WING FROZEN TEARDROP

2 RONDO OF REDEMPTION (Part.2)

新機動戦記ガンダムW
フローズンティアドロップ

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Rondo of Redemption

Treize File 3

Heero Yuy emerged from the cryogenic capsule with preternatural grace, his movements liquid smooth as he rose to his feet without acknowledging my presence. The feat itself defied medical science—most subjects required a full day's recovery just to achieve basic motor functions after cryosleep. His display of physical resilience bordered on the impossible.

In the knife-edge cold of the chamber, crystalline frost scattered from his eyelashes as he spoke, his words materializing as ghostly wreaths of vapor. "Brief me on the current situation..."

"There's something we need to confirm first." Master Chang positioned himself like a sentinel before Heero, each word precisely chosen and weighted with intent, testing the younger man's resolve. "You once said something—"

Heero's silence hung heavy in the air.

"You said, 'I will never kill again.'"

"I remember." His voice was as cold as the chamber itself.

"Does that conviction still hold true?"

The silence that followed stretched like an eternity frozen in amber.

—Never kill again?

The notion of a Gundam pilot making such a vow struck me as fundamentally absurd, the contradiction impossible to reconcile in my mind. How could anyone possibly execute Operation Mythos while clinging to such idealistic principles? I found myself questioning the wisdom of awakening him. The battlefield holds no quarter for a soldier who refuses to take life.

The oppressive silence finally shattered as Duo exploded with barely contained frustration, "Hey, hey! Crapswell, this isn't what we agreed to!"

"Keep quiet," the priest cautioned, his perpetual smile never wavering.

"How can I stay quiet about this?!"

"Hey, Duo..."

Heero's voice cut through the tension, causing both versions of Duo Maxwell to pivot in response. But his attention was fixed solely on the priest.

"What's with that noisy malformed abomination?"

"The hell did you just say?!"

Before the younger Duo's rage could fully ignite, the priest's hand descended on the boy's braided head, gentle but firm. "He's my son..."

A barely suppressed smile played at the corners of the priest's mouth, tinted with embarrassment.

"Your son? That explains it."

"Haha, right?"

The priest's laughter died as the deeper implications of Heero's words registered.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

The subtle suggestion hung in the air—the "malformation" was a hereditary trait.

But Heero's acidic wit wasn't finished. His chin jerked in my direction, eyes sharp as scalpels.

"And what's with that cheap Sally ripoff?"

"Excuse me?!"

The words "cheap ripoff" burned like acid, absolutely unforgivable.

It seemed Heero Yuy was determined to antagonize everyone present in the chamber.

Master Chang's hand descended on my shoulder as indignation rose in my throat, his eyes commanding calm.

"Master."

"You still have work to do... Until that's finished, what he says isn't wrong."

The truth in his words stung. Heero's superior capabilities were undeniable—he had apparently processed all the files in the same timeframe where I had barely scratched the surface.

As the question of Heero's stance on killing hung unanswered in the frigid air, I slipped the virtual visor over my eyes.

The past began flowing into my consciousness like a digital river. The Heero Yuy I witnessed there was merely a six-year-old child—a version that, for the sake of my mental equilibrium, was far easier to process.

AC-186 SUMMER

At the L-1 Colony cluster's spaceport, Treize Khushrenada contemplated the lunar battlefield with a strategist's measured precision. The coming conflict would pivot on mobility—not just of the machines, but the commanders' ability to orchestrate their units like pieces on a cosmic chessboard.

The lunar theater presented unique challenges: gravity a mere sixth of Earth's pull, an atmosphere too thin to sustain life, and vast seas of desolate gray stretching endlessly to the horizon. Such extreme conditions demanded something beyond even the sophisticated Leo Type III Chimera.

Enter the Greif (Leo Type IV), a high-mobility space combat suit that left the OZ Specials breathless with its capabilities. Cost considerations cast aside, it had transcended mere mass-production status—a masterwork representing the pinnacle of Leo engineering.

Chief Engineer Seis Clark, the architect behind the Leo's development, exploded with rage upon witnessing the Greif.

"This is practically a Tallgeese!"

His outburst carried the weight of betrayal, as if years of cost-optimization efforts had been rendered meaningless.

"Unacceptable! Absolutely unacceptable!"

His fury culminated in his immediate resignation as OZ's Chief Mobile Suit Design Engineer.

The Greif's resemblance to the Tallgeese extended beyond its pristine OZ Specials white finish. It married the Leo's formidable arsenal with the Aries' swift flight capabilities, sporting twin beam sabers nestled in its shoulders for close-quarters combat and high-output verniers matching the Aries' specifications. A shoulder-mounted cannon rivaling the Tragos' medium-range firepower complemented its disc-shaped shield, standard-issue on the left arm. Its versatility shone through multiple configurations—dual shoulder-mounted cannons for assault missions, adaptable for frontline deployment with either conventional or beam rifles.

It was, in essence, a solution for every combat scenario imaginable.

"If they were going to go this far, they should have mass-produced the Tallgeese from the start!" Seis Clark's pride in the Leo's mass-production achievement lay shattered—this new development effectively negated his life's work. His anger—and undoubtedly his professional jealousy—seemed justified.

Yet Treize saw beyond the engineer's wounded pride. In the Greif's apparent regression to Tallgeese principles, he recognized the key to victory in the coming engagement.

The real challenge lay not with the machines, but with their pilots. Combat in the lunar environment, though surface-based, demanded mastery of vacuum warfare. It bore little resemblance to terrestrial combat, where Treize's three cardinal "instincts" reigned supreme: the intuitive grasp of enemy proximity, the visceral understanding of battlefield conditions, and the psychological resilience to maintain clarity under duress.

These skills, honed through the elimination of combat hesitation, proved manageable in ground training. Space, however, transformed the

equation entirely. Spatial awareness, tactile feedback, and concentration all degraded in the alien environment of variable gravity and negligible atmospheric pressure.

Meanwhile, their Anti-Alliance adversaries had acclimated to lunar conditions through extended deployment, developing an intimate familiarity with space combat. While the Greif boasted cutting-edge detection systems, Treize knew technology alone rarely decided battles.

The Specials pilots faced their greatest challenge: shedding Earth-bound combat instincts and adapting to the capricious nature of variable gravity warfare.

General Million Liddell Hart's devastating strike against the Marius Plant with the giant beam cannon, though strategically catastrophic, offered a tactical silver lining. With enemy reinforcements no longer a factor, they gained the luxury of time—precious moments to consider both offensive and defensive strategies.

This breathing space allowed the young Specials forces, worn from their hasty deployment, to recover from the rigors of space flight and rebuild their combat readiness.

Treize set the lunar descent for three days hence.

"Use this time to acclimate your bodies to space conditions," he directed.

"What if the rebel forces strike the lunar base during this period?" Cadet Izumi inquired, ever tactically minded. "Should we maintain scramble readiness?"

"The lunar descent timeline remains fixed at three days," Treize explained to his puzzled subordinates, his tone gentle but firm. "OZ Specials, with Marius Plant's destruction, this war is already lost... Neither rebellion suppression nor lunar base rescue factors into our mission."

No voices rose in question or protest. They understood their true purpose, their real mission. The principles had been ingrained in their very being: "Act on your own judgment!"

"For the soldiers who will follow!"

Treize concluded with a final benediction: "I pray your training proves successful. Dismissed."

Within Mare Tranquillitatis Lunar Base, the Alliance Space Force's inventory painted a stark picture: fifteen Chimera (Leo Type II) main battle mobile suits, five Tragos (Lunar Surface Combat Type II), and five high-mobility space fighters stood ready for combat.

The Anti-Alliance forces, having seized the formidable lunar battleship Sagittarius, commanded not only these assets but an additional eighty state-of-the-art Chimera (Leo III) units. Even with Treize's Specials contributing twenty-five advanced Greif (Leo IV) units, the raw numbers told a grim tale—50 against 80.

Factor in the Sagittarius itself, conservatively rated as equivalent to fifty mobile suits, and the disparity widened to a daunting 50:130 ratio—an overwhelming tactical advantage for the Anti-Alliance forces.

A pre-emptive strike on the lunar base before Treize's arrival would have guaranteed victory. This tempting prospect of "lunar conquest" hung like ripe fruit before them, particularly inflaming the resistance fighters' martial spirit. Yet the colony workers, seasoned by pragmatism, harbored deep reservations.

Within the Sagittarius' briefing room, anchored in the vast Oceanus Procellarum, daily debates erupted between soldiers and workers with increasing intensity.

"We should negotiate for peace!"

"Strike Mare Tranquillitatis now!"

"Seconded!"

"Victory is assured!"

The soldiers' voices carried the heat of conviction.

"And then what?"

Commander Artemis Sedici, typically a silent observer, cut through the clamor with unexpected precision.

"What do you plan to do after this victory?"

"That's obvious!" The soldiers' enthusiasm faltered, revealing the void where concrete plans should have been.

"We'll demonstrate our resolve to the Alliance and make them recognize space's independence!"

"With just the Sagittarius and the Chimeras?"

"That's more than enough!"

A young soldier leapt up, passion overwhelming reason.

"We can drive out all Alliance forces from every colony with this strength."

"If you're bluffing." Artemis' sigh carried the weight of experience.

"Bluffing?"

"You know poker, the card game?"

"We're not playing games here! This is war!"

"That's precisely why we should stop--"

"Miss Artemis, if you feel so strongly about this, could you tell us what we should do?"

The workers' representative looked to their commander for guidance, but Artemis merely shrugged, hands spread in resignation.

"Who can say..." Her silence spoke volumes.

A resistance operative's report shattered the moment.

"Our sources indicate OZ Specials have already arrived in L-1 Colony space..."

The briefing room descended into chaos. Their isolation on the lunar surface couldn't persist indefinitely. The Specials' arrival raised the specter of Earth-based Alliance reinforcements. They needed a breakthrough—urgently.

The Sagittarius had become a pressure vessel of anxiety, its occupants haunted by dwindling ammunition stocks, diminishing food supplies, and the increasingly precious commodity of breathable air.

Treize had anticipated this psychological pressure cooker. Hence the calculated three-day window before lunar descent. The Sagittarius' two days of inaction confirmed his assessment and bolstered his confidence—the enemy lacked unified purpose.

Even if his read proved incorrect and the Anti-Alliance forces launched prematurely, he'd instructed Mare Tranquillitatis to surrender immediately. A captured lunar base would inevitably drive the Anti-Alliance forces to coordinate with space colonies, perhaps declaring "independence." But the subsequent steps revealed mounting complications.

The L-1 and L-2 colonies, closest to the moon, would likely arm themselves first, establishing a defensive perimeter around the lunar base. This would spiral into a protracted independence war against Alliance forces, ultimately forcing them into a siege at the lunar base—a massive gamble with uncertain odds.

While one couldn't definitively claim Treize had predicted this exact scenario, his strategic calculus likely encompassed similar possibilities. Any commander worth their salt would recognize the futility of capturing the lunar base without a broader strategic framework.

Artemis' opposition to the base takeover reflected this reality, and the lunar-stationed workers' hesitation stemmed from their understanding that mere capture wouldn't guarantee freedom. Given the option, many

would have chosen flight, especially with OZ Specials' arrival looming. While the Greif units' capabilities remained theoretical, these workers had witnessed mobile suit technology's exponential evolution over mere months, adding another layer of uncertainty to their precarious position.

The L-1 Colony spaceport's lounge offered a panoramic vista of the cosmos, its restaurant-bar designed for travelers to savor both culinary delights and celestial wonders. Against this backdrop of infinite black, Lucrezia and Zechs sat in quiet companionship by the window, steam rising gently from their coffee cups.

"Space is beautiful, isn't it, Zechs..."

The summer constellations painted their ancient stories across the void, more vivid here than they ever appeared from Earth's surface.

"There's the Southern Cross, Sagittarius in the Milky Way... It's clearer than from Earth." Lucrezia's face glowed with childlike wonder, her features softened by starlight.

"They believe there's a black hole at the center of Sagittarius A Star... A darkness that devours everything, even light... But is there truly nothing there?"

Zechs remained silent, the metaphysical question hanging between them like cosmic dust.

"In a world without light, there's nothing... Or rather, nothing can be seen." His words fell into the space between them, an attempt to bridge the philosophical gap.

Lucrezia, chin still resting contemplatively on her hand, continued as if he hadn't spoken: "The truly important things are invisible to the eye." Her gaze remained fixed on the eternal dance of stars beyond the window.

Zechs lifted his coffee, now grown cold with contemplation.

"Lucrezia... you know a lot about stars."

He drained the bitter liquid, and when he lowered his cup, he found her eyes fixed directly on him, intense and searching.

"Yes... I want to know everything about the stars. Including you, Zechs, my Little Prince." Her words carried weight beyond their simple meaning as their eyes met.

"The Little Prince, huh?" A self-deprecating smile played across Zechs' features.

The reference hung between them—the lonely prince on his tiny star, guardian of a single rose. Saint-Exupéry's beloved tale resonated in the silence.

"Indeed."



"The essential things are invisible to the eyes, Zechs Merquise."

"You're a mysterious girl, Lucrezia Noin."

This moment, suspended in the vastness of space, marked the beginning of Lucrezia Noin's love for Zechs Merquise. Whether she had already pierced the veil of his true identity remained uncertain. Their layered conversation spoke to Lucrezia's remarkable intuition, as if she could see past the stars themselves to the truths they concealed.

At the bar counter, distanced from the stargazing couple, Odin Lowe and Aoi Clark shared cocktails under the ambient lighting—dry martinis and gin and tonics reflecting the artificial starlight. She was the mother of the six-year-old destined to adopt "Heero Yuy" as his codename.

"Chief Engineer Seis seemed well."

"He's leaving OZ to become a technical advisor for the Alliance... The Greif development must have really gotten under his skin."

"So that's why you're on surveillance duty?"

"Something like that..."

"You looked just like any other family." The observation carried weight—though she passed as Seis's wife, her true role as an OZ secret agent cast shadows over the façade.

"It reminds me of when we traveled the colonies together... Those were the happiest times."

Nostalgia colored her voice.

"Maybe it's time you retired?"

"He is six now..."

"I'm glad he's doing well."

"You could show a little responsibility."

"I was against it." Odin punctuated his words by draining his gin and tonic.

"I wanted to have *your* child," Aoi murmured, absently rolling the olive in her empty glass, the subtle movement hypnotic.

"But if you stay with OZ any longer, that child will—"

"I know, but it's not that simple..."

Her deep sigh carried years of complications.

"By the way, you're the one who leaked Alliance information to Artemis, aren't you?"

"Your husband's the one who pushed the workers too hard."

"That was Tubarov... He's being removed from development for a while over this."

"I see."

The conversation paused, heavy with the unspoken knowledge that Tubarov would later create the mobile dolls—humanity's most horrific unmanned weapons. This temporary demotion would plant seeds of bitterness and misanthropy, fueling nearly a decade of development driven by jealousy and vengeance, an obsession that would border on madness.

The bartender's approach offered a momentary respite: "Another round?"

After ordering "The same," Aoi returned to their loaded dialogue.

"Why did you go freelance? Are you still hung up on that?"

"Drop it."

"So that's it after all."

"That was ten years ago."

"It's why I left you too."

"But it wasn't OZ's orders - it was Septum from the Space Force who—"

"It's all the same." Odin's sharp interruption cut like a blade. "I'm still the fool who derailed history."

Fresh drinks materialized before them, placed with professional precision. The bartender's murmured "Take your time" faded into the shadows behind the counter.

"Your current client is from the colonies, isn't it?"

"Stay out of it. It's just business for both of us."

"Something doesn't add up." She took a swift gulp of her martini, alcohol heightening her analytical edge. "The timing between Marius Plant's rebellion and sending in Artemis is too perfect."

Her sharpened instincts pierced through the alcohol-induced haze. "I see... so the real objective was eliminating Marius's Hills Hall," she concluded, eyes bright with intelligence. "Anyone could have predicted Million would use that beam cannon."

"The colony's engineers succeeded in refining that alloy." Odin watched the ephemeral dance of bubbles in his gin and tonic.

"We can't let OZ or the Alliance have it."

A knowing smile curved Aoi's lips. "Don't tell me... are they planning to build mobile suits with Gundanium?"

"Who knows?"

The conversation lapsed into pregnant silence. Though Aoi's words carried a playful tone, they masked a deadly serious truth—the Colony's scientists were already committed to constructing the mobile suit

"Gundam" from Gundanium alloy. Fate's cruel irony would eventually place their child in its cockpit.

During the three-day window, the Anti-Alliance soldiers immersed themselves in lunar surface drills with almost fanatical dedication. Their perceived superiority over the Specials rested on three pillars: hard-won combat experience from the Lunar Wars, overwhelming material advantage—eighty Chimera units backed by the formidable lunar battleship Sagittarius—and Commander Artemis's meticulously crafted combat formations.

Battlefield experience, while valuable, wasn't necessarily decisive. There could be no certainty that the enemy would employ familiar tactics or field-known mobile suit configurations. Yet the Anti-Alliance soldiers elevated this experience to an article of faith, their sole badge of honor transformed into near-religious conviction.

"Even if they come at us with new models, they'll be piloting them for the first time! They're not even used to this battlefield! Compare that to us with our battle-tested Chimeras! We've got the absolute advantage!"

This mantra echoed through the ranks of both soldiers and workers, a shared article of faith. Though their previous engagement had whittled their Chimera force from one hundred to eighty units, the tactical adaptation from an octagram to a hexagram formation had preserved their combat effectiveness with minimal compromise.

Within this force structure, a clear division emerged. The elite strike force of twenty Chimeras, helmed by their most skilled pilots, maintained unwavering confidence. However, beneath this veneer of certainty, the six unit commanders—each responsible for shepherding ten-unit squadrons—harbored growing undercurrents of anxiety.

When the third day arrived, the OZ Specials made their descent to the Mare Tranquillitatis Space Force base on the lunar surface, integrating with the Alliance forces. Yet in the face of this development, they maintained an enigmatic stillness, their next move impossible to predict.

The absence of a surprise attack washed relief through Artemis's being. She analyzed Treize's tactics with growing clarity—if he intended to engage in a full-scale lunar surface battle like General Million, their previous formation would suffice. The fundamental reality of one-sixth

gravity dictated battlefield tactics, making a conventional engagement more logical than a surprise assault. This led Artemis to her strategic conclusion: returning the six ace pilots to their original strike force and implementing a defensive double-formation would be optimal.

Her awareness of Treize had evolved into something approaching obsession. Perhaps dangerously so. This fixation had unconsciously morphed into a sense of rivalry, born from their parallel roles as commanders who'd achieved victory through effectively deploying amateur forces. Yet the similarity was superficial at best.

Artemis religiously studied her opponents' personalities and tactical tendencies, adhering to ancient wisdom: "Know your enemy and know yourself, and you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."

Treize, conversely, showed no interest in enemy commanders—likely didn't even know her name. Their fundamental difference crystallized in one crucial question: "Do you trust your subordinates?"

Where Artemis viewed her soldiers as chess pieces to be maneuvered, Treize saw them as individuals, placing absolute faith in their fighting spirit.

Meanwhile, in the sterile corridors of an L-1 medical facility, Vingt Khushrenada pursued a different battle. His official mission concerned a devastating new virus ravaging the L-2 colonies—the "Colony Flu" with its terrifying 40% mortality rate demanded immediate action: vaccine development and distribution.

This facility, staffed by brilliant medical refugees from the former Sanc Kingdom, represented humanity's best hope for a solution.

"We have no choice but to rely on their expertise now," Vingt declared, promising financial backing while emphasizing the urgency of saving lives.

A doctor's accusation cut straight to the moral contradiction: "So the Romefeller Foundation profits from weapons of death on one hand, while claiming to save lives with the other?"

"Ignore the irony if you wish. We want to save the people of space. Please, help us."

The medical staff's humanitarian instincts prevailed. The vaccine was developed and distributed with remarkable speed to the L-2 colonies.

This crisis would intersect with another destiny—six-year-old Duo Maxwell in L-2 colony V08744, where fate introduced him to Solo. The virus claimed Solo despite Duo's desperate theft of the vaccine. Though

Duo must have been exposed, he remained mysteriously immune. Solo's death birthed "Duo"—a name born of the promise "We'll always be together."

But Vingt's true purpose in space lay in a quiet hospital room, where his mother Angelina waited. At thirty-four, her beauty remained undimmed, though her voice had acquired a heartbreaking fragility.

"Your color looks remarkably better."

"Thanks to the Sanc Kingdom..." she murmured, lost in temporal displacement.

"The air in this country seems to suit me."

The long hospitalization had taken its toll. Her legs and back had weakened to the point where she could neither walk nor even stand on her own.

"Is that so?"

"Haven't you been able to visit after school lately?"

"Eh?"

While she seemed lucid at first glance, it became clear that Angelina still believed she was in the Royal Hospital of the Sanc Kingdom.

"I'm sorry..."

"The stars are so beautiful..."

Her eyes were vacant. Through the transparent outer wall outside her window, the vastness of space was visible beyond the roof of the opposite ward.

"But the nights are so very long..."

Vingt discreetly wiped the corner of his eye, careful not to let Angelina notice. Seeing his beloved mother in this state invariably brought tears to his eyes.

"How is Treize doing?"

"Well. Brother is on the moon right now."

"Oh, is that so..."

Vingt thought of his brother. Treize would never cry in a situation like this. He was a man of strong will and determination.

"Brother is a hero who will unite Earth and space."

"Yes, that's right."

"And he remains as elegant as that ice floe from back then."

"Hehe... no need to state such obvious things."

Two days after integration, the Alliance Space Forces under Treize's command finally launched from the Mare Tranquillitatis lunar base.

Though his Specials hadn't fully adapted to lunar gravity, Treize gave the order with characteristic confidence.

"We've acquired more than sufficient familiarity... Believe in victory."

"Sir!"

The soldiers' belief transcended mere faith in victory—they believed in Treize's words themselves, advancing with dignified assurance. Their formation defied conventional military doctrine.

Treize's white Greif led from the vanguard, his forces arrayed behind him. A blue crest mounted on its head marked his command unit—white and blue, colors that would become his signature, evoking memories of a distant ice floe.

The second row comprised five Tragos II units, each followed by three Chimeras. Behind them, five squadrons of Greif units advanced in single file. The formation resembled an antiquated tank-infantry configuration from the previous century—deliberately immobile and methodically slow.

From the Sagittarius's bridge, Artemis's first thought was, "Could the enemy be afraid of us?"

Logic dictated that the Sagittarius's massive beam cannon could obliterate their modest force of forty-five units in a single shot.

Distance remained the only real variable. The giant beam cannon's straight trajectory, combined with the moon's curved surface, meant long-range shots would likely miss their mark. Unlike Earth-bound combat, even "flat ground" here meant engaging across a spherical surface—an area roughly equivalent to Africa and Australia combined, on a sphere one-fourth Earth's diameter. The moon's modest size became a tactical consideration.

"I see..." Artemis decoded Treize's strategy. The enemy's glacial advance seemed designed to provoke a premature beam cannon discharge, allowing them to strike during the lengthy recharge cycle.

"But we won't fall for that."

Treize halted his front-line Tragos units just before the enemy would appear on the horizon.

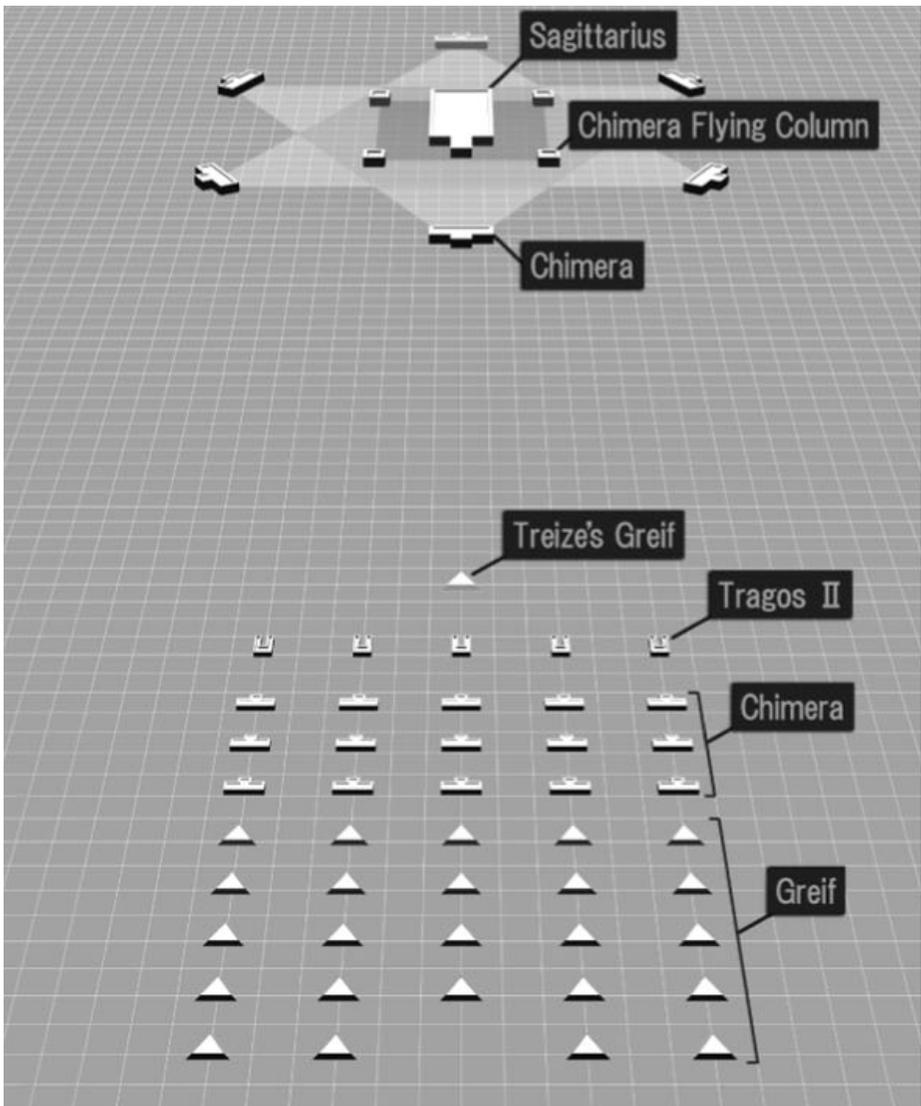
"Well then, shall we begin our operation?" he proposed with the casual air of suggesting afternoon tea.

His Specials displayed remarkable composure. Zechs lectured on the Greif's capabilities to his attentive subordinates. Lucrezia contemplated Earth's beauty from the lunar surface. Izumi expounded on Treize's

tactical brilliance. Solac shared battlefield survival wisdom. Eleve's squad—Treize's personal guard of four units—had but one directive: protect their commander at all costs.

Their collective calm stemmed from a paradoxical source—by accepting this battle as already lost, they freed themselves from tension, each understanding their role with crystal clarity. They showed no fear despite facing the overwhelming force of enemy Chimeras and the Sagittarius.

Both formations remained frozen in a tableau of potential energy, neither side willing to break the deadlock first. Though both battle lines stood complete, they remained locked in motionless confrontation across the lunar wastes.



The appearance of five high-mobility space fighters seemed almost ceremonial—the Alliance Space Forces' final combat units merely traced a path between the opposing forces, departing without engaging. The maneuver lasted mere seconds. The Anti-Alliance Chimeras tensed but held their fire, watching as the fighters sketched what appeared to be a demarcation line, like officials marking a tournament field.

Even from the Sagittarius's bridge, Artemis struggled to decode this peculiar crossing pattern.

"What was that about?"

"Perhaps they were signaling the start of battle?" her aide ventured quietly.

"Surely not..."

But Treize, as if orchestrating a precisely timed performance, ordered his Tragos units to open fire—shots that couldn't possibly reach the enemy Chimera forces at this range.

"So it begins!" A confident smile played across Artemis's features.

The pattern was unmistakable - straight from Treize's Mogadishu playbook. High-mobility Aries units sowing chaos, followed by Tragos artillery support. Though seemingly ineffective, the approach carried an almost ceremonial quality.

"Even tactically redundant patterns serve to bolster morale," she reflected. Through the lens of Treize's aristocratic heritage, this could be read as adherence to time-honored combat tradition.

The fighters' center line took on ritualistic significance - establishing a symbolic boundary, like nobles marking the grounds for a formal duel.

The Tragos units' second volley landed predictably short.

"Another futile display," her aide scoffed.

"Shall we indulge their performance?"

"Perhaps..."

Treize must have memorized her formation patterns by now. "They're testing our reactions," she realized. The artillery served as tactical probes, searching for response patterns.

"That's what makes this dance intriguing." Her smile turned predatory.

Like a chess master's opening - a pawn's advance concealing a deeper stratagem.

"Forward Chimera units 01, 02, 03, advance! Strike teams Alpha and Bravo, maintain rear support!"

Forty Chimera units surged forward as the enemy Tragos units withdrew.

"Enemy frontline is falling back!"

"They cower before our strength," the aide's tone dripped satisfaction.

Despite his confidence, unease crept through Artemis's tactical awareness. Something felt discordant. Nevertheless, she advanced Sagittarius and rear units to preserve formation integrity.

"Status of the giant beam cannon?"

"Destruction probability remains below 20%."

The enemy's continued retreat nagged at her instincts - since when did Treize embrace such defensive tactics?

"Current effectiveness prediction dropping below 15%."

The Anti-Alliance's vanguard Chimera 01 and supporting Alpha and Bravo teams pressed their advantage with the Sagittarius struggling to maintain optimal distance.

"Enemy disposition?"

"Five Tragos units continuing withdrawal."

Artemis's blood froze.

"Confirm - five Tragos?"

The critical oversight struck like lightning.

"Where is Treize's white unit?"

"Unable to verify position."

Her aide smirked, "Typical nobleman's gambit. Probably retreated in panic."

"Absurd!" The mere suggestion of Treize displaying cowardice was unthinkable.

"We've walked into his trap!"

The advancing Chimeras crossed the center line.

"All units halt! ALL UNITS HALT!"

The explosions drowned her commands.

Reality took precious seconds to register.

Land mines. The Chimeras had triggered land mines.

"Land mines?"

"When did they—?"

The truth crystallized with devastating clarity - those five units hadn't been drawing battle lines. They'd been methodically laying anti-mobile suit mines - scatter-type or space mines triggered by magnetic or acoustic signatures, both lethal in the lunar environment.

Smoke billowed across the battlefield, obscuring tactical visibility.

"We played directly into his hands," Artemis's frustration tasted like iron.

But—

"All units, converge on the Sagittarius! Execute thirty-degree starboard shift! Enemy's main force is positioning for a flank assault!" The crisp commands cut through the tactical channel with laser precision.

Her tactical acumen shone through the chaos, each prediction manifesting with remarkable clarity even as she maintained her iron composure. The minefield sprawling before them made a frontal assault tactically unsound, yet the billowing clouds of metallic smoke posed an escalating threat. In the vacuum of lunar space, the particles would hang suspended like a deadly curtain.

"Maintain beam cannon at combat readiness!"

Any enemy Greifs attempting to vault the minefield would be caught in the devastating energy burst, their formations reduced to cosmic debris.

"Strike teams, hold internal defensive positions!"

Each word to the Sagittarius bridge crew was measured, deliberate, carrying the gravity of command: "Maximum vigilance on all sensor arrays. Flag any deviation in thermal or radar signatures - no matter how minute."

Only after this rapid cascade of battlefield directives did Artemis request, "Status of casualties?"

"Ten Chimeras combat ineffective." The report was stark, unforgiving.

No window for tactical reorganization presented itself. Their pristine hexagram formation, originally sixty Chimeras strong, would need to morph into a pentagram with fifty. Yet even diminished, they maintained a two-to-one numerical advantage.

"The critical variable remains - will they strike from port or starboard?" she mused, analyzing the probable vectors of the main Greif assault. A split attack seemed strategically unsound - dividing twenty-five units would leave each wing dangerously exposed with barely ten units each.

"Port side," her combat instincts whispered. Historical engagement patterns had consistently revealed vulnerabilities along the left flank.

"Although starboard..." The specter of previous tactical outmaneuvering haunted her strategic calculus. This was the true source of her concern.

For any commander on the front lines, such a decision carried crushing weight.

Then—

"Multiple thermal signatures detected forward!"

The impossible materialized.

"Execute beam cannon strike!" Artemis's command was pure reflex.

The Sagittarius's massive beam weapon discharged its lethal payload. But their targets proved to be nothing more than mid-range ballistic shells launched by five Tragos units.

Their trump card, squandered on projectiles that posed no real threat.

Sometimes, the slightest tactical hesitation cascades into strategic catastrophe.

In this instance, while wrestling with the port-starboard dilemma, an unexpected development in the least probable direction - dead ahead - had triggered an instinctive response.

"A critical error..." she acknowledged.

This misstep stemmed from Artemis's distinctive combination of tactical prudence and lightning-quick decision-making.

While not indicative of command incompetence, the error remained undeniable.

"This could prove decisive..." she realized grimly.

Yet her immediate response demonstrated why she was no ordinary battlefield commander.

"Expand thermal detection parameters!"

With their primary weapon expended, enemy engagement was inevitable. The question remained: from which vector?

Port or starboard?

The crater-pocked lunar surface played havoc with radar detection of ground-based mobile suits.

But thermal signatures remained reliable.

The sun-bathed lunar surface exceeded 100°C, but maintained remarkable thermal uniformity. Unlike Earth-based operations, mobile suits could be tracked by the telltale contrast between their refrigerated cockpit systems and the intense heat signatures of their fusion reactors.

When these readings materialized on her command display, Artemis felt her blood freeze.

"This defies logic..."

Only twenty enemy signatures registered beyond their forward line - likely the five Tragos units plus fifteen Chimeras.

As the metallic smoke began to dissipate, visual clarity improved incrementally.

"Where have they concealed the Greifs?"

Their superior mobility made a wide flanking maneuver plausible.

Yet even with their advanced propulsion systems, they couldn't simply vanish from the Oceanus Procellarum.

"Above us?!"

Could they have ascended beyond detection range?

At lunar escape velocity - 2.4 kilometers per second - they could theoretically break free of the surface.

That marked the moon's first cosmic velocity threshold.

However, Earth's gravitational influence would prove inescapable. Even the cutting-edge Greif lacked sufficient thrust to execute a return trajectory after achieving orbital velocity.

"The crater network..."

The possibility materialized.

The moon's endless field of impact scars.

Some craters in the Oceanus Procellarum boasted walls reaching dozens of meters skyward.

But methodically searching each one was tactically impossible.

Time was measured now by the Sagittarius's main weapon recharge cycle.

The moment Treize would spring his trap.

In these seconds that seemed simultaneously instantaneous and eternal, twenty-five Greifs would launch their assault.

Artemis's combat intuition flared to life.

"Incoming!"

Her battlefield instincts had never failed her.

Yet precise targeting instructions eluded her.

"But the vector—"

"High-velocity contacts detected from rear quarter!"

"Behind us?!"

She pivoted sharply.

Treize had shattered the boundaries of conventional tactical thought.

The Specials' Greif squadron, under Treize's command, had executed the unthinkable - circumnavigating the moon itself to strike directly at their rear echelon.

Throughout military history, battlefield strategy had been imprisoned by two-dimensional thinking.

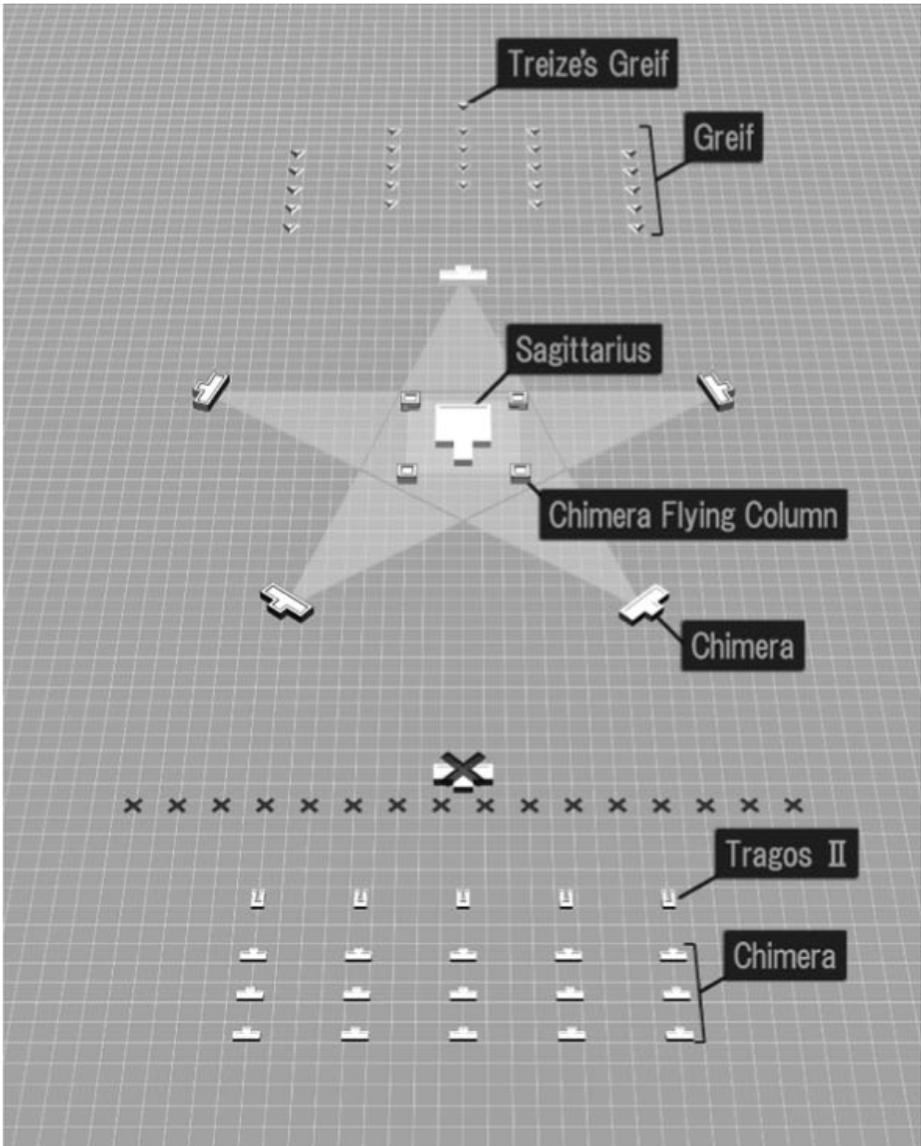
While aviation and submarine warfare had introduced vertical tactical elements, these remained confined to specific domains. Never had a commander approached strategy by treating the moon itself as a vast three-dimensional sphere of operations.

"Impossible..."

Artemis found herself momentarily staggered by the audacious brilliance of the maneuver.

But her reputation as an exceptional commander was well-earned.

Strategic surprise might rock her - but it would never paralyze her decision-making.



"All forces, converge on Unit 06!"

Her next command followed without pause.

"Rotate main beam cannon 180 degrees!"

The orders cascaded in rapid succession, but the weapon's energy capacitors remained frustratingly incomplete.

"This time lag will determine victory or defeat..."

A shadow of foreboding darkened Artemis's thoughts.

"This could be our undoing."

"All units, advance! Primary target: enemy battleship Sagittarius!"
Treize's voice carried absolute authority through the comm channels.

Twenty-five Greifs concentrated their devastating firepower on Unit 06's exposed rear armor. The tactical mathematics were brutal - 25 against 10. Unit 06's destruction was swift and merciless.

"Deploy main gun battery at 120 degrees!"

"Unit 06 sustaining critical damage!"

"Main gun energy charge: 130 seconds to completion!"

Artemis absorbed the frantic reports with a silent exhalation.

"Two minutes... an eternity in battle."

Time had become their most precious resource.

They desperately needed every second.

"Sagittarius, disengage from frontline position! Prepare to fire main gun the instant charge completes!"

"Moving while firing will compromise targeting solutions!"

"Precision is irrelevant - just fire!"

Their densely packed formation meant the main gun would inflict significant damage regardless of exact targeting. Their sole counter-offensive option lay in exploiting that moment to rejoin the battle line and launch a reversal attack.

"Hold position until then, boys."

Even with Units 04 and 05's twenty Chimeras rushing to reinforce the Sagittarius's rear guard on Artemis's command, they remained outmatched - 25 Specials units against their 20. The Greifs' medium-range artillery had already exacted a heavy toll before reinforcements could arrive.

Moments later, the elite strike teams Charlie and Delta joined the fray. Though the twenty-five Greifs remained largely undamaged, these ace-piloted Chimeras wouldn't fall easily. Their valiant counter-offensive forced the Greifs to yield ground incrementally.

Zechs and Solac's units surged forward to meet this challenge. Their Greifs carried beam sabers for close-quarters combat. While the Greif's versatility allowed it to excel in both melee and mobile warfare, it lacked overwhelming strike power. The Chimera, conversely, boasted superior armor and devastating firepower, but suffered from targeting limitations and close-combat deficiencies.

Zechs recognized his moment. Discarding his depleted munitions rifle, he gripped beam sabers in both hands, raised them skyward, and charged.

"Disregard our six! Focus on the objective!"

"Acknowledged!"

Solac's excitement was palpable.

"Impressive form, Zechs! Let's join the dance!"

"Affirmative!"

Hearing his subordinates' resolute responses, he too abandoned his medium-range cannon (despite remaining ammunition) and charged with dual beam sabers raised.

Given both machines' specifications, even an equal exchange would prove tactically advantageous. Yet none present concerned themselves with such calculated attrition. The situation had reached critical mass. Both forces fought at their absolute limits.

"Advance! Push the line!"

"Stand fast! This ground marks the boundary between victory and defeat!"

Zechs's unit's superior close-combat capabilities forced Charlie and Delta to yield ground. This tactical retreat instantly carved a direct path to Sagittarius.

"Engaging now!"

Treize's unit streaked forward at maximum thrust.

"Instructor Treize!"

Eleve team's four units moved with desperate precision, transforming themselves into living shields against Sagittarius's bombardment. The remaining three units mirrored this defensive formation with practiced efficiency.

"Protect him! Shield Instructor Treize!"

Eleve's teams desperate maneuver might have sprouted from loyalty to Treize, but the Specials weren't known for acting on mere sentiment. They operated on tactical judgment! For future generations of soldiers! Eleve's team intuitively grasped Treize's incoming strategy. Their primary mission formulated into this crucial defensive support.

"This defines the Specials - holding the line against all odds!"

"Main gun charge complete!" The operator's voice cut through the chaos.



"Main gun preparing to fire!"

"Just ten more seconds," Artemis whispered.

Facing the looming barrel of the massive beam cannon, Treize's Greif snapped its medium-range cannon into position and fired with surgical precision. The shot connected with devastating accuracy, mere seconds before the weapon could discharge.

"Treize Khushrenada reporting. Enemy main gun neutralized."

Victory cries echoed through the comm channels.

"I've been blessed with exceptional students," Treize remarked with characteristic composure.

That single shot had silenced the Sagittarius completely. The beam cannon's destruction triggered a cascade effect through the charging energy systems, forcing an emergency shutdown of the main engine. It would take over ten minutes for Sagittarius to reactivate using auxiliary power.

The bridge descended into darkness and chaos during the power failure. Yet Artemis's features held an unexpected smile.

"Well... perhaps I became too engrossed in the moment..."

It was almost sheepish, as if she'd rediscovered her true self.

Treize's unit and Eleve team immediately disengaged from Sagittarius, their armor requiring cooldown after sustaining multiple impacts. Lucrezia's and Izumi's teams seamlessly took their position, methodically dismantling the ship's remaining weapon emplacements.

"Earth's radiance watches over us."

"Lucrezia, victory is ours, isn't it?"

"Yes, but we can't let our guard down yet, Izumi."

The battle devolved swiftly into close-quarters chaos, friend and foe intermingled in deadly dance. Strike teams Alpha and Bravo arrived at this maelstrom, followed by Chimera units 02 and 03. The presence of all forces from both sides only intensified the tactical complexity.

When Alpha and Bravo attempted to engage Treize's unit and Eleve's team, Zechs and Solac's teams executed perfect intercepting maneuvers. As units 02 and 03 moved against Lucrezia and Izumi's teams, Treize's

unit and Eleve team provided precise supporting fire while maintaining tactical distance.

When units 04 and 05's survivors attempted reinforcement, Zechs and Solac's teams redirected their artillery. During these moments, only Zechs and Solac's units engaged Alpha and Bravo teams, their masterful beam saber techniques overwhelming even these elite close-combat specialists.

The Specials demonstrated their mastery of flexible defense and wave-like offensive deployment, executing both simultaneously. More precisely, they shifted between offensive and defensive stances with near-instantaneous precision. Their tactical responses displayed unprecedented speed.

Despite near-equal numbers, the Specials' Greifs maintained superiority through their seamless systematic coordination. While the Anti-Alliance Chimera forces possessed two distinct tactical advantages - strike teams excelling at assault maneuvers and mobile units specializing in medium-range engagement - these strengths had been thoroughly negated, leaving them tactically paralyzed.

Neither force had achieved absolute victory, yet fatigue and impending defeat began to erode the Chimera units' response times. Meanwhile, Sagittarius had established connection with its backup power grid and engaged sub-engines, continuing its strategic withdrawal.

Combat doctrine recognizes the inevitable moment when concentration falters. Victory belongs to those who exploit such instances. Treize's forces seized this opportunity with characteristic precision. The silent pressure of twenty-five Greifs forced the remaining thirty Chimeras into tactical retreat.

As Sagittarius's withdrawal reached the minefield, the Anti-Alliance forces' defeat became inevitable. The mines detonated in sequence, creating an access corridor. The Alliance Space Forces' five Tragos and fifteen Chimeras that had maintained the frontal position now revealed their trap, with twenty-five Greifs attacking from behind, completing the encirclement.

"Magnificent... A textbook defeat," Artemis acknowledged with self-deprecating grace as she accepted Treize Khushrenada's terms of surrender.

The battle reached its conclusion.

The Anti-Alliance Forces' decisive defeat can be attributed to three critical factors:

Foremost was Commander Artemis's psychological state. Her heightened perception of Treize's capabilities amplified her tactical anxiety, leading to last-minute reorganization of her unit commanders - only to revert these changes as battle approached. Such organizational flux inevitably undermined troop morale and compromised their formation's combat effectiveness. This same psychological burden led her to mirror General Million Liddell Hart's critical error - premature deployment of the giant beam cannon, their strategic trump card.

The second factor lay in the stark performance disparity between Chimeras and Greifs. While the new Chimera (Leo Type III) boasted impressive specifications for lunar warfare - markedly superior to its predecessor, the space-combat Leo II (old Chimera) - this technological advantage bred overconfidence. Their pilots developed an almost religious faith in lunar combat experience as the decisive factor.

This hubris created the perfect opening for Treize's forces. Though the Greif's medium-range ordinance lacked overwhelming force, it demonstrated exceptional accuracy. Meanwhile, the Chimeras failed to capitalize on either their superior mobility or destructive potential, leaving the Greif forces virtually unscathed and at peak combat readiness.

The third factor, Treize's bold lunar circumnavigation strategy, while innovative, wasn't necessarily the determining factor. The psychological elements alone likely ensured Treize's victory. However, this tactical brilliance cemented his position among OZ's new recruits. Soldiers naturally gravitate toward commanders who lead them to triumph.

This engagement proved pivotal in establishing Treize Khushrenada's absolute charismatic authority within OZ.

Treize and his forces made their triumphant return to the L-1 colony cluster's spaceport, leaving the Alliance Space Forces to handle the aftermath of war.

Vingt stood waiting at the dock.

His second, unspoken reason for coming to space was deeply personal. He wanted to be the first to witness his brother's moment of triumph.

"A masterful victory," he remarked.

Treize responded with characteristic gentility, though maintaining military bearing, "We haven't achieved victory, Vingt Khushrenada."

"Ah, of course..."

Treize had already declared this battle a strategic loss given Marius Plant's destruction. This deployment served solely "for future soldiers" - nothing more profound.

"Nevertheless, I'm grateful for your safe return."

"Not entirely unscathed... Precious lives were extinguished."

"I understood there were no OZ casualties?"

Vingt wondered if Treize referred to General Million Liddell Hart, though reports indicated the general had withdrawn from service after his release, his confidence shattered.

Treize pressed his eyelids, saying softly, "I meant our enemy."

"But surely-"

"I forced my cherished students to stain their hands with blood... when I think of their hearts-"

The unspoken weight hung between them: "I've committed an unforgivable act."

In Vingt's presence, Treize relaxed into his familiar brotherly demeanor.

"Have you visited Mother?"

"Yes... I plan another visit today."

"Then let's go together."

"Brother, Mother's condition..."

He wanted to convey her deteriorating state.

But Treize interjected, "What of Mr. Hundert?"

"Why should I concern myself? That man can die for all I care."

"He's your father. You'll regret it if you don't see him while you can."

Vingt, realizing Treize had never met his real father Ein Yuy, stopped his bitter remarks.

"Let's visit him too."

"If you say so, Brother."

At the medical facility, Hundert greeted them with effusive warmth.

"Word of your achievements has reached me! Such pride! The Khushrenada family's greatest glory. Duke Demail was absolutely elated!"

Hundert's vibrant energy seemed incongruous in the sterile hospital setting.

"Your praise honors me deeply, Father," Treize responded with apparent sincerity.

But Vingt bristled.

"We serve Earth's Sphere alone. The Khushrenada name and Romefeller Foundation bear no relevance."

"Naturally, I meant precisely that."

"We must take our leave."

"Why such haste? We've only just reunited."

"Duties require our attention."

They departed with military precision.

As they traversed the sterile hospital corridor toward Angelina's room, Treize addressed his brother.

"You needn't strain yourself, Vingt."

"I'm not straining."

"There's no need to maintain appearances for my sake."

"I'm not maintaining anything."

Vingt's tone carried unusual edge.

Internally, he grappled with an unspoken truth: "Seeing that man's robust health only amplifies Mother's suffering..."

Deflecting his inner turmoil, he pivoted the conversation.

"Brother, intelligence indicates colony scientists are developing Mobile Suits using Gundanium alloy."

"Is that so?"

"They mean to persist in their resistance."

"Perhaps inevitable. We Earth-dwellers have undeniably forced their hand."

"Our agents are investigating. If we secure the blueprints, we'll have irrefutable evidence to condemn their actions."

"Our priorities should lie with improving conditions for lunar factory workers."

"We've already initiated those measures. Worker-specific housing facilities have been established in the L-1 and L-2 colony clusters, with twice-daily shuttle service to the factory... Rotating day shifts have been implemented as standard."

"Commendable progress."

"However, these lunar factory improvements carry significant costs. We'll require increased military funding from member nations."

"Vingt Khushrenada, against what 'enemy' does the Alliance require such military reinforcement?"

"As previously stated - they're developing Gundanium mobile suits."

"..."

Treize's silence spoke volumes.

He recognized the deeper motivation driving Vingt's push for military expansion.

"Brother, we must strengthen our position. Victory must remain absolute."

The unspoken context hung heavy: preventing recurrences of tragedies like Heero Yuy and the Sanc Kingdom.

They must never again create circumstances that would break someone like their poor mother.

The unification of space and Earth was paramount.

Military might was the necessary foundation.

No alternative path to lasting peace existed.

Such contradictions perpetually churned within Vingt's psyche.

Perhaps these internal conflicts stemmed from his unique position - an executive of the Romefeller Foundation with a mother who seemed to channel space's collective will.

He would simultaneously develop cutting-edge weaponry and secure massive financial resources, while providing free viral countermeasures to the colonies. He balanced protection for vulnerable workers against shrewd manipulation of national military budgets.

When they entered Angelina's hospital room, Vingt's voice erupted.

"What are you doing!?"

The scene before them was clinically routine - a young male nurse performing standard care, washing Angelina's exposed upper body. But through thirteen-year-old Vingt's eyes, this professional act became an unforgivable violation.

"Wait!"

Treize's attempt to intervene came too late. Vingt's fist had already connected with the nurse.

"W-What are you-!"

"How dare you touch Mother like that!?"

"Vingt, control yourself!"

Treize's voice carried commanding authority.

"Please accept my deepest apologies. I will address this with my brother privately."

Treize bowed deeply to the young nurse, his apology carrying genuine remorse and respect.

After the nurse's departure, Vingt's emotions spilled over.



"Brother, you had no cause to bow! That man was smirking while manhandling Mother!"

What might have been a reassuring professional smile had twisted into something sinister through Vingt's protective gaze.

"Violence remained unjustified."

"But-!"

Heavy tears splashed against the sterile floor.

This moment would stand singular in time - the only instance where Vingt, typically composed and controlled, would display such raw fury.

"To look at Mother with such impure intent..."

His voice fractured, emotions overwhelming speech.

The depth of his frustration was palpable.

And beneath it lay an ocean of love for his mother.

For Vingt, even Hundert's marital intimacy with the beautiful Angelina seemed a transgression.

"He shows me kindness," Angelina spoke, her gaze distant and unfocused.

"Mother..."

Vingt raised his tear-streaked face.

Angelina adjusted her garments with innate dignity.

"You've made it, Treize."

Her voice now rang with clarity and authority, transformed from its previous vacancy.

"Yes, Mother."

"Claim dominion over Earth and space. Your bloodline destines you for this."

"....."

Treize maintained measured silence, offering no response.

Vingt's joy at witnessing his mother's apparent lucidity was evident.

"Indeed, Mother! Brother Treize will end this era's conflicts!"

But Angelina's attention remained fixed on Treize, Vingt's words seemingly lost to the void.

"You shall carry forward Heero Yuy and Ein's legacy."

Treize, mindful of his brother's pain, interjected:

"Mother, please acknowledge Vingt... His love for you surpasses all others."

"...Vingt?"

The light in Angelina's eyes dimmed suddenly, returning to that haunting vacancy.

One can only fathom the depths of Vingt's anguish in that moment.

His love for his mother undoubtedly exceeded Treize's own.

Yet by the time he achieved understanding, maternal affection had already been denied him.

To persist in loving while knowing that love went unreturned.

Condemned to continue loving regardless.

Though we can merely glimpse it, the pain must have been extraordinary.

Perhaps these complicated emotions drove him to affect premature maturity, grasp at power, and desperately support Treize in fulfilling their mother's wishes (even if born of delirium).

Vingt approached the medical facility's director, demanding that only female staff be permitted to attend his mother.

He learned that while this was standard protocol, staff shortages following the lunar war and increased casualties had necessitated adjustments.

"I don't want excuses. The fact remains that my mother was subjected to humiliation."

The director's unspoken thought blazed.

"You presumptuous little shit..."

Being thirteen and wielding power naturally bred resentment.

"And here - compensation for the man I struck. Sufficient for a decade of leisure."

He extended a credit key with cold precision.

"In exchange, have him resign."

"That's utterly unreasonable!"

"If you object, I can arrange compensation for you as well."

His gaze carried lethal intent.

"Or in your case, perhaps severance pay would be more appropriate... shall I arrange that?"

The director yielded, albeit reluctantly.

For Vingt, this childish exercise in "petty revenge" likely stemmed from a complex emotional tapestry: his profound maternal devotion, simultaneous admiration and envy toward his brother, hatred for his father, contempt for both the Foundation and Alliance Forces, and disdain for the colonies.

But such actions would exact their price.

In the L-1 colony cluster's spaceport, two clandestine operatives pursued their separate missions, their paths unknowingly intersecting.

Odin Lowe, working under the colony's Barton Foundation, carried orders to orchestrate the liberation of Artemis and her captured Anti-Alliance forces.

Aoi Clark, an OZ operative serving Vingt of the Romefeller Foundation, sought to penetrate underground resistance cells and secure blueprints for the mysterious Gundanium alloy Mobile Suit designated "Gundam."

Yet another figure moved through this web of intrigue, following his own distinct path.

Chief Engineer Seis Clark, architect of the revolutionary mass-production Leo, walked the spaceport's vast domed corridor with his six-year-old stepson - a child destined to adopt the legendary codename "Heero Yuy."

Father and son traversed the deserted passage alone, their footsteps echoing in the artificial silence.

"Mr. Clark, what's our destination?"

Seis halted, releasing a weighted sigh.

"You still refuse to call me father?"

"I cannot."

"Why?"

"Because you belong to Mother, not to me..."

"Even without blood ties, treating a father as property isn't right."

"But Mr. Clark possesses something precious..."

The child's words carried a hint of jealous discontent.

"I alone possess nothing."

"I have... something precious...?"

"Yes..."

"What do you believe I have...?"

"Leo."

Seis crumpled to his knees, overcome by emotion, fighting back tears.

"How those words save me..."

He pulled his stepson into a fierce embrace.

"Thank you... you truly have a beautiful soul... thank you."

His unstoppable tears soaked the young boy's shoulder.

The child stood bewildered, too young to comprehend the profound impact of his innocent words.

MC-0022 NEXT WINTER

My head snapped up with jarring awareness.

Master Chang's fingers danced across the keyboard, conjuring holographic images that filled the central monitor - a detailed topographical rendering of Mars's surface.

I removed my virtual visor, focusing my attention fully - the Martian landscape spread before us in stark detail.

"—And that's our current assessment."

Heero Yuy absorbed the briefing in characteristic silence.

Evidently, the explanation of "Operation Mythos" had begun while my mind wandered.

"However, we face a critical variable—"

Chang's fingers found the keys again, transitioning to a new display.

"Can you kill this woman?"

The holographic display erupted with multiple images of a striking young woman, each capturing a different facet of her presence.

Here, radiating warmth through a smile.

There, piercing through an intense gaze.

Sharing tender moments with animals.

Commanding attention with regal bearing.

Exuding sophisticated grace.

Yet notably absent was any trace of sorrow or defeat.

"Is this—"

Heero's voice carried its customary steel.

"Darlian? Or Peacecraft?"

Duo's patience snapped, his long braid whipping as he burst out:

"It's obviously Peacecraft! Relena Peacecraft!"

Indeed...

The face dominating the holographic display belonged to Relena Peacecraft - our designated Preventer target and most formidable adversary.

Heero Yuy turned to Father Maxwell, who stood at his side:

"A mission?"

The priest's response came as an uncharacteristically grave whisper.

"A mission."

In that brief moment, I caught the weight of moral burden in the priest's tone.

Heero released a breath that might have passed for a sigh, then spoke with glacial resolve.

"Understood."

He pivoted to face me and my superior, his words measured and absolute.

"I will kill Relena Peacecraft."



Rondo of Redemption

Treize File 4

How many times had those words - "Mission acknowledged" - passed through Heero Yuy's lips? The weight of that simple phrase hung in the air like lead, though I confess, I never truly grasped its crushing burden at the time.

The Gundam pilots always seemed to operate outside the rigid structures of "organization," their battles fought not by command but through sheer force of will. Yet they clung to that military vocabulary - "mission," "operation" - like a lifeline in the chaos of war.

No human, I believe, can commit murder through pure logic alone. The mind requires something more - perhaps a sliver of madness creeping at the edges of sanity, or the cold comfort of "following orders," or even the desperate justification that their target represents some greater "evil" threatening the masses. This isn't some lofty philosophical concept drawn from religion or humanitarian ideals or superhuman justice - it's a truth that resonates in our very bones.

This isn't about escaping guilt - it's closer to seeking atonement. They needed to cultivate a deliberate resolve, one that acknowledged their human weakness yet sought to transcend it.

Even now, anyone can see the razor-sharp rationality that defines Heero Yuy, whether they stand before him or not. When he once declared "I'll never kill again," yet assigned himself the "mission" to "eliminate Relena Peacecraft," there was no contradiction - or rather, that very contradiction illuminates both his thoughtful humanity and the raw wounds of his heart.

That's how thoroughly he had killed his own heart.

And we - there's no denying it - we were the ones who forced him down this merciless path.

I too must find that same steel within myself. Treize Khushrenada's file approaches its conclusion, and I count myself fortunate beyond measure to have witnessed such a kaleidoscope of perspectives in understanding this man.

Father Maxwell deserves my deepest gratitude for bringing this data to light.

I see it now - how Treize Khushrenada and Heero Yuy, though seemingly worlds apart, emerged from nearly identical wellsprings of motivation.

And stepping back further still, one could say that all of them - every legendary hero who blazed across the tumultuous After Colony era -

willingly hurled themselves into this maelstrom of destiny from that crucial moment onward.

It was their hearts, pure to the point of madness, untainted by corruption, that drove them toward the battlefield...

AC-186 AUTUMN

Within the L-1 Colony cluster, an Alliance Space Force detention facility stood under military police control, the same complex where, fifteen years prior, Ein Yuy had been imprisoned for illegal entry and acts of treason.

Now it held Artemis Sedici and approximately a dozen other anti-Alliance soldiers facing similar charges. Odin Lowe, operating as a freelance operative under Barton Foundation orders for "Operation: Rescue Artemis," had orchestrated his mission with surgical precision. His execution approached perfection.

Under the guise of a facility guard, Odin had methodically infiltrated the complex, strategically positioning explosives throughout while severing the main power supply. In the vacuum of space, power loss represented an immediate survival threat. Just as the Sagittarius had experienced during its lunar crisis, predictable panic erupted within the facility. Then, as if conducting a symphony of chaos, coordinated explosions began detonating across multiple sectors.

The widespread assumption pointed to a coordinated anti-Alliance assault. In truth, it was Odin's solitary masterwork - the phantom army existed purely in imagination. Earlier, a shuttle had approached from the spaceport, but control operators had dismissed it as routine civilian traffic. When emergency systems restored power, surrounding space appeared empty of vessels. That civilian shuttle should have remained visible, but operators, relieved by the absence of hostile forces, overlooked this critical anomaly.

This vessel was, in fact, Odin's extraction craft, piloted by Quinze, a self-styled revolutionary within the anti-Alliance resistance. The shuttle had secured itself against the facility's lower quadrant, beyond detection radar range. When the explosions initiated, Artemis and several fellow prisoners were already safely aboard.

Precise timing proved essential. Odin had positioned a final high-yield explosive at the facility's apex. Its detonation triggered another strategic blackout.

"Execute now, Quinze!" Odin's command cut through the chaos.

"Confirmed..."

The civilian shuttle disengaged from the facility. Odin remained behind, planning his own unhurried extraction once the situation stabilized.

Meanwhile, a massive transport vessel cut through space, piloted by cadets Zechs Merquise and Eleve Onegell. Their mission: delivering twenty-five Leo IV Type Greifs to the near-complete mobile fortress Bulge. Such transport duties typically fell beneath ace pilots' station, but Treize's core doctrine was absolute: "Those who cannot maintain their machines have no right to pilot them or be protected by them." This demanded personal oversight of all aspects - maintenance, inspection, preservation, and transport.

This particular assignment fell to these two alone because of their passionate volunteering. Once the Greifs transferred to Alliance Space Force registry, the Specials cadets would likely receive new units. Both pilots shared a deep connection to the Greifs, pleading with Treize for this final farewell mission.

During the long void of space travel, their thoughts drifted to recent fierce engagements.

"That was truly perilous," Eleve reflected, recalling his desperate defense of Treize during the Oceanus Procellarum battle.

"If Instructor Treize had taken a hit, we wouldn't be having this conversation."

At Lake Victoria, Zechs and Eleve had occupied different spheres. Though aware of each other's presence, they'd barely exchanged formal acknowledgments. This isolated dialogue in space marked their first true connection - perhaps by destiny. Or perhaps by design.

"Back then, had I failed to protect Instructor Treize, I would have eliminated you," Zechs stated with glacial precision.

"Likewise, Zechs. You remain my sworn enemy, after all."

"When did you realize?"

"During the Mogadishu offensive."

"Instructor Treize knew my true identity as well."

"You're terrible at hiding it," Eleve continued, meeting Zechs' gaze directly. "Those blue eyes bear the unmistakable mark of Sanc Kingdom royalty... and that audacious combat style speaks volumes of Peacecraft lineage."

Zechs offered a self-deprecating laugh. "Perhaps my grandmother's influence... They called her the 'Lightning Queen.'"

"My father despised the Sanc Kingdom to his core, to the point of self-destruction."

"Brigadier General Daigo Onegell... Have you reported to your father?"

"Never... I don't betray fellow warriors. Moreover, before being enemies, we're Instructor Treize's students..."

"Yet my thirst for vengeance remains unquenched."

"Act as you must. My father's actions are beyond forgiveness. Though I offer no apologies either."

"A chain of hatred..." The young cadets exhaled deeply, almost synchronized.

"Will we ever see its end?"

"What troubles me is the possibility of you claiming the Peacecraft name for that purpose..."

"Elaborate."

"The Peacecraft family exists to create peace... Wouldn't they take any measure to eliminate war?"

"Such as?"

"Perhaps halting time itself to break the cycle."

"Heh... Such a day seems unlikely."

The space fortress Bulge had yet to materialize before them.

Chief Engineer Seis Clark's initial vision had birthed Bulge's basic design, overseeing all OZ weapons manufacturing. However, in AC-175, when mobile suit development pivoted from Tallgeese to mass-produced Leos under his direction, he reluctantly relinquished the project to a successor. Another source of his discontent lay in Bulge's main mobile suits completely abandoning his design philosophy.

In a hotel room at the spaceport, Seis was in a rage before his wife Aoi and young son.

"What good are accolades from the Lunar Battle now?!"

Neither Aoi nor their child could find words to soothe him, understanding too well the depths of his anguish.

"I created both the Leo and Bulge!"

His helpless rage permeated the room, his state of mind painfully apparent.

"Even the Greif is practically your creation..."

"No! Absolutely not! I would never design something so costly! I refuse! I absolutely refuse to acknowledge it!"

"But..."

"Shut up! Be quiet!"

Each attempt at speech only stoked Seis's anger, his own words seeming to cut deeper into his psyche.

"Mr. Clark..."

The young boy clutched a Leo toy in his small hands.

Seeing it, Seis flew into a further rage.

"Tch!"

He ripped it from those tiny fingers, sending it shattering against the wall.

"Don't let him have such things! Are you mocking my work?!"

"It's just a child's toy..."

"What I created wasn't meant for children's games!"

The child hunched over, silently gathering the scattered pieces.

Something far more precious than plastic had shattered in that moment.

"....."

The boy remained mute, focused entirely on collecting the broken fragments.

"Enough! Both of you, out!"

"Darling..."

"Go to your real father! He's still alive, isn't he?!"

"Please, not in front of the child."

"Forgive me. But that boy is not 'my son'!"

After unleashing those venomous words, he stormed into the adjacent room.

The son shed no tears.

"Is it broken?"

"No, it's okay..."

"I'll buy you another one."

"I don't want one..."

He had gathered every piece.

(This broken toy is the only thing truly mine)

Keeping these thoughts locked inside, he looked to his mother:

"Mom, do you love him?"

Aoi pressed her ear against the door where Seis had vanished and answered:

"Of course I do, just as I love you."

Even at his tender age, he recognized the discord between her words and actions.

"....."

Years later, this wounded child would hear an unfamiliar girl ask:

"Hey mister, are you lost?"

After being asked repeatedly "Hey, are you lost?" he finally answered.

"I..."

Carrying a lifetime of feeling unwanted, he shared a glimpse of his truth.

"I've been lost ever since the day I was born..."

Seis initiated a long-distance communication link to the Barton Foundation in the L-3 Colony cluster.

This represented the current technological limit for real-time transmission within the Earth Sphere.

"Connect me to Mr. Dekim."

His request for the Foundation's representative carried lethal precision.

The businessman's face materialized on the monitor, wearing a smile that never reached his eyes.

"Ah, Chief Engineer Seis. Your contributions have ensured our operation's success."

"So I've heard."

Seis continued with mechanical detachment:

"Then you'll fulfill my request."

"Name your price."

"I've implemented modifications to that shuttle."

"Quinze has confirmed as much."

"An OZ transport approaches Bulge."

"Yes."

"Shoot it down!"

Dekim Barton transmitted these orders to Quinze without hesitation.

"Intercept the Greifs before they reach Bulge."

Their technical collaborator Seis's request had manifested in an unexpected form of vengeance.

A civilian shuttle rapidly closed on the large transport's stern where Zechs and Eleve maintained their vigil.

"Zechs, we're getting a distress signal."

"Engine trouble?"

"Negative, reported hijacking."

Artemis materialized on their monitor, wearing a predator's smile.

"This is Artemis Sedici."

The two cadets froze at her unexpected appearance.

"How are you, boys?"

Still smiling, she pressed her weapon against Quinzes' temple with elegant menace.

"Our demands are clear. Can you really abandon this poor pilot?"

"Impossible..."

Though clearly resistance theater, their ingrained sense of justice wouldn't permit them to ignore the crisis. Artemis had calculated this moral imperative perfectly.

Their deception became apparent only when the civilian shuttle closed to deployment range, a Leo III Chimera emerging from its concealed hangar, bazooka trained on their position.

This was Seis Clark's modification signature.

At this point in history, neither transports nor mobile suits typically carried self-destruct mechanisms.

"Heh... a chain of hatred indeed," Zechs remarked with bitter irony.

Eleve mused philosophically, "Life sometimes demands we bear others' hatred..."

"Should we mount resistance?"

"Don't. You have greater ambitions... I won't let you die meaninglessly."

"But..."

Eleve smiled, saying "Leave it to me," restraining Zechs' impulse to fight.

The massive transport carrying twenty-five Greifs vanished into the void of space, along with cadets Zechs Merquise and Eleve Onegell. Space fortress Bulge would never receive its intended complement.

Alliance military documentation recorded them as casualties of duty. In the final analysis...

The loss of both promising cadets and their complement of cutting-edge Greif units.

The successful liberation of Artemis and other key colonial resistance leaders.

The Marius Plant's destruction on the lunar surface.

These three factors transformed the "First Lunar War - Battle of Oceanus Procellarum" into an unequivocal defeat for the United Earth Sphere Alliance.

Significantly, Vingt Khushrenada deemed this engagement a stain on his brilliant brother Treize's record and deliberately excised it from OZ's military history.

Sure enough, until AC-188, two years hence, Treize and his comrades' activities remained conspicuously absent from official records.

All space engagements in historical documentation were attributed to Alliance Space Forces.

Major Septum actively participated in this historical revision, earning rapid promotion to Lieutenant Colonel within a month, Colonel the following year, and Brigadier General the year after.

While some questioned this meteoric rise, he merely harvested the opportunities created by General Million Liddell Hart's regime collapse.

Though critics labeled Septum "incompetent," his mastery of historical revision proved remarkable.

He managed this situation with characteristic efficiency.

Naturally, Vingt sought Treize's counsel on this decision.

"Shall we allow Alliance Space Forces to claim credit for the Marius Plant debacle? They seem particularly invested in their reputation."

"No objections, Vingt Khushrenada. More pressing is Marshal Catalonia's authorization."

"Regarding our missing cadets?"

"Cadet Zechs and Cadet Eleve."

"Brother, you needn't assume personal command—"

"I must. They remain my students. I'll stake my life on their recovery."

"If you're determined, I'll petition Uncle Chillas."

Vingt acquiesced reluctantly, pleading with barely concealed concern:

"Return before the Bulge completion ceremony. And please, exercise caution... Mother couldn't bear your loss."

"Understood, Vingt..."

The following day, Treize departed at the head of an elite cadet search unit, determined to locate Zechs and Eleve.

AC-186 OCTOBER 26

In AC-133, the United Earth Sphere Alliance emerged with lofty ideals of global harmony, but its Western-dominated leadership immediately sparked resistance from the nations of Asia, the Middle East, South America, and Africa. The power imbalance was glaring, and those desperate for sanctuary from escalating conflicts fled skyward to the artificial havens of the space colonies.

The era presented a bitter paradox: humanity's desperate clutching at peace while simultaneously fueling the engines of war. Throughout

civilization's long march, true peace had never been more than a carefully constructed illusion—a delicate framework built from countless compromising pieces. Like a house of cards, it threatened to collapse at the slightest tremor of discord.

This fragility mirrored the precarious nature of the space colonies themselves, hanging in the void like dewdrops on a spider's web.

The colonial citizens' fervent embrace of "pacifist demilitarization," championed by their leader Heero Yuy, perhaps revealed less about their political convictions than their bone-deep exhaustion with conflict. Yet their dreams of tranquility remained vulnerable to humanity's eternal plagues: fear slithering through minds, profit poisoning hearts, and honor driving people to madness. War would always find a way to breach their peaceful sanctuaries.

To forestall such intrusion demanded more than wishful thinking—it required iron-willed leadership, expanded personnel, and a robust arsenal. The financial burden of such preparation was staggering.

The construction of the mobile space fortress Bulge, straddling the L-1 and L-2 colony clusters beyond the moon, shackled many space citizens with crushing debt. Its very name—"Bulge"—carried dual meanings: Earth's aggressive projection of power or space's unnecessary burden, depending on one's perspective.

For twelve grueling years, from AC-174 to autumn AC-186, the Alliance Space Forces compelled the colonists to shoulder every credit of construction costs. This financial stranglehold masked a calculated strategy to prevent the colonies from building their own military capabilities.

The policy bred a virulent hatred among space citizens toward the United Earth Sphere Alliance. Nowhere felt this burden more acutely than Colony V08744 in L-2, where economic devastation spawned a generation of orphans—including the young Duo Maxwell—who would one day become warriors born of desperation.

When Seis Clark received his invitation to the Bulge's completion ceremony, his status as a mere "development contributor" rather than an honored guest spoke volumes. He shared this diminished position with other dignitaries from Alliance-sympathetic colonies.

In the officers' waiting room, Seis remained motionless, his refusal to attend the ceremony absolute. Aoi, adjusting her formal dress, broke the heavy silence.

"Are you really not attending the ceremony?"

"Leave me be..."

He was completely depressed at this point.

"I understand... let's go." His voice carried the weight of utter dejection.

"I understand... let's go."

Aoi guided their fidgeting son, uncomfortable in his formal suit, toward the ceremonial venue, leaving Seis alone with his thoughts.

At the reception room entrance, Aoi's eyes fell on the Leo toy clutched in her son's hands—a well-worn companion he had meticulously repaired himself.

"You should have left that behind."

"It stands in for Mr. Clark."

His words drew a bittersweet smile from his mother, and she reached into her pocket.

"Then perhaps this can stand in for me." She extended her hand, offering him a delicately folded blue paper crane.

"I find myself reluctant to attend as well," she admitted softly. "I'll wait here."

"Okay..."

In the depths of her heart, Aoi knew her husband Seis had turned to the anti-Alliance cause. Her position left her no right to condemn him—if anything, her intimate understanding of his motivations only deepened her sympathy.

Though Vingt's request weighed heavily on her conscience, she found herself unable to act each time she glimpsed her son's treasured Leo toy. The carefully repaired figure had become a silent testament to something greater than her mission.

(Compared to me, this child carries such courage...)

Her son's innocent bravery threatened to shatter her resolve. With each passing day, her hesitation grew, marking her inevitable failure as an OZ agent.

(This will be the end)

The knowledge that Vingt Khushrenada awaited in the fortress's reception room pressed against her thoughts like a physical weight.

"Perhaps I guided Seis down this path."

"Saving him from this torment—that's my true mission now"

The decision crystallized in her mind: she would abandon her role as an agent and embrace life as simply a wife and mother. The microchip nestled within that blue paper crane—containing the copied schematics of the Gundanium mobile suit prototype—would be her final act in this chapter of their lives.

Among engineering circles, Seis's legacy sparked endless debate. His twin achievements stood as testaments to his brilliance: the fortress Bulge, remaining unconquered for nearly a decade, and the Leo, whose design proved so fundamentally sound it required only minimal modifications over twenty years. These accomplishments deserved to stand alongside revolutionary designs like Tallgeese and Gundam. While others chased spectacular innovations, Seis had achieved something far rarer—he had created technology that withstood the relentless march of time.

Yet history seemed determined to remember him merely as a capable engineer rather than a pivotal figure of his era. Perhaps that recognition was what Seis truly craved, but his moment had slipped through his fingers like stardust. Only future generations of engineers would fully grasp the magnitude of his technical mastery.

His specialized field perhaps contributed to this oversight—the political and economic elite, absorbed in their grand schemes of power, had little time to appreciate engineering excellence. But Seis's burning desire for status within the Romefeller Foundation, his desperate hunger for acknowledgment, only served to diminish him in others' eyes.

Years later, in AC 195, his stepson would pilot a Gundam to Earth, operating under the aliases "Heero Yuy" and "Red One." In battle after battle, he deliberately showcased the Leo's true capabilities, elevating its reputation among both warriors and civilians as the finest mobile suit ever created.

Some might dismiss it as overanalysis, but there seemed to be purpose in the boy's actions—a son's tribute to his stepfather's genius, demonstrated through the masterful handling of his creation.

Field Marshal Chillas Catalonia commanded the podium at the Bulge's ceremony, his voice carrying across the gathered crowd with practiced authority.

"History shows us an unchanging truth—colonial peace has consistently been sacrificed on the altar of Earth's security," he declared, his words resonating through the chamber. "That small blue sphere's

endless power struggles have cast long shadows over your lives. The lunar war, its wounds still fresh, served only Earth's insatiable appetites..."

Truth, as always, made the perfect foundation for deception.

"But now, Bulge stands as space's singular military authority. Our lunar surveillance network is absolute! Never again will Earth's schemes touch your lives!"

These carefully crafted words bore Vingt Khushrenada's unmistakable political artistry, especially evident in what followed:

"While we deeply regret the financial burden placed upon the colonies, remember—you are Bulge's rightful masters."

Their masterful sleight of hand transformed the colonists from victims into willing participants in their own pacification.

"We of the United Earth Sphere Alliance Forces serve merely as caretakers. Earth's coffers will sustain this fortress's future needs. You need not worry."

Such calculated reassurances proved devastatingly effective in soothing the colonies' collective conscience.

"In After Colony 186, space will finally know true peace. I, Chilias Catalonia, shall relinquish my title of Marshal upon this fortress's completion, becoming but a simple soldier to herald war's end."

Chilias's "demotion" from Marshal to General was nothing but theatre—a token gesture acknowledging the catastrophic Battle of Oceanus Procellarum. War persisted; his grip on the Alliance Forces remained absolute.

Yet the colonists eagerly embraced the sweet fiction of "space's peace," accepting their financial shackles with gratitude.

Nine years hence, in AC-195, OZ's Colonel Lady Une would employ similar tactics, militarizing the colonies while preaching harmony. As Duo Maxwell would later observe with bitter wit, "Space is full of easy marks."

Meanwhile, Dorothy watched her father's speech with undisguised boredom, her six-year-old patience wearing thin.

Vingt stood at her side, ever vigilant.

"Vingt," she tugged at his sleeve, "where's Mr. Treize?"

"Let me check," he murmured, turning to the nearby security officer.

"Any word from my brother?"

"Still no return, sir."

"This is dreadful," Dorothy declared, cheeks puffing in protest.

"Couldn't agree more."

"I'm going exploring!" she announced, darting through the crowd with surprising agility.

"Mind your bearings," Vingt called after her, silently signaling half the security detail to shadow the spirited child.

His thoughts turned to his brother, still searching the colonies, and he sighed.

"Unlike our young Dorothy... he should abandon this pursuit of wayward students."

Earth-side intelligence had confirmed Eleve Onegell's identity as the son of Brigadier General Onegell, Northern European Command. But Zechs Merquise? A phantom—name and documents both fabricated, nonexistent throughout the Earth Sphere.

(His proximity to my brother poses risks...)

Privately, he hoped the students would remain hidden, if that was their desire.

(My brother has no need of them)

The thought came unbidden, but certain.

A small figure appeared before him—Seis and Aoi's son, still clutching his battle-worn Leo toy.

Vingt found himself drawn to the miniature mobile suit.

"A Leo, isn't it?"

"Mark I early type... A stand-in for Mr. Clark."

"The camouflage seems ineffective."

"White machines don't appeal to me."

Words that struck an uncomfortable chord. Vingt redirected:

"Was there something you needed?"

"....."

The boy considered his words carefully.

"You're Chief Engineer Clark's son, correct?"

The child remained still, clearly harboring different thoughts.

"Please, speak freely," Vingt encouraged, maintaining his diplomatic demeanor.

"Has the war really ended?"

The question caught Vingt off-guard and he felt exposed.

He countered with a frozen smile.

"What do you think?"

"I think it hasn't."

"Why? Don't you desire peace?"

"I do... but it seems unlikely."

Vingt's self-deprecating smile preceded his next probe.

"Do you wish to fight?"

"I don't want to."



"No one does... that's why war will end."

"Merely running accomplishes nothing."

A remarkable exchange between children of six and thirteen years. Vingt reflected how his conversations with Dorothy, of similar age, carried more childlike charm.

"Indeed, your insight proves valuable. I shall consider it carefully."

Vingt extended his left hand.

"It will guide my future decisions. You have my thanks."

"....."

The young boy reached out with his own left hand.

While left-handed handshakes held specific meaning in certain contexts, like the Boy Scouts, they remained unusual.

Children sometimes used them playfully to signal a duel or "Adieu"—a final farewell in French.

This moment could be interpreted similarly.

Yet their left-handed gesture seemed to carry deeper symbolism.

But perhaps that was reading too much into it.

More significant was the blue paper crane that remained in Vingt's palm afterward.

"What's this?"

"Mother's proxy..."

Vingt shook the crane gently, recognizing its hidden contents.

"Give Mrs. Aoi my regards," he whispered to the retreating figure.

Just then, Dorothy reappeared, colliding with the boy and sending the Leo toy clattering to the floor.

"Watch it."

The boy who would later call himself "Heero Yuy" picked up his stepfather's proxy and replied:

"Likewise."

A fleeting encounter, likely forgotten by both.

They would meet again in AC-195, within the restored Sanc Kingdom.

Hours later, in Bulge's sterile command room, Chilias and Vingt faced the array of monitors displaying Earth Sphere Alliance Force leadership, their faces cast in the artificial glow of screens.

"Why should Earth shoulder the fortress's maintenance?" General Ventei's digitized voice carried his indignation clearly.

Vingt responded with calculated precision: "Further colonial taxation would grant them true ownership of Bulge."

"That's not the core issue," Ventei countered. "With space posing no threat, why maintain increased military funding now that Bulge stands complete?"

"Consider this evidence." Vingt's fingers danced across the console, loading data from the blue crane's microchip. The monitor flickered to life with new schematics.

"Behold—design specifications for a Gundanium mobile suit."

The prototype's designation blazed across the screen:

"WING GUNDAM 0"

"The colonies intend mass production to challenge our authority."

"Surely you jest," General Noventa interjected, disbelief evident in his tone. "This seems far-fetched."

"The signs surround us, if you care to look," Vingt's voice carried quiet authority. "I see them clearly."

Each piece fit perfectly—Heero Yuy's assassination, the manipulated export tariffs, the crushing space force costs, the fortress construction demands, the systematic psychological oppression of colonial leadership.

Earth's hubris had planted countless seeds of rebellion.

"This machine would require fifty mobile suits to counter... Should the colonies achieve mass production, our Forces must field fifty times that strength. Increased military expenditure becomes inevitable for Earth Sphere security."

Lieutenant Colonel Septum seized his moment: "My Third Space Force requires immediate reinforcement!"

His voice carried the ambition of his L-3 colony cluster base construction.

"We must sever inter-colony communications at any cost!"

The cascade of reactions followed swiftly:

"Can our technology not replicate these Gundanium units?"

"What are the time and resource requirements?"

"Military expansion is clearly paramount!"

The generals' agitation spread like a contagion through the screens.

If these hardened military minds showed such disturbance, Earth's civilian leadership would surely embrace increased military spending.

Space had become the perfect "hypothetical enemy," justifying Earth's bloated military machine.

Young Vingt possessed an uncanny talent for maintaining equilibrium by introducing opposing forces to both sides of paradoxical relationships. He offered salvation to the weak while seeding anxiety among the strong, painted nightmares for the old while promising liberation to the young.

Had any general asked: "Wouldn't this arms race trigger all-out colonial war?"

What answer would he have given?

The truth remained: the Gundanium mobile suit "Gundam" never reached mass production. The colonies lacked both resources and industrial capacity—and most crucially, pilots.

This Wing Zero blueprint wouldn't see even partial construction for nine years, until Quatre Raberba Winner finally completed it.

Though fearsome on paper, without capable pilots, it posed no genuine threat.

Vingt knew this truth, yet wielded the information like a master manipulator.

The Romefeller Foundation would profit handsomely.

The thirteen-year-old prodigy folded a paper airplane with deliberate precision, launching it into the air.

"Ruthless" seemed an appropriate addition to his character.

Characteristic of this era, youth repeatedly stood at history's crossroads.

Relena Peacecraft became world leader "Queen" at fifteen, as did Dorothy Catalonia becoming White Fang's vice commander.

The Gundam pilots had fought since even younger.

Most striking was Mariemeia Khushrenada's declaration of war against the Earth Sphere Unified Nation at mere seven years old.

This pattern perhaps reflected next-generation apathy creating a generational schism.

It mirrored late twentieth to early twenty-first century dynamics—advanced medicine and abundant resources increased lifespans, while elderly power holders clung to their positions across politics, economics, ideology, and arts.

Thus, the next generation faced chronic suppression, ceasing innovative action.

Yet they pushed their children toward precocious genius while abdicating responsibility themselves.

When aging leaders finally acknowledged their limits, they found no capable successors in the next generation, leaving only young prodigies as viable options.

Prioritizing ability over seniority prevented incompetent leadership.

This produced such unusual situations.

Yet perhaps this wasn't abnormal—maybe evaluating factors barely related to ability, like seniority and experience, was the true problem.

The blue paper airplane spiraled beneath the conference table.
Dorothy crouched there, hidden.

"Fate" sometimes presents multiple souls with simultaneous turning points.

This moment was one such nexus.

"Begin the attack!"

Artemis's command cut through the void.

The massive transport from the L-2 Colony cluster halted within visual range of space fortress Bulge, disgorging twenty-five Greifs. These weren't the pristine white units of old—pragmatism, not ideology, had demanded pitch-black paint for space camouflage. History would remember them as the "Schwarz Greifs."

"Target: Space Fortress Bulge!"

The curtain rose on their lightning strike.

Under Artemis's leadership, the Schwarz Greifs split into groups of three, launching a synchronized bombardment. Bulge found itself caught in her signature tactic—attacks from every vector. The fortress's eight intercepting Chimeras (Leo III types) barely had time to register the threat before being methodically eliminated.

Though Bulge bristled with 280mm triple gun turrets and twin machine guns covering every approach, the high-velocity Schwarz Greifs proved too nimble. Medium-range shells found their mark instead on several turrets, creating defensive blind spots that became staging grounds for the assault force.

Within moments, Bulge's mighty frame shuddered under devastating impacts. Despite its titanium armor, violent tremors penetrated deep inside, while explosion-spawned smoke choked the outer corridors. The green garrison troops struggled to mount any defense, let alone contain the spreading fires. Civilian personnel scattered in panic through the chaos.

This catastrophic response stemmed from Alliance leadership's fatal complacency—they'd never imagined anyone would dare strike Bulge. Their hubris showed clearly in the absence of a designated command room commander, leaving Alliance forces rudderless, dependent on automated defenses without tactical direction.

The command room held only three souls: Vingt Khushrenada, General Chilias Catalonia, and his daughter Dorothy, who had slipped

inside despite orders to wait out. When direct hits hammered the outer wall, the main computer's security protocols sealed all three within.

Yet Chalias proved worthy of his rank. His voice carried across communication channels, rallying troops to their trained positions, somehow maintaining a defensive line against internal breach.

"Execute my orders! Stand fast—Bulge won't fall to these dogs!" Dorothy watched her father's resolute back with swelling pride.

The fortress's civilian population complicated matters enormously. Soldiers, consumed with Chalias's defensive priorities, couldn't spare manpower for evacuation procedures.

In the hermetically sealed reception room, emergency red lights cast bloody shadows as Aoi frantically searched for her son. Finding no trace, she concluded, "He must be outside."

Without warning, she tore her dress skirt, exposing her legs. Male eyes couldn't help but follow. She fixed the nearest sunglasses guard with a seductive gaze.

"Pardon me..."

As he turned, her roundhouse kick struck like lightning. His sunglasses skittered across carpet as she seized his weapon, emptying it into the door's safety mechanism.

To onlookers, she appeared mad. The massive door yielded slightly to her hands—displaying shocking strength for any human, let alone a woman. But it refused to open fully.

Security personnel converged on her position.

"Have you lost your mind?! This assault won't go unpunished—"

"Move! We're not safe here!"

"What?"

"Everyone to shelter! Now! Help me with this door!"

Her commanding tone galvanized the guards into action, joining her effort against the stubborn door.

The evacuation order was pure fabrication—Aoi cared nothing for their safety. Her world had narrowed to a single purpose: finding her son.

Moments earlier, Seis Clark had burst from the officers' room, one arm raised against the acrid smoke as he raced toward the reception room's middle level. Guilt gnawed at him—he should be with his wife and son.

"No time for self-loathing!"

If the fortress matched his designs—and he knew it did—he could navigate these corridors blindfolded. Indeed, Seis might have been the only soul who could traverse Bulge's labyrinthine depths by pure instinct.

"Only I..."

His voice rose to a shout as he ran through the thickening smoke:

"Only I can save my wife and son!"

A space-suited figure astride an Eleauto—the zero-gravity electric bike—materialized from the haze before him.

"Chief Engineer Seis!"

"You know me?"

"Yes sir. Take this!"

He thrust forward another space suit.

"I don't need that!"

"Heading for the reception room?"

"Ah, yes!"

"I'll get you there! But we might hit decompressed zones! So!"

"R-right."

Seis wrestled with the suit's unfamiliar clasps.

"Thank you."

A distant explosion punctuated their exchange. The enemy's approach was palpable.

"What's Command thinking? Why isn't the Bulge Cannon firing?"

Still grumbling, Seis secured his helmet and mounted behind the soldier.

"Could you navigate?"

"Absolutely—go!"

The Eleauto surged forward.

Unknown to Seis, his pilot was no Alliance soldier. Odin Lowe, anti-Alliance operative, had appropriated the suit for cover. Though sent to sabotage Bulge from within, that mission had evaporated. Now "emotion drove him"—the urge to save his former lover and their child. His objective perfectly mirrored Seis's own.

The Eleauto carved through dense smoke until bulkheads blocked their path.

"Mobile suit hangar's beyond that bulkhead."

"Got it."

Without hesitation, Odin primed a grenade. As the Eleauto banked hard, he hurled it at the obstruction. The explosion carved them a passage.

"You're insane!"

"Less so than your wife."

"You know Aoi?"

"Hang on!"

Odin gunned the engine, plunging into the hangar.

"Thirty degrees up-right—there's an air circulation vent serving the whole fortress! It also cools the main Bulge Cannon. We can cut through now."

The Sagittarius had lacked this feature, requiring longer recharge cycles.

"It'll take us straight to the middle level!"

Meanwhile, the heavy reception room door had finally yielded a narrow gap. Aoi's lithe form slipped through into the outer corridor. The middle level passage remained mercifully unsealed. She kicked off her heels, her movements fluid and precise—products of OZ training, though her natural athleticism had always set her apart.

As Odin and Seis's Eleauto shot through the hangar toward the vent, an enemy unit smashed through the wall. Seis's breath caught—he knew that silhouette instantly.

"That's... that's a Greif..."

The Schwarz Greif methodically destroyed the dormant Chimeras. Their detonating fusion reactors triggered a cascade, transforming the hangar into an inferno.

Heart pounding with each explosion, Aoi pushed her body to its limits through the corridors. As predicted, emergency bulkheads began their relentless descent. Like an Olympic athlete, she vaulted rising barriers and slid beneath falling ones, her momentum barely breaking.

But her beloved son proved hard to find. Even Aoi's superhuman stamina began to waver. Just as she feared the next bulkhead would defeat her, she spotted a small figure ahead—her child, desperately struggling to free a toy Leo trapped in an unforgiving metal wall.

Her son's name died in her throat as the world erupted. For one terrible moment, despair threatened to consume her. A pillar of crimson flame danced before her eyes. In those precious seconds before, the Eleauto had swept her child to safety.

As the vacuum's darkness reached for her, time seemed to slow. Odin and Seis perched on the Eleauto, her precious son sheltered between both his fathers. The mother's face softened into a genuine smile at fate's bitter irony.

"Thank goodness... but..."

"I'm sorry..."

"Please forgive me, all of you..."

"I can't stay with you anymore!"

"Good...bye..."

Both men watched helplessly as Aoi vanished into the inferno, her final smile searing itself into their souls.

"You... I'm sorry..."

Seis gently transferred his son to Odin's care.

"Watch over him for me..."

"Hey, wait... that's suicide!"

The former Chief Engineer, now simply a father, kicked away from the Eleauto, ricocheting off the near-weightless shaft wall, plunging into the still-detonating hangar.

Odin looked down at his newfound charge:

"Air's getting thin. Holding up?"

The boy managed a slight nod, his gaze fixed on the fragments of his shattered toy.

"My treasure is gone."

"Nothing..."

"I have nothing left."

As Odin guided the Eleauto toward the evacuation shelter with his precious cargo, Seis channeled his grief into vengeance. He seized control of a remaining Chimera, unleashing every scrap of his mobile suit expertise against the hated Greifs. Three units now surrounded him in a deadly dance.

Yet no matter their modifications, they remained Leos at heart. Seis knew their essence intimately.

"You bastards!"

He destroyed the first by rupturing its back-mounted energy generator, the explosion a funeral pyre for his beloved wife.

"Just modified Leos!"

The second fell as he shredded its auto-balancer circuits beneath the left arm while blinding its head cameras, a sacrifice to his own hubris.

"You won't have my son!"

He engaged the final unit with desperate hopes for his stepson's future.

"You won't touch him—!!"

His beam saber pierced the Schwarz Greif's chest with vengeful precision, barely missing the cockpit. At point-blank range, the final Greif discharged its medium-range cannon.



Seis's Chimera detonated in a cataclysmic burst, dragging the Greif into oblivion. The explosion's fury physically rocked Bulge's massive frame, tilting the entire station, as a father's final act of protection.

Artemis stared at her display in disbelief as reports confirmed three units destroyed by a single Chimera.

"That's... impossible."

Her mind immediately leaped to one conclusion—an elite pilot had been lying in wait. Most likely OZ Specials'—

"Treize Khushrenada..."

Reckless advance would be suicide. She keyed her comm to regroup her forces at the fortress's firing blind spot.

"All units, converge on Point H!"

Her display suddenly flickered to life with an unexpected face.

"This is Treize Khushrenada of OZ Specials, United Earth Sphere Alliance Forces."

"What?!"

"Commander Artemis Sedici of the Schwarz Greif force—I challenge you to a duel."

"Where are you?!"

"Directly behind you—"

She spun her unit around, heart freezing.

A formation of pristine white Chimeras had encircled her Schwarz Greifs.

"Not again!"

Rage burned through her—twice now Treize had wounded her pride with the same maneuver.

Her command cut through all channels:

"All units, new target! Focus on the white Leos! Concentrate everything on their commander!"

Every Schwarz Greif's medium-range cannon swiveled toward Treize's unit.

"If you reject honor, then we fight without it."

Treize opened a separate channel to the fortress.

"Space Fortress Bulge, requesting acknowledgment."

Inside the command center, his appearance brought both relief and tension.

"Mr. Treize!"

"Brother..."

His image carried an unusual gravity, even for him.

"Master Catalonia, disable the automatic defenses and prepare the Bulge Cannon."

"W-what?"

"And if fate allows, let my dear brother Vingt execute the firing sequence."

Vingt's confusion was evident.

"What are you suggesting, brother...?"

"It must be you, Vingt..."

Treize's unit executed a measured retreat while dodging concentrated fire.

"I'll draw them to my position... Set the Bulge Cannon's target point on my position..."

The weapon's characteristics meant greater distance would catch more enemies—but would leave Treize's unit with virtually no escape path.

"If I must fall by your hand, I accept it gladly..."

"I won't! I can't!" Vingt's protest was immediate.

"It's unthinkable!"

"Look at the bigger picture, Vingt... One life to preserve Fortress Bulge."

Vingt recognized the tactical truth—this was their sole path to victory.

"Would you sacrifice General Catalonia, beloved Dorothy, and yourself for my sake?"

(Such resolve, Treize... but)

(Must this be the only way...?)

The Catalonias shared his turmoil. Treize's sacrificial gambit revealed his failure to locate Zechs and Elve. As their instructor who had approved the Greif transport mission at their urging, he bore the weight of enabling this assault on Bulge.

"Decide now! Or my death becomes meaningless!"

"Understood!"

Vingt's voice cracked with tears.

"Bulge Cannon, prepare to fire! Target: OZ Specials commander unit!"

"That's my brother!"

"All Chimeras, disengage immediately! This is a direct order!"

Treize's unit drew nearly twenty Schwarz Greifs in its wake as it retreated.

"Take the shot, Vingt Khushrenada."

"The Earth Sphere's future lies in your hands."

A smile crossed his lips as he whispered.

"Please watch over Mother..."

The Bulge cannon's orientation required adjusting the entire fortress's position via propulsion verniers. Artemis was the first to realize this.

"They wouldn't... fire the Bulge cannon?!"

Logic argued against sacrificing Treize—surely the Alliance wasn't so resource-rich they'd expend such talent as mere bait. Yet every development before her supported this impossible conclusion.

"What's the Bulge cannon's charge status?!"

For the first time in her career, Artemis hesitated. Her instincts had never failed her, but this situation defied analysis. The duel challenge had destabilized her certainty. She still couldn't reconcile Treize's appearance behind her when she'd believed him within the fortress.

Her legendary mind, nicknamed "precision machinery," had stumbled on Treize's unpredictability. Future military scholars would cite this moment of doubt as her critical tactical failure.

The Bulge Cannon's aim locked. This time, Vingt didn't hesitate. In his mind echoed the words of that child with the patched-up Leo:

"Just running away isn't enough."

Vingt had sworn to honor that wisdom.

"My brother won't be hit! He'll definitely dodge! The gods of space, Mother—surely they'll protect him!"

"Target acquisition complete!"

Artemis finally broke her paralysis.

"All units disperse! Bulge Cannon imminent!"

But her command came fatally late. The attacking Schwarz Greifs froze for precious seconds.

"Bulge Cannon, fire!"

As Vingt's finger met the trigger, Lucrezia's, Izumi's, and Solac's units slammed into Treize's at maximum thrust, yanking him clear of the cannon's arc.

The devastating beam consumed twenty Schwarz Greifs, leaving nothing but space dust.

"What a fool I've been..."

Artemis's whisper carried infinite regret.

"Such a complete fool..."

Only two units remained, including her own.

"Commander Artemis..."

Her surviving deputy awaited orders.

"Full retreat! This is total defeat!"

The surviving Schwarz Greifs fled, shame their only companion.

The three rescue Chimeras showed battle damage from the cannon's periphery, but Treize's unit emerged unscathed.

"Thank goodness... nothing matters more than your safety."

Solac Delbrück sighed in relief.

"After losing Zechs and Eevee, losing Instructor Treize too would have left me a walking corpse,"

Lucrezia Noin's voice trembled with emotion.

"You've all committed serious violations... My order to disengage was absolute."

Treize's tone carried unusual steel.

"I coerced them both! Let the punishment fall on me alone!"

Izumi Tarnov's cry came from his half-ruined unit.

"No, I 'acted on personal initiative'!"

"I 'endorsed Cadet Izumi's proposal for future soldiers! I'm equally guilty!"

"All three restart basic training at Lake Victoria! However, I honor your valor! And..."

Treize's expression softened:

"I'm sorry... and thank you."

In Bulge's command center, relief flooded through Vingt and the Catalonias at Treize's survival.

"Pure elegance, Master Treize... like watching a waltz."

"Vingt Khushrenada, should this incident join Alliance military records?"

"No... acknowledging such a breach would undermine Bulge's reputation as space's supreme fortress."

"As anticipated..."

"We'll treat it as if it never occurred."

Vingt's smile masked a deeper truth—

Perhaps he couldn't bear documenting his attempt on his beloved brother's life—

"I thank the gods of space and Mother..."

Though victory was theirs, the day's cascading coincidences had triggered an inexorable chain of fate. Without the boy's Leo toy? Without Seis Clark's sacrifice against the Greifs, would Artemis have faltered? Absent the Catalonias, had Treize arrived later, had Izumi's team followed orders...

The possibilities stretched endlessly. In retrospect, their victory balanced on a knife's edge that induced cold sweats.

(Such fortunate convergence can't repeat)

(Never again will I court such terror)

(Just running away isn't enough...)

(We must extinguish the colonies' rebellious spirit)

Vingt Khushrenada sealed his resolution.

Yet claiming twenty lives in an instant, enemy or not, cast an indelible shadow across the thirteen-year-old's soul.

He emerged colder than ever before.

AC-187 SUMMER

Nearly a year had passed.

Zechs Merquise and Eleve Onegell remained missing.

Meanwhile, Odin Lowe and his son drifted between colonies like cosmic debris. Though blood linked them, Odin buried this truth deep. Instead, he passed on more practical inheritance: survival skills, tactical knowledge, and the ruthless arts of staying alive.

The boy carried Aoi's physical gifts in his bones.

His mind sparkled with Seis's analytical brilliance.

And from Odin, he inherited a darker talent.

"Who's our target here?"

They stood before an L-1 colony medical facility.

"Kid, don't stick your nose in your parent's work."

"Parent? I don't have any parents."

"This parent-child act is our contract. If you want to eat."

The boy served as convenient cover for his work.

"...Understood."

Even for those "ready to die," hunger persists.

Though the boy believed he "had nothing," he still "had life."

His mind might crave oblivion, but his body demanded survival.

"Survival" meant feeding on others' deaths.

Whether consuming flesh or plant, life must end for life to continue.

The longer one exists, the heavier this burden grows.

Humans cannot maintain purity.

He rejected such idealistic delusions.

Only the immediate state of mind matters.

This was Odin's terrorist philosophy, passed down like poison honey.

The Khushrenada brothers arrived at the same facility to claim their father Hundert's remains. "Colony Flu" had claimed him—a new strain that mocked existing vaccines.

"He was hollow from the start... his death changes nothing."

Vingt's words carried arctic chill.

"If this is karma for Mother's treatment, it's overdue."

"No need to flog a corpse..."

"Though you're silent, Brother, surely you agree."

"Brother" now, no longer "big brother."

Treize stayed silent, knowing his actions that day had frozen something in Vingt's soul.

"Will you visit Mother?"

"A rebellion's broken out in a nearby colony. I'll go after handling that."

"Still their convenient tool... Isn't it time you claimed your place in history?"

"This role suits me better."

Treize had left Lake Victoria's halls. Now he roamed between Alliance training facilities, teaching mobile suit mastery to fresh recruits. When coups, conflicts, or riots erupted nearby, the military called him to the front lines.

History would record these as minor rebellion suppressions. Like Mogadishu before, Treize simply executed his missions, neither championing causes nor questioning orders.

This mission followed the pattern. Rebels had seized five Tragos units to assault an Alliance base. Treize would meet them in a standard Leo, though he missed his white unit's familiar embrace.

Colonial terrorist cells had marked Vingt Khushrenada for assassination. They couldn't ignore the young Romefeller leader who'd made space his enemy. His recent colonial policies had grown increasingly draconian, painting a larger target on his back.

He'd severed inter-colony communications (including personnel and material transfers) and strengthened censorship of all resource transport. Essentially, it was as if the feudal relationship between kingdom and

colony had been recreated between the United Earth Sphere Alliance and the colonies.

The same ruthlessness that had reformed the Foundation and Alliance now turned outward, but only Romefeller reaped the benefits.

Despotic oppression in monarchial garb.

To shatter this system, the monarch must fall first.

This was Odin's assignment.

Yet doubt gnawed at him.

Would assassinating Vingt Khushrenada really change anything?

Heero Yuy's assassination had altered the era's course.

But once history's gears slip, they resist correction.

Real change demands complete dismantling—each gear examined, repaired, replaced.

This requires freezing time itself, but...

Today, the medical facility's director had provided information that Vingt would visit his mother's hospital room.

"That boy's collected too many enemies in his wake..." Odin murmured, positioning himself on the rooftop that commanded a perfect view of the hospital room window. With practiced efficiency, he extracted a gleaming sniper rifle from its hiding place within an inconspicuous viola case.

This rare moment - a high-ranking Romefeller Foundation official separated from his fortress of security personnel - presented their only window of opportunity.

"Escape route secured," came the steady report from his son, their partnership forged in the shadows of their profession.

Movement caught Odin's eye - a young male nurse entering Angelina's room. His instincts prickled.

"Something's not right..."

Inside, Angelina's face softened with recognition that wasn't quite recognition. "My, what a long time it's been..."

"Yes..." the nurse responded quietly.

"Have you been reassigned as my nurse?"

"No... I'm only here to refresh the vase." His hands cradled an elaborate arrangement, its colors dancing like captured light.

"Oh my, it's like an aurora..." Angelina's eyes grew distant, lost in the shimmering curtains of light from her memories.

"A gift from Treize?"

"Yes... ah, no, from Master Vingt."

"Vingt? The name escapes me... who might that be?"

The nurse withdrew in silence, like a ghost that had never been.

On the rooftop, Odin's mind raced. "Angelina Khushrenada's care protocol specifically mandated female nurses only..."

"Another organization's operative?" his seven-year-old partner suggested, voice sharp with professional intuition.

"Our line of work's getting rather crowded these days."

"I'll track him."

"Don't overextend yourself."

"I'll be careful."

The scene shifted as Vingt approached the facility, arms laden with pristine white lilies, their color an echo of arctic ice that both he and Treize had always favored. He'd waited, certain his brother would quickly quell the uprising and hurry to join him.

But Treize's absence stretched on, the military channels only offering the maddeningly vague "operation in progress."

"Nothing for it... though Mother only truly shines in Brother's presence."

Resignation colored his voice as he decided to proceed alone.

His knuckles rapped gently against the door.

"Mother, how are you faring?"

Odin's finger tensed on the trigger, waiting. Vingt needed to step just a bit closer to the window for the perfect shot.

The question echoed in his mind: "Will ending this young man's life truly alter the course of history?"

"I'm so glad you came, Treize... Look at these beautiful flowers... Aren't they exquisite? They're from someone called Vingt."

Angelina gestured to the vase beside her pillow. "Please convey my thanks."

"Brother isn't here." Vingt moved to replace the existing arrangement with his lilies.

"Besides, I didn't..."

The explosion shattered the relative peace, transforming the window into a deadly shower of glass, mingling with blood, flesh, and delicate petals.

"Tch, someone else got there first..." Odin muttered, stowing his rifle as his communicator vibrated.

His son's voice came through, trembling, "...Sorry, my mistake."

"Time to move, now!"

The external spiral staircase leading from the rooftop revealed a small figure, a child assassin, frozen in place, pistol still raised.

Odin's hand found the boy's head, gentle despite everything. "The bastard took his mother with him... It shouldn't have happened that way."

It was like watching his own past unfold.

"If I'd acted faster... his mother would still be alive." The boy's voice struggled for composure.

"Don't carry that weight."

Odin carefully extracted the smoking weapon from his son's grip.

"The first one always haunts us... It gets easier after that."

"The contract payment is ours, then."

"Yeah..."

Below them lay the male nurse, a precise headshot marking the boy's first kill.

(I warned him not to push too hard...)

(If only I could have left this life behind before it came to this...)

(The burden was too heavy...)

(Forgive me, Aoi...)

These thoughts shadowed father and son as they melted away from the facility, leaving chaos in their wake.



The news reached Treize in the aftermath of his victory, a triumph achieved, as always, without a single casualty. This had been his signature: overwhelming force that subdued rather than destroyed. Indeed, Treize had never directly taken a life in battle.

"Can this... can this truly be real...?"

His brother's death cut deeper than his mother's. Treize had seen in Vingt a brilliant architect of the future, his talents perfectly suited to guide the next era. More than that, he had admired his brother's pure heart - the gentle soul who continued to love their mother with unflinching devotion.

The security briefing revealed a bitter truth: the young nurse wasn't affiliated with any resistance group. Instead, driven by rage at Vingt's colonial suppression and memories of past violence, he had offered himself to the terrorists as an instrument of vengeance.

"So that's what drove this tragedy..."

Regret crashed over Treize in waves.

For the first time in his life, he wept openly, shoulders shaking with the weight of his responsibility. Vingt's harsh colonial policies had escalated after receiving orders to deploy the Bulge Cannon. By keeping his own hands unsullied, Treize had unwittingly set this catastrophe in motion.

He who had remained stoic through countless hardships now found himself undone by grief. The cost had been unbearable.

"Angelina Yuy."

"Vingt Khushrenada."

These names became his mantra, carved into memory. With their weight came a solemn vow - never again would he hesitate to bloody his own hands.

"Even if such actions freeze time itself, even knowing they'll turn back the clock - I'll embrace that burden!"

In the years that followed, until assuming the mantle of OZ Supreme Commander in AC-193, Treize withdrew from the spotlight, content to serve as an instructor. For eight years, until his fateful defeat by Chang Wufei in AC-195, he carried with him the names of every precious life sacrificed in his name.

But this wasn't mere remembrance - it was closer to a spiritual penance, each name etched like a prayer into his soul.

This period likely marked the beginning of Treize's self-doubt. One might trace to these dark days the seeds of his transformation - his evolution from potential tyrant to a man who would choose to become a beautiful, self-sacrificing loser rather than a hollow victor ruling through oppression alone. Though he kept these thoughts private until the end, they shaped his path.

But one thing remained certain -

During this time, Treize carried the crushing weight of "atonement." Perhaps this explained why he couldn't permit himself the escape of suicide or a reckless death in combat.

The bitter irony haunted him - perhaps it should have been Vingt, not himself, who could have brought genuine peace to their chaotic age.

From that moment forward, Treize seemingly dedicated himself to fulfilling his mother Angelina's vision - "obtaining both Earth and space" - while bearing the heavy cross of his "atonement."

MC-0022 NEXT WINTER

The virtual interface dissolved as I removed my visor. Though Treize's file had concluded, its weight lingered.

The next dossier belonged to Zechs Merquise - or rather, Milliardo Peacecraft - but my attention drifted back to a creative work of Treize's from AC 187. With a few mental commands, I recalled the poem titled "Dazzling Light" to my display.

Beyond the darkness, I saw a point of light
Towards that light, I ran
Simply, earnestly ran
Ran in a frenzy

As I kept running
As if emerging from a tunnel
I plunged into a world of dazzling light
It was a world filled with fulfillment

Is this what I seek?
What I had been seeking?

No, that's not it!
I wasn't seeking rest
This wasn't the heart I wanted

I look back
There is the exit
Of the dark tunnel I passed through

What I sought wasn't the result
The process itself was important

If so
My salvation
Was within that pitch-black darkness
The meaning was in the continuous running

So I ask myself
Why
Did I keep running?

AC187 sommer TK

The poem's resonance hung in the air, but before I could contemplate its depths, an urgent alert pierced the silence.

"This is Doktor T... North Polar Base, respond."

I established the connection swiftly.

"North Polar Base here, Doktor T, go ahead."

Through the static-laden holo-monitor, a scholarly figure appeared - thin-faced, distinguished by long bangs, his usual stoic expression intact despite the urgency in his voice. The Martian sandstorms wreaked havoc with our communications, distorting the image.

"Tell Master Chang... The young Winner lady has stolen Prometheus."

"Impossible!" Master Chang's voice thundered behind me.

"How could such negligence occur?"

"I accept full responsibility!"

A silver-haired gentleman interjected, his blue-green eyes still vibrant despite his years. "I never anticipated Katerine would take such drastic action. The fault lies with my judgment."

"Evidently," Master Chang's response cut like ice.

The long-banged scholar matched his tone but tempered it with understanding.



"The young lady simply proved more resourceful than anticipated... Further blame serves no purpose."

"I've dispatched No Name in pursuit... Can we rely on intervention from your end?"

"You're suggesting we terminate Professor W's sister."

"An unfortunate necessity... perhaps I bear responsibility..."

"Looks like we're up." Duo Maxwell's braid swung as he turned. "Ready, bossman?" he addressed Heero Yuy.

"Where's Snow White?"

"With this one's Warlock."

Father Maxwell answered for his son.

I began rising from my station, mind already shifting to emergency protocols.

"Stay put..." The priest's firm hands guided me back to my seat.

"But-!"

"Those files still need your attention, don't they?"

His smile carried hidden meaning as he squeezed my shoulder.

"The next dossier on Zechs - it's the exact data set used for Relena Peacecraft's revival from cryogenic sleep..."

"Relena Peacecraft?"

"Had a hell of a time hacking it."

The priest's expression held a touch of boyish pride.

"The princess we remember was considerably more rational."

"But something changed..."

"They suspect it's because they used only that file for her revival."

A mischievous glint sparked in the priest's eyes.

"Well? Finding this a bit more compelling now?"

To be continued in Vol.03

April 2011 Gundam Ace
CD Script

FATHER: She really is the spitting image of her mother...
So she's Sally's daughter, huh?

DUO: How long you gonna keep that thing pointed at us?
Got a death wish or something?

FATHER: I am Father Maxwell...
Father Maxwell, who runs but never hides, and never lies.
And this surly kid here is my son, Duo.

DUO: Lucky you.
Might live a bit longer now.

FATHER: By the way, you did bring those three files, right? We'll
need those three preludes to awaken our Princess
Aurora.

FATHER: The real concern is his condition upon awakening from
the cryogenic capsule... Based on previous artificial
hibernation awakening patterns, there's an 80% chance
of abnormal neuron secretion in the hippocampus.
In other words, there's a possibility that stored memories
could be reset.
If we were to awaken Princess Aurora as is, his body
would be the same as before, but his mind could
potentially be like that of a newborn.

DUO: Hey, Father Crapswell, where's my partner?

FATHER: I apologize for his poor manners.

It's my fault for raising him alone since his mother passed.

FATHER: These files... You could call it a history book, or a
biography. Basically, it's all past events processed by a
special program called 'ZERO' and stored in this chip.

FATHER: It would have been possible to include all of human
history, but if we did that, Princess Aurora would become
some kind of omniscient being.
On the other hand, recent events alone would be
useless. What's necessary for his personality formation is
the AC calendar, not the Mars calendar...
And it's not the sanitized version you'd find in textbooks.

What matters is the underground history that we knew as kids.

DUO:

Finally!

DUO:

(Monologue) I'm counting on you, bro!

FATHER:

Hey there, Heero! You haven't changed a bit!

HEERO:

Neither have you, Duo...

HEERO:

(Narration) I've been lost ever since the day I was born.

I have nothing.

Space took everything from me.

My parents, my toy Leo...

And now, I am no one.

The first man I killed was a rival terrorist.

The young leader of the Romefeller Foundation, Vingt Khushrenada, and his mother Angelina were assassinated by that man's bomb.

I could have killed him before he carried it out.

But I failed.

My heart was too weak.

My hesitation caused their deaths.

"Don't carry that weight. The first one always haunts us...

It gets easier after that."

That's what Odin said.

How many lives have I taken since then?

I got used to it, but it never got easier.

Aware of my heart's weakness, I needed 'deliberate resolve' to overcome the 'sin of killing.'

I wandered through various colonies with a man named Odin Lowe, who worked as a freelance sniper.

Everything I needed to survive, I learned from Odin.

Even how to live by one's emotions.

Even after Odin died and Doctor J took me in, my heart found no peace.

The deaths of an innocent girl and her puppy were also the result of my misjudgment.

Even after taking the codename Heero Yuy and landing on Earth as a Gundam pilot, I continued carrying out miserable missions.

Deceived many times, betrayed many times.

The more I tried to live true to myself, the more others became unhappy.
Until I met Relena Darlian, I had never truly been myself.
Life is cheap, especially mine...
But this is the only way I can live.
The battle became fierce, and before I knew it, I had made protecting Relena my mission.
I couldn't stand the weak.
They were always nervous about being attacked next.
They couldn't trust anybody and never had their own opinion. I couldn't tolerate those people.
Milliardo Peacecraft said "Strong people make them that way."
But that's wrong.
There are no strong ones anywhere.
All of humanity is weak.
Without doubt, I was weak and defeated.
There were no victors anywhere.
And I have resolved to continue living in such an era.
After Colony 197. That was the final battle.
The rebellion started by Mariemeia Khushrenada was an invitation to turn temporary peace into an endless waltz.
"Her belief that peace is attained by throwing away weapons and confining soldiers is wrong!"
That's what Chang WuFei, another Gundam pilot, said.
Indeed, peace built on sacrifice cannot be called right.
While not wrong, we had already sacrificed many lives.
Someday, an era will come when people like us won't be needed.
Peace isn't something given by others.
The day will surely come when people transform from weak ones who fear war into strong ones who desire peace.
This world needs people worthy of freedom and peace.
We must believe in that.
I still have nothing.
But I want to hold onto hope.
Humanity will surely realize it.
That they are never powerless...

HEERO: I've killed Mariemaia...

I will never kill anyone ever again...

I don't... have to anymore.

DUO: Hey, hey! Crapswell, this isn't what we agreed to!

FATHER: Keep quiet!

DUO: How can I stay quiet about this?!

HEERO: Hey Duo, what's with that noisy malformed abomination?

FATHER: He's my son.

HEERO: You son? That explains it.

FATHER: Haha, right? Hey, what's that supposed to mean?

HEERO: The malformation is hereditary. Nothing more to it.

FATHER: Now listen here...

HEERO: More importantly, brief me on the current situation.

DUO: Take a look at the monitor. We're going to kill her!

HEERO: Is this... Darlian? Or Peacecraft?

DUO: Peacecraft, duh! Relena Peacecraft!

HEERO: Is his a mission?

FATHER: **(with a deep sigh)** It's a mission.

HEERO: Understood. I will kill Relena Peacecraft.

DUO: Let's go, bossman.

HEERO: Where's my Snow White?

FATHER: With this one's Warlock.

HEERO: Roger that. Moving out.

Afterword

Let's set aside my own matters for a moment. I've always thought that human imagination is truly a staggering, awe-inspiring force.

Among that boundless capacity for creativity, I think the Japanese brand of imagination is particularly remarkable. Consider their language, their written expression—an evolution so distinct, so Galápagos-like in its isolation from other cultures, that it seems to have attained a state of completion all its own, don't you agree?

In the Meiji era, when the style unifying spoken and written language first emerged in novels, readers faced texts that were sometimes so brief they might seem under-expressive, and at other times so complex and difficult that they bordered on the verbose. Yet despite this, I'm convinced those readers clearly pictured the scenes and empathized deeply with the characters, moved to the core by what they read. And that tradition—the way of shaping stories into novels—endures to this day, which I find genuinely wonderful.

Postwar, thanks to the narrative grammar Osamu Tezuka pioneered in manga, readers could imagine dynamic "movement" expressed entirely through static images. Recent studies reveal that this kind of representation wouldn't have been possible without the Japanese language. And what followed, the anime culture (forgive me for stating this so bluntly, but it is my profession), also relies on Japanese. When expressing elements like "ma" (the subtle interplay of tempo and rhythm) or "voices" in scripts, only Japanese can adequately spark the storyboard artist's imagination, enabling them to visualize the resulting scenes. This point has now been proven.

In fact, that's precisely the difference between writing scripts for live-action dramas or films and writing scripts for anime.

Some might be furious and ask, "Who do you think you are, acting all high and mighty in a light novel's afterword?" But the rules I've established with my readers depend on that magnificent imagination—so much so that I'd even call it "wild fantasy" if I could—that conjures these vivid images. I'm aware that it might be extraneous, yet I still feel compelled to mention it here.

I don't expect you to understand. I just want you to feel it.

And I am certain that what you're experiencing right now can only be described as a uniquely modern kind of "floating sensation," "tension," and "excitement."

You're free to value only the logical "conclusion," but if you do that, I can't help feeling you'll lose the "imagination," "daydreams," "fantasies," "guesswork," and "speculation" that make the ongoing reading experience so profoundly enjoyable.

Those who watched Mobile Suit Gundam Wing on TV over fifteen years ago, in real time, undoubtedly savored it through exactly this sense of anticipation.

At that time, I was striving for scripts so thrilling that no one could predict what lay ahead—scripts that got your heart pounding.

Today, I write works like this novel to recreate that very feeling.

So, perhaps it's worth trying to read this as if you were a film director or producer deciding how to bring the visuals to life, or as an actor contemplating how to step into a role. Wouldn't that be an interesting approach?

Since there's still time, I invite younger readers who didn't experience "Gundam W" in real time, or those who, by some fluke, purchased and read this book without any prior exposure to Wing, to pick up the continuation being serialized in Gundam Ace. If you send in your impressions along with the questionnaire, I'll be thrilled—and I'll be able to respond more actively, guided by your feedback.

If I may be a bit demanding, I'd like to give preference to analog over digital means. In other words, postcards or letters rather than the internet would be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Now then, as I promised in the G-SELECTION liner notes, let me share some behind-the-scenes stories about the voice actors of Gundam W.

Hikaru Midorikawa's voice, in his role as Heero Yuy, has this mesmerizing warmth shimmering beneath the cool surface. I believe his gorgeous voice carries both poetic and literary undertones—there's a delicate intelligence and sensitivity infused within it. If you read the prologue of Volume 1, you'll notice that Heero, without permission, endlessly recites Duo's name in a long monologue. That's the very piece used at the end of Episode 18 in the main series.

The origin of that line lies in the storyboard stage, where Director Masashi Ikeda suddenly wrote it in. Its sheer brilliance was worth more than gold, and I believe that style and wording is the perfect choice to convey the world of Gundam W. Trying to make that voice my own, I copied it out, mulled it over, and attempted to distill it into this novel. It might have ended up a bit awkward to read—my apologies.

There's a famous story involving Midorikawa from that time.

In Episode 11 of the main series, Midorikawa performed the title call "The Whereabouts of Happiness." Yet Heero doesn't appear at all in that episode. After all, in the previous one, Heero pressed the self-destruct switch. In the script, he was supposed to moan "U... uuh..." but due to time constraints, that scene was cut. Even so, he stayed until the final part of the recording, and with his usual warm smile, said "Great work, everyone" before departing. He's truly a wonderful person.

But treating an actor like this is incredibly disrespectful. I truly feel sorry about it.

What's worse, I had committed a similar blunder involving Midorikawa before.

In the 1992 series Dragon Ball Z, Midorikawa played Android 16.

Originally, the character was nearly mute, but I wrote "No. 16" in the character list anyway. That made it onto the dubbing script, summoning Midorikawa despite having only "..." as dialogue. He didn't get to say a single word, and I don't believe his name even made it into the ending credits.

To make the same mistake twice (!) is enough to have "incompetent" slapped on one's forehead.

Even so, Midorikawa remembered me.

When we reunited at the 1997 wrap party for Slayers TRY (where I was a lazy scriptwriter who only wrote one episode, though it turned out interesting thanks to director Mizushima Seiji, who later directed Mobile Suit Gundam 00), I met him again, and he greeted me warmly, striking up an amiable conversation. I had a delightful time. He really is a wonderful human being.

As for Toshihiko Seki, who played Duo, I've known him forever. Though there's barely any official record, back in 1988, Asahi Sonorama Bunko released a drama cassette of Kazue Aki's Operation MM series, the first installment being "The Planet of the White Demon." Seki played the main character, Mark, and I, a raw newbie then, wrote the script.

We've worked together on countless titles—Ranma 1/2, "Haou Taikei Ryu Knight," Saiyuki, NARUTO, Inuyasha, and so many more. Just the other day, I finally had the chance to hand him an unopened copy of that original cassette.

Even after all this time, he accepted it with joy, which shows just how genuinely kind he is.

It might be pointless to explain something readers can't easily obtain, but that cassette features terms like Operation MM and Battleship Chanfei, names somewhat reminiscent of Gundam W.

Ah, there was still so much I wanted to write about, but unfortunately, I'll have to save it for next time.

Mobile Suit Gundam Wing: Frozen Teardrop

Vol.02 Rondo of Redemption (Part.02)

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