It was a common misconception, brought by years of popular media, to think of battles in space as these loud events. Where the run of gunfire, sizzling lasers, and deafening missile blasts filled the void with a cacophony of war.

But space was a vacuum, there was no air or any other molecules to carry the sounds. The noise one would hear from space combat came just from a ship or mech’s systems. And right now, the data stream was flooding Lunamaria’s panels.

Her superhuman senses quickly took it all in, from specs of the enemy’s mechs, their movements, their attack patterns, to the various detonations and visuals of beam fire being exchanged, and the reports of enemy movements on other sides.

Blue Cosmos’ attack was desperate, chaotic, like a rabid animal let off its leash. The remnants of that organization were taking everyone they could get their hands on, giving them only the necessary training, and throwing them at the grinder without concern for their fellow man, for the human lives they claimed to be fighting for.

Their attack had come as a surprise, an initial missile barrage that had their defenses scrambling to intercept them all, softening them up so their carriers began launching their mechs. They attacked without a clear objective, without rhythm, just an all-out assault on their convoys with the intent of destroying them.

Even if the attack lacked strategy, the way these people fought with zealotry and hatred made them extremely dangerous. Luna knew wars were won by professional soldiers, strategy, and quick thinking, yet it was ferocity and ruthlessness that caused the most losses for both sides.

Not a single convoy would be lost this day. Not to a bunch of terrorists with delusions of grandeur and a burning hatred for the different. They would not allow the people in them, the colonists heading for a new home, to be lost.

The Millennium stood at the head of the convoys providing cover for most of them as its defense systems intercepted enemy mechs and missiles. Combat data was supplied from its command center directly to their GUNDAM systems, allowing them access to real-time information, through it, Luna and Shinn could observe what was happening as the rest of their defenders fought off the Cosmos’ mechs.

They were ordered to remain in position underneath the convey, keep the perimeter in check in case the Cosmos forces suddenly decided to switch their offensive. While Kira was handling a squadron by himself in the rear.

Luna could hear her boyfriend’s frustrations through the comms as he once more hailed their squad leader, “*Kira, our position is secure, let us move in!*”

“*Negative!*” He replied, “*Stay where you are!*”

Luna comm’d him. “*Kira, you have Hilda engaging on sector Zeta, Agnes is busy fighting off attacks on the Millennium, you can’t handle this on your own!*”

“*I gave you an order! Guard your sector and stay put! I don’t want Cosmos attacking where we’re vulnerable!*”

“*They outnumber you!*” Kira shouted. “*You* are *vulnerable right now!*”

Kira just lost the channel, and Luna sighed in frustration, a sentiment shared by the other pilot. “*He’s going to get himself killed*…”

Just when things couldn’t get worse, they suddenly did. Combat data had informed them that one of the convoy engines had been hit, the shift was drifting and steadily losing velocity. Soon it’d fall out of formation and become vulnerable to enemy attacks.

It was one of the ships in Kira’s sector.

Luna quickly hailed him, “*Kira! Convoy-3 is drifting, moving to intercept!*”

“*Negative, I’ll handle it!*”

He *what?* Oh, that self-sacrificing *idiot*. Why did the people she loved the most in her life have to be so thick-headed?

Speaking of…

“*Justice, going in!*”

And once more Shinn charged in without thinking. Oh, it’s not like she approved of Kira’s orders. He needed assistance. What she *didn’t* like was how Shinn suddenly boosted his thrusts and jumped straight into danger at all speed instead of a more careful approach.

He went directly for the drifting convoy, knowing it’d attract a wave of Cosmos’ mechs. Which of course it did. Shinn would soon find himself in a similar predicament as Kira. Outnumbered and burdened. They were all ace pilots, the best of the best. But they were still human, their flaws born from their own experiences.

Such as Kira’s desire to protect his friends. And Shinn’s drive to make sure no civilian came to harm.

She should have gone with him, should pulled his head out of the fire before got in too deep. But this flank had to remain protected, even if no Cosmos’ mech was around…

She kept the channels open, hearing Shinn’s voice as his ragged breath filtered over the comms. The clenching of his teeth, the rattling of his pilot seat as explosions rattled over his mech.

He could do this, he could handle it, she just had to stay here and-

“*Shit!* *Sensors are down!*

Lunamaria gasped. “*What happened?!*”

“*Bastard got a lucky shot! Visual feed is working but targeting barely is! Radar’s going haywire, can’t tell where they’re coming!*”

Her hands tightened on her controls.

“*Tch! Left leg thruster down! Ack-!*” His shout was distorted, filled with static.

Luna turned her mech around and took flight before she even realized it. The Gelgoog’s thrusters boomed as she charged them to the maximum output. Her mech blazed through debris and gunfire, her superhuman mind reacting to the various prompts and warnings in her sensors with great speed and dexterity.

There she found her objection. Shinn’s mech, haphazardly drifted as its leg thrusters were damaged. His range of movements was limited, yet still, he soldiered on, gunning down the enemy mechs that drew close to confront him in melee. But with sensors damaged and no targeting systems, he was a sitting duck for the Cosmos mechs flying around him.

Lunamaria aimed for her first target and fired, a clean shot that pierced its head, leading to an explosion that took out a piece of its torso. Her energy shield deflected the barrage of beam fire aimed at her, she flew around in arms, aiming their sights away from Shinn’s mech.

She dodged a barrage of missiles, her mech’s countermeasures igniting them with pinpoint accuracy and razor-thin lasers before they would impact its frame and detonate. Thrusters flared at full power to evade two mechs with beam sabers poised to strike at her from behind, she released explosives to throw them off her path.

There were so many, she had to fight them off, she had to keep Shinn safe, she had to keep the colonists safe.

The multiple alarms on her screen became too much, even for her to handle.

On the comms, she heard Kira swear, “*Convoy 3’s integrity is compromised!*”

The drifting convoy had a fire on its rear section, with Cosmos still on its trail. Too much, too much was happening all around her. The enemies on her tail, the enemies attacking Shinn, the convoy in danger…

And Shinn, brave, idiot, beautiful Shinn, was moving his mech back as much as he could, to shield the convoy with his own mech.

Selfless fool, that heroic stubborn knucklehead who owned her heart.

Her screen showed his mech fighting still, firing almost blindly, striking in melee at any mech that got close enough, doing his damnedest to protect the colonists no matter what.

Even if it cost him his life.

No… not on her watch.

Lunamaria gasped, and her vision was filled with stars.

It felt like a *powerful* jolt of electricity shooting up her spine. A dose of adrenaline injected straight into her heart and pumped through every fiber and nerve in her body. Brain cell synapses fired at all cylinders.

Time… seemed to slow down.

The constant update of data seemed so slow now, no longer overwhelming, her mind was processing it with unnatural speed and calmness, as though she was simply reading an after-action report. Her muscles *tensed* so much, as though she had been lifting heavy weights, she failed to notice the way her suit felt a bit tighter, how the grip in her instruments dented the material slightly.

She felt she could see everything in slow motion, and more than that, *process* at a speed even her enhanced Coordinator mind had never been able to before.

This… This was that special ability some Coordinators like her managed to tap into. When their senses, reflexes, and perception all went into overdrive, allowing them to react at lightning speeds.

The state unofficially known as ‘SEED Mode’.

Lunamaria was experiencing it for the first time in her life.

And she knew what to do.

Her gun aimed at the mechs around her, she felt she had all the time in the world to aim. And fired a series of shots that pierced through their weak points with pinpoint accuracy, faster they could react.

She danced around her pursues with such dexterity and speed, pulling off maneuvers they couldn’t follow, and it cost them dearly when she turned her sights on them.

Then she blasted off, thrusters burning with flaming exhaust as she flew towards Shinn. She picked his pursuers one by one, with precision shots of her rifle. Storing it away instead of reloading, she brandished her mech’s double-sided saber. It spun like a wheel of death in her machine’s grasp, cutting through the enemy’s plates like a hot knife through butter, seeing them in slow motion, she maneuvered around them before they could defend themselves or escape.

Lunamaria fought like a machine, with all the efficiency and effectiveness of a supercomputer.

Then when it was all said and done, there were no enemies left, and her senses returned to normal.

Luna gasped, a wave of exhaustion hitting her all at once, her brain raced with hundreds of thoughts, her muscles *burned*. Yet at the same time, it felt… good, great even. She felt *amazing*.

“*Luna!*” Shinn’s comms hailed her, she could feel the smile on his face. “*That was amazing! You- Are you okay?!*”

She panted, one eye closed as she stared at her screen where her boyfriend’s icon was displayed. “I should be asking you that,” She sighed in relief before fondly muttering, “Dummy…”

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Lunamaria let out a sigh, rubbing her neck as she walked to Shinn’s room. After-action medical checkups were thorough and time-consuming, and most pilots hated them for a good reason. But it was vital, and most importantly it was protocol. There was no getting out of one.

Although they wouldn’t need to go to the doctor any time soon. They were on shore leave right now.

Though perhaps it was more accurate to say they were ‘benched’ for the time being. Between Kira’s irresponsible orders, Shinn’s blatant disregard for them, and the repairs and retrofit the mobile suits desperately needed, the trio of pilots wouldn’t be flying for a few weeks. The Millennium was in dry dock, its valiant crew deservingly needing some rest after the constant action and close calls.

Lunamaria adjusted the sleeve of her uniform a little bit, tugging at the shoulder and smoothening the fabric. It felt a little bit tighter than usual, indeed her physical showed she had put on a little bit more muscle. Well, she was a mech pilot and a Coordinator, she was in peak physical condition and followed a strict workout regimen.

Her check-up had taken longer than usual for a few reasons. First, it was standard procedure for a Coordinator to be examined after using SEED Mode for the first time. The ability to trigger it wasn’t exactly common, in fact, it was rare enough that a lot of Coordinators hadn’t even heard of it, and Luna hadn’t really been able to use it before. She didn’t know if there could be any potential side effects, like, burning her brain under the sheer stress that mode induced, so she at least needed to make sure.

Thankfully they clarified SEED Mode worked like an adrenaline rush, but augmented to Coordinator levels. So long as she didn’t overdo it she’d be fine.

Then there was the fact that she wanted to make sure the SEED Mode had not created any unintentional side effects with another procedure she was currently undergoing. An experimental gene therapy.

For all the advantages Coordinators had over baseline humans, there was a great setback to the offshoot of their species. Coordinators possessed a very low fertility rate, after a third generation, it’d be almost impossible to naturally conceive. Their people were looking into ways to circumvent this devastating hurdle in order to maintain stable populations and not rely on completely artificial means just as the genetic modification of human fetuses to create more Coordinators.

Genetic therapy to increase fertility levels over the course of generations was one such experiment, one that was still in its early stages but were hoping it’d bear fruit. Lunamaria had volunteered to undergo it as one of the test subjects. She felt it was a personal responsibility to her people, and… well she wasn’t certain if she wanted *children* in her future just yet, but she’d like the possibility of that being open to her.

Shinn and her had started dating for a year, but it was still *very* soon to start talking about a family. Even with the bond they shared, and how much they loved each other. It was better to go step by step.

…Even if Shinn had yet to take a certain ‘step’, no matter how many hints Luna dropped on him.

Gods she loved that thick-headed man, but it was *infuriating* that he needed landing lights for him to get the hint that she wanted to get *intimate* with him.

Not like she was any better, given that she couldn’t even muster up the courage to say it.

She entered Shinn’s room with her access key card, which had long since been programmed to give her access to his room much like his card could give access to her room. And found Shinn sitting in front of his desk, looking over reports on datapads. He soon looked up the moment she entered the room, smiling warmly at her. “Hey”

“Hey,” She replied with a smile of her own.

“Everything okay?”

“Yeah, no issues at all”

“Good, that’s… good” He trailed off a bit distractedly.

Luna went on to sit on his bed, figuring out the best way to approach this. She really wanted for Shinn and her to be intimate at some point, and at this point in their relationship, she felt they should have already. Having almost lost him recently made that want even stronger, you never knew how much time you had with someone after all.

Should she go for a more direct approach, take off her jacket, and say something coy like ‘I think I’ve put on a bit more muscle, what do you think~?’. Hopefully, that would do the trick. First, she actually had to get him to look at her, she needed to lay it on properly.

“It was a close call,” Luna softly said.

“…It was,” He said with a low voice.

“Makes you think, huh?” She blushed, feeling her heart hammering in her chest. “About the things you never did, the… chances you let slip by. Things you’d never have a chance to do again”

She saw his back rise with a long intake of air, which he slowly let out in a sigh. “Yeah,”

“…I love you,” She said, feeling happy just by saying it. “Just… want to say it for as long as I can”

That got him to turn around, a joyous gentle look in his eyes and he said back, “I love you too”

Amazing how just a few words made one’s body feel so light.

She was about to go for it, to say what she really wanted to be doing with him, when Shinn spoke again and threw all her plans out of order.

“Am I good enough?”

Luna blinked, staring at him in surprise. “What do you mean?”

“I messed up today,” He continued, looking away downcast. “I just dived into danger without considering the consequences. It was more than my life on the line, I made a mistake and other people would have paid for it”

Luna stood up from the bed, walking towards him, she put a comforting hand on his shoulder. “You’re alive, Shinn. Everyone made it out”

“This time,” He said, looking at her with uncertainty. “But there’s been close calls before. And I keep doing this, I keep… being so stubborn and so foolhardy when I’m in the field. I take so many unnecessary risks because I want to give it my all and… and sometimes I wonder if everything I have is enough”

“Shinn…”

“I’m serious. I just… stumble into things, I get way in over my head and just believe I’ll come out okay. I think I’m doing the right thing, and then…”

Luna could already tell what he was thinking about; ZAFT, Durandal, Kira.

Stella, the name he sometimes mumbled in his sleep…

“But that’s not always the case, I don’t stop and think, I just act and other people end up paying for it”

Luna remained silent, letting him vent as she comforted him with her presence.

“I should have trusted Kira today…”

“His orders weren’t the right ones”

“Well, that’s not for me to decide. I know that, and yet I-“ He paused, letting out a weary sigh. “It doesn’t matter. I was given this opportunity here at Compass, and I’m not making the best of it, I keep making the same mistakes *over and over*”

He was silent for a moment.

“What am I doing here, Luna? What is someone like *me* doing here?” He laughed ruefully. “They should get a better pilot, a better soldier, a better… just someone better than me”

Luna decided she had enough.

“You want to know why you’re here?” Her voice was firm, making him look at her in surprise. “You’re here because you want a better future for *everyone*. You’re here because you know the prize of war. And you’re here because you are willing to lay down your life for it, because you know it’s a noble goal, and you believe in it because you have a good heart”

Shinn stared at her his eyes marginally wider than before.

“Yes, you should start thinking more with this” She tapped a finger to his forehead, a touch playfully. “But please, never stop thinking *this*” She then laid her palm over his chest. “Is not good enough”

Shinn’s eyes reflected a myriad of emotions, remorse, gratitude, melancholy, grief, joy, before finally settling on love as he held the hand on his chest. “Thank you. Just… Thank you so much”

Lunamaria let out a huff mixed in with a laugh, “Why did I have to fall for a knucklehead like you?”

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