

MOBILESUIT GUNDAM

SILHOUETTE FORMULA 91

IN U.C.0123



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Chapter 1

Encounter

U.C.0123.02, the far side of the moon.

A small convoy of battered-looking ships moved steadily near a sector of space known as the Zebra Zone, their presence all but invisible. The AE logo for Anaheim Electronics could be seen emblazoned on the fleet of larger transport ships, standing out in stark contrast to their surroundings.

Three months had already passed since this small convoy of ships started showing up in this dark sector.

"Captain, we're approaching the designated testing grounds in the Zebra Zone," said the navigator.

"Any signs of other ships in the area?" the captain asked.

"Blips on the screen indicate there's nothing but debris and remnants of an abandoned colony, sir. No thermal or Minovsky signatures detected," the navigator reported.

"Excellent. Purge our camouflage. Prepare to commence testing."

The fleet spreads out, with mobile suit launch catapults extending from either of the larger transports. Secret testing of mobile suits by Anaheim's mobile suit evaluation ship *Braywood* was underway.

"Bow ramp deployed!"

"Catapult pressure set for emergency launch!"

"Archive team, report to the starboard observation deck."

A flurry of various comms went up.

Among them was a conversation between Ensign Tokio D. Randall, pilot of the RXF-91, who had just settled into his launch position, and the suit's chief engineer Albert Elsener.

"Randall, my boy, this testing will be over in a week or so. Now is where we really get to push the boundaries," Elsener said.

"So you're fine with me going full throttle, Chief?"

"Hahaha, just take it easy, Ensign. The suit belongs to Anaheim, not the military. So try not to get too wild."

"I hear you," he said, "But I doubt Kevin will let that slide. Apparently, he's gunning to take down the Silhouette Gundam."

"I'm 'apparently' doing that? What's that supposed to mean?" interjected Kevin Forrest, the pilot of the RGM-111 Hardygun, who was waiting outside the ship. Being an exclusive test pilot for Anaheim rather than a soldier, Kevin saw little value in the adoration and praise of the RXF-91.

"Randall, you know this Heavygun is also a testbed for the next round of mass-production mobile suits, right? With the testing I've done on it, it has the maneuverability and thrust to surpass even the current F-71 G-Cannon. Either way, it beats me whether it's a Gundam-type or whatnot, but I'm not gonna lose to a suit with such unknown characteristics."

Kevin had a deep-seated hostility towards the RXF-91, also known as the Silhouette G. Following the development of the RGM-109 Heavygun, the new 15-meter class mobile suits, commonly known as miniaturized mobile suits, were becoming something of a monopoly for the SNRI military branch office, a position that Anaheim Electronics once held.

The RXF-91 was manufactured as a sort of coup de grace against SNRI and was proposed to the military. However, since the prototype was based on the latest data from a "project" obtained through espionage, Kevin had no attachment to the suit as one of his company's units.

Of course, there was no denying he also had a sense of rivalry with Tokio, despite him being a soldier.

"Let it go, Kevin. Quit yer yapping and get to your attack position! I swear you're all talk and are always sloppy with your attacks..." grumbled the voice of Karl Spitz, the experimental unit test pilot commander.

It was a repetition of an all too familiar scene and conversation among them over the past three months. With testing coming to an end only a week away, everyone was planning for the long vacation that would follow.

But they weren't the only ones conducting operational tests. Across the Zebra Zone, in a sector on the opposite side, another fleet was also traveling in secrecy. Both of their testing courses just happened to intersect at the Zebra Zone. But who was the other fleet?

Shortly after Tokio was launched from the *Braywood's* catapult, Kevin's frantic voice crackled over the comms.

"Oh, what the?!"

"What's wrong, Kevin?"

"R-Randall... T-that was a blood-red mobile suit!" Kevin stammered.

"What?! What model is it--" Tokio pressed.

"A Zaku?!"

It was no wonder Kevin mistook the sudden appearance of the crimson mobile suit as an MS-06 Zaku, a famous suit from the One Year War.

"Are the Oldsmobile in this sector?!"

Fate had brought them together, and tragedy was about to strike.

Maurice O'Barry, a young pilot from the other fleet, the Crossbone Vanguard, was piloting the crimson De'nan Zon. His cover had been blown. The moment of fear and desperation of being found out caused him to unleash a barrage of bullets at Kevin's Hardygun.

Tokio immediately returned fire. His gun wasn't equipped for actual combat, of course, seeing as they were conducting mock battles, but it definitely elicited a response.

Upon impact, the monoeye of the crimson mobile suit shattered, exposing twin-eyed main cameras beneath them, much to his surprise.

"Dual eyes... So the monoeye was just a disguise to conceal the suit's true features? Plus, that spear-like weapon it's wielding, could they be the rumored pirates known as the Crossbone Vanguard?"

Just as the name Crossbone Vanguard flitted through Tokio's mind, the frame of his RXF-91 was jolted by a glancing blow. The red mobile suit had unleashed dummy rounds, and they had found their mark. At the same time, with a belch from its main thrusters, the suit rocketed away from the pure white mobile frame. Despite that, both suits were scarred with evidence of their mutual encounter with an unknown foe.

The tension was palpable as the crew reconvened to debrief Tokio and Kevin upon their return.

"Tokio, did you catch sight of them?" asked Karl, cutting to the chase.

"Kevin's camera captured them. Here."

"What the devil is that? It's got some kind of spear or something," he scoffed, turning towards Albert Elsener, the chief engineer of Anaheim's evaluation unit.

"What indeed, Spitzzy. Look at this damage."

"Here, take a look at this. Have you seen anything like this on any of SNRI's new models? As far as I can tell, I don't think this is former Neo Zeon nor Federation."

Everyone in the room was now fixated on the camera's playback screen, studying it intently. And then, in her usual cool and collected tone, Iris Orlando, the assistant engineer known as the "Ice Doll," began her analysis.

"It looks like the Dessa Type, the small mobile suit presented by Buffo Aerodynamics back in 0108. But that was supposed to be a worker suit."

"Worker suit? Are you kidding me? That thing nearly impaled me! It's a full-on battle machine!" Kevin exclaimed, still in disbelief.

As a soldier, Tokio had heard rumors surrounding Buffo Concern's worker mobile suits being repurposed as weapons for the Crossbone Vanguard - the private army of the Ronah family. But Kevin, being a civilian, couldn't be clued into this fact.

"I picked up on that as well while examining the damage on the Hardygun, but there is a possibility that the spear-like equipment is only for mock battles."

"Care to elaborate, Orlando?"

"Basically, the damage is far too light to have been hit by these extravagant spears."

"So, if I understand correctly, they were experimenting with new mobile suits, right Iris?"

"Precisely, Randall. And if they were testing one, it's safe to assume they would also have cameras on board."

"Are you suggesting they captured footage of the Silhouette G?" Randall asked, his curiosity piqued.

Iris' assumption was correct.

Just as Tokio and the others were analyzing the incident, on the other side of the Zebra Zone, the Crossbone Vanguard's Evaluation Unit "Dark Tiger," led by Lieutenant Shelf Sheffield, was doing the same. As the commander, he viewed the situation with grave importance and promptly declared the

suspension of all operational testing. He then shifted the unit's focus to a mission of destroying the remaining *Braywood* mobile suit forces to safeguard their clandestine existence.

"Whoever they are, we can't let them escape from here. The existence of our Crossbone Vanguard cannot be made known to the world just yet. I swear on this, on my name as the Flame Tiger!"

Chapter 2

Diversion

The development staff at Anaheim Electronics were confident that the RXF-91, also known as "Silhouette G," had data specifications that were on par with or even superior to SNRI's F91.

[F91]

Head Height: 15.2m

Base Weight: 7.8t

Full Weight: 19.9t

Generator Output: 4250kW

Thruster Propulsion: 15530kg x 4, 1380kg x 6

Apogee Motors: 51 (8)

[RXF-91]

Head Height: 15.4m

Base Weight: 8.5t

Full Weight: 21.7t

Generator Output: 4570kW

Thruster Propulsion: 31460 x 2, 19920kg x 1, 4620 kg x 2

Apogee Motors: 50 (6)

The F-series, also known as the Formula series, had its origins in a proposal by the Strategic Naval Research Institute (SNRI) to the Federation Assembly in UC 0102. The proposal (titled "Recommendations on the Development of Miniaturized Mobile Suits") aimed to develop miniaturized mobile suits in order to reduce the exorbitant costs of their development and redirect the bloated military budget towards colony reconstruction following Char's Rebellion. However, Anaheim Electronics, the company that held a monopoly on the development of high-performance mobile suits, did not immediately accept this proposal.

Instead of investing in mobile suit development, Anaheim focused on the production of colony materials, space vessels, and small-scale contracts that brought immediate profits. Additionally, the temporary pacification of the anti-Earth Federation movements slowed down the development of new mobile suits. The RGM-89 Jegan's upgrade was sufficient as the mainstay mobile suits

for the Federation Forces. Although the exceptional versatility of the Jegan should be acknowledged, it further delayed Anaheim's development of miniaturized mobile suits.

It took Anaheim five years from the time they began developing small-sized mobile suit for the completion of the RGM-109 Heavygun's first prototype, which should have been the vanguard of the next-generation mobile suits. In the meantime, Buffo Concern completed their small worker mobile suit dubbed the "Dessa Type" using its proprietary technology. Additionally, SNRI, dissatisfied with the performance of the RGM-109, obtained approval from the Federation Assembly to begin its own development and completed a prototype machine, the F90, targeting it as the next mainstay mobile suit in 0111.

In the following year's military evaluation, the F90 defeated Anaheim's competing prototype, the MSA-0120, and won adoption.

However, Anaheim's executives still did not take the situation seriously at that time. This was because they supplied the nuclear fusion reactors, which were the main engine of mobile suits, and both Buffo and SNRI were no exception. It wasn't until around the time when the procurement of the F71C Cannon, a support mobile suit, began in 0115 that AE finally began to feel the pressure. This was due to the information that the completion of F91, which could be called the culmination of the F series' performance, was imminent. On the societal front, the movements of the Ronah family, and the repeated piracy using old-type mobile suits, had once again begun to create a sense of unrest and the possibility of war.

It was inevitable that the development of miniaturized mobile suits would determine the fate of Anaheim Electronics. However, any new machine had to exceed the performance of the F91. Fortunately for AE, the F91 experienced setbacks with the bio-computer adjustments, and full-scale operational testing was stalled. Compounding this, it proved quite easy to infiltrate within the ranks of SNRI for industrial espionage, despite the semi-governmental, semi-private collection of agencies being a strategic research institute of the Federation Forces.

As a result of the information obtained through illegal means, the AE-made F91, known as the "RXF-91," was rolled out in August of UC 0122. Subsequently, in November of the same year, operational testing began in space near the "Zebra Zone" on the far side of the moon. Meanwhile, SNRI had relocated the F91 to its Frontier Side, where the bio-computer development division was located, due to flaws in the head computer replacement. At the same time, the F91 and its silhouette, the "RXF-91," were about to take flight...

Comparing the "F91" and the "RXF-91" based solely on appearance and data specifications, it would be difficult to find any differences. However, the "RXF-91" had a weakness in that it was ultimately just a silhouette, and this is where SNRI's technological prowess came into play. They were able to control the propulsion units mounted on the limited space on the mobile suit and could be controlled with the aid of a bio-computer. This system was, in essence, a step above the psycommu, allowing pilots to manipulate the propulsion system much

like they would their own bodies. AE didn't have such advanced computer technology capable of this level of control.

Furthermore, AE only acquired SNRI's fire control system from the F90. The only technology that flowed back to AE was the fire control system, which alone was insufficient to develop a mobile suit that could rival the F91. Even the large-caliber beam cannon mounted on the RGM-111's backpack was made practical only because of this fire control system.

Another problem was that the "RXF-91" wasn't a military prototype but an in-house experimental suit for AE. The real focus was on the "RX-91," which would be completed later, so this was merely a stepping stone towards restoring AE's credibility with the military. After the RGM-109 debacle, AE needed to regain the military's trust.

The "RXF-91" had to be developed on a limited budget, so some parts, such as the internal frame, were reused from the RGM-109. Because of the installation of a generator (a fusion reactor) that outputted more than 1,000 kW, there was a weakness in its durability against excessive output. Of course, the crew of the *Braywood* knew that this was an acceptable weakness for an experimental machine, and not one of them imagined that this machine would ever be deployed in actual combat.

The captain of the *Braywood*, Aitor Horst, tried to send a communication to Anaheim headquarters alerting them of the situation, but it was already too late. The Dark Tiger team had completed their dispersion of Minovsky particles around the Zebra Zone.

"Karl, it would be wise to consider this the precursor to a counterattack from the red MS we just saw," the Admiral said.

"Admiral, we need to prepare for battle immediately! If necessary, I too can pilot a mobile suit..." replied Karl Spitz, who had fought as a Neo Zeon mobile suit pilot during the events of the Gryps War.

Aitor Horst, on the other hand, was only a former Federation Forces Captain, and his experience was that of a minesweeper ship captain at best. Although he was the superior officer in terms of his position, Karl always had the feeling that he was superior to him when it came to mobile suits. But in the end, he was just an underdog. At times, it made him feel pitiful to be glorifying him as an 'Admiral' when he was just a captain.

"Hold on, Spitz. Both the RXF-91 and the Hardygun are experimental suits. We can't risk them in actual combat."

Chief Engineer Eisner's unease about the upcoming battle was evident, but Orlando was quick to offer a solution.

"Chief, neither the RXF-91 nor the RGM-111 are far from fragile machines. They can be equipped with combat-ready gear in less than five minutes."

"Orlando, that may be true for the RGM-111, but there's only one RXF-91 in existence at Anaheim. If it gets heavily damaged in a fight with these pirates, how are we going to explain it to the folks at headquarters?"

Ensign Randall felt helpless as he listened to the conversation between Chief Engineer Eisner and Iris Orlando.

"If it's just a test, I can handle it, but if it's actual combat, it's my job. So if you entrust me with this RXF-91, I'll definitely return it without a scratch."

Eisner hesitated, "Randall, are you sure you can handle it? You don't have that much combat experience yet..."

"Chief Engineer, he can do it... I believe in him," said Iris Orlando.

Iris Orlando's father, William C. Orlando, was also a mobile suit pilot exclusively for Anaheim. Since the late UC 0090s, he had served as a senior test pilot for the company, making significant contributions to the practical testing for the RGM-109 as well as the modifications to the RGM-89 (J, R, and M types). On June 20, UC 0111, he died in an accident during the test of the prototype MSA-120, which aimed to be the next mainstay mobile suit. It happened on his thirty-sixth birthday, and Iris had just turned nine.

"Chief Engineer, is the F71B operational? I feel more comfortable with it than the Hardygun..."

"Commander, after this test, if you go to SNRI..." Iris's sarcasm was sharp, and Karl Spitz's expression became stern.

"Randall, I'll let you take the lead. Show us what a soldier can do! I'll support you from the rear with this F71B... and Kevin, you can sit on the bridge and watch!"

"This is no joke. Even if you don't have any military experience, the enemy is just a bunch of pirates, aren't they? Besides, even if they call it a new model, it's just a mobile suit from Buffo."

"Enough with the chatter... you can do that from the cockpit!"

The three mobile suits, the RXF-91, F71B, and RGM-111, raced towards the launch catapult from the hanger, ready for battle. As they rocketed off into the dark void, Iris monitored their progress from the bridge, fingers flying over here keyboard.

"From OMS723986 to IW C-115600... Wait, the output of the D Vernier exceeds 300kW... This is bad. There's a crack in the frame supporting the generator and cockpit block..."

"In that case, it could self-destruct..."

"I'll try to figure out the adjustment data before we receive the transmission from Tokio..."

Under the influence of Minovsky particles, longer wavelength waves are more susceptible to interference than ultra-microwaves. Laser detectors are effective for detecting small targets and measuring distances for shooting.

"It looks like our little pirate friends are here. Cut off comms and get into combat formation. Kevin and I will wait here, while Randall performs an upward inversion and attacks the enemy with a hit and fade. Got it?!"

Commander Karl's booming voice echoed inside the cockpit of the RXF-91 through their contact communication.

"Copy that!"

Using the AMBAC functions to control the two VSBR (Variable Speed Beam Rifle) protruding from its back, and the RXF-91 executed a smooth inversion.

As it disappeared from Kevin and Karl's view, four crimson-colored mobile suits emerged.

"Commander, the one from earlier is here too, but the rest are all different in form. When did Buffo... Forget that. They're all so flashy with their red bodies..."

"Kevin, as always, you talk way too much."

In combat under the influence of Minovsky particles, the visuals on a panoramic monitor captured by the main camera have a significant impact compared to HUD and CRT displays. It's as if the world has become an aerial battle with reciprocating aircraft during World War II. But the more flashy the color of the aircraft, the more it serves as a means to identify allies, similar to biplanes in World War I.

The formation was led by Lieutenant Shelf Sheffield's XM-05B Berga-Barus, with one XM-01 Den'an Zon and two XM-02 Den'an Gei. Of course, the Den'an Zon's pilot was none other than Morris O'Barry, whom they had encountered earlier.

Suddenly, the right arm of the Den'an Gei on the left flank exploded. The attacking RXF-91 quickly evaded.

"Kevin, now! Fire the beam cannon!"

The beam cannons of the RGM-111 and F71B flashed. One more Den'an Gei suffered minor damage. It disappeared with the Den'an Gei that lost its right arm.

Ensign O'Barry's Den'an Zon tears after the RXF-91 in a fit of rage, firing off the machine gun mounted in the shot lancer. The pilot was a novice, which meant he would tend to shoot too fast. O'Barry was inexperienced.

However, Tokio was not much better. The RXF-91 had no time to deploy its beam shield and fired the mega machine cannon on its shoulder. The bullets from the cannon tore into the exposed power cables, the weakness of the Den'an Zon, causing it to lose balance and begin to falter. Then the fusion reactor detonated when it was barely visible.

"I did it... but someone died, didn't they... I had no choice... he fired at me... and I did what the commander told me to do!"

Tokio D. Randall was greatly confused by his first shutdown.

The Berga-Barus, which had repositioned itself behind the RXF-91, was rapidly approaching.

Chapter 3

Blockade

"You're so naive, thinking you're a full-fledged pilot with that!" Lieutenant Shelf Sheffield's Berga-Barus closely trailed behind the RXF-91.

The Crossbone Vanguard's model number was assigned by the Federation Forces arbitrarily, similar to the NATO codes used for identifying old Soviet weapons in the 20th century. This Berga-Barus was later registered as "XM-05B" based on *Braywood's* report, as it was determined to be an upgraded version of the Berga-Giros.

At the time of its encounter with the RXF-91, the Berga-Barus was equipped with a prototype high-mobility unit called the "shelf nozzle," which was intended to be used by the Vigna-Ghina, a new model undergoing development and testing. Depending on the results of its operation, the Berga-Barus was planned to become Lieutenant Sheffield's personal unit. Additionally, a similar mobile suit called the Vigna-Zirah, based on a different concept, was undergoing development and would soon be rolled out and deployed to the Dark Tiger team.

Let's compare the performance specifications of the Berga-Barus and the Berga-Giros.

[XM-05 BERGA-GIROS]

Head Height: 15.7m

Base Weight: 9.1t

Full Weight: 22.7t

Armor Material: titanium alloy ceramic composite

Generator Output: 4,790kW

Thruster Propulsion: 21,820kg x 2, 8,950kg x 2, 3,460kg x 2

Apogee Motors: 73

Armaments: shot lancer x 1

heavy machine gun x 4

beam shield x 1

beam saber x 2

[XM-05B BERGA-BARUS]

Head Height: 15.6m

Base Weight: 9.7t

Full Weight: 27.6t

Armor Material: titanium alloy ceramic composite

Generator Output: 5,410kW

Thruster Propulsion: 16,580kg x 2, 9,580 x 4, 8,950kg x 3, 3,180kg x 8

Apogee Motors: 87

Armaments: shot lancer x 1

heavy machine gun x 4

beam shield x 1

beam saber x 2

Although the dimensions and armament were almost the same as the previous model, it was clear that the generator output, thruster power, and the number of apogee motors were far superior. However, Lieutenant Shelf Sheffield was the top ace pilot of the Crossbone Vanguard forces, on par with the Black Vanguard's commander Zabine Chareux. Despite piloting the state-of-the-art RXF-91, the newbie Tokio Randall was no match for him.

"What the hell, this guy is on my ass! Shit, is he trying to avenge the other guy or something? If he wants to take me down, he's got plenty of opportunity!"

It was evident at a glance that there was a difference in skill between the two suits' movements.

"Ice Doll, is there anything we can do?"

Karl Spitz shouted.

"Yeah, stop calling me that! I'm thinking... That's it. Maybe if we use those trim tabs..."

Fortunately, Iris's communication reached the RXF-91 because it wasn't far from the *Braywood*.

"Tokio, listen to me! Can you see the small knobs when you open the lower right box cover?"

"Copy that, Iris. These things?"

"It's a trim tab for balance adjustment and data collection. If you adjust it, the balance will be off, but the output will increase."

"So I can take down that red guy?"

"However, I cannot guarantee it for a long time. The structural material of the aircraft is only as strong as that of a Heavygun. It probably cannot withstand excessive output for more than a minute." Chief Engineer Eisner intervened.

"If we have one minute, he can return to the *Braywood* easily. Match the trim tab to the numbers I'm about to read out now... OMS723986... IW..."

The operation proved successful.

The Dark Tiger Squadron was caught off guard by the RXF-91's revived movements and was temporarily forced to retreat. The *Braywood*, who recovered RXF-91, RGM-111, and F71B, went into hiding in the "Zebra Zone."

Although it was called the Zebra Zone, it was a hazardous sector for ships to traverse. Even now, thirty years after the "Char's Rebellion," remnants of

battleships and mobile suits were still floating in large numbers, posing a risk of grounding. However, it was also a perfect place for political prisoners to hide...

"There's so many hulks of Geara Doga and old Jegan here..." Kevin exclaimed, trailing off in amazement.

"Hey Karl, that's a colony, isn't it?"

A huge, hulking cylinder could be seen hovering into view from the bridge.

"That's an Island 1 type. I can't believe there's a colony from so early in the Universal Century here. Are there people living on it?"

The Island 1 type colony was the first of the early model colonies proposed by Dr. Gerald K. O'Neill, consisting of a spherical living block with a diameter of 510m (a circumference of about 1.6 km) connected to a cylindrical agricultural block about 300m long. Although it is considered a small colony compared to the typical 40 km long cylindrical ones, it is still over five times larger than the *Braywood*.

The *Braywood* docked in the colony's port block. Kevin piloted his RGM-111 for reconnaissance outside of the colony, which had been abandoned and left to ruin.

"Oh, I see lights in the residential area on the opposite side," Kevin's communication came in just as an emergency alarm sounded on the bridge, alerting the crew to a crisis. The crew members became tense.

"Shit, did those space pirates follow us all the way here?" Karl asked as a mobile suit attached to the ship's hull.

Tokio, who was watching on the monitor, said, "It's a Geara Doga. It belonged to the Neo Zeon during the time of Char's Rebellion."

When he heard the term "Neo Zeon," Karl Spitz reacted immediately. That was because his previous job before being hired by Anaheim was as a mobile suit pilot for Neo Zeon.

"Who are you?! People are living in this colony. Unauthorized docking is not allowed," a surprisingly young girl's voice came from the cockpit of the mobile suit.

"We're employees with Anaheim. We apologize, but we would like to request permission to stay for approximately two hours for repairs," the Admiral responded to the girl's hail.

"Fine. However, entry into the residential area is not permitted. If you enter, we will open fire," the girl said, pointing an old Zaku machine gun at the bridge. To the eyes of someone accustomed to small mobile suits, the mobile suit from Char's Rebellion era looked massive. The Geara Doga, painted inconspicuously black, warned them again to leave the colony as soon as possible before moving back towards the residential area.

Following Karl's orders, Kevin returned to the ship, and Tokio followed the mobile suit. They needed to report to the Federation Forces in case it was the headquarters of the Oldsmobile.

"The air is polluted... it's almost like there's a fog. The air filter must be broken," Kevin said.

"Shh, Kevin! Cut comms!" but it was too late. A 9mm round grazed Kevin's head.

"Why did you follow me?" A girl holding an automatic appeared from the valley of a crumbling building.

"You're the one who was on the Geara Doga, right?"

"That's right. This is where we, refugees from Sweetwater, live peacefully. This is not a place for people from the military-industrial complex like you. Or do you want to buy scraps of mobile suits at a high price?"

"Uh..."

Tokio absent-mindedly looked in the direction of the building where the girl had appeared and was captivated by what he saw. There, old-generation mobile suits such as the Geara Doga and Jagd Doga were lined up, haggard as could be.

Chapter 4

Friendly

"Layla, these people aren't enemies. Lower your gun," the voice came from a middle-aged man standing behind Layla.

"I am this girl's father. We used to be soldiers of the former Neo Zeon, but now we live quietly as junk dealers in this remote shoal zone. Please, rest assured."

"Junk dealers, you say?"

Both Tokio and Kevin felt overwhelming relief. In the midst of their perturbation due to the presence of Dark Tiger's squad, if the place they had just stumbled upon had been the Oldsmobile hideout, it would have been the worst possible outcome. Including the Geara Doga that was still operational, all the old mobile suits there were more or less scrap than weapons.

"I have been listening to the communication between my daughter and you all, and I am curious about something. Is there a man named Karl among your crew?"

"T-the old man... He's our commander!" blurted Kevin. Layla couldn't help but laugh at his flustered state, effectively dissipating the tension hanging in the air.

The residential area of the "hidden village," an apt description for the Island Type 1 space colony, was inhabited by just over a hundred people. All of them were ex-Neo Zeon soldiers and their families who lived during Char's Rebellion. They were now living secluded lives, having forgotten their days of battle.

Char's Rebellion was already a 30-year-old event. Those young soldiers who were active on the frontlines were now in their 50s, and the children of that generation were now the ones running this hidden village. Layla Lagiorr, who had warned the *Braywood* piloting the Geara Doga, was also a second-generation ex-Neo Zeon soldier.

21-year-old Tokio Randall knew about "Char's Rebellion" only from history textbooks and the videos shown at the mobile suit pilot training institute. Moreover, mobile suits had undergone major changes during these 30 years.

Tokio and Kevin belonged to a generation where small mobile suits were commonplace.

Two months since the secret operational test of the "SFP" had started, it was a rare moment of rest for the *Braywood* crew. Because of the past friendship between ex-Neo Zeon mobile suit pilot commander Spitz and Layla's father, Adel Lagiorr, the colony residents treated the crew warmly.

In particular, Kevin found himself deeply attracted to Layla, who also seemed to enjoy his cheerful personality. Secretly, Kevin invited Layla to the *Braywood* mobile suit deck.

"This is the new mobile suit that Anaheim Electronics is proud of. It's pretty shiny compared to those old Neo Zeon models, isn't it?"

"But it's rather small," Layla noted. She had grown accustomed to piloting mobile suits since she was a child, but she wasn't aware of the existence of the latest miniaturized mobile suits.

"Mobile suits have been miniaturized as per SNRI's proposal after Char's Rebellion. But, its performance and firepower far exceed the previous larger mobile suits."

Layla, who had been scanning the three mobile suits in the deck, suddenly stopped in front of the RGM-111.

"I think I like this blue and white mobile suit. The red one looks lame and the one marked with '91' on its shoulder seems too pompous for my taste."

"Really!" Kevin exclaimed, jumping in excitement. He was thrilled that Layla complimented his beloved machine, and also seemed to criticize the existence of RXF-91, and Tokio, to whom Kevin always felt inferior.

"Do you really think so... After all, we at Anaheim Electronics were the first to create the small MS. SNRI's mobile suits are no good, isn't it? And this F91 knockoff mobile suit is even more--"

Kevin let slip a little of his true feelings.

"I'd like to ride this mobile suit. Can you please open the cockpit hatch?"

"Oh no, if Ice Doll finds out... Well, whatever."

At the same time, on the bridge, Tokio, Iris, and Karl Spitz were in discussion.

"We have ample supplies, but we can't leave this colony!"

"We only lost one machine to a red mobile suit squad. If they had reinforcements, we would be no match for them."

"That's not true..."

"What are you saying? Who was the one who couldn't shake off the enemy's pursuit without resorting to drastic measures?"

"That's harsh..."

"The junk in this colony is useless."

Karl sighed deeply.

"So, after all, it's impossible for everyone to escape... Wait! We could use that. Ensign Randall, you've trained on small fighters at the academy, right?"

"The FF-4 Toriares, yes."

"I have something to show you. Bring Chief Engineer Eisner here immediately!"

The FF-4 Toriares was a small liaison aircraft that became the prototype for the Core Fighter. However, the Federation's mobile suit pilot training manual was based on the RX-78 Gundam, so this small aircraft's training was included.

Meanwhile, Layla had settled into the cockpit of the RGM-111.

"Wow, it's surprisingly spacious inside compared to how it looks from the outside. Hey, what's this mobile suit called?"

"Its model number is RGM-111, but it's commonly known as the 'Hardygun'."

"Hardygun, huh? Sounds powerful."

Just then, an emergency alarm, shattering the quietude, blared through the ship.

One of the bridge monitors shouted.

"A red mobile suit squad is approaching the harbor block. Five in total."

"So, they've finally come. Ensign Randall, it's time to sortie!"

"Who is that! The manual catapult release mechanism on the mobile suit deck is--"

Suddenly, the RGM-111 burst forth from the *Braywood's* launch catapult.

Karl and Randall, along with the mechanics, hurried towards the deck.

Kevin stood dumbfounded beneath the deck.

"Kevin, what happened?"

"Layla, Layla took off in the Hardygun."

"What?! Were you fooling around on a date on the MS deck, Kevin?"

On the mobile suit deck, the RXF-91 was being serviced and the F71B equipped with experimental options were left behind.

"The Hardygun has the F-Project's fire control codes integrated. If the machine gets stolen and the codes deciphered... that would be the end of this SFP."

Ice Doll looked distraught.

"Iris, I'll teach you that human lives are more important than mobile suits!"

Kevin jumped into the cockpit of the F71B.

"Commander, I'm borrowing the G-Cannon Magna. Ensign Randall, I'll take care of this myself. So, please stand by with the RXF-91!"

Kevin's F71B also took off.

Surrounding the harbor block were a single reconnaissance Ebirhu-S and two assault De'nan-Gei - a three-unit formation. The number reported by the *Braywood's* bridge was an overestimate due to mistaking dummy balloons.

"Layla, are you okay?"

It was Kevin in the F71B. But whether it was due to being in the middle of maintenance, but the twin beam cannon mounted on the right shoulder wouldn't fire.

"What's happening?!"

The reconnaissance Ebiru-S circled behind the F71B. The spear mounted on its right hand pierced through the abdomen of the F71B.

A flash ran through the belly of the F71B, followed by a minor explosion.

"Damn it!"

In front of the RXF91's cockpit hatch, Tokio bit his lip.

Chapter 5

Breakthrough

In the Zebra Zone, the battle between Anaheim Electronics mobile suit test ship *Braywood* and the Dark Tiger squad of the Crossbone Vanguard was becoming increasingly entrenched, drawing in nearby settlements.

In it, the prowess of Layla Ogirr, as a mobile suit pilot, was on par with that of Tokio and Kevin.

Amidst the chaos, Layla deftly shielded her damaged F71B. Operating its vulcan guns with precision, she shot down a Den'an Gei.

"You idiots! Just die already!"

Layla shouted. Her ferocity seemed to push back the retreating XM-02 and XM-03 units.

"That girl's got skill," Iris marveled.

"Priority is Kevin's safety! Get medical here, now!" Tokio urgently commanded the mechanics. The RGM-111, without a guide beacon, pulled the battered F71B into the mobile suit deck, where mechanics rushed to assist.

"The main generator's stable, no risk of explosion," one reported.

"We can't open the cockpit hatch. We'll need to torch our way through," another mechanic said, their voice somber. "The thought of sifting through Kevin's remains... Namu Amida Butsu."

Layla suddenly emerged from the RGM-111. Reacting swiftly, Tokio reached out and grabbed her from behind, trying to halt her advance.

"Don't go..."

"But I must!" Layla's voice echoed across the mobile suit deck, her pained cry filled with determination.

"Hey, Kevin's alive... he's okay."

By a stroke of luck, Kevin was found unharmed. Thanks to the F71 B's generator being repositioned to its back, unlike the F71, a nuclear meltdown was averted. The damaged areas were just the electrical systems and balancer connections. Fortunately, Kevin's unfamiliarity with the F71B prevented him from activating its large beam cannon.

However, he had suffered complex fractures in his right leg and severe chest contusions. It would be months before he could pilot a mobile suit again. Following Iris's recommendation, Layla Ogirr was designated as Anaheim's interim test pilot, stepping into a new role amidst the chaos.

Karl Spitz expressed his doubts aloud, "How can they entrust the latest model from Anaheim to a young girl, just on the word of her father, Adel?" His tone was laced with skepticism, clearly unconvinced by the decision.

"Karl, you might be assigned the RXF-91," the chief engineer, Eisner, said, patting his shoulder.

"And what about Ensign Tokio?"

"We need to send Ensign Randall to Von Braun."

"How will he get there?"

"The *Braywood* has a prototype Core Fighter for communication purposes. You know that, right?"

"Iris, are you really asking him to break through the pirate blockade in that?"

"The Ensign can do it!"

The Dark Tiger squad positioned their space cruiser, the Zamouth Zena - a sister ship to the Zamouth Jeth, equipped with mobile suit catapults - 20,000 clicks from the old colony where the *Braywood* was holed up. They had sustained considerable damage: one each of the XM-01 Den'an Gei and XM-02 Den'an Zon were lost, with two more Den'an Zon slightly damaged. Now, they could only operate one each of XM-01, XM-02, XM-03, and the squadron leader's XM-05B Berga Balus. Out of the eight mobile suits on board, they had lost half.

"Can you believe this? All this over an unarmed civilian ship. It's not even a fleet battle, and yet, look at our losses..." Lieutenant Sheffield, his agitation surpassing his usual composure, vented his frustration.

"And you're saying it's all because of that white mobile suit - the legendary Gundam!" said a pilot who had just returned.

"Lieutenant, our unit has also shot down an improved F71 model."

"That was only one machine! Furthermore, according to reports, the Gundam was not even present during that battle..."

"Well..."

"If our Crossbone Vanguard mobile suits are inferior to Federation machines like this, the grand ceremony for the founding of Cosmo Babylonian won't be successful. Do we have to unveil that new model?"

"With all due respect, I heard that the XM-07 was prepared for someone with the bloodline of the Ronah family."

"Did that Zabine guy say that...?"

In contrast to the red Dark Tiger mobile suit squadron was the ace squad comprised of black mobile suits led by Lieutenant Zabine Chareux - the Black Vanguard.

Sheffield and Zabine had been rivals yet the closest of friends since their days at the Crossbone Vanguard's military academy.

"Captain Gilles Krueger didn't even hand over the XM-07, the Vigna series, to Lord Dorel. There must be some intent..."

Rumored to outclass even the latest models from Anaheim and SNRI, the Vigna series was the crowning achievement of Buffo Aerodynamics. Giving up on the heavy Berga series, it was redesigned from the combat Den'an Gei. Thus, it shared the same basic structure but with far superior mobility and firepower. Two prototypes, Type A and G, were completed early on. Type A was deployed to the Zamouth Garr under Iron Mask, and Type G was set for operational

testing with Zabine's unit. But its completion was delayed, and it still hadn't been delivered.

The Type G instead focused on attack power, emphasizing enhanced firepower in its design. Despite that, its main weapon, the VSBR cannon, resulted from an intel leak from SNRI to Buffo Aerodynamics. In that sense, the shadow of the F91, the XM-07G, also adheres to the Crossbone Vanguard's silhouette formula.

Lieutenant Sheffield, a paragon of chivalrous spirit loyal to the Ronah family, revered this mobile suit as a guardian deity, despite Gilles ulterior motives.

"On the honor as the Flame Tiger, I must defeat the Gundam. Prepare the G Type, no, the Vigna-Zerah for launch. Lord Meitzer, I graciously accept this suit as an honor!"

Meanwhile, inside the *Braywood*, the Core Fighter was prepped for launch. It was a transforming fighter, capable of serving as the cockpit block for a Gundam-type mobile suit.

"So, this is the Core Fighter? I've seen the FF-X7 at the Granada War Museum, but this?" Tokio asked, observing the small combat aircraft painted in gray and navy blue.

"Unfortunately, it won't transform into a Core Block in its current state," Iris explained, opening the cockpit hatch and beginning computer adjustments. "It's mostly similar to the FF-4, but we can't take off leisurely in this situation. We'll use the catapult for a forced launch. Brace yourself for high G's so you don't break your neck!"

"That's not funny. What about a course?"

"3-2002A6... The Crossbone Vanguard's mobile suits always come from this direction. So, their mothership must be--"

"What I want to know is my destination! This isn't some A.E. mystery flight, right?"

Tokio's humor made Iris smile.

"I like how you put it. Maybe we should just do that."

"Ugh, come one."

"Alright, here's the truth. I haven't briefed the Ensign, but this is top secret. Your destination is Von Braun to acquire the new Gundam. This Core Fighter is the key!"

"A key?"

"Everything's in the computer... if captured by the Crossbone Vanguard, this button wipes all data."

"So, an even more powerful Gundam than the RXF-91 is complete..."

The RXF-91 seemed somehow hazy through the core fighter's canopy.

The new-model Core Fighter rocketed from the *Braywood's* mobile suit catapult, the force of the launch surpassing all expectations. The shock was tremendous, almost nauseating. Everything in front of him suddenly turned bright red. No, it didn't turn red. A red object had just passed in front of him.

"Mobile suits! It's the Crossbone Vanguard! Wait, a red Gundam!"

It resembled the RXF-91, possibly Lieutenant Sheffield's Vigna-Zerah?

Chapter 6

Launching

As Ensign Tokio D. Randall took off in his prototype Core Fighter from the *Braywood*, a new chapter was unfolding at Anaheim Electronics' Von Braun branch on Luna. There, the birth cries of a new Gundam, distinct from the RX-F91, were about to echo.

This was the AFX-9000, a mobile suit born out of Anaheim's long-standing aspirations, a candidate for the next mainstay mobile suit of the military in U.C.0111, following MSA-0120's defeat to SNRI's F90.

Anaheim, having obtained data through illicit means from SNRI, had completed the RXF-91 "Silhouette G" and was now conducting operational testing alongside the Hardygun and G-Cannon Magna. This testing paved the way for the final touches on the AFX-9000.

AFX-9000, an abbreviation for Advanced Formula Examination, was essentially an internal code within Anaheim. Its official designation, RX-99 Neo Gundam, was a number that carried the legacy of the Federation's pride in the GUNDAM lineage, a lineage that culminated in the RX-93 Nu Gundam.

This number didn't represent formal adoption in the year U.C.0099; it was a fervent wish by the developers for it to surpass the F91 as the leading mobile suit. Anaheim had even considered giving this evolved RX-99 the designation "RX-100" as part of the New Century Series to get back at SNRI.

But what set the RX-91 apart from the RXF-91? The defining difference lay in the generator, the heart of the mobile suits power source, its nuclear reactor. SNRI's F91 (Formula Ninety-One) revolutionized the basic design concept of miniaturized mobile suits by externally placing the generator, jutting out from the back rather than housed within the torso. This brought about a radical overhaul in thrust-to-weight ratio and even led to the development of an unexpected byproduct, the V.S.B.R (Variable Speed Beam Rifle).

Although the RXF-91 borrowed heavily from the F91's design, resulting in a similar balance and shape, Anaheim lagged behind in bio-computer technology and couldn't replicate this aspect. Instead, they equipped the mobile suit with a high-performance learning computer tailored to the pilot's skills and characteristics.

While future models would switch modes based on pre-programmed data, the RXF-91 relied on manual trim tab adjustments. This was how Tokio managed to evade Lieutenant Sheffield's XM-05B Berga-Barus by exploiting its burst capability in a focused direction.

Iris had entered this data into the prototype Core Fighter's navigation computer.

But why did this Core Fighter achieve the same output as the RXF-91's main generator? And how did it manage to keep the Crossbone Vanguard's state-of-the-art XM-07G Vigna-Zerah at bay?

The Core Fighter that Tokio piloted was no ordinary space combat aircraft. It was the main generator for the RX-99. The RX-99 docked the Core Fighter horizontally on its back, allowing the fighter's nose to be protected by the chest armor, functioning as the cockpit of the mobile suit. The rear of the machine, where the generator was located, folded 90 degrees to form a backpack.

This backpack, equipped with an internal sub-generator, was engineered to retain at least 50% operational capacity, even when damaged. But what was the high output of the main generator used for?

The answer lay in Anaheim's completion of the G-BRD - the Generator Beam Rifle Device, a unit created to counter SNRI's VSBR. This beam gun, almost as long as the RX-99 itself, drew power directly from the generator, capable of firing high-powered beams suitable for ship-to-ship combat, and when combined with the Core Fighter, enabled entirely new tactical applications.

Of course, since this machine was designed solely for space use, the beam cannon's size would not hinder mobility. This beam gun, complete with its own generator, was a revolutionary concept in heavy artillery. Additionally, Anaheim had completed units for retrofitting the RXF-91, addressing shortcomings in armor materials and propellant capacity.

The objective of the "S.F.P." was to modularize the manufacturing process of small mobile suits, allowing the production of a wide variety of machines tailored to operational needs. Expanding on SNRI's F90 weapon interchange system, Anaheim innovatively applied these principles directly to the manufacturing process.

Tokio's Core Fighter, on autopilot, arrived at the Granada port block, a Federation-exclusive harbor where two space battleships, or rather, cruiser-battleships judging by the mobile suit deck size, were docked. Handing over the Core Fighter to AE's technicians, Tokio was led to the mobile suit deck, reminiscent of the *Braywood's* own.

There, he encountered the towering, pure white form of the RX-99 Neo Gundam - his first meeting with the machine.

"So this is the new model Iris mentioned... But it's structurally quite different from the RXF-91," Tokio mused.

"Ensign Randall!" a deep voice boomed from behind. The voice belonged to a bald, heavily built man adorned with a Commander's insignia, who then introduced himself.

"I'm Buzz Galemson of the 306 Special Forces Squadron. Ensign Randall, you're to join our unit as a mobile suit pilot for combat operations!"

"But I am with Anaheim--"

"How long do you intend to play civilian, Ensign? Our unit is heading into real combat!"

Commander Galemson spoke with an ominous undertone, his smile masking a deeper, unspoken strategy.

Chapter 7

Commando

Commander Buzz Galemson's 306th Special Forces Squadron was known as a mercenary force employed to suppress anti-Earth Federation movements. However, the reason Tokio was now under Galemson's command was a puzzle he couldn't quite piece together.

"I was supposed to return to Anaheim's *Braywood* and continue the operational testing of the RX-99," Tokio protested.

Galemson's response came with a thin, knowing smile. "Ensign Randall, you were relieved of your duties as a test pilot for the SFP the moment you boarded our ship at Granada."

"Then what's the purpose of the RX-99 on board?" Tokio inquired, confusion lacing his tone.

"You're slow on the uptake, Ensign. Anaheim has officially transferred the RX-99 Neo Gundam to the military, and it's now assigned to this ship with you as the pilot," Galemson clarified, though it seemed he had more to say.

"As you know, the *Braywood* has been infested by the detestable remnants of Neo Zeon," Galemson continued.

"That's absurd... The *Braywood* was cooperating with the colony residents, fighting against the Crossbone Vanguard," Tokio countered in disbelief.

Galemson lashed out, kicking the wall fiercely with his military boot, his frustration palpable.

"No, you're wrong. It's Buffo Concern who's aiding us in our pursuit of Neo Zeon.

"What are you saying, Commander? What are you planning?"

Suddenly, a soldier surrounding Galemson pointed a gun at Tokio.

"Ensign Randall, if you can't grasp the situation after all this explanation, perhaps a stint in the brig to cool your head would help."

Tokio's realization of the situation's gravity hit him with a wave of dread and disbelief. The operational testing in the Zebra Zone, the encounter with the Crossbone Vanguard, and the deployment of the mercenary unit - if all these events were part of a premeditated scheme... a secret mobile suit operational test by the Earth Federation Forces and Buffo Aerodynamics, a search for Neo Zeon remnants in the Zebra Zone. Were Tokio and others involved merely puppets on invisible strings?

Yet, Kevin Forrest was critically injured. There had been casualties among the Crossbone Vanguard forces pilots who engaged him.

"Unforgivable... and what about Iris and the others?"

Iris's smiling face flashed through Tokio's mind.

"What are you doing?" the soldier yelled, lunging to restrain Tokio. But Tokio, fueled by desperation, ignored the warning shots and continued his frantic run.

Returning to the mobile suit deck, Tokio opened the cockpit hatch and settled into the RX-99's cockpit. He found a strange comfort in the familiar controls, identical to those of the *Braywood's* Core Fighter.

He considered firing the G-B.R.D. but, fortunately, the deck was open as a Heavygun had just launched on patrol, allowing the RX-99 to leap into space without using the catapult. Yet, Tokio was acutely aware that Buzz Galemson wouldn't let him escape so easily. A patrolling Heavygun approached, attempting to bring the RX-99 back to the ship.

"Ensign Randall. Even if it's a valuable new model, it's been assigned to our unit. If necessary, we'll destroy the RX-99. And remember, Randall, you are now a traitor. So, before we deal with the Neo Zeon remnants..."

The pilot of the Heavygun was Captain Hess, a man deeply trusted by Galemson.

"They're insane; it's like they're enjoying killing people."

Armed with heavy weapons, the Heavygun unleashed a barrage from its small beam launcher. Although the RX-99's maneuverability made it a formidable opponent, the pilot was the battle-hardened Lieutenant Hess.

Tokio's thoughts were consumed with concern for Iris, Kevin, and the other *Braywood* crew members' safety.

Chapter 8

Sanction

Tokio Randall, piloting the RX-99 Neo Gundam, engaged in combat with Commander Galemson's subordinate, Lieutenant Hess, in his Heavygun. Despite the Heavygun's armor, it stood little chance against the RX-99, a testament to Anaheim Electronics' technological prowess.

Yet, Hess pursued relentlessly.

Using the G-B.R.D could have quickly downed Hess, but Tokio was hardly experienced with the RX-99. How he wished it were the RXF-91 instead...

In an unexpected move, the battle-hardened Hess skillfully swooped down from above, taking advantage of the RX-99's blind spot. He must have deduced that targeting from above with the G-B.R.D fixed to the right arm was impossible.

"Damn, he got the drop on me!"

Just as Tokio resigned himself, a sudden burst of flames engulfed the Heavygun's backpack, casting an intense glow across his monitor. Had it self-destructed? No, it had been shot by someone else. Behind the Heavygun, a red mobile suit was spotted.

"Crossbone Vanguard forces?"

The ones who downed Hess's Heavygun were the Vanguard's mobile suits Vigna-Zerah and its support, the Den'an Zon, previously seen by Tokio in the Core Fighter.

"If only I could use the G-B.R.D effectively..."

The RX-99 raised its long-barreled weapon.

"Hold your fire, Ensign Randall. We no longer intend to fight you," came the voice of Lieutenant Sheffield from the Vigna-Zerah, over the comms link, revealing an unexpected truth.

"We, along with the Braywood crew, have been dancing in the palm of someone else's hand."

"What are you getting at?"

Tokio's mind reeled, overwhelmed by a whirlwind of confusion and disbelief.

"We, the Dark Tiger Squad, are about to engage in battle with the Earth Federation's special forces... Anyway, you should return to the Braywood."

"But--"

"There's no time. Be thankful to the great Adel Lagiorr. Our duel will come soon enough..."

The communication ended abruptly, likely cut off by Sheffield. Determined, Tokio steered a course for the Zebra Zone, deliberately choosing a divergent path. He spotted Crossbone Vanguard warships en route but was not attacked.

The *Braywood* was still intact. Kevin, Iris, Commander Karl, and Layla were all safe. Iris briefed Tokio on the events. The clash between the *Braywood* and the Dark Tiger Squad was the result of a cunning plan orchestrated by the upper echelons of the Federation government. Sheffield's mention of "dancing in the palm of a giant hand" now made sense.

High-ranking government officials connected to the Buffo Concern had informed them of the SFP's secret training location to conduct real battle tests of Buffo-manufactured mobile suits. This fact had not been disclosed to Lieutenant Sheffield. But why such an elaborate scheme? It was to gather the latest mobile suits and combat data for the Ronah family in preparation for their upcoming armed uprising. Commander Galemson's unit, under the pretext of hunting Neo Zeon remnants, likely intended to annihilate both the *Braywood* and the Dark Tiger Squad to silence them.

Why had these facts come to light? It was because the Neo Zeon had successfully decoded a secret communication. Adel Lagiorr, Layla's courageous father, had taken the initiative to personally approach the Dark Tiger Squad's ship to convince Lieutenant Sheffield.

With the crisis narrowly averted, the *Braywood* left the colony where Layla and others lived and resumed the SFP operational testing. The RXF-91, based on the results of previous tests, was upgraded to the RXF-91A (Kai). And so began the operational testing of the RX-99.

Yet, in the shadows of these events, the impending day of the Crossbone Vanguard's uprising loomed ominously closer.

The year was Universal Century 0123, and March was fast approaching.

PART 1 COMPLETE