

Macross Delta Volume 2. Windermere Aerial Knights

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Chapter 1: "Seaside Days"

The sun rises from behind the morning mist. It's strange, but no matter how many times I look at the sun, I never get tired of looking at it. This is especially true if you've lived on a spaceship for a long time. At least, for Hayate Immelman.

With the sea breeze and the sunlight shining through the refraction of the atmosphere, it's something special. That's not the case in the vacuum of space. Unless you're one of the Zentraedi, you can't feel the solar wind without a spacesuit, and without air, the sun wouldn't shine like that. That's why the morning sun is so beautiful.

Due to the balance between rotation and revolution, there is actually some variation in whether the sun rises from a planet, and there are many planets where the sun remains fixed in the same position depending on the star, but here on Planet Lagna, the sun rises just like on Earth.

Its rotation period is approximately 24 hours, and is no different from Galactic Standard Time. The reason why there are many terrestrial planets in the universe with rotation periods and gravity similar to that of Earth is that the range in which life can exist, the so-called habitable zone, is limited.

A planet that is easy for humans to live on would naturally be one like Earth. Of course, there are planets that are all ocean or all rock. But if the climate and gravity are stable and humans can live on it permanently, then gravity needs to be around 1G and the rotation period needs to be 24 hours. Morning comes three times in 24 hours, and gravity is one-sixth, making your body feel light and fluffy.

It's hard to live in a place where you float and your bones become brittle. Nevertheless, it appears to be true that the Breisingl Globular Cluster has an unusually large number of such terrestrial planets.

It was said to be a galactic miracle of probabilistic proportions, and there were rumors that Dr. Aisha Blanchett, the eccentric sequestered in the Chaos lab, believed that the Protoculture's will was at work.

That's just a distraction.

It has nothing to do with Hayate now.

Wearing a Chaos-issued jersey and sneakers. He stomped over the cobblestones and ran. Ran. Ran. Just kept running.

The Chaos squadrons are privately contracted, and there is surprisingly little prescribed training. The company culture is that as long as you follow the contract, you can do whatever you want. There's no way Chuck from that era could work as a sales clerk at Rag-Nyan-Nyan Therefore, this voluntary training is purely Hayate's own initiative.

Why run?

"I don't know."

Yes, I answered. Yes, when was it that Mirage Farina Jenius asked me that question? It was definitely in the locker room after one of our many sorties.

Somehow, that's how the conversation turned.

"Are you training on your own for reasons you don't even know?"

The answer was something the red-haired, strict instructor couldn't understand. Well, that's understandable. Mirage always sets goals, makes plans, and then trains. That's the kind of person she is. That's fine.

"If I had to say"

"Say it?"

Mirage's jewel-like eyes stared intently at Hayate.

"I don't want to kill them"

With those words, Mirage seemed to be convinced.

It looked like he was smiling slightly, but when Hayate tilted his head, his face turned pouty, so it might have just been his imagination. Put your feet forward, swing your arms, and just run. As the sun rises, the temperature rises and fishing boats can be seen bustling between the sea and the sky. A huge, one-meter-tall sea cat jumped nearby, making Hayate sneeze. He is allergic to cats.

In fact, cats, including the sea cat named "Don" that appears in "Rag-Nyan-Nyan" have a hard time. Strictly speaking, they had no genetic connection to Earth cats, yet they were allergic to them. Hayate didn't know if this was because there was an allergen common to all creatures that looked like cats, or if it was psychological, but he didn't want to go to the trouble of undergoing detailed tests to find out. There was only one possible outcome.

Still, I run. There are many tips for running, but when you get down to it, it all comes down to "keep running." Step by step, step by step, keep moving forward. When you stop, the muscles and cells throughout your body begin to lose heat in order to rest, so you just can't stop. The trick to running long distances is to run at a constant a speed as possible, whatever pace is possible. It's even better if you can maintain your breathing.

Far away, beyond memory. I can no longer remember my father's face. That day, my father had a rare long vacation and was at home the whole time. I was so happy about that that I followed in my father's footsteps. I enjoyed the stories my father told me about the mysterious planets and alien creatures in the galaxy. So I tried to join my father on his morning runs. I was exhausted after less than a kilometer, but we ran together.

(Yes, that's when I learned it.)

"Four beats of breathing, Hayate."

Count to four and inhale.

Count to four and exhale.

"Imagine your body as a bag. Then, breathe in the air.

Count. Count to four and exhale the wind." Run.

Step on it firmly.

Inhale while taking four steps.

I vomited after four steps.

"When your body becomes one with the wind, you can run as long as you want."

It just happened.

The cobblestones beat out a pleasant four-beat staccato. Each time, Hayate's body takes in the wind. Hayate's body becomes the wind. The wind becomes Hayate. Hayate and the wind are the same. So you can run anywhere.

The warm sea air becomes a pleasantly lukewarm sea breeze, giving Hayate a push. Beyond the horizon, you can see the glittering dome of a city. It is a small city-spaceship onto which people from Earth immigrated several decades ago. Inside the dome of this spaceship, known as an island ship, is a modern city that was once the home of the immigrants. Today, the island ships have been turned into hotels with casinos, entertaining tourists visiting Laguna. They will not take off again because the Macross-class immigrant ship that serves as their energy source has not docked. They have once again departed on a journey in search of a new planet.

Hayate keeps running while looking at this scenery. The running course runs from the city walls overlooking the sea to the winding alleys of the old town.

Fishermen's wives prepare breakfast to welcome their husbands home from work. A stall selling cheap souvenirs for tourists is getting ready for business. The fragrant smell of grilled jellyfish wafts from a food stall bar. Nearby, a sea cat waits for an opportunity to leap in search of a jellyfish.

These are all the things that surround Hayate, the presence carried by the wind. As we climbed the winding slope, we were greeted by the delicious smell of burning fish sauce. One of Chuck's brothers was making the breakfast.

Squishy

When I looked up, the flashy exterior of Naked Eater Niangniang jumped into my eyes. I had reached the end of the running course.

"Hayate, good work."

"I see."

The one handing me the sports towel was Freyja Wion.

"Sorry."

"I just came to have breakfast too."

A trivial morning conversation.

As I wiped away the sweat that was gushing out like a waterfall, the towel gave off a faint citrus scent. It was only fairly recently that Freya was able to blend into everyday life like this. Because Freya is Winderemerian.

Technically, all intelligent life in the galaxy belongs to one government, the New Unified Government. In reality, the Zentraedi and most of the giant fleets known as the Supervisory Force are engaged in wars unrelated to the New Unified Government, but the official position is that the human race is united under the cultural banner of Protoculture.

The Kingdom of Windermere rebelled against it. This was no mere warlording of space pirates on a remote frontier planet. A planetary nation with a population exceeding hundreds of millions had openly declared war. Every day, cries of a crisis on the galactic network about the division of humanity following the Second Unification War were heard.

Naturally, public opinion was abuzz. The Windamians are not only the enemies of Earth's human race, but of all intelligent species. Many Windamians abroad were left feeling lost and were subject to persecution. Freyja Wion was no exception.

The fact that she was a new member of the galactically popular group Walküre and that her debut live performance fell on the same day that Windamian declared war on her led to confusing speculation.

If Reina Prowler hadn't improvised an AI system to handle the phone calls, it was a fuss that the entire Chaos system might have been brought down, in all seriousness. Hayate was also saddened to see Freya's dejected state upon returning to Laguna. Hayate has no planet to call home. I lived a life of traveling from place to place, accompanied by my mother. Every planet has memories, but no planet is home. However, I understand the pain of not being able to return to a place called home, and of incurring the hostility of others by calling it home. Even Hayate has had stones thrown at him and spat on just because he is an Earthling and has Zentradi blood in him.

"Shut up. Freya is Freya."

I don't know how many times I said that right after that commotion. The good news was that the members of Delta Platoon and the members of Walküre all agreed with Hayate. The fact that the Kingdom of Windamia as a nation has become the "enemy" has nothing to do with Freya personally. That's what he thought and believed.

Many people didn't think so. Very, very many. It's not that there were many, it's that there are many. Since that day, the heartless slander that has been hurled at Freya has been horrific. "traitor." "Spy." This is relatively, no, very elegant. The more common ones are so shocking that they cannot possibly be posted here, and the most vulgar ones were so outrageous that the usually calm and collected Messer smashed his monitor with his fist - so you can imagine how bad it was. Things like that were coming at the teenage girl from all over the galaxy. Even so, Freyja, the Valkyries, fought on. We fought and won.

Even after the war with Windemere began, they continued to perform live on the battlefield, She continued to stand where the syndrome was and continue to sing. That was more eloquent than anything else. That's not the case. Freya never spoke of "loyalty to the new unity government" or "admiration for democracy."

However, she continued to be with the wounded and fallen, and continued to sing amid the gunfire. It's not just a matter of Valkyries exerting their power when their lives are in danger. People cannot risk their lives just because of that kind of logic. Freyja's actions meant that Delta and the Walküre would fight alongside her.

This proved that they were not Windemere's lackeys. At first, Freya was supported by those whom she protected from the threat of Vaalization. Next to pay tribute to Freya were the soldiers, police officers, firefighters and emergency personnel who had faced the threat alongside her. They all sang in the midst of a battlefield riddled with missiles and machine gun fire.

To them, Freya was a savior, a neighbor, and a comrade-in-arms. Therefore, they tried to protect Freya from those who attacked her. So Freya was neither chased away from the Valkyries nor imprisoned. Instead, she was hailed as a quasi-exile from Windemere and a guardian of human harmony.

However, this meant that Freya had made her hometown her enemy. Freya doesn't say anything about it. (But... that's not the point, right?) Pain, this was painful for Hayate. Freya says she has no relatives in Windemere. She is all alone. Even so, Freya seemed happy when talking about the village where she was born and raised, and she even said that she sometimes listened to Galactic Network broadcasts with her friends.

"Can I sit next to you?"

"Nothing special."

It was unusual for Hayate to make the effort to decline to sit on the bench next to Freya, because Hayate thought that if there was an empty seat, it was fine, even if the person he was talking to was a senator. However, even Hayate is kind enough to think that it is polite to invade Freya's personal space at this point.

"Yeah. What's wrong?"

Well, that's the only thing I can say. If I say I'm worried about you, it will sound like I pity Freya. That would be an insult to her resolve.

"The next one isn't a live concert, it's an infiltration mission into Voldor."

Freya said, half talking to herself.

"Planet Voldor?"

Randall, where Freya's debut live show took place, is a sister planet in the same star system. While people's attention was focused on Randall, the Windermere Kingdom's Air Knights

It is said that they took over Voldor in a flash. It's not just Voldor. Already, more than ten star nations have fallen into Windamia's hands. Of course, it goes without saying that this includes planets that have long been critical of the new unified government. But even so, there were too many. There is no doubt that the Windamia army's lightning victory was due to the military use of Var.

This is clear from the Randall incident. At that time, Windamia's Aerial Knights had treated the Var-ized New Unified Army like their limbs. If, like the legendary Sirens, Windermere could charm all enemies and turn them into allies, they would be an invincible army. Therefore, the only one who can deal with it is Walkure.

"It's going to turn into a war."

"That's right."

It's war. The Breisingal Globular Cluster is a node of the fold route connecting the Milky Way and the Brisingir Globular Cluster. Laguna is located far from Windamia and has not yet been affected by the war.

"Now..."

However, if we were to travel to occupied territory in Windermere, it would be a different story. Having said that, Hayate swallowed his words. He might be killed. He might kill. Yes, I was about to say that, but stopped myself. Those words are something that Hayate and the other pilots should understand, and it is not something that Freyja should have to bear. To not kill. To avoid being killed.

"hmm.....?"

I heard a song. It's a song that is crystal clear, yet stays in the listener's ears. It was only a faint a cappella voice carried on the wind, but the song

"Whose song is that?"

Mikumo

"It's Mikumo!"

"Kiraa," Freya said, her eyes shining brightly.

"Look, there!"

Where Freya was pointing, there was a shadow standing in the center of the bay. The center of Walküre is Mikumo Guynemer. Mikumo sang, standing majestically like a goddess, as if floating on the sea. It doesn't matter if there is an audience or not. It was as if all the crashing waves, all the stars disappearing into the dawning sky, all the fish swimming in the sea and the birds flying in the sky were the audience. Mikumo Guynemer was singing. There was a faint glow at her feet, and upon closer inspection, I could see that there was something shining beneath her feet.

"Ragna's?"

"What's that? Delta 01 unit?"

"No. Those are the ruins of Laguna."

"I asked Chuck."

Freya continued her explanation while listening to her senior's song in ecstasy.

"They say that the ocean around Laguna is covered with sunken ruins of ancient Protoculture. When bad giants came from beyond the stars and bullied the people of Laguna, a good giant god built a castle to protect Laguna. The Ragna city walls are a remnant of that."

"Ah, I see---"

Indeed, the city walls protecting Laguna are so large that even human-sized walls are a joke. Even Destroids can't climb them, and they have to use a lift every time. I've heard that they are hundreds of thousands of years old, though I doubt it.

"Are those ruins glowing?"

Mikumo

"I'm sure the ruins are in high spirits listening to Mikumo's song."

".....Is that how it is?"

"That's how it is! Maybe Hayate's Valkyrie will be excited by Walküre's song?"

"No way."

"No way. Even if it has a human shape, it's just a plane."

"Even machines may have runes!"

Hayate gave a wry smile, but Freya puffed out her cheeks.

"All right."

"That's not true! I mean, Hayate may not have a rune, but he does have a heart!"

".....Now that you mention it, I guess that's true."

To Hayate, who is not used to the Windamians having runes, it is natural to not have runes, but to Freya, who always has a rune as a medium for expressing her emotions, Earthlings are a mystery. It would not be strange to think that they may not have hearts.

"So I'm sure Valkyries want to rumble, get excited, and fly away."

"Well, I guess you want to fly."

I couldn't bring myself to deny that. A variable fighter is an extension of the pilot's body, and even Hayate has a romantic desire for his alter ego to find joy in flying. Hayate quickly stood up. The sea breeze feels really nice.

"I'll run a bit more."

"Are you okay?"

"yeah"

Hayate flashed a grin. I will never forget the tragedy on Randall, where pilots who had turned into Var died before my eyes. I will never forget the devastation in the city when the variable fighter jet, which had become a flaming arrow, crashed. We must not let something like that happen again. And the only way to do that is to become stronger. We have no choice but to fly faster, sharper, and higher.

So Hayate starts running again. I believe that this is the only path that leads to the sky. Freya smiled and watched Hayate leave. Mikumo's song rises into the sky, as

if watching over the two of them. After the training, it's time for flight exercises. Each time, they would climb up to the giant battleship Macross Elysion on the hill, and Hayate found these times quite enjoyable.

The biggest excitement was being able to fly in the sky, but I also liked the view of Laguna and the breeze. They take the linear lines inside the Elysion and fly into the hangar of the aircraft carrier Itair, which is the arm of Macross. That's Hayate's workplace and playground.

"Hey, you're here. The curriculum is the same as usual. You'll be working with Messer with VF-31," Commander Arad announced, looking at the tablet filled with schedules with a tired look on his face.

"With Messer?"

"No. I thought it was Mirage, just like always."

"He's accompanying Walküre today. They're going shopping, so Chuck and I can't go."

The Delta Platoon's job is to protect the Walküre, a singer group that can resist the Var. Among them, Mirage has the sole domain of escort duties, which are unique to women.

"No way. That's what I want! I'll pay you back for the entrance exam!"

Hayate laughed wickedly.

I could only keep that look on my face for two seconds after we took off.

Although we were supposed to have risen from the catapult at the same time, Mess had somehow slipped behind us. Messer fired a storm of dummy bullets.

"Wait a minute!"

"You're not going to tell me there was no starting signal, are you?"

"Ah! You're kidding!"

"slow"

Directly above. Transform into Battroid, flip over and counterattack. However, Messer, who had been there just a moment ago, was gone. Messer, now ascending, has entered the sun. A storm of lasers as they pass each other. In real combat, he would be dead.

"Aaaaah!"

Still in toroid form, it was slammed into the ground.

"You still have the habit of being a Workroid. If something happens, you transform into a Battroid. That would make air combat under gravity impossible."

Before they knew it, Messer's Battroid was helping Hayate's Battroid up.

"Come on. I'll show you that your fighting techniques won't work in real combat."

Messer, boxing... "...good"

He took a stance. I can taste blood in my mouth. The taste of defeat. But at the same time, I felt a strong fighting spirit well up inside me. "I'll make him crawl on his hands and knees!"

"Hayate Immelman, you."

In fact, that's what happened, immediately.

"Ow Ow Ow OW"

The medical block is located right next to the research block. The massive aircraft carrier, Aither, is like a small city in itself, containing everything from

laboratories to small factories and even a hospital. Hayate was floating in a treatment capsule at the hospital when he suddenly realized he had fallen asleep three hours later than he was supposed to...or rather, he didn't want to admit it, but he realized he had passed out.

Dinner time at Rag-Nyan-Nyan is already approaching. The owner, Chuck, is a conscientious man and doesn't serve food to people past curfew. So Hayate came up with the idea of going through the adjacent research block rather than going directly through the medical block. (There should have been a linear shaft in this lab that led directly down to the surface.)

Hayate's long life working part-time jobs on spaceships gave him a good memory for these sorts of things. Fortunately, the eccentric Dr. Aisha Blanchette, who was also in charge of the research block, was someone who treated Delta Platoon like guinea pigs or something, so it was a daily occurrence for him to be called into the research block and asked all sorts of questions about VF-31.

I walked, weaving my way through the piles of incomprehensible research equipment that spilled out into the hallway. This must be the best shortcut. What on earth is that doctor researching here? Fold quartz, song energy, I don't understand anything.)

"I'll say it again." (This is bad)

The fact that there were people there was something I hadn't taken into account. Normally, the lab would be empty at this time of day. The ship's schedule also indicated this. Unauthorized entry into the lab was prohibited by regulations. It was mostly just a formality, but if Mirage were to find out, they'd have to prepare for an all-night lecture.

"Are you listening, Messer Ihlefeld?"

It was a woman's voice. The doctor's voice was unusually cold. Hayate peeked into their conversation from across the hallway because there was something strange about the tone of their voices.

"What is it?"

"I think you know this, but your body is in danger."

Messer was silent. Hayate couldn't understand the meaning of that. No, let's pretend he didn't understand.

"The encounter over Randall... Ever since then, your coefficient has been steadily increasing."

"But it shouldn't be enough to ground flights."

The doctor let out a huge sigh.

"And you are only an observer of Delta Platoon's operations and health management, not its director."

"That's right. That's why I haven't even told Kaname about this."

For a moment, Messer's eyes burned like fire, but the doctor didn't seem intimidated.

"Hey, why don't you reconsider? Hayate is still growing, so maybe you should leave Delta for now, join the training force, and take your time listening to the Vaccine Live."

"I can't imagine that. He's still a baby."

I wanted to scream and run out, but after having been beaten nearly to death just a moment ago, I couldn't bring myself to do that.

"Do you really want to fly that much?"

"That's a stupid question. All pilots say that." "Yes."

"Every single one of them," Aisha said, lighting a non-existent cigarette and pretending to put it in her mouth. It was a habit of hers as a former heavy smoker who had been quitting for a long time.

"Lieutenant Ihlefeldt, in my capacity as technical advisor, I must advise the captain that you are unsuitable as a pilot for VF-31."

"The prototype Siegfried, a secret mass equipped with fold quartz, It's completely different from the Kairos. I can't entrust such a machine to a pilot who is in danger of becoming a Var. This is my duty as the person in charge of the technical operation of the new variable fighters and the Valkyries for Chaos and this project."

(Messer... Var?)

Certainly, there was something about that that struck me. That time when Var broke out during the battle at Randor. Messer had lost his usual cool flying style. And from then on, whenever Varl appeared fighting alongside Windamia, Messer seemed calm. Hayate and the others thought it was an expression of Messer's inner rage, a justifiable anger towards the enemy army that was treating people like drones.

"Soon, you will be assigned to a training mission in a star region on the galactic outskirts where the incidence of Var is low.

Commander of the newly established 10th Fighter Wing

"Do you want me to think of this as a promotion?"

There was a long, terrible silence.

If Aisha had a real cigarette in her hand, it would take just enough time for one to turn to ash.

"When will that be?"

"By the time the next mission is over."

Hayate couldn't do or say anything.

It was a decision he would long regret, but nothing he had done would have changed Messer's resolve.

That's how it is.

Intermission 1: "The Next Ride"

Rubble stretches out everywhere. The smell of burning human flesh and the sound of giant insects rotting can be heard all around the burned-out city.

A damaged variable fighter flies through the polluted air. She will never forget that scene. We must not forget. As she sank onto the fluffy hotel sofa, Senator Chelsea Scarlett didn't want to do anything else. I can't remember the last time I had a good night's sleep. The reality is that in between the endless waltz of meetings, negotiations and secret talks, you sleep in a rental car. However, even though this is a battlefield, no shells or missiles fly here. That is what she feels as a former soldier.

Planet Windermere's declaration of war has shaken up our everyday lives. Far away, almost on the other side of the galaxy, is the planet where humanity originated, Earth. In reality, this planet, burned to the ground in the First Interstellar War, has little value. It has no cultural heritage, and its natural environment has been replicated through cloning, making it far more abundant than other colonized planets. It was also off the interstellar route, and Earth was slowly but surely drifting away from the center of the galaxy. But even so, the people had placed the seat of the new unified government here, and established a democratic government. If not here, which planet could be worthy of being the "center of humanity"?

Yes, the "center of humanity" Chelsea looked up to the sky. She was born on the immigrant fleet, Macross 5. Naturally, she has no connection to Earth. In fact, she is a pure Zentradi, so she has no sympathy for them. That's why I can understand why the Windamians are clamoring for independence. The biometric cell phone beside me rang. I don't need to look to know it's from the secretary.

"hello"

Chelsea briefly considered not answering the phone, then picked up her phone.

He brought it close to his pointed ears.

"Sorry to interrupt your relaxation. Congressman Doug Whitney has requested an urgent meeting.

"He's finally biting the bait. What are your conditions?"

"Eden Capital will invest another 25% in the resource mining rights for the resource asteroid Ito P.

"That's very common sense and ordinary.

There's probably some ulterior motives going on.

"Please confirm. Anyway, we need to put a stop to the General Staff's grandstanding..."

"I got it"

I hang up the phone and look up at the ceiling. When I was a pilot, it was good. All they had to do was defeat the enemy in front of them without thinking about anything else. There was fear of death, but there was also trust and cheers. The political arena is not like that. The job of a member of parliament is not what is commonly called "discussion" or "debate." It is rare to see a negotiation where a debate continues until a decision is reached and the winning side's position is completely accepted. What you end up with is a quagmire of compromise and negotiation, a job of continuing to make deals in order to get something that satisfies neither party, but also infuriates neither party.

The reason Chelsea is participating in this game is due to a special situation in the Macross Frontier fleet, her second home. The Frontier Fleet entered into a war with the rival Macross Galaxy Fleet and the Vajra, a trans-dimensional lifeform that could be said to rule over the "Fold Quartz," a super-material that is said to revolutionize fold navigation and connect the stars. Through the efforts of many, the fleet gained a new home on a planet once inhabited by the Vajra, but in the process, most of the fleet's political establishment was killed or overthrown. Meanwhile, in the collapsed fleet's Zentradi community, a leader of a mutual aid society seemed like an ideal candidate.

Chelsea, who was doing this kind of work, was recommended by a member of Congress. She was originally an ace pilot at a private military provider, so she had connections in the military, and although she wasn't particularly popular (after all, the fleet at the time included Sheryl Nome and Ranka Lee), she was well-known as a singer. She ended up taking a seat in the Senate of the unified government as a voice for frontier interests.

It wasn't supposed to be like this. Many people laughed at her for being young and beautiful, saying she was just a figurehead, and she herself probably agreed, but her beautiful nature was that she still believed she could not neglect the fate of the 10 million people riding on her back.

The lights visible through the car window are bright as far as the eye can see. The first thing people did on Earth, which had been burned in the First Interstellar War, was to build a shining city of buildings with the giant humanoid aircraft carrier Macross at its center. I understand how you feel.

"Tear the Windermereans to pieces!"

"Death to the barbarians!"

"We will use the full force of the New United Nations Army to exact revenge on Windemere!"

The demonstrators walk right alongside the car. Someone else's problem. It was an enthusiastic, yet utterly irrelevant chant. There are also a fair number of placards that don't distinguish between the inhabitants of the Brisingr Globular Cluster and the Windemereans, and they want to kill the "natives" of Ragna and Al-Shahal, labeling them as rebels against Earth. It's not just Earthlings who are shouting this: there are Zentradi like her, and Peace Children who share both bloodlines. Could this be the result of Earth and the Zentradi overcoming their grudges and becoming "everyone"? If that's the case, does "everyone" really mean something exclusive? They don't think about what that means.

When it comes to dispatching forces, a call is made to various immigrant fleets and fleets of immigrant planets scattered across the galaxy. Soldiers who have never seen Earth will kill each other with Windermereian knights who have never seen Earth either.

The Earth will win the war.. There is an overwhelming difference in both quantity and technology. However, that does not mean that declaring war will solve the problem. Windemere would be completely under Earth's control, and the anger of the oppressed Windemereian people would erupt in the form of terrorism, which would decisively increase the cost of governance for Earth. Terrorism is cheap. And it is Chelsea and other unstable immigrant planets on the outskirts who will have to pay the price. With a military still in the process of rebuilding and finances in dire straits, these pioneer planets, still deeply scarred by the Vajra War, have no capacity to withstand a new war.

That's why Chelsea is flying around at the behest of their home government to avoid all-out war. Perhaps I am betraying the people of Brisingr. There is regret about that. The people of the Brisingr Globular Cluster, now occupied by Windemere, who have had their property confiscated and imprisoned, will hate Chelsea. What they need is fast and large-scale reinforcements from Earth. Keep conflict to a minimum with minimal bloodshed.

It sounds good, but that's what it comes down to. They are trying to overlook the injustice of today in order to avoid drawing their own people into the flames of war, to avoid a chain of retaliation in the future, and to avoid genocide. Of course, this does not mean that there will be no deployment of troops at all.

Most of the immigrant planets agreed with Chelsea. They were willing to spend a certain amount of money, but they could not afford to sacrifice their own soldiers. As a result, they decided to mobilize part of the outer galactic fleet under the direct control of Earth,

It would mean hitting Windemere. It's an adult solution. But.... As in the past, the Windemereian military would be forced to withdraw to the home planet, and the cold war would continue in the form of an economic blockade. Windemere would be able to claim that it had won "independence," while Earth would be able to claim that it had suppressed the rebellion. From there, they would secure their respective profits through smuggling...

There was something strange in Chelsea's military brain cells. It's hard to imagine things going so ideally. Military action is avoided in the political arena because it generates unpredictable emotional consequences that are beyond the control of political actors. In fact, this is beginning to happen. The failure to adopt the idea of destroying Windemere with reactive bombs is the result of a number of people's tenuous efforts. And the Windemere people should understand that.

In the Independence War, although it was almost a case of tacit approval, Windemereians succeeded in expelling Earth forces from the planet. (Would Windemereians act solely on the ideology of liberating Breezingal?) To think so seemed to me to be the same prejudice as those shouting those slogans. Like a pilot under attack by an enemy aircraft, Chelsea

jumped out of her seat and began touch-typing at a speed far beyond that of an Earthling.

The screen unfolds, and a torrent of information flows like a raging wave, hammering into the brain through the retina. Information is a maneuver, stock prices are thrusters, and votes and interests are missiles and lasers. Chelsea have no intuition that this maneuver is correct. It's the same as a dogfight. Avoiding the direction of the attack, read the enemy's future position and move around. The answer will come some time after the decision is made. However, in the political arena, the difference is that a few seconds later could be a few days later or a few months later.

Yes, the political struggle they are engaged in is different from the politics that existed when humanity was thriving on the surface of the Earth. Information is now dispersed and disconnected. In reality, in this three-dimensional space, the propagation of any matter, or ultimately of information, can never exceed the speed of light. It is the special theory of relativity. For example, it takes about 8 minutes and 19 seconds for light to travel between the sun and the earth. The sun Chelsea looks up at is the sun of the past, eight minutes and nineteen seconds ago. If the sun were to suddenly disappear, she would only realize this eight minutes and a little later.

This is also true for communications. For example, it takes roughly five hours to send a one-way message to Pluto, the outermost planet in the solar system. There was a movement to remove it from the definition of a planet, but it is still considered a planet because the Astronomical Society was destroyed in an attack by the Zentraedi before that could happen. It takes five hours for a message saying "hello" to arrive from Earth, and another five hours for Pluto to reply with "how are you?"

This is even the case within the solar system. However, The nearest planet, Eden, is about four light years away, meaning it would take four years for a message to reach it. There is no way that human society can be maintained like this. What was brought out was the fold technology obtained from the ancient spaceship Macross. This space-folding technology has been mocked as "using found materials," and many of its properties are still unknown, but it does work. For example, by apparently "folding" the four light-years of space to the planet Eden, it becomes possible to treat the space between Earth and Eden as if the spacecraft or radio waves had only traveled a few hundred meters.

Strictly speaking, there is a time difference due to the folding distance, but this is negligible compared to the time difference in light years. This technology was thought to continue to enable the integration of human society at the beginning of humanity's galactic age of exploration. While the fold navigation method of spaceships itself consumed more and more energy as the jump distance increased, distance was thought to be virtually unlimited for communication, an activity that involves almost no mass. Human society during this period was described as "the speed of the seas during the Age of Discovery and the Internet." Through the Galactic Network, the entire galaxy was connected in real time, and all of humanity was on a large-scale migration voyage.

However, this was not the case. Soon, fold faults were discovered. This fault, which cannot be observed in physical space, only acts in fold space. In other words, it is a space that increases the folding distance. When this fault is involved, not only the movement of spaceships but even communication is greatly delayed, with communication between the colony planet and Earth experiencing delays of a day, or even a week or even a month.

Naturally, central control collapses. It can be said that the Second Unification War, which led to the reorganization of the Unified Government, was caused by the fact that this communication delay made it physically impossible for Earth to maintain a centralized system. However, human technology has discovered a way to overcome even this.

This material is called folded quartz. This material, which is rarely found in the remains of the prehistoric Protoculture civilization, may enable humans to achieve long-distance fold navigation across fold faults and fold communication.

But that's not all. There are other weapons available today, such as pseudo-inertial control, gravity control, and space-shattering weapons. Most of the advanced technology used in cutting-edge variable fighters would not be possible without Fold Quartz. The difference in performance between Xhaos's mass-produced VF-31 Kairos series and the Siegfried used by Delta Squadron is due to the use of Fold Quartz. It is also thanks to Fold Quartz that the Walküre Song can be expanded to continental and planetary levels.

However, excluding the very few relics excavated from ruins, the confirmed sources of folded quartz are believed to be three locations in the Milky Way. One is the planet Ouroboros, an extreme outskirts of the galaxy. One is the Vajra home planet where Chelsea and the others immigrated. And finally, there is the planet Windemere. Of these, Ouroboros and the Vajra home planet were both extremely difficult to reach star systems, and

development had not progressed, so a stable supply was a dream within a dream. As for the Vajra home planet, while the immigration was successful, the source of fold quartz was lost, and the dream of a treasure island came to an end. But Windermere is different. There was an advanced civilization and an indigenous people numbering in the hundreds of millions. In other words, it was the leading supplier of fold quartz. That's why the people of Windemere couldn't stand the exploitation of the Earth. That was Chelsea's conclusion.

I also feel sympathy. If the situation were reversed, Earthlings would surely have done the same. These people, who were initially friendly, eventually took advantage of the technological gap to impose laws favorable to them, forcibly created a government that suited them, and completely seized the Fold Quartz, which was worshipped as a sacred object. In the process, they were not paid a fair wage for their labor, and only wealth was lost.

If this doesn't spark a rebellion, it would be a lie. And so, the people of Windemere succeeded. The Aerial Knights, united around King Gramia, a hero of the Second Unification War, succeeded in expelling the Earth military from Windemere. Since then, the Unified Government has tried to forget about the planet through a nominal economic blockade.

In other words, the Windemere government was victorious. Its strategic objective had been achieved. This leaves three mysteries: First, who helped them achieve this victory?, Where did the military equipment come from? Second, what is happening with the fold quartz that Windermere currently produces? Chelsea's face turned grim. The face of the former idol with a smitten look on his face was nowhere to be seen. And third, why did they dare to challenge the new unified government even after they achieved independence? I needed to be sure.

Currently, little detailed news about the Brisingr Globular Cluster reaches Earth, as most of the ultra-long distance communications networks have fallen into Windermere's hands, and the remaining news sent via standard fold communications is months late. First, get some local information. Along with a souvenir. After a moment's thought, Chelsea sighed and picked up her biometric cell phone. She was talking to the fastest racer in the galaxy. Perhaps he could even cross the turbulent waves of the fold fault and deliver a message to the globular cluster.

"Long time no see, Hakuna. This is Chelsea. Okay... Could you please take me to the other side of the galaxy? I'd like to somehow connect with Lady M..."

## Chapter 2: Jungle Conspiracy

The boy stared intently at the huge crater that stretched out before him.

There is nothing there.

It's a cursed space where the soil itself has vanished, the atmosphere itself has vanished, and simply vanished. Carlisle.

It was once a big city called that.

It was the city where the boy was born and its second capital. The people praised Carlisle as the city of flowers and the city of stars, and called it a city of culture and peace that was not inferior to the royal capital where knights gathered.

But there's nothing there anymore, only emptiness spreads. Even now, due to the instability of the space itself, entry into this area is prohibited. The bespectacled prime minister standing next to him tried to control his emotions as he spoke.

"This view is why we, the people of Windermere, fight."

"I know, Lloyd."

But the tears wouldn't stop. There were hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, of souls, smiles, memories and songs here. Just thinking about it brings tears to my eyes.

"Keith and I will now depart for the planet Voldor."

"To Voldor?"

"Yes. There we will prove ourselves the successors of the Protoculture. In doing so, we will put an end to this war, this tragedy. This cursed war that began with the arrival of those Earthlings--"

"Thank you, Lloyd. Please say goodbye to Brother Keith."

The boy didn't even try to wipe away his tears, he just stared at the wind. I had to sing. Because it is the mission.

"Heck!"

That boy, Heinz Nurich Windermere, was born into the royal family of this planet.

Hayate sneezed loudly for what seemed like ages.

"Hey Hayahaya, are you okay?"

"Well, somehow..."

More important than Makina's voluptuous breasts, which he peers at anxiously, is the tickling sensation on his nose.

A cat.

The jungle city of the planet Voldor was overrun with cats. To begin with, the indigenous people of this planet are humanoids that evolved from cats, large jaguar-like cats. They look just like humans, but they have what are known as cat ears. Hayate, Mirage, and Messer, who have infiltrated the place, as well as the rest of the Walküre crew, are dressed as Voldorians...that is, they are wearing cat ears.

"Can something like this really fool you?"

"The Voldorians are divided into many different races. The main race is the Jaguar, but there are 36 confirmed sub-species, including the Panther, Lion, and Lynx. If minority races are included, the total number exceeds 500."

The one who was quickly calling up data on the terminal in her hand was Reina Prowler.

"Wow, there are lots of cats."

The projected hologram monitor is a bit diverse, but that doesn't quite describe it. There were about 100 cat-like creatures lined up. Indeed, some of them looked like cats standing upright. For example, there are races like Hayate and his friends who can only be described as Earthlings or Zentrans with cat ears.

"Really... I explained that in the briefing, right?"

"There's a big difference between listening and doing."

Hayate shrugged at Mirage's shocked expression.

"I never thought I'd have to guard an infiltration mission like this... Damn it... I should have been assigned to guard Itair too."

".....It was Dr. Blanchett who ordered you to come here."

There was a hint of irritation in Messer's voice as he answered. It seemed he was concerned about the risks of bringing a man with a cat allergy along. Well, Hayate thought that was only natural.

"That weird doctor's?"

But, implicitly,

"Yes. After checking all the data, it seems you're the best person for the job. Captain Arad has already given his approval."

It was a way of coming to terms with the situation that was typical of a veteran pilot who trusted the strategic decisions of his superiors, rather than focusing on the events in front of him. (Otherwise, I wouldn't entrust the life and death of the Valkyries to a half-baked person like you. Such strictness only fueled Hayate's competitive spirit. If that's the case, young people think, "I might as well show them what I'm capable of.")

Also, there's the conversation we had the other day.

"What happened to the doctor himself?"

"Stand by on Aether in lunar orbit. It's too risky to send a staff member with low Var resistance down."

"The doctor was quite reluctant though."

Kaname gave a wry smile.

"Well, that's true. A planet where the city itself is buried in ancient ruins would be a hot topic for trans-dimensional archaeologists."

The capital of Voldor was indeed a spectacular sight. The sight of a modern city dotted amongst the forest was a sight that even Hayate, who had traveled to many planets, found stunningly beautiful.

(If only there were no cats...)

Hayate's cat allergy seems to be psychological. Otherwise, there's no way he would be allergic to cats from Voldor, sea cats from Laguna, cats from Earth, or even to Freya with cat ears, all of which are genetically completely different species.

"Let's go. Let's check the situation first."

The city of Voldor was quiet. I thought that since it was a city ruled by Vaal, it must be in a state of ruin. But there is no sign of that. Certainly, there were signs of skirmishes at government ministries and military facilities, but civil activities were carried out peacefully and order appeared to be maintained.

"Buy some! It's the best catnip! We also have Windermere apples!"

A sturdy-looking woman with leopard skin working at a stall forcefully pulled Hayate's sleeve.

"N-no, I don't really..."

Kaname pushed Hayate away with a smile.

"Hayate, you're at the market, so if you don't go shopping it will look suspicious."

Freya's point was true. I couldn't put on a sour face and pretend I was scouting.

"Is it from Windermere? Do you have any from Voldor?"

The one who said this was Messer, who looked like Kaname's boyfriend. He has the look of a tourist who doesn't understand the current situation. He is used to espionage activities. (Am I the only one who doesn't understand?) Hayate found this frustrating.

"Are you a country bumpkin?"

"Does it look like it?"

The leopard-skinned woman made an unpleasant face.

"I see. Voldor apples aren't very popular these days. People prefer the cheaper, sweeter Windermere apples."

Freya nodded as if she had been hired to advertise for the Windermere Agricultural

"I prefer these because they're sour. Voldor's are 1,200 catni a bag. Windermere's are 800 katni a bag. I'll bake them for you free."

The katni is Voldor's native currency, which is still used in these outlying municipalities, though not in the Galactic Center. One thousand katni should be equivalent to one new unified credit. Of course, Hayate and the others were given some Catoni along with their fake IDs.

That's it. I sigh.

"That's expensive. Make it 2,000 kkyatni for two bags."

Kaname looked like a capable manager. He had no intention of giving in. Hayate couldn't tell if it was an act or just his true nature. Then, seeing Freya's profile as she gazed longingly at the Windermere apples,

"And a bag of Windermere apples. That makes two thousand five hundred."

It seemed that this was not his true nature after all. The baked apples were delicious.

"It's delicious."

If anything, it is clear that Windermere apples are tastier. It has just the right amount of sweetness and sourness, and while it fills you up, it doesn't leave you feeling bloated. It's the perfect taste. He spoke with deep emotion to Messer,

"I didn't come here for sightseeing."

He was glared at.

"I know."

Although I replied that way, I can't deny that I did feel that way.

"Hey, Hayate, water."

"Thank you."

Freya handed over a bottle of mineral water for the New United Nations Army. They were in enemy territory. They had a water filtration kit, but that was a last resort. It was best not to drink the water if possible. It wasn't just that the water was potentially contaminated, but that the water on this alien planet was teeming with unknown pathogens and parasites.

What's confusing is that while it may work for Earthlings like Messer, Kaname, and Hayate, it may not work for Zentradi Mirage or Windamian Freya. Taking that into consideration, the answer is to just drink packaged water. The Aeter has a water circulation system on board and is capable of bottling water, but the water is rather inorganic and the taste is not great, so the New United Nations Forces' Mineralizer is the preferred drink. At first, Hayate thought there was no need to be so particular about food, but he soon found out why.

Under the pressure of not knowing when you will die, sleep and food seem extremely important. In the past, when ships were still powered by wind, warships apparently had lemonade makers, the giant battleship Yamato had a soda factory, and the ships of a great nation like America had huge ice cream makers.

I don't want to die thinking about how bad tonight's dinner was. As it passes through your throat, the scent of apples floats up and tickles your nostrils. I want to eat another apple.

"But even so"

Freya seemed to find it quite amusing to watch him go back and forth between the water and the apple like an idiot. She kept looking at Hayate's face with a smile.

"It's really peaceful."

Just one point. To hide his embarrassment, Hayate said something that went without saying. To be honest, I thought there would be tyrannical Windemere soldiers and rampaging var infected like in an action movie, but that doesn't seem to be the case. In fact, the knights of Windermere are rarely seen, and the only ones maintaining the peace are the peaceful infected, even Voldor's police and military personnel.

At first glance, it would appear to be a peaceful, ordinary day. There's just one difference. They are like robots made of organic matter, simply carrying out orders.

Controlled by the Var

Voldor's soldiers are not berserkers, but rather have their violent impulses controlled by some means and are forced to obey. Of course, the result of this is that the Var-ized soldiers will not cause suffering to the people. In fact, it will be the opposite: as long as they are under control, there will be no unnecessary sword-fighting, looting, or firing of guns in fear.

However, I felt that this idea of people being controlled like robots was creepy and not something that should exist.

As they reached the city's central square, Mirage stopped.

"Isn't that Captain Alberto Larrazabal's machine?"

In front of him was a VF-17 painted in the colors of the Voldor New United Nations Army, enshrined in humanoid form. Judging from the way they are holding large rifles, it is clear that they are on guard against rebellion. This is a battlefield after all.

"Is he someone you know?"

"I don't know him personally, but... he's one of the frontier's top aces, and he made a name for himself in the battle to subjugate space pirates. I've always wanted to meet him."

There was both longing and sadness in Mirage's eyes. It must be unbearable to see a pilot you respect so captivated that he becomes a mere puppet.

"Hayate, that."

Freya gently tugged on Hayate's sleeve.

"The song those kids are singing....."

In front of the VF-17 of the Larrazabal, two brothers were singing a familiar song. It was a cover version in Voldorian, but it was a song by Walküre.

It was obvious, it's not good. It's not something that really touches people's hearts. To begin with, the pitch is off. But that wasn't a problem. Hayate's eyes began to water. The song was a prayer. It was a wish. that's why. Because behind the cold metal cockpit, their father was trapped as just another part of a Valkyrie. It's a wish for hi parent to come back. Hayate knew that look. I remember the loneliness of not having my father.

"Sing!"

As Freya tried to run, someone held her shoulders. I recognized that profile - or rather, it was a beautiful woman who had disappeared without a trace.

"Of course, if you go, Captain Lazrrabal will be saved, but that's all."

Yes, that's all.

"We don't know what causes the Vaization. Unless we find out, the Captain will soon be turned into a Var again, and we'll be captured... and that's it."

Freya clenched her fist in frustration.

She gripped it so tightly that his hands seemed to bleed.

"More importantly, I have somewhere to go. Come with me."

"The Presidential Palace of Voldor."

Mikumo said this as casually as if she were visiting a friend's house.

He was a very beautiful man, like a statue. It's neat, or maybe too neat. It seemed to me that she was so beautiful that she surpassed human symmetry. He is a Windermereian.

"Y-yes"

His clothes are gorgeous and over the top, and she wears well-tailored designer glasses. His straight silver, soft hair, well-proportioned muscles, and articulate voice made him seem more like a refined priest than a politician or evil invader.

"You're sure that's Lloyd Brehm?"

Without a doubt, it is Prime Minister Lloyd

In the bushes, Freya was extremely nervous. Even through a long-distance camera and a laser

microphone, you can see its majesty. Even though he has parted ways with his homeland, it is no wonder that Freya holds him in awe.

"So that's the president?"

A man was lying on a couch sharpening his nails.

The Chancellor of Windermere was in Voldor, a place that had no strategic value. I had to know what that meant.

A laser microphone is a special type of eavesdropping microphone that emits an invisible laser beam at a wall or window and measures the sound waves that are reflected back. Its selling point is its long range, but it is difficult to adjust and must be set up at a fixed point.

The model used by Chaos uses a special phase laser oscillation system excavated by Professor Aisha from Protoculture ruins, which cancels out noise from ultrasonic jammers installed on walls, making it possible to hear conversations even through thick concrete walls.

"The Unified Government's rule wasn't all bad though."

The president's words were literally soothing.

"Their base created jobs and allowed for the transfer of technology. It has increased life expectancy and stabilized society. It has also revived negotiations with our sister planet, Randall... Honestly, we're not in much trouble."

"That's how they tame you."

"...Even so, isn't it too hasty to declare war? We had already agreed to the establishment of an economic zone centered around Windemere."

"We don't have time."

Lloyd adjusted his glasses.

"No, no. His Majesty the King is still alive and well. After all, he is a hero of the Second Unification War and the War of Independence."

"What is the Second Unification War?"

Freya tilted her head.

"A dozen years ago, two factions, 'Latence', who insisted on a centralized government centered on Earth, and 'Vindirance', who opposed them, fought over who would form the new unified government. At one point, the fighting spread across the entire galaxy, and 'Vindirance' ultimately emerged victorious, leading to the current confederated state system."

"Wow, I had no idea."

"Before we were born, the King of Windermere participated in that war."

"Yes. King Gramia fought as a mercenary knight on the side of Vindirance. Records say he was hailed as a hero."

"So he was on our side at the time..."

"Well, you're the current ruler of Voldor. We'll behave obediently."

The president made a dramatic gesture.

"After all the New Unified Government are the kind of people who can blow away both enemies and allies with dimensional weapons, like in Windemere"

Lloyd's eyebrows moved slightly.

Freya, who was listening, also widened her eyes.

"Are you trying to say that we brought one of those to this planet?" "No way. Impossible."

"So what is that big machine you brought to the Paraganar ruins?"

"It's an academic investigation. Once it's completed, we, the people of the globular cluster, will be the legitimate heir to the Protoculture"

"I'm sure you will prove yourself a worthy successor."

The president chewed the catnip with a listless look on his face.

"I wonder if this is the time for us to be doing something like that."

"What is needed to win a war is not military force, but culture. That is what Lynn Minmay of Earth has shown us."

"We, the Brisingr people, have cultural and historical legitimacy, and we want to treat this globular cluster as an independent economic zone, and negotiate peacefully with the United Earth Government. This academic survey is key to achieving this purpose."

"I see. No, no..."

The president shook his head.

"What is it?"

"No, I just thought that you seemed almost like an Earthling, which is unusual for someone from Windemere who values chivalry. Excuse me, excuse me! We Voldorians cannot be individualistic. How about we perform the Voldor folk dance now? I think you'll like it."

".....no thanks"

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73

「大丈夫か」  
大統領府を離れたフレリアが最初にしたのは、トイレに駆け込むことだった。  
中にまで入るわけにはいかないが、出てきたフレリアに、ペットボトルの水を差し出す  
ことくらいは、できる。  
「.....あんがと」  
いつもリンゴのように色つややかな頬が、青かった。  
「何か、あったのか？」  
「七年前」  
フレリアの言葉は、重たかった。  
「空から、光が降ってきたんよ」  
「.....」

"Are you okay?"

The first thing Freya did after leaving the presidential palace was run to the bathroom.

Although I can't go inside, I offer Freya a bottle of water when she comes out.

I can do that much.

"Thank you..."

Her cheeks, which were usually as bright as apples, were now pale.

"Did something happen?"

"Seven years ago"

Freya's words carried weight.

"Light fell from the sky"

"The clouds broke into pieces, and the wind blew as if it had been destroyed. Millions of people died near the capital... Apparently it was the people of Earth who did it... And after that, all Earth songs were banned..."

Freya was crying.

He looked like he didn't know what to do.

"Many people who went to work away from home never returned. It's unheard of in Windermere's history for someone who wasn't a knight to die in battle..."

"Carlyle's Black Storm, right?"

The one who said this was Mikumo, who had appeared again like the wind.

"The Windermere Aerial Knights used fold bombs they seized from the New United Nations Army."

"Fold bomb?"

"Yes".

"But"

"It's a weapon that literally folds the surrounding space into another dimension and annihilates it. It is a weapon that can destroy objects...or rather, it can completely erase them from existence. The city of Carlisle was literally wiped out, along with its residents."

"Mikumo-san, that's not right! That's the Earth..."

"That's what the New United Nations Army announced."

Mikumo's eyes were calm.

"...In any case, our mission is not to argue about history.

Make sure that no harm is done again."

"Is Windemere going to use a fold bomb?"

"The Intelligence Department has determined that Windemere currently does not have the ability to develop dimensional weapons.

"However, the New United Nations Army has deployed both dimensional and reactive weapons. You understand what I mean, right?" ".....Var."

It is ultimately humans who press the switch on planet-destroying weapons. This was the result of fears of an A.I rebellion, but right now, the very system of weapons controlled by humans is threatening to bare its fangs at humanity.

"Let's go, Freya, Hayate. We'll find out what Lloyd Brehm is doing at the Paraganar ruins."

Mikumo flipped up her rainbow-colored hair.

"No demonstrations or strikes. Freyja Wion."

Mikumo seemed a little disappointed.

"We, the Walküres, sing to inspire the entire galaxy. Earth and Windemere have nothing to do with it. Just focus on the stage and your performance in front of you. What are you?" "..... Walküre."

"Then let's go."

Freya started walking a beat later.

The Paraganar ruins were more of a construction site than a site of academic research. It is no wonder that Dr. Aisha fainted when she saw the image transmitted to Iter. A huge reactor was connected to the stone statue ruins in the jungle, and pipes and cables were buried everywhere. It was clear that the people excavating had no respect for culture whatsoever.

"There's no doubt that the inside has been turned into a plant."

Kaname said as he collated the data from the unmanned reconnaissance drone.

"Reyna, what about security?"

".....It's all rubbish. Makina and I can take control of it."

Shaking her big breasts, Makina grabbed the tool and smiled. There was no lie in Reina's words. The combination of her and Makina is formidable, and they can easily defeat countless security forces. They power up, seize control of, or physically destroy, and march through the ruins as if walking through a deserted field.

"Amazing.....!"

"That's Walküre's special unit, MIX."

Kaname puffed out his chest proudly.

"Of course."

"It was really hard to bring those two, who were like oil and water at first, to that level." "Hard to do?"

Kaname gave a wry smile, but Reina and Makina continued to lead the way as if they had been created by God as a pair from the beginning, and to be honest, Hayate wondered if Kaname was just teasing him.

"this....."

Deep inside was an all too familiar pile of plastic bottles.

"Mineral water, right?"

"Voldor is blessed with nature, Delivering health to....."

"By the way, this is the one that was given to us this morning."

Hayate looked at the plastic bottle hanging from his waist. Water from the granite-polished water system.

"That's true. The label is slightly different because it's for export, but the contents seem to be the same, hay hay."

"So what? The Windamere people went to the trouble of occupying an entire planet to get mineral water".

Have you tried your hand at bottling water?"

"That can't be true."

"I understand."

Even Messer seemed confused, though. No matter how you look at it, it was nothing more than an underground water intake facility and a mineral water bottling facility.

"Could it be... a dimensional weapon cooling plant?"

"I understand Mirage's concerns, but if it was just for the sake of disguise, why go to such a large-scale effort?

There's no need to set up a facility. No fold matter has been detected..."

"Hey hey, everyone."

It was Freya who came over with a big smile on her face.

"There's a snack!"

"Oh, I see."

He had a lot of apples in his hands.

"There it is...But it's a piece of equipment in this factory."

"Even if it's a covert investigation, stealing food is not okay."

"Hmm, I'll bring it back."

"Wait."

Messer held Freya's wrist.

"Are those apples from Windemere?" "Yes, they are."

"Where was it?"

"Deep inside the factory. There's so much!"

Reyna jumped up and grabbed the measuring device.

"Wait... This water and Windemere apples are supplied to the military... and to Chaos, of course."

"But... what's the problem? They both meet safety standards, right?"

"But chemicals can combine to form different substances. What if chemicals are produced in the body by ingesting certain combinations of substances?"

The results were immediate.

"The polyphenols in apples combine with the bicarbonate in mineral water to produce and possibly accumulate substances that cause Var syndrome in the body."

That was when it happened.

"Got it."

"Hey, Kumo Kumo is not here."

Everyone thought it was impossible for him to do this at a time like this, but that was just the kind of person Mikumo was.

"It can't be helped. Hayate, Mirage. You guys investigate further in with Freyja. I'll lead Kaname and the others and look for Mikumo."

Unexpected events are inevitable on stage. That's unavoidable.

Freya looked gloomy. That's probably true. What if the apple he was so proud of was the cause of the tragedy caused by Vaal?

"Hey, Freya--"

"Hey, Freya--"

At that moment, Hayate and Mirage were probably about to say the same thing. A dazzling light converges on everyone.

Beautiful men standing in the light.

"Stay still, rats. We are the Aerial Knights. We are the enforcers of justice for Windemere"

The cloaked men standing in the corridors of the ruins were terribly, terribly beautiful. And because of this, a strong sense of death hung in the air.

### Chapter 3: "The Big Escape"

The knights' gazes were fierce.

Among them all, the knight standing in the middle, with golden hair shaped like a lion's mane, was a living sword, his gaze, muscles, murderous intent, everything about him was so fierce that it seemed as if he were the embodiment of the will to kill.

My body won't move. This is what it means to be a frog stared at by a snake. Hayate is not the only one. Not only the members of Walküre, but also Hayate, Mirage, and even Messer was also intimidated by the man.

"Keith... Aero Windemere... Sir."

Freya forced the name out of her throat in a trembling voice.

"You are Freyja Wion?"

I didn't know when the man called Keith had drawn his sword. His voice was as cold as ice, and his eyes were piercing. The tip of the sword is aimed precisely at Freya's throat.

"The traitors of Windemere are hanging out with the filthy dogs of the United Government.

"She is a guilty criminal of high treason."

They were different from the Vars and thugs that Hayate had seen. He had resolve, not the bravado of a common thug, but the real determination of someone prepared to become a killer and, to be killed. He was not emotional or self-indulgent, he was resolute. He intended to kill Freya.

There was not so much as a glimmer of light in the rune of the golden haired knight. Just coldly, mechanically, and with ice-cold hatred and rage, he was going to kill Freya. In an instant, my throat became dry. My eyes wouldn't leave the knight. Several strands of cold sweat run down my skin.

Every nerve in my body screamed at me to run. My muscles trembled, telling me to take the optimal action for survival. That was how overwhelming the golden knight was, "death" itself.

No one can move. Even "Shinigami" Messer can't reach for the gun on his waist.

But still. Or perhaps that's why. Hayate took a step forward.

"Don't lay a hand on Freya."

"Oh"

The knight glanced at Hayate as if he had always thought of him as a stone on the side of the road or something - it was a reaction that made it clear that he didn't think of him as an individual.

To this man, Hayate and the others are beings he can kill at any time. To put it in perspective, they are like the chunks of chicken lined up in front of a supermarket. Would a chef holding a knife consider the chicken a threat to him? Of course not. However, if he cuts it into pieces and drops them into the pot,

"What do you mean, Air Knights? Is pointing a blade at an unarmed woman your chivalry?"

"You bastard"

The young knight beside Keith put his hand on the sword at his waist, but was stopped by the middle-aged knight who seemed to be his master.

"You can't even fight without using the brainwashed Vars as a shield, right? Aren't you a great Knight of Windermere?"

The provocation was deliberate. Partly to draw their attention to himself. But that's not all.

He was convinced that unless he could put his justification into words, and demonstrate the beliefs on which he stood, the knights before him would not understand.

"Scum!"

The young knight from before became enraged and drew his blade.

However, before that, Mirage was already moving right behind Hayate.

"Hayate!"

It wasn't something we had planned. However, we had faith that our comrades in the same formation would do it. Hayate had a request, and Mirage responded to it. Zentradedi. The blood of the giants, created as a fighting race, awakens.

A flash grenade magically shot out from Mirage's chest, shining brightly. The magnesium explosive emits a million candela of light that burns the retina. The light from a car's headlights is roughly 20,000 candela, 50 times stronger than high beams. Of course, at the same time as the light went off, Hayate, Mirage, and Messer all closed their eyes. Needless to say. He grabbed Freya's hand and ran through the flash of light. No, I tried to run.

It's a kick. A piercing shock to the right side of the abdomen and liver. The precise feel of the soles of the shoes. And it wasn't just a random kick. In the bright light, I realize that what I see in front of me is the floor. The pain was so intense that I didn't even notice the pain of falling. The beautiful twin boys standing next to the blonde knight looked down at Hayate and Mirage coldly.

"What a stupid thing to do."

"After all, a micronized Zentlan is only this good."

It was an unbelievable sight. It was supposed to be a complete surprise attack, but the knights all used their cloaks to block the flash and launched a brilliant counterattack.

The blade touches the nape of the neck. It belonged to the young knight who tried to launch a surprise attack.

"My name is Bouge. Bouge Con-Vart."

The knight who introduced himself as Bouge had a cold look in his eyes, as if he were looking at a boar he had just caught in the hunting grounds.

"I'll just tell you one thing."

Hayate felt no emotion at all as death approached him.

"The people of Windamere are the perfected successors created by the Protoculture."

"Successors...?"

The boastful tone of the Bouge knight irritated Hayate, but he thought it was important to buy time. The longer he delayed it, the more opportunities he would have to exploit. In any case, it's more important that Hayate and the others don't think that their job for the day is done once they kill Valkyrie.

"The prehistoric civilization, the Protoculture, had giants, Zentlaedi, as a warrior race to serve them.

"Yeah?"

"However, they were imperfect beings. Eventually, the Zentraedi went out of control and they became enemies of the Protoculture."

".....It was a long time ago. The Zentraedi reclaimed their culture and are now one of the successors of Protoculture!"

"That's a fallacy from Earth."

Bouge refused to listen to Mirage. The other knights nodded slightly in agreement, but the blonde knight remained motionless.

"Our history is different. Protoculture created a greater race to succeed them. We, the people of Windemere, have our own culture, superior physical abilities and intelligence, and are the true bearers of Protoculture's spirit. We have a duty to carry on the culture left behind by Protoculture and to lead our brethren across

the galaxy."

"We will liberate the Brisingr Globular Cluster from Earth's exploitation."

The twin knights continued after Borg's words.

"Don't mess with us..."

Hayate's actions from then on were definitely not calculated. There was a heat in the pit of my stomach. There's something sparkling in my eyes.

"How many do you think died?"

"What? What are you talking about, Earthling?"

"How many people do you think died because of the Vars you scattered?!"

Ryoga

Anger overcame the pain. Sit up. Glare. Everything they said seemed empty. No, it's better if it's empty. These men are hopelessly "serious." They truly believe in their own righteousness, and as such, they cannot see those who have been trampled upon. For the first time, Hayate understood in his soul that being "serious" is not always okay, and ironically, he was "seriously" angry.

"Have you seen the town of Randall?"

I squeeze out anger from the back of my throat.

"Did you see how many people died in that city? How many people who lived there died in the attacks of your own army on Sailu, how many lost their families? Did you really see that? Not just Randall. Not just in Al Shahal... All over the globular cluster, you..

I won't forget. How many people do you think died from that water and apple? I will never forget.

"Shut up!"

Whatever the reason, whether the person who was hurt was an Earthling or not, whether they were a good person or a bad person, it doesn't matter. My brain is shaking.

"There he is!"

"You!"

"Shut up!"

I will never forget the people whose hearts were stolen and used as tools to kill each other. The young knight's boot kicks Hayate in the forehead. However, this in turn made me more aware.

"You're not going to shut up! Even in the city of Voldor, there are children crying because their parents have been turned into Vars"

"It was the Earthlings who trampled on our peace first!"

"But just because...!"

(Freya!) Freya's rune shined brightly and she took a big step forward.

"Don't waste food!"

"What did you say?"

After listening to it for a little while, it seemed like a strange line. But there was no hint of a joke in those words.

"How dare you do something bad with an apple... Auntie Karin, Uncle Niels, everyone worked so hard to grow these apples, and now you are waging war with them. Is that really for the good of the people of Windermere? Apologize to the apple and everyone else!"

The young knight who called himself Borg turned red all the way up to his ears.



Keith pushes the blade back. However, the blade was controlled by Lloyd. It's not just force, it's total weight control. No pulling, no pushing.

"Also, we need to investigate Walkure. Their song can rival the Var. If it is possible, we must ascertain its power."

"That's out of the question."

It's anger. The golden knight used his physical strength to push back the blade. Hayate knew what was supporting it. Perhaps it was the same kind of anger as his own. Genuine anger at injustice. He was a warrior of a different kind, different from Messer's intelligence.

(This guy is strong!)

That's when it happens. I heard a song. That familiar singing voice.

"Mikumo-san!"

Smoke and a cocktail of lights filled the bleak corridor.

"Run!"

"I'll let you hear the song of the goddess!"

Along with the resounding singing, gunfire rang out. Messer's voice was heard, and bullets were fired at the knights' feet. Hayate and his friends are not going to let this opportunity slip away.

Grab Freya's hand and run!

"...Seriously?"

"Seriously."

Arad, who had advanced into the airspace above Voldor in low orbit, with the planet right in front of him, was wide-eyed at the report from Dr. Aisha Blanchet. The doctor, watching the rainbow-colored waveforms on the monitor, felt like he was playing dress-up in a shop window. Her eyes sparkled like a girl looking at a doll.

"In response to the song of the Valkyries, the entire ruins of Voldor are beginning to awaken...!"

".....It's not a sound energy system or some such facility set up by Windemere, is it?"

"This fold wave is something we cannot recreate in our modern age. There's no doubt about it...! This planet is a winner! Oh dear! I should have descended after all!"

"If we had let you descend, things would have become several times more complicated, so we stopped it,"

Arad began to say. Judging by the way the doctor lost his mind, it was definitely the right decision. But a decision must be made anyway. And soon.

".....Seriously!"

The true nature of military decisions is unknown to historians who look at history books later. He calmly analyzed the formations of the troops, spent days in a comfortable room figuring out the "correct answer," and corrected the mistakes of the commanders. They denounce the fallacy, but there's not much point in doing so. In reality, commanders must make extraordinary decisions in a matter of seconds, often under extreme stress and fatigue for days, and may or may not be right. And that decision hinges on the lives of hundreds, even thousands, of people. And Arad was the man to make that decision.

"Contact Chuck, who is on reconnaissance! We'll enter the atmosphere and launch a surprise attack to retrieve Walkure and Delta!"

"You know how they say you can't catch a jellyfish unless you jump into the ocean? I'm in command of a fighter wing. I'll leave the aircraft carrier to you, Doctor."

"Thank you."

"Understood. I don't mind such an absurd command."

Without even trying to hide his joy at being freed from the tedium of desk work, Arad jumped from the captain's chair, grabbed his helmet from beside him, and ran down the bridge's ladder.

(Seriously, every single pilot is like that...)

Aisha gave a wry smile and returned to the console.

Keith was seething with rage. I can understand why Lloyd stopped me. But that's the theory. Morality and chivalry are only important if the opponent is a worthy opponent. Keith thought that showing mercy to the Earthlings, who had caused so much death and so much atrocity, was the thinking of a politician. That's probably not the case. What Keith and Lloyd once shared must have been anger. He must have been angry at the injustice and prepared to take responsibility for it.

I want to kill all the Walkure and have only Lord Heinz's song echo throughout the galaxy. That's simple justice. In this world there is gray justice, white evil, and black justice. However, Keith chose to be the white knight. He decided to separate black from white with his own sense of justice. Therefore, Keith saw it as weakness for the young knights like Bouge to be angry at the words of that enemy soldier called Hayate. No matter what justice the enemy has, no matter how much compassion they have, they will crush him and lay righteous deeds on his corpse.

Building justice. Heinz sets out on the path of kingship, atop the mountain of corpses and rivers of blood he has built. I think that's all I need. A bullet grazed the side of his cheek. It was an astonishingly accurate shot. If I hadn't been the one leading the charge, my head would have been blown off. Evading and attacking are the same to Keith.

It's Messer. He leaps like this and captures a man hiding in the shadows of a leopard statue in the ruins. In his hand is a silenced infiltration rifle. Keith unleashes a deadly slash, but Messer blocks the blow with the bayonet attached to his rifle. He brushed it off.

Keith's lunatic movements shifted slightly. It was unbelievable. To think that a normal human, not even a cyborg, could match his reflexes!

"Have you read my mind?"

"White Knight Keith!"

"You are the 'Grim Reaper'?"

Without the slightest panic, Messer pointed his rifle at Keith and fired. Of course, there was no way he would hit something like that. Keith kicked another statue, then turned around and kicked it, sending the rifle flying.

"Damn it...!"

Messer's eyes fixed on Keith. There is no resignation, no hatred. These are the eyes of a man simply seeking survival and continuing to fight. Without the slightest hesitation, Keith sheathed his sword.

".....Why?"

There was no doubt that the man in front of him was feeling humiliated. Keith also felt that he had insulted the resolve of a man who had chosen to become a rear guard in order to continue killing as many people as possible and allow his allies to escape. In fact, if it hadn't been for Keith, this "Grim Reaper" might not have been annihilated, but it would have dealt a heavy blow to the Knights, allowing their allies to successfully retreat.

"My fight with you will be in the sky."

The night sky is visible through the ceiling of the shattered ruins. There, an air battle between the 3rd Fighter Wing and the Voldor Air Force has already begun. The brilliance of the battle outshines the stars. This prey is different. That's fine. He was a man worthy of striking into Keith's spirit as a knight.

"That's fine."

The voice of the "Grim Reaper" is filled with flames of shame and anger. Only by defeating such a formidable opponent head-on could he prove to the world the righteousness of the justice that he and Lloyd believed in.

Because it can be proven to the world. That's why Keith didn't pursue the man who was retreating while protecting Walküre. He didn't have his subordinates chase him either. He took out his mobile device.

"Lloyd"

"Keith? Where's Walküre?"

"I missed them"

"...Command for the Wind Singer's power, Lord Heinz, to appear from the throne."

He could hear Lloyd grimacing on the other end of the terminal. He was born into the same royal family. Even if they are young, even if it means sacrificing themselves, royalty pays the price to sit on a throne of glory. The king bleeds. That's what I decided. Even the young prince is no exception. That is the white justice that Keith believes in. There is only black and white in this world.

"I'll say it again. Let Lord Heinz sing. That will be the way to prove our righteousness."

"...I understand. I will contact home immediately."

Lloyd was kind. Keith found that kindness very appealing. However, this is unnecessary, just as the beauty of flowers is unnecessary for war. When we left the ruins of Voldor, the sky had already become a battlefield. Crimson flames stain the sky. As Hayate and his friends run through the jungle, the metallic sound of a thermonuclear burst turbine engine cuts through their ears. Hayate and Mirage stood to protect Walküre, then realized what that sound was and called out,

"Commander!"

"Too late!"

Beautiful wings that flutter down like a fantasy. Siegfried The VF-31 piloted by Arado showed no signs of damage whatsoever. The wings, which must have broken through the air defense network from over 30,000 meters above the stratosphere, showed no damage whatsoever. Behind them is Hayate and his team's VF-31, which is being remotely controlled.

"Hey guys! Come on Delta Platoon, let's take another swim! Jump in the ocean!"

"Sorry for the wait, the big wave is coming!"

In the cockpit, Arad gave a big thumbs up. Of course, that was my intention. This is the stage where Hayate should fly.

#### Chapter 4: Singer of the Wind

The boy had no interest in singing. Crown Prince Heinz of Windemere had doubts. This is because the power known as the Wind singer is not manifested in just anyone from the Windemere royal family. In fact, Keith Aero Windemere, who is also a member of the royal family and whom the boy regards as his older brother, does not possess such power. This means that no one in the royal family, or any of the nobles who inherited their blood, possesses it either. For starters, the power did not manifest in either his father, Gramia V, or his grandfather King V.

Therefore, Heinz, the only direct descendant of the royal family, had the power of the Wind Singer was seen as a blessing from the Windemere winds upon the royal family. That's why Heinz sings today too. There is neither joy nor sadness there.

He sang from the bottom of his heart, as if squeezing his soul out.

"Heinz-sama."

The voice of a page came. A young boy, beautiful as a little bird, not yet in puberty. Only matters of state were permitted to interrupt his vocal training.

And the Kingdom of Windemere was at war. In other words, it can be understood that the page's calling him is related to the war. Heinz accepts that he must fight to bring light to the hearts of people in this desolate galaxy. In the vacuum of space, on a scorching outer planet, on a space station with a thin atmosphere. When he thinks about the soldiers who are facing off against the New United Forces, the knights who support his comfortable life, and his servants, he realizes that he is truly blessed.

He sings at the request of the Prime Minister, day or night. There is no joy or excitement there. Just as an engineer operates his machine with precision, or a farmer performs his daily chores, so too does he sing until his throat is torn in the temple. That was his life and his destiny. I thought that was fine.

Until that day.

The word "cockpit" originally meant a cockfighting arena. It's a place where roosters are thrown into a small hole and fight to the death. Fighter pilots liked the term because they felt that the situation of the fighting cocks was similar to their own.

There are various theories about the first aircraft ever developed to shoot down other aircraft, but the most well-known is that it was developed by a nation called the German Empire over 150 years ago during World War I, a small-scale intercontinental conflict fought on the surface of the Earth.

The aircraft, called the "Fokker Eindecker," was only 7.2 meters long, about one-third the length of the VF-3, weighed only 400 kilograms, and had a top speed of just 140 kilometers. However, the Eindecker, equipped with a powerful 7'92 mm machine gun, had tremendous combat power. As a result, he dominated the skies at the time and was feared as the "Fokker's Punishment" - and an ace spy. One after another, it produced fearsome heroes known as ace pilots.

Since then, the size of the cockpit hasn't changed much. There's a pilot, a seat, and a control stick. Of course, power that was once transmitted by men using their muscular strength via wires from the control stick is now transmitted in an intricate manner via a computer-controlled fly-by-light system. Enemy detection that once relied solely on the human eye has been replaced by an electronic eye reconstructed using a complex sensor system and cameras. But still, some things remain the same.

He's a pilot. At least, that's what Messer Ihlefeld believes, and so do the pilots who gather on the Macross Elysion. Probably every variable fighter pilot in the galaxy would believe it. In the end, it is not thermonuclear burst turbine engines, swing wings, or inertial control systems that make planes fly. It is the burning blood and fighting spirit of the men and women who hold the controls.

They believe that only bullets, missiles and lasers fired with murderous intent and heartfelt respect are worthy of shooting down the enemy. The same could be said of the men known as the "Knights of the Air."

He moves his head around. The AR helmet and the aircraft's sensors are synchronized. What VF-31 sees becomes what Messer sees. It's as if he's looking through the cockpit wall, and

everything he sees is the sky.

Messer is wearing a type of dynamic armor called EX-Gear. By tracing his movements and transmitting them to the aircraft, it allows the humanoid fighter to move more precisely as he wishes and also protects his body from sudden acceleration and deceleration.

(This is who I am)

Any pilot would think so. Apparently, it's not good when you're on the ground. Even if you are on full alert, you can't escape by accelerating suddenly, and it's not good that you can only move in two dimensions, with no ascent or descent. Gravity is not good in the first place.

Of course, there is recognition that it is a means of murder. Messer has killed many enemies in the past, and he is prepared to take the initiative in killing the enemy rather than see the gruesome corpses of his allies and civilians. That is not something to be praised. One day, I too will join the ranks of the dead, and it will not be a peaceful death. Your whole body will be burned, or you will be thrown into the vacuum of space, or you will be reduced to pieces of flesh without any bones left, or your organs will be filled with iron. Either he'll be shot in the arm, writhe in agony, and then die. The same fate befell so many of his comrades, and even more so the enemies he shot. I can only pray that it's in the sky.

"Delta Platoon, all units, let's go."

Captain Arad's voice came, slightly muffled.

"Yes, we ready."

Needless to say. Now, the roaring thermonuclear burst turbine engine is Messer's heart. His wings are silvery white blades. As long as he is in this cockpit, he has no fear of death. No hail of bullets can dampen his spirit. My heart pounded.

(That song again...!)

Messer is unaware that the angelic voice reaching him through the fold waves is Heinz's. Blood flow speeds up. My heart is beating like a bell. I silence the AI that shows physical abnormalities. It doesn't take a warning from Dr. Blanchett. It's your own body. You know it.

(Almost there...!)

It is my own will to fight.

(The song I want to hear is not that kind of song...)

The Grim Reaper's wings reach towards the sky.

The sky that Hayate jumped into was a battlefield.

The Aether had already entered the upper atmosphere and launched its combat wing, engaging in a fierce air battle with the Voldor Air Force, which had come to intercept them. The unmanned VF-31 was delivered through a corridor that turned the sky into a fireworks display. Arad's technology is truly impressive.

"I repeat. Our mission is to protect Walkure. We will hold a live vaccine event here."

Neutralize the surrounding Var soldiers. Open a path to break through. Otherwise, the gravity of Aither

"You'll be targeted if you leave the defensive perimeter."

That was Arad's wise message to Hayate and the others who crawled out of the ruins, fearing for their lives. Of course, I have no complaints. They brought me a variable fighter. What could I complain about?

"The fold song that was heard during the encounter on Randall has been observed. I expect Var to act in a controlled manner, just like last time."

"I know! But the first wave will be old-fashioned drones, right? Easy!"

Still, my heart froze as we took off from the forest, weaving through the tall, dense trees. Once they were spotted and targeted by enemy aircraft, like the VF-31s slowly hovering through the forest, they were no different than turkeys. They had to take off and gain speed and altitude.

"Delta 5! Two o'clock!"

"Roger!"

Mirage gave short but precise instructions. The VF-31, known as the Gerwalk, cuts through the trees with only its arms and legs deployed. What came into view was an AIF-7S (Ghost) unmanned fighter jet painted in Voldor colors. With unmanned aircraft, there was no need to show mercy. It shot down one with a short blast from its beam gun pod, then rocketed upwards. It then destroyed the other two with the railgun on its arm.

"How could you lose to a RC plane?"

"Hey Delta 5, you know I'm sending out a jamming signal that makes them look like a RC plane, right?"

Chuck, piloting the electronic warfare-equipped VF-31, exclaimed in astonishment. Packed with electronic weapons, Chuck's VF-31 rarely engages in air combat. Though it is part of the ACR, its primary role is to disable enemy missiles and drones using high-tech equipment such as radars and jammers. Even now, Chuck was high in the sky, watching the battlefield, providing support to the Deltas and the Valkyries.

"I know, I'll borrow it."

While we were chatting away like that, our field of vision was a sea of light created by lasers, plasma, and missiles. The forest below is burning everywhere.

A stray bullet grazed the cockpit, just a few dozen centimeters away (Unbelievable!)

Despite this, Hayate was excited. I am certainly alive now. There was that feeling. Joy. There was that joy. It was only when he was so close to death that Hayate was able to feel, helplessly, that he was flying in the sky and that he was alive. That may be a stupid thing to do. Ordinary people find such joy in nature and find their own way of life. If you say that we are born, find a partner, continue our lives, and then die, then perhaps that is true. But that's not the case. It's like a bird only discovering the meaning of its wings once it has left its cage. He was a young man who had no choice but to do so. It may be foolish, but it is not evil or sad. However, there are some flowers that can only bloom in this way.

It turns approaching missiles into fireworks with lasers. As they pass each other, he unfolds his arms and blows away the unmanned fighter jet with a Pinpoint Barrier Lariat. Yes, only Hayate can live and shine in a place like this.

Another girl's stage is about to begin. And protecting that stage is where Hayate shines the most.

The Walkures are not hiding in a safe zone. Singing on the battlefield is their way of being. But today is different. It's the "enemy" another song dominates the battlefield.

"This song....."

"Fre fre... this."

"Yeah"

Freya nodded, feeling her throat go dry.

"The song of Prince Heinz of Windermere..."

There's no way I didn't know. There's no way I could forget. The language of the motherland. The melody of my homeland.

"yes!"

That song is sad and yet majestic!

"Song of the Wind...But this song has no color..."

"It's the same as with Kumo Kumo... no, the waveform is stronger now."

Makina, who was checking the fold wave checker in her hand, let out a nervous cry.

"Does that mean it's in tune with those ruins?"

Makina nodded in response to Kaname's question.

"The ruins themselves are emitting light. This corresponds to Dr. Blanchet's document M30-BX. It appears that the fold material in the ruins is functioning as an amplifier."

"Roger that. Transfer all the data to Itair one by one. Request analysis. Okay, everyone, let's go as usual!"

The girls' voices chant together. Yes, this is a battlefield. I made up my mind. Whether there was a concrete enemy or not, no, it was precisely because there was one - this was their stage. A stray missile landed nearby, and was contained by a barrier deployed by the drone. No one screamed. She will sing on the battlefield and save the people from the threat of Varl.

And even in the midst of all this, Mikumo Guynemer was smiling. Or perhaps it was precisely because of this that he was laughing.

"That's great, things are getting exciting."

There's only one thing she cares about. *It's true* If that's the case, the only way to beat them is through their performance on stage. Will the missile hit them? Are they within bombing range? That's not a problem. Wouldn't it be much more humiliating to lose in performance and still be alive? Mikumo believes so. I don't know any other way to live. That's the kind of girl she is. That is why it is beautiful.

In aerial combat, shootdowns occur spontaneously. The kind of one-on-one combat that involves using all your strength, like those seen in TV dramas and movies, is the lowest of the low. The best thing you can do is to defeat your opponent in an instant, from outside their range, without them noticing.

"That's hilarious."

Hayate once said this to Mirage, causing him a lot of trouble.

"Please consider military rationality. Casualties to our allies..."

"Well, but, you know, we're the Delta Platoone, right?"

Isn't it lame to fight in a cowardly way?"

"it is....."

When Mirage was at a loss for an answer, Messer, who happened to be passing by, came to his rescue. He threw one of the deck brushes he had lying around to Hayate, and then, holding the other like a fencing rapier,

"Go ahead and poke me."

Needless to say, Hayate took the initiative. If you feel challenged, do it. It was just a moment. Moreover, if it is a challenge from a man who has set his sights on it, there is no reason to run away. Messer stepped forward and thrust faster than Hayate's, and grabbed his throat.

"This is it."

".....I see. That's certainly not cowardly."

"I hope you understand."

Messer shook his head, saying he was a difficult man, and left. Mirage was the only one who looked dumbfounded, but Hayate's soul understood what Messer was trying to say.

If you think of the "battlefield" as the area within your field of vision, then attacking from outside your opponent's field of vision would certainly be cowardly. However, it is you who defines the stage. No, what if you think of the stage as the entire sky?

Isn't it rather elegant and cool to attack from outside the opponent's "intent" and range, sliding in and defeating them in an instant without giving them a chance to "start" their movement?

From the moment he thought this, Hayate began to enjoy flying even more. Using a good aircraft and coordinating with teammates will help you fly higher.

(What's wrong with that?)

I've come to think that way.

(I'll outsmart them in a fair and honest way)

That's how I began to feel.

"Yes!"

In the air, it transformed into a Battroid. Its head-mounted composite sensors were

exposed, and it captured an approaching formation of Voldor Air Force VF-17 (Nightmare Plus) aircraft. With ultra-long-range laser sniping, Hayate destroyed the engine nozzles of two of them in quick succession, and simultaneously fired missiles that destroyed roughly a dozen unmanned fighter jets.

"Delta 5, don't get carried away! We're closing in!"

The night sky was filled with rays of light, like the glow of the Laguna sea. Hayate thought it was beautiful. Although Delta succeeded in striking first with its ultra-high performance aircraft, the enemy numbers were overwhelming. More than half of them were shot down, but the next moment a storm of missiles and lasers caught us and poured down upon us. The reason for this is not only Hayate's skill, but also the difference in their electronic equipment.

All variable fighters incorporate some form of stealth technology. As mentioned earlier, the principle in air combat is "find first, shoot first." The means of finding are the naked eye and sensors such as radar, and the means of shooting are missiles and machine guns. So what's the best way to defend? Needless to say, it's impossible to find. This is where hide-and-seek comes in.

In the past, a type of stealth camouflage paint scheme involved painting an aircraft green if there was a forest underneath. Before the First Interstellar War, primitive anti-radar paint and more advanced "stealth" technology had been developed, including the use of devised exterior shapes to reduce radar reflection and deceive enemy aircraft's radar and infrared sensors. Currently, various technologies originating from the Protoculture are used to disrupt the system, including radar, infrared, and even optical cameras. Of course, the sensors that detect it are also constantly evolving, so it's a cat-and-mouse game. Therefore, the VF-31, which is equipped with the latest stealth technology, is no match for Voldo's older models, the VF-1 and AIF7S.

Missiles targeted the wrong direction, radar picked up shadows that didn't exist, and laser machine guns that were supposed to be guided by sensors and hit the target with 100% accuracy were fooled by deceptive signals and fired into thin air.

"All units, formation Erebus!"

Fighter planes from both sides pass each other, dodging the onslaught. At last, the air battle begins. Three V-31A Kairos from the 5th Chaos Platoon charged in from the sky and were instantly turned into fireballs. Messer confirmed this and, rather than mourn the deaths of his comrades, began climbing and searching for the enemy. It's not that he's cruel. It's just a reflection.

(Move, move!)

That's all. Messer's experience of thousands of air battles appeals to him. If it's moving, it's not dead. If you keep your eyes open, you won't miss anything. Furthermore, the 5th Platoon is a group of professionals. They were recruited as a group from the collapsed General Galaxy Corporate Army. All of them are powerful, augmented soldiers, so-called cyborgs. From the start, this is the perfect unit to cut through enemy lines and come to your aid.

(Only someone can do all that in an instant)

A blurry shadow appeared on the other side of the AR helmet. A stealth system that disrupted the computer-corrected image—there was no doubt about it. The Sv-262 Draken. A cutting-edge, hostile variable fighter as noted by the intelligence department. He rose further, aiming for the rear of the Draken as if to dig into it.

Of course, the enemy aircraft would not allow that. In an instant, it transformed into a Gerwalk and swung the craft sideways, tracing a beautiful path in the sky like an ice skater, then made a sharp turn and came up behind Messer. No, I'm trying to turn around.

By that time, Messer was no longer in his position. He accelerated even faster and did a quick somersault, trying to hold down the Draken's head as it tried to spin. Then, the Draken transformed into a Battroid. That's all there is to it in words, but in reality it only lasts a few seconds.

Meanwhile, the two aircraft are exchanging all sorts of missiles and lasers. The enemy plane had a golden line that he had seen before. (No doubt it's that guy) The golden-haired knight in the ruins, Keith Aero Windermere. (Otherwise, who could fly like this?)

"All Deltas! I'll take the White Knight! Don't mess with me!"

He did not shout this out of a desire for fame. If I didn't, I felt someone would die the next moment.

Beads of sweat trickled down Freya's smooth, white, egg-like forehead. It wasn't just the heat of battle. (I didn't do it as I practiced...!) Yes, that's how I feel. It's not just Freya. It's clear that Kaname, Reina, and Makina are all disrupting the tempo. Even Mikumo, who maintains her solitary nature, is dragged down by the chaos of the other four and is unable to perform at 100%. Of course, it's not a complete failure. It's just that it's not enough.

Mikumo, her superhuman training and talent keep the crumbling stage standing. We know the cause. It's Heinz's song. His singing resonates through the fold space, and is similarly subjected to interference from other songs that pass through the fold space.

This has been proven through repeated experiments since before the founding of Walküre. However, there is a lack of data on what causes this mutual interference. In fact, on the bridge of the Aether, Dr. Aisha had left the battle command entirely to her subordinates, her eyes shining with excitement at the vast amount of data streaming in. This was the first time in history that two "songs" with the ability to interfere with Varl had collided on a field.

The idea that there are five people here and one there is almost meaningless. Whether it's a song sung by five people or a song sung by one person, it's still a song. It's just a matter of which one performs better.

Mikumo glanced at Freya, who was singing beside her. I can sing much better than I thought I would. I felt that I had become a member of the enemy country, and that my country had done such a despicable thing. Being able to accept this fact and sing about it is proof of being a first-class artist. (But it's not enough) There are tens of thousands of first-class people in the galaxy.

It's a common occurrence. Mikumo had seen plenty of geniuses. That's only natural. First-class, genius, hardworking, singing until your throat is hoarse. Still, I can't reach the summit. At the top, Mikumo is searching for someone who can shine with her. But Freya's rune is not shining. It shows that her singing is ultimately nothing more than first-class routine work, a faithful imitation of previous training, just ordinary genius. (Then I don't need it.) That won't make Mikumo shine.

(What I want is)

(why?)

\*

I wonder how many enemy planes they shot down. I wonder how many times it turned. The lock-on warnings almost filled his field of vision, and the altitude and speed indicators continued to scream as Hayate flew at the edge of his consciousness. He glides just inside the shadow of a rock, diving into a group of missiles before their proximity fuses detonate, and avoiding them before they explode. After a series of ultra-high speed barrel rolls, he transforms into a Battroid, forcibly stopping the aircraft and sniping the aircraft that has passed him.

All of these are flimsy moves that would get Mirage a scolding if they were to try them in training. But there's no other way. I no longer have any sense of time. I don't know. It feels like minutes, hours, or maybe even years have passed since the battle began. The eyes that are about to pop out of when G-forces hit, and the stomach that can't stand the strain and wants to vomit, are terrifying.

Hayate mustered up his nerves, which were frozen with fear, and continued to fly. All I know is that I desperately love this ordeal. What I mean is that I love the most dangerous job in the galaxy: being a backup dancer. One moment of misjudgment could send me crashing into the ground at supersonic speed or being engulfed in missile flames.

Bouge Con-Vaart, the young knight sitting in the cockpit of the Sv-262, had no choice but to acknowledge this fact. It's also different from the Earthlings and Zentrades he's fought so far. Of course, there's no doubt that the enemy aircraft, called "Siegfried," is extremely powerful enough to keep up with the Sv-262. But that's not all. All of Chaos' enemy aircraft fight tenaciously.

(Unbelievable)

It's probably to protect the singing girls known as the Valkyries. To the young, angry Bouge, they appear to be a revealing, decadent bunch. (My sisters wouldn't dress like that.) Bogue had been taught that it was vulgar for an unmarried girl to sing such an outspoken song, and that it was not something a knight should do. That is the Bouge's belief. Therefore, he did not understand the orders of the Prime Minister, Lloyd, who wanted to capture the Valkyries rather than kill them.

But that's not the case now. I don't know their songs. I don't know their culture either. Moreover, I don't know anything about that woman named Freya who abandoned her homeland. There's only one thing I know. The enemy before them was using all they had to protect them. All this technology employed, and above all, with even more astonishing passion, they are fighting on equal terms with the Air Knights, no, even more than equal terms. In fact, in the midst of the melee, the enemy's captain's plane had its engine damaged, and Theo, one of the Jussila brothers, had to retreat. They are forced to retreat, and the other knights are also stuck in the enemy's front line.

And how impressive is the enemy aircraft that is holding back the White Knight Keith? If the source of that strength is the Valkyries.

"We must surpass it!"

The young knight roared from inside the cockpit. He roared and roared and roared. (strong.....!)

\*

Mirage was being shot at repeatedly by Bouge, but in the midst of the melee, she was amazed at the strength of the Aerial Knights. It doesn't seem like a bunch of remote nationalists just got their hands on the latest aircraft. They had probably erased their nationality markings and been sent to a conflict zone somewhere to gain combat experience, but even so, their command was superb and perfectly coordinated.

Added to that would be the Vaar-ified Voldor Air Force. Of course, the fact that Mirage was able to continue fighting without being shot down in such a situation shows that he was also an outstanding ace. (But that's not enough). Of course, the difference in quantity is obvious.

In the atmosphere, variable speed fighters use thermonuclear burst turbine engines to heat and eject the air itself, so as long as they have the engines they can continue flying without worrying about fuel (apart from auxiliary chemical thrusters). However, missiles and bullets are not infinite, and the same goes for wear and tear on the aircraft.

Above all, a pilot's fatigue cannot be compensated for by willpower alone. Someday, somewhere, when the tension eases, she will be shot down. There is only one chance of winning.

The only way is for Walkure to surpass Heinz's and stop the Varified Voldor Air Force.

(I believe in you all...!)

\*

There was a strong impact, and Hayate's body shook like an egg thrown into a shaker. If I hadn't been wearing EX-Gear, I would have passed out and died.

"Guh...Ahh...!"

Hits in aerial combat are always sudden. When you are prepared, you are unlikely to be shocked. The attack comes from outside of consciousness. Nightmare Plus VF-117. That's what Mirage and the others were taught. So, the fact that Hayate's plane was shaking now meant that he had been caught off guard.

"This thing...!"

In an instant, Hayate's well-trained body regains its balance and transforms into a Battroid. It was a familiar aircraft. That proud Valkyrie I saw in the capital of Voldor. (Captain Alberto Larrazábal!)

The fact that Larrazábal is an ace is not a big deal for Hayate. I remember those little children singing prayers in front of his plane. It's about their eyes waiting for their father. The lock-on marker screams, "Fire!" The VF-117 is a great machine, but compared to the VF-31, it's practically outdated. At this distance, I can just leave the firing to the computer and shoot it down. But Hayate didn't do that. There's no way it's possible. I can't kill their father. Probably even if he hadn't seen those kids. Hayate would have done the same. Even though he knew it would put him and his comrades in danger. Therefore, he cannot kill his enemies. Hayate Immelman is that kind of guy. And his comrades and Walküre understand, forgive, and love him for being that kind of man. So that's fine. So Hayate did so.

\*

As Freya continued singing, two giants ran past, grappling with each other. Siegfried Nightmare Plus. One is Alberto Larrazábal's VF-117, and the other is Hayate's VF-31. Freya

immediately knew what he meant. (Hayate...their father...) Freya felt the same way.

\*

Bouge didn't understand Hayate's intentions. It is in the middle of a melee. Battroid grappling is a spectacle of fighting between Valkyries.

(No way)

It's something they do to entertain the audience at events like the "Vanquish Race," but if they did it in a real battle, they'd just be a target for sniping. If there is an intention, there is only one. Bouge remembered the young Earth soldier he met in the ruins, Hayate. (Are you trying to help?) Is that what you mean? Even Bouge feel pity for those who have been turned into Varl. But this is a necessary evil, a means to an end until independence is eventually regained. Moreover, to the pilots on Earth, they are merely enemies, aliens. Bouge asserted that this was just his own imagination. Even if that's the case, there's no choice but to drop it. (I'm a knight!) Like a knight with a lance raised, he shouts.

\*

It was Mirage who blocked that cry.

"Don't get in the way!"

I can at least understand Hayate's intentions. I want to support that feeling.

Vertical The purple machine acts as a shield, blocking all of Bouge's attacks. The pinpoint barrier is penetrated and part of the energy conversion armor is blown off. The frame itself was damaged by repeated reckless maneuvers.

\*

"Dammit, wake up!"

Hayate launched every last one of the multi-drones installed on the VF-31. They want to deliver Freya and the others' song to Alberto, but Alberto Larrazábal refuses to respond. The response was a torrent of charged particle cannons and missiles.

"What are you doing?! Didn't you hear the brats singing?"

Still, Hayate doesn't shoot. Just deploy your shields and barriers and keep shouting.

"The kids are waiting for you to come home! Go home!"

A house without parents is lonely. It's heartbreaking and sad. Hayate wonders how much loss he will suffer if he loves his parents and adores them. I know it well. That's why. (That's right) I vividly remember my mother's small back when she lost my father.

"Go home! Go home! I told you to go home!"

Even as rocks shattered, trees burned, and the Valkyrie's joints sparked, Hayate continued to scream.

\*

Freya saw herself in that figure. Maybe that's what I was like when I first left the planet where I was born. I was completely resigned, without thinking about anything, I just wanted to sing.

"My song is.....!"

Freya's runes begin to glow.

"I won't lose at singing!"

She ran between the two Valkyries. I don't even think about dying.

"The song...the song, song, song is GoriGori!"

The VF-17 accelerated. He aims the knife in his hand at Hayate's cockpit.

"I'm all GoriGori!"

The runes lengthen and shine brightly.

"Yes! Sing, Freya!"

Freya's song had certainly reached Hayate's ears and heart. I could hear the song. He threw away the gunpods and redirected all power to the energy conversion armor and pinpoint barrier. Its appearance is that of a giant shield. Like the legendary hero who once slayed a dragon and became immortal.

The silver giant god becomes a wall of protection. Mikumo laughed with great satisfaction.

"Finally, you see."

"This song is..."

A crystal clear song ran through Heinz's mind. It was a wind he didn't know. I had to know, it was the wind.

"This song is....."

"different

Captain Alberto Larrazábal was certainly looking back at home at that moment. He dreamed of returning home to be greeted by his wife and children. The dream is the reality to which he must return.

"Yes, I am.....!"

"Stop that song!"

Bouge, in agony, increased the power output of their beam gun pods. He felt that Lloyd's orders no longer mattered. The women before him were witches.

"Song!"

"That's right."

If things continued like this, the Aerial Knights would fall into disarray, and the Voldor Air Force, which they had taken control of, would turn against them. They intended to attack Hayate and Alberto as well.

"Everyone sings GoriGori, it's fun, so everyone sings GoriGori, and that's my

No one knew what he was saying, but the meaning was clear to all who heard it, because it was Freya. Hayate smiled thinly and stepped on the pedal. The pendant on her chest sparkles and the aircraft accelerates.

On the bridge of Aither, Aisha smiled, pleased that her hypothesis had been confirmed.

"Delta 5 fold increase....yes, that's what I thought."

Crossing his shapely legs, the genius scientist smiled fearlessly.

"I understand"

Mikumo? Now is our stage. Return to proticulture.

"I won't let his singing get in the way!"

It was a dance. It's not a fighting technique at all. However, it was a wonderful dance that made Freya's stage shine, and therefore Bouge, skilled in fighting techniques, was unable to see through her movements. Before I knew it, they had gotten in close enough to cut both of the Battroid's arms off. That was it.

"Send it to me, Freya! Your feelings! Your song!"

But even so, Bouge, the Sky Knight, is no ordinary person.

With both arms gone, it leaps and aims its built-in missiles at Hayate.

But then...

"Captain!"

The Sv-262's right leg snapped off. Even Bouge had no choice but to fall. Captain Alberto Larracerval's machine fired a shot with the beam gun pod. The VF-117 gave a thumbs-up, then dropped to its knees and stopped moving. It seems that all of the energy was directed into the beam in order to penetrate the armor of the 262.

"Delta 5, Hayate!"

"But!"

".....yes"

Hayate was about to try and help when the voice of his commander, who was concentrating on gaining control of the air, scolded him. I learned

"We don't have time to rescue Voldor's soldiers! We don't have time to pick up dozens of Pilot's that have been disabled across this battlefield!"

"...Just because they're a Var doesn't mean they'll be killed. We'll definitely come to rescue them."

I had no choice but to accept that Arad was right. The confusion among the Air Knights is only temporary. Soon the second wave will come. There is no way to miss this chance and return to Aither. Once that was decided, Hayate's decision was quick.

"Freya, retreat! We're pulling up to Ragna!"

"Yes!"

Freya answered Hayate with a special smile.

\*

The VIP transport plane carrying Delta Platoon and the Valkyries cut through the sea of clouds. They were close to meeting up with the Aither. If he did that, he would be able to escape Voldor's gravity and fold. Chuck's combined sensors picked up on an ominous shadow.

".....Captain, you're being followed. It's the wolf in sheep's clothing."

"There's no reaction from our sensors."

Arad swallowed his saliva.

".....Ura-sar. There's no doubt about it. It's only a fraction of a second, but I won't miss it. The numbers are"

148 マクロスΔ 2. ウィンダムニア空中騎士団



147

「機。へワイバーンです」  
「俺が行く」  
メッサーが機体を大きく傾けた。  
「メッサー!」  
「おまえたちの機体は損傷が激しすぎる。それに――」  
メッサーの表情は、言葉は、ハヤテとミラージュの知らない厳しさだった。  
「あれは、白騎士だ」

"It's a Wyvern."

"I'll go."

Messer tilted the plane sharply.

"Messer!"

"Your aircraft is too badly damaged. And--"

Messer's expression and words were stern, something Hayate and Mirage had never known.

"That's the 'White Knight'."

---

149

Axia

Chapter Five "AXIA"

This is not the first time that Messer-Ihlefeld has encountered something hidden within himself.

Probably not the last either.

Satsuriku

That something, the urge to kill that makes the blood run red before your eyes, the will to fight that just keeps expanding.

That was two years ago.

Alfheim

This was when he was still a pilot for the New United Nations Forces.

\*

Messer's home planet, Alfheim, is a poor planet made of rocks and sand. However, it still has the right gravity and distance from the sun to be suitable for human habitation.

The absence of indigenous people gave the immigrants a sense of ease, as they were not concerned with the question of whether they were invaders.

There were signs here and there on the planet that intelligent life had once inhabited it, and it was assumed that the indigenous people had probably perished in the war that destroyed Protoculture.

Alf

Therefore, the immigrants, who had German culture, called the indigenous people fairies and the planet fairyland, praying that the invisible fairies, the spirits of the indigenous people, would protect the immigrants.

Muspel

It was like a prayer from them as they crossed the endless ocean of vacuum.

Ancient myths also said that fairies were enemies of giants, so they were Zentler

There must have been a feeling that she would protect him more than Di.

Moro

However, after decades of peace, those prayers were quickly dashed.

syndrome

Due to a massive outbreak of Vaal Syndrome across the planet.

\*

Messer imagined his own death in many different ways.

It's only natural, since he became a soldier and a pilot.

150 Macross 2. Windermere Aerial Knights

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152 Macross 2. Windermere Aerial Knights

151

Zentradai

If you mess up and your beloved plane crashes into the earth, or you're thrown into the vacuum of space,

Will it end in a battle with the giants?

None of that is shameful.

As someone who lives in war, it is probably a death that comes at the end of fighting.

Messer

It was a prayer from his parents, who named him Tsurugi. Live for someone else, risk your life to carve out a future for yourself.

Yes, I believed that I was born because someone wanted me to be.

\*

However, the scene that unfolded before his eyes that day was different.

Glenn Fire

A city engulfed in crimson flames.

Le Kiri  
How many  
Many, many variable fighters lying around like gravestones  
Destroid  
Humanoid tank.  
Maybe.  
Death and destruction stretched to the horizon.  
The familiar sights, the town where I was born and raised, disappear in flames.  
Only one machine stands in the midst of the crimson flames: Messer's Battroid.  
If it had been a war with the Zentraedi, Messer's soul would have been saved.  
Perhaps he was able to live with the sadness of having fought and fought well, but not being able to protect them.  
But I was wrong.  
Extremely violent heartbeat.  
My vision turns bright red.  
An excessive secretion of adrenaline brought on by intense pain and joy.  
The taste of blood spreads in your mouth.  
It felt like my consciousness was expanding and only murderous intent was spreading throughout the universe.  
And then, the corpses spread out before my eyes  
corpse  
He had fired off all of his beloved plane's missiles.  
Energy is also running low.  
All around were the remains of his comrades from the same platoon.  
All damage was caused by Earth-made armor-piercing shells and missiles.  
The manipulator of my beloved machine was sticky and dirty with oil.  
Scars where a fist had pierced several aircraft.

---

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and.

But it was different.

It was different.

153

He killed him.

The ultra-hard knife held in his beloved left arm was broken in half.

Realizing what this meant, Messer cried.

I had heard of a disease called Varl.

Uchi

However, I thought of such things as urban legends from more remote star systems, nasty rumours born on the internet.

blue

It's an excuse for some idiot, fuelled by alcohol or drugs, to accidentally fire a Destroid gun.

Var was certainly there.

Ushina

It certainly did, and it caused Messer to lose something that should never have been lost.

People say it's not a sin.

Actions taken while in a state of insanity will not be punished.

This is a natural principle.

People should not be held responsible for their own actions, even those they commit when they are distracted.

It is the galaxy's inviolable sanctuary.

Spiritia

Kairai

Otherwise, victims of alcohol, drugs, disease, Protodeviln, the galactic lifeforms that steal people's minds and turn them into puppets, super AIs like Sharon Apple that play with people's minds, and even victims whose cyber implants have been hacked and controlled by corporations would all be held responsible for their own actions.

This is not true. They are victims too.

Victims of Varl, who have lost their will to the disease, are also victims. Victims are not judged.

What is needed is healing.

But that is not what Messer himself is concerned with.

Loose

Whether he can forgive him is another matter.

Of course, he doesn't blame Varl's victims.

Needless to say.

But I blame myself.

## Chapter Five: "AXIA"

This is not the first time that Messer-Ihlefeld has encountered this "something" hidden within himself. Probably not the last either. That something, the urge to kill that makes the blood run red before your eyes, the will to fight that just keeps expanding. That was two years ago. Alfheim This was when he was still a pilot for the NUNS.

Messer's home planet, Alfheim, is a poor planet made of rocks and sand. However, it still has the right gravity and distance from the sun to be suitable for human habitation. The absence of indigenous people gave the immigrants a sense of ease, as they were not concerned with the question of whether they were invaders. There were signs here and there on the planet that intelligent life had once inhabited it, and it was assumed that the indigenous people had probably perished in the war that destroyed Protoculture.

Therefore, the immigrants, who had a German culture, called the indigenous people fairies and the planet "the land of fairies", praying that the invisible fairies, the spirits of the indigenous people, would protect the immigrants. It was like a prayer from them as they crossed the endless ocean of vacuum. Ancient myths also said that fairies were enemies of giants, perhaps they would protect them from zentraedis as well.

However, after decades of peace, those prayers were quickly shattered due to a massive outbreak of Vaal Syndrome across the planet.

\*

Messer imagined his own death in many different ways. It's only natural, since he became a soldier and a pilot. If he messed up and his beloved plane crashed into the earth, was thrown into the vacuum of space, or perished fighting the giants, None of that is shameful. As someone who lives in war, it is probably a death what comes at the end of fighting.

It was a prayer from his parents, who named him. Live for someone else, risk your life to carve out a future for yourself. Yes, he believed that he was born because someone wanted me to be.

However, the scene that unfolded before his eyes that day was different. A city engulfed in crimson flames. How many, many, many variable fighters lying around like gravestones Death and destruction stretched to the horizon. The familiar sights, the town where he was born and raised, disappeared in flames.

Only one machine stands in the midst of the crimson flames: Messer's Battroid. If it had been a war with the Zentraedi, Messer's soul would have been saved. Perhaps he would be able to live with only the sadness of having fought and fought well, but not being able to protect them.

But he was wrong. An extremely violent heartbeat. His vision turns bright red. An excessive secretion of adrenaline brought on by intense pain and joy. The taste of blood spreads in his mouth. It felt like his consciousness was expanding and only murderous intent was spreading throughout the universe.

And then, the corpses spread out before his eyes. He had fired off all of his beloved plane's missiles. Energy was also running low. All around were the remains of his comrades from the same platoon. All damage was caused by Earth-made armor-piercing shells and missiles. The manipulator of his beloved machine was sticky and dirty with oil. Scars where his fist had pierced several airframes. The ultra-hard knife held in his beloved left arm

was broken in half.

Realizing what this meant, Messer cried. He had heard of a disease called Varl. However, he thought of such things as urban legends from more remote star systems, nasty rumours born on the internet. It's an excuse for some idiot, fuelled by alcohol or drugs, to accidentally fire a Destroid gun. Var was certainly there. It certainly did, and it caused Messer to lose something that should never have been lost.

People say it's not a sin. Actions taken while in a state of insanity will not be punished. This is a natural principle. People should not be held responsible for their own actions, even those they commit when they are distracted. It is the galaxy's inviolable sanctuary.

Otherwise, victims of alcohol, drugs, disease, Protodeviln, the galactic lifeforms that steal people's minds and turn them into puppets, super AI's like Sharon Apple that play with people's minds, and even victims whose cyber implants have been hacked and controlled by corporations would all be held responsible for their own actions.

This is not true. They are victims too. Victims of Var, who have lost their will to the disease, are also victims. Victims are not judged. What is needed is healing. But that is not what Messer himself is concerned with.

Whether he can forgive himself is another matter. Of course, he doesn't blame Var's victims. But he blames himself.

This, too, goes without saying.

Yes. Even then, without regard for Messer's wailing soul, his feverish eyes were trembling with the grief of his nerves. Yet, they fixed on the enemy aircraft at the edge of his vision, breaking through the clouds, he saw an unfamiliar Valkirie flying in that would normally be invisible.

The reason he was able to see this was probably because of Var's expanded perception. As per his training, Messer raised his Gatling gun pod and aimed the laser on his head. His reason screamed that he had to stop. However, murderous intent suppressed it. His training, thousands upon thousands of times, betrays his pride as a warrior.

He could not miss. The aircraft's AI looked at the "enemy craft" identified by his radar and electronic sensors. The IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) response is not that of the New Joint Force. The AI lock-on function installed in the Valkyrie can detect tens of thousands of possible future positions of enemy aircraft. It can accurately predict the target and send a hypersonic electromagnetically accelerated shell at that location, making it impossible for humans to avoid it with their reflexes. (Stop!)

But Messer's body betrays his mind. He is about to add one more tombstone to the tens of thousands of victims he has killed. (Stop!) The finger is on the trigger. (Stop!) That's when it happens. It was only a fraction of a second, maybe even less, but to Messer it seemed like an eternity. Messer certainly heard the song. He heard a crystal clear song. There would have been no time to listen to even a single phrase. But he definitely heard it. The song of the Valkyries. The gunpod was fired, sending a swath of light over the ruins of Alfheim, but that was all. In the nick of time, his ferocious attack narrowly missed the enemy plane and only cut through the clouds.

\*

While lying in bed, Messer learned that the aircraft that had descended on Alfheim was a VF-31B, the predecessor of the VF-31 Siegfried, which was also being tested to escort Walküre.

"I'm glad you're getting better."

At that moment, he also learnt that the girl singing was named Kaname Buccaneer.

"What a frightening skill. I never thought Alfheim's Grim Reaper would be this powerful. I never thought he would be able to shoot up from the ground with more precision than the stealth of the Kairos. If it wasn't for me..."

"I, I was eaten."

The pilot of the "enemy plane," a man named Arad Mölders laughed and said this without any hint of irony.

"What should we do now?"

There was nothing he could do. There's nowhere to go. All he was thinking about was how he was going to die. He must have sensed that. Arad thought for a moment and continued.

"Why don't you come to Chaos?"

The words were so out of the blue that, unusually, Messer was left speechless.

"There are few similar cases of recovery from Var Syndrome. This live performance was also effective. It's hard to say. You're one of the few successful examples."

He didn't even have the energy to get angry and ask what was going on.

No, he shouldn't have been angry. Because they did their best. However, he just couldn't believe that his life was the one that needed to be saved.

"According to Dr. Blanchett, one of our researchers, said it is possible that some Var survivors have developed a form of immunity, similar to Walküre, who are resistant to Var."

"You want me to protect those girls?"

"You have good intuition. That's it. The song of the Walküre only has meaning when sung on the battlefield. They need skilled pilots that can handle aerial combat, acrobatics, and battloid battles. What's more, it's the kind of thing the New United Forces would never do."

"A guy like me?"

"Yeah, guys like you."

It's true that the New Joint Command is not happy that Messer survived. Normally, no matter how defeated a battle may be, the surviving pilot is still of value. He is treated as a hero and celebrated in the skies. But this time the incident was different. Messer was the only one of his men to survive. If he were to receive the medal, what would the families of the soldiers think? However, punishing him would mean having to punish Var's victims in the future, which would also go against the spirit of Galactic Humanitarian Law.

".....got it"

Let's sleep. At the very least, he thought it would be a meaningful place to die. It would be easy to blow his brains out with a gun, but he didn't think that would be any kind of atonement. At the very least, he wanted a meaningful death. Otherwise, what exactly was the tragedy of Alheim for.

"But there are two conditions."

"Oh, just tell me anything."

"Delta cadets are more valuable than Fold Quartz. The engineering department is willing to spend any amount of money on their talent"

Arad said with a laugh. That smile is surely a sign of a good commander. In a hopeless battlefield, if the person ordering death isn't smiling, the pilots below feel safe. He felt this man was someone he could entrust his death to.

"One thing is... If I become Var, please kill me."

"...There is also the option of being discharged from the military. Or rather, that is the rule."

"...I understand. However, for example, if you were to show early signs of Var, I would take you to the doctor".

"No, I'll be in the cockpit until the very last moment"

"That's a personal agreement between you and me"

Arad looked troubled, but finally said yes. That's probably true for any pilot. Dying peacefully in bed, surrounded by my loving family, is fine, but if I could die, he would rather die in the cockpit, in the sky. (Until the very last moment, my life should be used for something.)

Yes, Messer believed.

"That's fine. If you say so, I can fight with peace of mind."

"Yeah... and what about the other one?"

The other one took more courage to say.

"Was it Kaname Buccaneer? If her single is available on disc, I'd like it.

"Why not just buy the song in digital?"

"Optical discs are more resistant to stellar winds and reactive weapon EMPs."

"Okay. I'll arrange it. Will you also want her to sign it?"

He was asked this, but he politely declined. He simply wanted to keep close to me the song that would send me off after my death, the song that would give meaning to my second life. Neither Kaname nor the other members of the team know about this. It's a secret between Arad and Messer. There was a kind of very old-fashioned solidarity among pilots.

--

"I will intercept that lone wolf. Especially if he is the white knight."

It wasn't a surprise to Arad that Messer said that.

"Understood"

"Messer!"

"You too, Captain!"

Hayate and Mirage were shocked.

"I can't leave Walküre's escort, and neither can Chuck. We need to maintain a perimeter."

Arad looked up. About 3,000 feet above him, he saw a formation of nine VF-31A Kairos planes: Alpha, Beta, and Gamma platoons. Three planes were eaten by the Voldor Air Force and the Aerial Knights. Although they shot down fewer planes than expected, we still can't be happy.

"Since the enemy is Var, Delta has no choice but to take command of the escort. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd squadrons will have to stick to the Aether."

This was after a full-scale attack.

Already, the Aether hangar is in rush hour mode with damaged aircraft. The Third Squadron had twelve aircraft in reserve, but these were their most precious possessions and could not be separated from the aircraft carrier. In that case, the exhausted first and second, 18 aircraft, and a total of 30 aircraft, were to provide direct cover for the Aether. Even if you add in the unmanned fighter jets, it's not a number that can be neglected. If the Aether could at least leave Voldor's gravity, they would be able to fold, but to do so they would need to rendezvous with the recovery craft carrying Walküre. The recovery craft does not have the ability to leave the atmosphere, so they must get Walküre to Aether before leaving Voldor.

Even if the Voldor Air Force had been neutralized by the Vaccine Live earlier, it had no effect on the unmanned fighter force, and there was no guarantee that the Aerial Knights wouldn't appear. There hadn't even been a fold reaction from the enemy ships on Al-Shahal, yet they had suddenly appeared. Arad was not optimistic enough to believe that the same thing would never happen again.

(If only we had a VIP Calibur...)

The VIP Calibur is a high-speed variable transport aircraft modified from the old variable fighter VF-19 Excalibur. While not as fast as the VF-31, it flies at hypersonic speeds and uses a pseudo-inertial control system. It is an ideal transport aircraft that can protect the VIPs inside from the acceleration by being equipped with ISC.

However, the sale of the VC-19V VIP Calibur to Chaos was not approved by the new Unified Government, as it was deemed too dangerous for a private company to possess, even if it was intended to protect Walküre.

Arad, Aisha, Kaname, and the ship's captain, Ernest, were furious at this, thinking that they had even staked out the latest variable fighters on a Macross-class aircraft carrier, but it seemed that the capitalists who had invested heavily in the New Unified Government were averse to "private ownership" of a songstress with the power to change the world, capable of invading any part of the galaxy. Needless to say, Arad put the name of that foundation (Epsilon), on his mental "someday kill list," but that's another story. In any case, all Arad can do at present is to defend the Walküre transport plane, which is like a turtle compared to the variable fighters.

"I won't say it again. Delta 2, intercept the wolf pack."

With a quick salute, Messer turned around. Without any hesitation or reflection, without even a speck of self-absorption mixed in. All he could see was the freshness of a man who had found what he needed to do and was ready to throw everything away. Beautiful, Arad thinks. Warriors are always beautiful. Its beauty is hopelessly sad.

(I always just send them out and all I can do is pray for his safe return).

"Captain Arad!"

The two chicks, Hayate and Mirage, shouted in unison.

"We'll join on Delta 2!"

"There are no more missiles left, but the machine guns and optical weapons have enough ammunition to meet combat regulations. We still have energy remaining. One more aerial battle is possible!"

Well, that's what you'd say yourself, Arad thought. That's what it means to be a pilot and to be young. At the moment, the best tactical move would be to reject Hayate and Mirage's proposal, use Messer as a decoy, and shake off the wolves. That's what a commander is. However, even if such an order were given, the two would not be satisfied. They are traumatized by the knowledge that they have abandoned their comrades in arms, and feel that they will soon be abandoned as well. What the military needs is the confidence that someone will come to their aid when they are in danger, which is why prisoner rescue is a top priority.

"Understood. Delta 4 and 5 will be under the command of Delta 2 and will carry out the interception."

He then added:

"However, if you determine that your aircraft's survival is uncertain, escape without hesitation."

Arad deliberately used the word "escape."

"Survival is the most important thing. Don't die without permission. You pilots are worth as much as the variable fighters. Especially if you're a Delta pilot."

"Roger!"

The blue and purple VF-31s made a perfectly timed, graceful turn, leaving behind contrails and a mess. (It's times like these that we get along so well...) The two of them have yet to experience the bitterness that Arad has experienced so many times. I can believe in the sense of omnipotence that comes with being young. Arad felt a little envious of that.

\*

The sky is already turning white and blue with the rising sun. A very short, yet very long night was coming to an end. Now it's time for the sun. It's time to board the plane. Messer gave a slight salute in the direction of the transport.

\*

From the window of the transport plane, they could see Messer, Hayate, and Mirage turning around.

"The Air Knights... are still coming."

Freya shivered at their presence. Keith and the other white knights are strong. No matter how tough Hayate and his friends are, I wonder if they can fight them twice and come out unscathed. Leaving Messer aside, even an amateur could see that Hayate and Mirage's aircraft were not unscathed. In particular, Hayate and Mirage are acting as shields for the others, and it is clear that they have been hurt so much. The battlefield is not the usual Ragna or within the sphere of influence of the New United Nations Army. Even if you are shot down and manage to escape, there is no chance of rescue.



そして、ウィンダムミアの騎士<sup>シイ</sup>たちが地球の兵をどう扱うかは——先に見た通りだ。

「何を悩んでるの」

その肩を、ぼん、とカナメが抱くように、触れた。

その手が、震えている。

「私たちは、ワルキューレよ。私たちの歌で、誰かを守るのなら——やることはひとつ。さうでしょう？」

「はいな」

フレイアは、にこり、と笑った。

さうだ、振り切るしかない。

「メッサーくんが頑張ってるんだから、私たちも、気合、入れないとね？」

カナメが、マイクを剣のように掲げた。

「いつでも、最高のパフォーマンスを」

美雲が進み出る。

歌が、始まる。

幾度でも、何度でも。

And we have seen how the Windemere knights treat Earth soldiers.

"What are you worried about?"

Kaname touched her shoulder lightly, as if to hug her. Her hands are shaking.

"We are Walküre. If our song can protect someone, then we have no choice but to do it. Isn't that right?"

"--Yes!"

Freya smiled and laughed. That's right, I have no choice but to shake it off.

"Messer-kun is working hard, so we need to get motivated too, right?"

Kaname held up the microphone like a sword.

"Perform at your best, every time"

Mikumo stepped forward. The song begins. Again and again.

\*

Far away in Windemere Heinz's feet got tangled as he sang in the temple. He stopped the page who rushed over with his hand.

"Are you okay"

I wanted to sing.

I don't know why.

"If Brother Keith is fighting... I must sing as the Prince of Windemere.

\*

Voldor, Paraganar Ruins, deepest part. It is said that this is the cave where the gods once descended and created the people of Voldor. The ancient crystals and jewels that adorn the cave now sparkle with the colors of the rainbow.

"Fold light.....!"

The reason why Lloyd Brehm, the Chancellor standing in the center, was excited was not because of the beauty of the scene. It was because he was convinced that the song of Heinz and the Valkyries had brought about this awakening.

"The song of the wind was correct. A correct song calls forth the wind, and the wind makes the stars shake. Protoculture!"

\*

Messer, charging ahead, accepted Hayate and Mirage's entry into the battle with a wry

smile. I don't think the two of them have the skills to keep up with me, and I don't have the resources to protect them, but I know that.

"The White Knight isn't alone. Attack the escorts."

That was all I could say briefly.

(The White Knight)

So, that should be understandable. That's all. If we can just defeat the White Knight, the rest will be fine. On the other hand, if he were to be defeated, the only one who could oppose the White Knight would be Arad.

In modern air combat, ace pilots and aircraft tuned specifically for ace pilots are a tactical-class weapon. Sending variable fighters with tremendous firepower and stealth capabilities into the enemy's core and destroying them in a single breakthrough is a tactic developed by Earth in battles with the Zentradi forces, which outnumbered them by tens of thousands, even hundreds of millions. It is sometimes called the "Hikaru Ichijo Doctrine," named after the ace pilot who defeated Gol Bodolzer, the core fleet that first invaded Earth.

The so-called fourth-generation and later variable fighters developed in accordance with this tactical philosophy are equipped with fold boosters, enabling interstellar invasions and the destruction of enemy command ships using reaction munitions and dimensional weapons. In fact, the legendary ace pilot, Isamu Dyson, used the famous fourth-generation aircraft, the YF-19, to invade the Earth's capital city alone, taking control of the central Macross.

"That's ridiculous."

Some would argue that the strength of individuals at the tactical level and the superiority or inferiority of individual weapons do not have that great an impact on war. However, in today's world, where the firepower and maneuverability of multipurpose weapons that can be operated by individuals are beyond human comprehension. This is a fact. Of course, if the combat power of the pilot and the weapon is equal, the side with superior material power will win, and it can be said that this is a tactic unique to humanity at this time, where a side is inferior in material power but superior in quality.

This is why The white knight must be defeated. Messer feels that in a one-on-one battle with any member of the Delta platoon, the best pilot is himself. Therefore if Messer gets defeated, Arad will be defeated.

Aisha suggests that enemy aircraft may be strengthened by the fold waves of the song, similar to the VF-31. If the White Knight, strengthened by the singing voice, could surpass even himself, then Arad and the other Deltas would be no match for him. That is why we must drop it.

\*

"Mr. Keith! Let me accompany you!"

It was Bouge who caught up with Keith. The aircraft however is not Bouge's SV-262 but a Nightmare Plus. It seems that they forcibly requisitioned a VF-17 from the Voldor Air Force.

"Why did you come?"

"I have left the fools of Voldor in the hands of the Yussila brothers and Lord Kassim! As the knight's attendant, I must perform the duties of the spear!"

Behind him is Hermann. It seems that the old knight who was in charge of keeping an eye on them was unable to restrain the young Bouge. Keith appreciated the ferocity, but it made him a little annoyed.

"Unnecessary"

"Why not?! We must defeat the Earthlings!"

The young knight shouted, his rune turning red with rage. Bouge lost more than half of their sisters in attacks by the New United Nations Army. The experience of wandering through ruins in his childhood, searching for his sisters' belongings, led him to become a knight named Bouge.

(But with that strength is not enough)

It is the strength of common sense. Wings that fly with anger are tainted. He was the same as the kid named Hayate who roared,

"What kind of justice is it to turn a Voldorian into a Vaal?"

Human anger is human anger. That's all there is to it. If you are faced with someone who has the same anger as you, you will break down and fall.

What Keith wants is an absolute fight. An absolute strength that will never succumb to any malice or impurity. It must be like that. It has to be like that.

If there are no longer dragons in this world, I must become a dragon. That is Keith's wish.

"No interference needed."

Yes, I told him.

"But!"

"Hermann. If Bouge continues to defy my orders as your White Knight, fire."

The old knight did not resist. It's a battlefield habit.

"Mr. Keith!"

Not worth it.

"Bouge! Hold back!"

Hermann was also Bouge's teacher. His words carried weight. It's not just Bouge. Keith and Lloyd have also received training from Hermann. He is one of the few veteran air knights who survived the Second Unification War and the War of Independence. Aside from King Gramia, there are only a few pilots with a similar combat record in the Aerial Knights.

It was a few years ago that Keith surpassed Hermann's skills. He hasn't lost once since. This is by no means due to Hermann's "old age." Windemereans age differently than other races. One day, a dying Windemerean's body will begin to crack like rotting wood, and their physical abilities will rapidly decline until they die.

This cracking can begin as early as the late teens, but usually occurs in the mid-twenties, or at the latest around thirties. Until then, Windemereans will continue to maintain the radiant vitality and judgment of an Earthling equivalent to about an 18-year-old. Therefore, it can be said that Keith's success over Hermann was due to both divine guidance and painstaking effort.

"Keith-sama!"

The young man was staring at Keith through the monitor.

"I will allow you to clear the way. If the enemy interferes, strike them down."

Nevertheless, the reason why Bouge was allowed to join the battle was because Keith's radar showed three enemy aircraft. Two additional interceptor aircraft.

The Grim Reaper will be at the vanguard of the enemy. Of course, it was unthinkable that he could be on equal terms with Keith. But at the same time, when was the last time we had an enemy that could carry out such a large air battle?

(If you're going to kill me anyway, the strong are better.)

Yes, I think so. Therefore, by leaving the clearing of the way to Bouge and Hermann, I will enjoy the sweet taste of strength to my heart's content, and offer it as an offering to the victory of my country.

"Let's march forward - victory awaits us, on the mighty wind!"

"By the great wind!"

Three Valkyries cut through the wind and soar.

\*

The White Knight and the Grim Reaper collided at the same time. It's not about who spotted the enemy first, or who set up the attack. With exquisite breathing, they caught each other, and at the exact same time, it was so smooth it was almost too smooth. With a rapid movement, they entered into an air battle.

They don't launch missiles in a spectacular way.

They don't scatter flares and chaff like amateurs.

As if to say hello, the two aircraft pass each other at close range. Messer has the golden wings of a white knight, and Keith has the Grim Reaper emblem. Each of them caught his eyes, and that was enough. And then sing.

\*

On the transport plane, Walküre is led by Kaname.  
Far away, in the temple of Windemere, Heinz persists.  
They sing for what they believe in.

\*

Behold  
There is no shame here.  
This is the cry of our souls.  
O Wind, O sky, these are our wings.

\*

The two Valkyries collide like a gust of wind.

\*

A golden arrow cuts through the sky. The Grim Reaper's wings dance, kicking up the clouds. It was an amazing aerial battle. Hayate, Mirage, Bouge, Hermann, and all the other pilots who had gathered in that airspace were unable to put a dent in the one-on-one battle between the two planes.

If you stand up, you will taint the battle. That was their common understanding. It is no longer a matter of tactical calculation. In fact, Hayate and Mirage reported this when they returned, and Arad accepted the report as a matter of course. The same is true on the Windemere side. As if by prearrangement, they flew around the battle between the two legendary ace pilots, Messer Ihlefeld and Keith Aero Windemere, and while they themselves were engaged in combat, they also added color to the battle as if they were backup dancers.

It was a terribly beautiful fight.

It was a very majestic battle.

This aerial battle is shrouded in much secrecy, and various legends remain, including that it actually took place on another planet, or that it took place twice or more times. However, the fact that Messer and Keith fought is a fact that is acknowledged by both the United Earth Government and Windemere. But what I am about to tell you is a myth based on the facts and reconstructed from fragments told by people who were present. They never forgot about these two ace pilots for the rest of their lives. I've never forgotten this air battle. The records eventually became legends, and the legends became myths, passed down for a long, long time, eventually giving birth to many aces who admired those myths.

\*

This was something different from a bloody massacre. They all have something they cannot compromise on, such as beliefs, fighting spirit, or justice. And now the two men are flying across the blue sky, their wings painted in flames. After all, it boils down to nothing but murder. However, Hayate felt that it was not permissible to adorn it with such words. The two Valkyries flew, sent on by the songs of Walküre and Windemere. Higher than anyone, faster than anyone. Even though it was on the battlefield, no one was allowed to intervene; it was a sanctuary. A sanctuary for the two men.

\*

"Majestic", Bouge thought. It was a terribly mediocre comment that would get a failing grade in an elementary school essay, but those were the only words Bouge could choose. Carrying the song of his master, Heinz, he cuts through the endless blue sky of Voldor and flies.

He believed that the Draken III looked just like the dragon that appears in legends. (I wouldn't be able to fly like that) Bouge thought so and hastily thought in his mind,

"At least for now."

He felt that he could not catch up not only with the White Knight Keith, but also with the Earthling pilot. He thought it was embarrassing to do so. It was the result of the fastidiousness and earnestness of a young man. (But even so) It was beautiful. It was terribly, terribly beautiful. In the distant, legendary era, before the arrival of

Earthlings and the culture of Windemere was forever changed, this is probably what a duel between knights was like.

This is probably what the myth about knights riding dragon birds fighting in front of the Temple of Wind for the love of a princess was about. There was something to make him believe that. And it was an honor to fight under a knight like Keith who could fight like that, and even more so, although it was somewhat difficult for Bouge himself to admit, he felt honored to have met an opponent who could fight Keith on equal terms.

\*

Mirage saw culture there. It's not about the song that's playing. She truly saw the cultural formation that had been built up by the sad history of war between the two planets. The two men, extremely polite and with astonishing respect for each other, shared their accumulated fighting skills. They understand each other's desires better than lovers do, and they understand what the other person wants to do next. We think of each other like family. They respond with machine guns, lasers, and missiles.

Like a waltz, like a jive. Just as she was born through song and dance, people from other planets came to understand each other. She certainly felt that the two pilots understood each other. It's a very sad thing, but it's a cultural form. Mirage decided she would never forget that craft. She decided not to forget about the devil doll lurking inside me, who was irresistibly drawn to its beauty. If she forgets, she'll surely become extremely arrogant.

\*

How many times has this happened? In some ways, this may have been their happiest time. I wonder how many times this has happened. Soon.

\*

Without seeing a decisive blow from either side, they continued to consume ammunition and propellant, and their concentration endlessly, endlessly, endlessly, as if dancing barefoot on a sharp blade— It wasn't something they had planned, it was just a natural movement. The two Valkyries did a somersault and caught each other head-on.

It's like when knights joust against each other on medieval Earth. They captured each other carefully, carefully. Messer has Keith. Keith has Messer. Each one captures the other. The world is made up of those two. Typically, when two aircraft are facing each other head-on in an aerial battle, there are two options.

One is to descend, and then use the kinetic energy of the fall to increase your speed and create distance, then start again. However, if your opponent predicts this and gets above you, you run the risk of being chased one-sidedly.

Next, they will try to move around to the side of the opponent by turning or climbing. If they do this as they pass each other, they can move around to the rear. However, if the opponent reads this move, they may be hit in the abdomen, where they are exposed.

But if it is read... If not read, it will give you an overwhelming advantage in your next combat maneuver. If you are too timid to move, you will be tormented. However, if you rush out in a hurry, you will fall into an enemy trap. When will it move?

Where do you balance risk and return? The relative speed of two fighter jets flying at supersonic speeds will be nearly doubled if they are heading towards each other in a straight line. A moment that is barely perceptible to humans.

It's a simple game.

A terribly simple game.

To move or not to move.

That's true.

But the men bet everything on this game. What we believe in, who we love, our pride, our beliefs, and everything we have cultivated. Many people can't decide. When you are handed a coin that tells you that tossing it will determine whether you live or die, you are so terrified that you are unable to make a decision. Both Messer and Keith know this very well. We fear death because we have a culture. Because they have a home to return to and things they want to protect. That's what makes you confused. That's what makes me hesitate. This leads to poor judgment and makes them ideal prey for ace pilots.

Messer is different.

Keith is different too.

That was something he had come to love from previous aerial battles. It's not a reckless strength like the Zentradi. It is the battle of a warrior who overcomes fear with fighting spirit, based on firm judgment and conviction. The two of them have been dancing tirelessly under the blue sky and are like partners. The opponent does not make a bad move. I am certain. It's trust. It's respect. It is something sacred that pilots have believed must not be violated since the first Fokker fighter jets fought in aerial combat so long ago.

Nothing is off limits. Nothing is allowed in. No one can catch up.

My soul melts into the blue sky and the pure breeze. The two made a choice. Each charges towards the enemy at top speed and fires. That is the decision. Both are neutralized by stealth when firing at each other from long distances. So, you only get one chance. They are on the verge of passing each other. Once you've made your decision, there's no escaping it. If you leave, you will surely be killed. Just in time, our shots graze the enemy's axis and hit them.

They cannot transform. If you do that, the air resistance of the deployed arms or legs will cause the aircraft to spin and slow down. It is inevitable. You just become a target. Just move forward. Transforming at the last moment and hitting enemies with a Battroid, like in the movies, is just a pipe dream. They both swallowed their deadly blades and got into deadly range. There are no words. There's no excitement. The sky seemed awfully quiet. Both sides' machine guns fired briefly.

The Grim Reaper and the White Knight certainly pass each other for a moment. They were so close that their wings were rubbing against each other and sparks were flying.

\*

It was the White Knight who opened fire first but the missile pack attached to the top of his aircraft was hit. An explosion of flames rises from it. By purging the pack, a secondary explosion was avoided. But with this, Keith's plan failed. He lost his precious anti-ship weapons and escape boosters. Even if they were capable of air combat, they lacked the firepower to destroy the transport planes and the Deltas that were providing cover. This would be even more so if Walküre escaped to the Aether.

He is not a man who cannot do that calculation. Keith, with such speed that everyone was astonished, turned the machine around and instantly retreated. There is not the slightest bit of hesitation or obsession.

\*

Messer's victorious aircraft was in tatters. In the fighting that continued from the Battle of Voldor, bullet holes were dug all over the VF-31, and after the fierce dogfight with Keith, it was clear that even the frame itself was showing signs of wear. It's not even possible to peer into the cockpit via data link, and all you can see is through the canopy glass that Messer is at the controls.

Walküre had already been taken into custody by the rushing Aether. If Messer had been defeated by Keith, the Air Knights would have destroyed the transport for sure.

(We can't stop the white knight) That is Hayate and Mirage's conviction.

Although it was not shot down, its tactical intent was thwarted. It's fair to say that Messer won. Beyond his field of vision, the deck of the aircraft carrier Aether comes into view, floating in a sea of clouds.

"Do you see it, Messer? It's Aether!"

Hayate said something that went without saying because there was no response from Messer's radio. According to the AI ARIEL III's diagnosis, repeated use of pseudo-inertial control had overloaded the capacitors, causing most of the communication systems to go down. Remote control via data link was also not possible. The amount of data being sent and received was so huge that the overloaded AI could not handle it.

However, it seems they can hear our voices. Messer gave a thumbs up.

"I'll accompany you!"

"Okay! Mirage and I will assist you on the approach."

A blue and purple Valkyrie escorts Messer's plane. This is the synchronized movement that only an acrobatic team can achieve. Shining in the sea of clouds, Aether looks like nothing more than a tiny bean. But in terms of distance, it's very close. Although Aether does not reach the speed of sound, it flies at a sufficient speed.

Touching down on the deck just a few hundred meters away is a terrifying experience no

matter how many times you do it. "If landing on a ground runway is "going down," then landing on an aircraft carrier deck is "crashing." That's what aircraft carrier crews often say. If you don't aim and descend, slamming the plane onto the runway, you'll lose your life in an instant.

Of course, the AI installed on the VF-31 will normally land accurately any number of times as long as the pilot gives the command. But that's in peacetime. Capacitors are on fire, most of the computer systems are down, sparks are rising from all over the transformation system, not now. The last thing you can trust is the pilot's control. That's how manned fighter jets are made. And Messer is the best, finest manned fighter pilot they know.

The wind roared.

\*

Even above the clouds, there's turbulence swirling around. It's not as graceful as it looks. There, a huge structure floats using anti-gravity propulsion. The resulting disturbances to the air flow become more complex and turbulent than even a computer could predict. This is why, in principle, even aircraft carriers that are capable of flight operate their aircraft by landing the hull in water or mooring it close to the ground.

However, Aether must escape the planet as soon as they receive Messer in order to escape Voldor's air force and the Aerial Knights. They cannot afford to take their time descending to the sea.

Kaname just stared at the figure. Perhaps that gaze is not what you might call love. But she felt she had to see it.

\*

Messer did not deploy the landing wheels. Just like walking through the front door to go home, I started both engines of the Gerwalk. Beautiful. Transforming into legs, it caught the wind beautifully with its damaged wings, floated gently once, then, with several thrusts of air, it spun around like a figure skater, killing inertia and bringing the craft to a complete halt.

"Messer!"

(amazing)

Hayate, who also landed using the Gerwalk, was impressed. My heart was pounding.

I got it. I finally found my goal. I always thought I was dead while still alive. I thought there was nothing worth risking my life for. But finally, Hayate found it. He found it.

"Messer!"

He ran over. He put the ladder in the cockpit faster than anyone else.

And then he saw. There's a tiny, awfully small hole in the cockpit glass. I wonder why I didn't notice. Why didn't the AI detect it? Or, even if it did, it was not recognized as serious damage. I wonder if that was the case. I don't know why. In any case, it was a hole that required a closer look, and it was quickly filled with repair material.

However, the hole was made by a laser, and beyond it was Messer's body.

"Messsssseeeeeeeeeer!"

The man was smiling. The Grim Reaper was smiling. It was as if a man had just finished listening to a beautiful song, all alone in a sunny concert hall, and had fallen asleep for just a moment. He was smiling. Is it possible for someone to smile so happily? Hayate thought he would never be able to smile like this in his life.

\*

The laser was aimed just below the heart. As they passed each other, the White Knight diverted most of its power to its energy conversion armor and barrier to avoid a fatal blow, and with a single shot from its lowest-power laser, it shot through the Messer in the cockpit.

It's a miracle. He managed to kill only people without shooting down any fighter planes. Minimal effort, maximum results. That's it. I could only be amazed. But perhaps what is even more remarkable is the mettle of the man named Messer, who, even though his own intestines were being burned, managed to return to base in an orderly fashion and even land on his ship without a single cry of agony.

Why? Why did he come back all that way? Hayate didn't understand. I knew, but I didn't understand.

Kaname was crying.

Kaname is not the only one.

Mirage and Freya were crying, and even Mikumo had tears in the corners of her eyes.

The mechanics on deck were crying, the pilots were crying.

They all lost something that should never have been lost.

Still, Messer came back.

He's back.

On the ship where Walküre awaits.

#### Intermission 2 "Jellyfish"

From then on, Hayate spent all his time in the simulator except for when he was going out on missions, sleeping, eating, or excreting. There is only one imaginary enemy floating in the electronic world a white knight. The data Messer left behind made it possible to simulate him. It was not in vain that he brought back his beloved machine.

Day after day, he continued to be shot down. It had to be admitted, but the White Knight was stronger than Messer. It looked like an even match, but the White Knight probably had more strength left, and in the end he even showed some leeway as he defeated Messer. It's not because of the White Knight's arrogance. Truly, that man is strong. Hayate recalled the face of the man named Keith whom he had met in the underground corridor. That man never showed his emotions. He was always calm and ruthless.

(Can you win?) he asks. (You can win) I believe that. (I can't win) Even if that man recognized Messer as a worthy opponent, he would not use all his strength, but would instead kill him with 80% of his strength, saving 20% for his country. And I get thrown to the ground again. It was a repetition of that process.

\*

I didn't go back to "Rag-Nyan-Nyan" I met Freya every time we went out on missions, but when I returned to Ragna, I was like, "Ouch!" I stayed overnight at the hotel. Before we knew it, the storage room near the waiting room had become Hayate's residence.

\*

Having faced what may have been his hundreds, perhaps thousands, of "deaths," Hayate was looking at an imaginary sky through the simulator monitor.

This is the sky of Voldor, as recorded by Messer's AI, "ARIEL III." What is shown is his last image. At that time, the entire battle was projected into the cockpit. As he watched, Hayate was engaged in a silent conversation with Messer. (Tell me, Messer, what did you see?) Even though I thought I had memorized everything, I just couldn't fly like Messer. Something was different.

"I want to fly, just like you."

When I put it into words, it was easy. Perhaps I was longing for it. I wanted to be like that.

\*

I heard a song. It's a new song.

Someone was playing the song "Valkyrie" outside the simulation room. It was Freya's singing voice. It was a song I didn't know. Not only Freyja, but Kaname, Mikumo, Reina, and Makina also sing. That is, a song that Messer had never heard. Tomorrow is what Messer couldn't see. Surely Messer wanted to come back. He didn't have the narcissism to sacrifice himself for the world. Arad told me that Messer's body had reached its limits. When Dr. Aisha heard of his death, she punched the wall until her fist bled. As a doctor, she should have stopped him.

But Messer still wanted to fight. Or perhaps he was looking for a place to die. But if that was all, Messer would not have attempted to land. Perhaps he wanted to return to Aither where she was waiting. I guess so.

"It's a beautiful song."

That's what Hayate thought. Honestly, I wanted to hear it again.

\*

Seeing the pile of dirty clothes piled high in Hayate's private room, Mirage decided to bring a flamethrower next time. He had been raised in the military and thought he could handle most things. However, Hayate's unruly "private room" was becoming more and more unacceptable with each passing day. (That said, it would be weird for me to wash his dirty clothes... well, it is weird...) I did have that kind of conflict. It was at this time that Hayate, looking completely worn out, returned to his private quarters.

"Warrant Officer Immelman... well, this is..."

"Food and water."

Hayate smiled awkwardly and looked at the gift Mirage had brought. I always bring it with me.

"Thank you every day"

".....Did you notice?"

"I don't think it's that bad."

Hayate sat down in a desk chair in the corner of the storeroom and drank the bottle of water Mirage had brought in one gulp.

"I agree"

"...But I have to say, the water tastes bad."

Mirage felt the same way. Since that incident, neither Voldor's water nor Windemere's apples have been sold at Ragna's market. It is harmless if not consumed at the same time, but such opinions were quickly dismissed, and an ethically unacceptable amount of food was discarded.

"More importantly."

"picture?"

Mirage was confused because Hayate was in better spirits than he expected and just like old times. Hayate, who is flying in formation with her, always seemed to be worried about something until a while ago. Of course, Mirage understands the reason for his worries. Only fellow pilots can share the weight of not being able to protect Messer.

"W-What is it?"

"Fireworks outside?"

--ah"

"I see."

Through the thick walls of Aether, the faint sounds of fireworks and cheers could be heard.

"Today is the annual Ragna Jellyfish Festival."

Hayate's words afterwards were unexpected.

"Let's go together."

\*

The city of Ragna is red, The fireworks were colorful, green, yellow, and It was beautiful. Ornate lanterns hang from every building in the city, and people from different planets walk by, wearing various costumes and laughing. Then, jellyfish, bearing a faint glow, emerge from the sea onto land. (strange) That is why. (Strangely--)

"Apparently, it's jellyfish spawning season. The giant jellyfish of Ragna only come onto land during this season, plant their young on land, and then return to the sea... so it's said that this festival makes love come true."

Mirage was flushed. This is because I realized that I was just one of the small units known as couples around me. All around me were young people walking with their partners, both of the same sex and the opposite sex. And I was walking with a man named Hayate Immelman. What does this mean? Isn't this tactically or strategically unacceptable? I just went to my colleague's room to deliver some water and food.

It was merely an act of comrades in arms. Why is that the case? Moreover, Hayate, who was walking next to him, seemed completely unaware of Mirage's confusion. That also makes me angry for some reason. After receiving Mirage's punishment, Hayate shaved his stubble and styled his hair. Although he was wearing the uniform of a Chaos soldier, his cool demeanor was...

It suits her. In fact, Mirage was assailed by an unfounded complex that she was the one who looked unfashionable, dressed exactly as prescribed. Well, it wasn't without reason. For some reason, living with those top singers, she felt as if, despite being the same girl as them, she was light or two light years behind. (Maybe I should try learning makeup from Kaname next time.) I thought that too.

"Hayate!"

\*

When Freyja Wion stepped out onto her usual beach, she was looking up at the stars, just like always. In his hand he holds a jellyfish on a skewer that he is grilling. With a beaming smile on her face, Freya handed Hayate and Mirage a jellyfish skewer.

"You're feeling much better now!"

"I'm fine."

"Seriously,"

Freya said, looking at Hayate's face.

"Well, let's just leave it at that."

and laughed.

"I get it."

Yes. Hayate stared intently at the sea. I was looking at the place where Messer had gone, between the sea and the sky. There, the people of Ragna. It is said that this is the place where people's souls return, swaying with the waves, and turn into jellyfish, enveloped in eternal warmth. Therefore, it is said that the jellyfish that return at the Jellyfish Festival are the souls of the dead.

"I can't be a messenger."

Hayate grabbed her hand tightly.

"What Messer felt, the song he heard, the sky he flew in,

"Also... it's different from mine."

Nevertheless. The two girls listened intently to what Hayate was saying.

"So... I'll dance in my own sky."

Even if the dead turn into jellyfish and float for eternity. As long as we are alive, we

are human and cannot become jellyfish. Just as Messer was not Hayate, Hayate is not Messer either. At this moment, the three of them were gazing at the jellyfish, which were shining like stars rising from the sea.

I was seeing the same thing. Even if it will be lost tomorrow. The three of them were certainly seeing the same things and feeling the same things. I felt that today was not what Messer lived.

\*

It was on this day that the Windemere Kingdom Army decided to dispatch troops to the planet Ragna.

## Chapter 6 "Getting On"

Captain Ernest Johnson is a strange man. Born half Zentradi, a warrior race, and half Earthling, he has been on the battlefield since he was old enough to understand. He first appears in history as a member of the terrorist group Black Rainbow. This organization fought for liberation from Earth's economic oppression and human rights violations against indigenous peoples. Although it was called a terrorist organization, it had a large mobile task force and at one time became one of the major forces in the galaxy.

When Black Rainbow was annihilated by the New United Forces' special forces, the VF-X Ravens, it was he who, with his tenacious command, brought the Ravens to the brink of annihilation.

"Fighting against Ernest's troops was truly unpleasant. They weren't afraid of death, but they didn't want to die. They fought until the very last moment, convinced of their rightness and ultimate victory, until they fired as many bullets and missiles as possible."

This is the story of "A", the ace pilot who annihilated the Black Rainbow execution force. This is the testimony of Aegis Fokker.

He next appears as a hired captain on the side of Latence in the Second Unification War, which broke out the following year and was fought between the geocentrist Latence and the Vindilance, a faction that fought for decentralization. The psychological motivation behind this is unclear. Those with little to no words said that Ernest was fine as long as he could fight, but the truth was that he had his own sense of justice and morality, and felt indebted to the Earth admiral who had allowed his subordinates, including those from the Black Rainbow era, to survive.

And here too, although Ernest fought well, he was defeated. The aircraft carrier he commanded was highly acclaimed as a distinguished ship, but never before in human history had a tactical victory been able to overturn a strategic defeat, and Ltence was defeated. Since then, Ernest has appeared on the battlefields of several local conflicts, but in each case the side he served on was defeated. He is the kind of man whose reputation grows with each defeat.

"I don't have any appreciation for the aesthetics of losing."

Always, he said it indignantly. Soldiers simply believe that they should do their best on the battlefield they are given. If as a result a nation or organization falls, so be it. But in the battlefield, you do your best.

He always exhausted every possible option. That was his conviction. But a man recognized him for his abilities, Gramia V, King Nerich Windemere himself.

During the Second Unification War, the king served as a volunteer knight on the side of the Vindilance, and later fought as reinforcements in the battle between the Frontier and Galaxy fleets fighting against the Frontier Fleet and the Galar. Truly, a galactic Knight.

\*

"Captain Ernest, military advisor to Windemere?"

Arad, Kaname, and Dr. Aisha, who were in the captain's cabin, were all shocked by this confession.

"I never say I didn't do that."

Laughing heartily, Ernest picked up the teacup on the sunken kotatsu table and drank the bancha tea. He is a man who likes the culture of the ship. The captain's room is filled with lanterns labeled "Asakusa" and "Nishio Gikubo" and "Minmay" and also ukiyo-e prints depicting virtual singers.

"No questions about past deeds is a cardinal rule in Chaos, isn't it Doctor? You are after all the one that left SMS with a dozen lawsuits pending"

".....I've dug too many Protoculture ruins."

On the other hand, his face showed that there was more to it than that.

"A lot has happened and she's the kind of girl who knows way too much, so it can't be helped!"

"The Major is the same, isn't he?"

"I don't get involved in unnecessary things like the professor or the captain."

Arad gave a wry smile and shrugged, but Dr. Blanchett suspected that he, like Arad, was probably harboring some shady ulterior motives.

"I'm getting off topic. So, Captain, why were you doing that again?"

Arad picked up a coconut daifuku from the sunken kotatsu and put it in his mouth. I guess I should assume he wanted to talk.

"During the Second Unification War, Gramia and I were on opposite sides. Apparently, he remembered my name as the fleet commander who gave him a hard time."

There was something nostalgic about Ernest's voice.

"Since then, I was helping train a secret space fleet in preparation for Windemere's independence. Windemere had limited military resources, so even though they had an air force, no one had the know-how to operate a full-scale aircraft carrier."

"During the Second Unification War, Windemere became famous for sending out a large volunteer army. I remember that. I was a student at the time, so I only saw it on the news."

Dr. Blanchett sat in a sloppy position, her chest pressed against the kotatsu table top,

and munched on jellyfish chips.

"After that didn't they become an example of a democratic monarchy in the frontier and had their autonomy expanded?"

The captain nodded vigorously at Kaname's words.

"Yes. Windemere finally gained a way to acquire a mobile task force, rather than just exporting skilled pilots as mercenaries."

"...I don't know."

Arad's eyes sharpened.

"It may be possible to go on your own when it comes to development and funding with variable fighters, but when it comes to a fleet, it's not going to be that easy, even if Earth's control has loosened. Did you have a sponsor for that?"

"Sorry, but the rule of mercenary business is to stay out of that sort of thing. I don't know where King Gramia's funding comes from. But I'm sure there are organizations and companies all over the galaxy that want that fold quartz."

Aisha nodded her head vigorously, her face akin to that of a mad scientist, her desire to make the Fold Quartz her own.

"Anyway, I spent a few years at Fort Hulberstone in Windemere, helping to set up the task force there. We didn't take part in the War of Independence, though, because they wanted to fight it ourselves."

"So, you fought on Earth-side?"

"No. I don't think I'd turn my comrades from yesterday into enemies. I only saw the War of Independence on the Galaxy Net."

"That's what happened when I was having trouble with the survivors of Latence in Ouroboros."

"Come to think of it, that was when the professor was still at S.M.S."

"Back then, Ouroboros was sealed off by a fold fault, due to the Protoculture ruins being activated, which I did myself, so I didn't know anything about the outside world."

That seems to be what the doctor meant when he said, "A lot of things happened."

"I've gone off topic again. And then, Windemere..."

"Yes."

Ernest paused a message was coming in

"Al-Shahal has fallen."

The relaxed atmosphere that had previously permeated the captain's quarters was gone.

Al Shahal is a key transportation hub in Brisingr. Losing it means that most of the trade in the globular cluster falls into Windemere's hands. Sooner or later, it's clear that Ragna will dry up.

"It's the fleet maneuver I taught him. No doubt about it."

"If that's the case..."

Ernest placed some photographs on the kotatsu table. Even today, optical photography is more valuable than video, which is susceptible to jamming - especially in military situations.

"In other words, we can assume that the king himself has come on a business trip."

Before I knew it, Aisha had sat up properly, befitting an advisor, and continued speaking.

"The next target is Ragna."

"If we were to destroy Walküre, that would be the case."

"However, there are other strategic bases for the New United Nations Army. How can you be so sure that it is Ragna?"

Aisha projected several graphs and images onto the Brisingr Globular Cluster.

"This is a measurement of the fold waveform across the entire Brisingr region. It's from the time of the Battle of Voldor"

Kaname's face turned sad for a moment, but everyone pretended not to notice.

"Walküre sang in Voldor, and the song of the Windemere wind was heard. At that moment, the ruins showed a large reaction. At the same time, the same waveform was measured in the ruins of Raguna. Similar signals have been measured in ruins in other regions, but the one in Ragna is by far the largest."

"Are the ruins in these globular clusters connected?"

"That seems more likely. It's a star cluster that's like a hideout for the Protoculture, protected by clearly man-made fold faults. There's also an unusually large number of human species here... We have to think that they were doing something here."

"And that's what Windemere is using."

Aisha rotated the image. Almost exactly opposite Ragna, there was another shining star.

"Windemere. We're measuring waveforms here similar to those in Voldor. On a similar scale to Ragna."

"So that's what it means."

Arad began sorting things out.

[?]

"When Windemere mobilizes the Var soldiers, a song can be heard. This song resonates with the ruins throughout Brisingr, and the largest of these are in Windemere and Ragma. In other words, it's safe to say that there's a connection between the ruins, Var, and Windemere."

"I see, that's it."

Thank you Everyone was amazed.

"That's the first I've heard of it!"

The captain nodded his already huge body vigorously.

"So that's why the New United Nations Army said they were going to blow up the ruins of Ragna with directed reactive munitions."

"...Even if it was a directional reactive missile, it was directly in front of the city. Are they out of their minds?"

"Normally, this isn't the kind of information that would reach our class, but Lady M received information from a government source. They even sent a messenger from Earth."

"That's an old-fashioned move."

It's an old-fashioned technique, but an effective one. Folding a Valkyrie equipped with a super-high performance fold device from base to base, and replacing the fold booster each time to deliver a "letter" is the fastest and most reliable way to simply transmit information. It's just that it's not commonly used because it's too much of a burden. The fact that they're using it means that at least the members of the Central Council are aware of the situation. Arad guessed it was probably the same class. Well, if you can't wrestle with the political players, you can't have an interstellar corporation.

"The Ragna government continues to protest strongly, but it won't last long. Even this planet won't defy the new unified government."

"Those ruins are an object of worship for the people of this planet. If the Earthlings were to blow them up, don't you think that all the people of Ragna might defect to Windemere?"

Aisha slammed the kotatsu.

"...They just don't have the imagination. From Earth, they probably can't understand things like the vastness of the galaxy."

"The discussion about humanity is interesting, but we'll leave it for another time. What we need to think about now is how to defeat king Gramia before that happens."

\*

Having made that decision, Chaos moved quickly. The survivors of the New United Forces from

the star systems occupied by Windemere, as well as the various branches of Chaos. They gathered together employees from the company, and even from rival company S.M.S., and formed a mixed force. It was only thanks to Lady M's quick information that they were able to carry out the operation.

Of course, this was due to the trust that each star system nation had in Walkure, who had fought against them up until then. The Ragna government in particular was more favorable to Chaos than to the central government, which had suddenly appeared and threatened to blow up the ruins with reaction bombs. Of course, Chaos was also a mouthpiece for the Earth mega-corporations, but even so, it was still far better to close the deal.

"I'm Delta Platoon's second-in-command?"

Mirage was so surprised he nearly jumped, but Arad remained calm.

"Your call sign will be upgraded to Delta 2, but from now on you will be in command of the Delta platoon. I must concentrate on my role as battalion commander. From now on, we will be engaged in full-scale fleet combat. I cannot just look after the platoon. Can you do it?"

Mirage nodded slightly but firmly and returned the eye-opening salute. That's right, if he couldn't do even this much, how could he face the dead Lieutenant Messer? Beyond that gaze was that man. Hayate Immelman gazed intently at Messer's beloved aircraft, still in the hangar. If there is a fleet battle with Windemere, the White Knight will appear. Can we defeat him? No, we have to win

After the physical examination, Aisha combed Mikumo's hair with her special comb, as the doctor's aesthetic sense would not allow her to leave her hair in a mess after the examination. It was unusual for Mikumo to show interest in anything in the professor's lab. Her beautiful eyes stared intently at the documents on the Windemere fleet that had been scattered about in a disarray.

"Yes. It's the fleet that set out for Al Shahaar. The one that the reconnaissance aircraft brought back. The flagship looks like a Zentraedi ship, but judging from its style it's probably a Protoculture ruin ship. What's up?"

The songstress swept back her rainbow-colored hair and stood up with the dignity of a queen.

"It just sparked a bit of inspiration."

\*

At all times, people have to eat. At all times, one must take rest. That is the nature of human life and death. When someone dies, even if it is a parent or sibling, people must get food and sleep. If they do not, they will only join the funeral procession. Knowing this, when Makina noticed that her partner, Reina, had stopped eating her specially made lunch with chopsticks, she tilted her head in concern.

"You can't be picky, okay?"

"..... I love Ragna."

Reina, who usually just looks at the computer, was gazing intently at the ocean through the viewing window today.

"I love the sea kitties, sea spiders, sea scorpions, and naked-eating girls. I also got to meet everyone. Messer, Hayate, and Freya."

".....I agree"

Makina hugged Reina tightly with her ample breasts.

"We have to do our best and protect Ragna."

That is the job of the living.

\*

After finishing the prelaunch checks and the briefing, there was nothing left for mirage to do except looking at the notes left behind by Messer.

"A song?"

It was Freya's song. I think it's beautiful. Mirage honestly loved her singing. She also feels envious. It was a song about a girl who had found what she wanted to do, had talent, and was running towards it. Mirage herself is not sure if aerial combat is what she really wants to do. Both my grandfather and grandmother were ace pilots, my mother was a pilot, and my father was a pilot. From the moment she was born, those around him had hoped that

Mirage would become an ace of the New United Nations Forces. However, after many twists and turns, Mirage is now in Chaos rather than the regular army.

In the end, she was never able to catch up with Messer. On the other side of the song were Freya and Hayate. For some reason, Mirage went into hiding. She didn't know why she did it, but when she saw the two of them getting along so well and Hayate listening to Freya's song, an emotion he didn't know took over his brain, her body grew hot, and the next thing he knew, she was hiding in the shadows.

"When I found the stowaway in Al Shahr, I never thought I'd end up fighting alongside her."

"Hihi, really, really."

That's exactly right. Looking back, the world was simpler back then. War was just a disaster, and we were the experts in dealing with it. That seems so, so, so long ago. Hayate seemed to be thinking the same thing, as he gazed intently at the pendant hanging from his neck, letting the wind shine through it. The gem at the top of the pendant sparkled with a mysterious color.

"You did that back then too."

"Hmm? Ah, it's a keepsake from my dad. He sent it to me from some planet when I was a kid. My dad was in the military, and he was posted to all sorts of planets."

"Hayate's father..."

"Right!"

"But"

"Yeah... well, he was one of those people who went missing in action. Apparently he was on a special mission, but I don't know which planet he was on or what he was doing... well, he wasn't around my house much, so to be honest I don't remember very well."

Freya looked sad. She's a very empathetic girl. Hayate must have noticed this, as he forced a playful smile. Mirage thought that the look on his face was pleasing, and then he quickly corrected his assessment in his mind, saying,

"It's just that he's usually so mean that he gives off such a good impression."

"But I never thought you'd really become a Walküre."

"Thanks to you, I might be able to bring my song to Windemere."

Freya lowered her eyes, looking a little sad.

"Sometimes... sometimes, when I sing, I feel like I'm having fun."

"Well, that's fine."

"Even when we're fighting."

"Oh, I know that's not good. But singing fills my body and I'm having so much fun."

"Well, that's true."

Hayate answered nonchalantly, which was a surprising answer to both Mirage and Freya.

"I also have so much fun flying while listening to your song. Even in the middle of a battle, there are times when I feel like I have wings and can fly forever. I guess that's just how it is."

His eyes were looking up at the sky.

"I met Freya, I met Mirage, I flew in the sky for the first time... I finally found what I wanted to do. It was so much fun. Of course... Messer died, and I was scared of dying, and to be honest, I hated the enemy. But,

Like a child who has been caught up in a prank, Hayate embarrassedly scratched his head.

"It's a bit frustrating, but I love your song."

"So, don't be shy, sing to your heart's content. I'll definitely protect you."

Freya's cheeks and Lun's turned bright red. As for Mirage, she wanted to run away. It was somehow much more painful than being exposed to countless missiles and lasers. That was when the announcement came over the ship's broadcast.

"Lieutenant Mirage, Lieutenant Mirage, the meeting is about to begin. Urgent briefing."

"Ah! No!"

I cried out. That was not good. Hayate and Freya both look at Mirage.

"What are you doing in a place like that?"

"N-nothing... nothing."

I wanted to run away. Or rather, I had no choice but to run away.

"Wait, Delta 2."

The voice sounded unusually serious.

"...Don't take on all the burden of Messer alone. You're too straightforward."

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I panicked. For a moment, my heart felt like it was going to burst. It was more exciting than the first time I ever flew a Valkyrie.

"Chuck and the Captain are here. I've got your back...Next time, let's drop it."

"Wh-what... that means..."

If Hayate had been just one second slower in continuing his words, his heart might have really exploded.

"I'll defeat the White Knight without you having to tell me. And once that's done, I'll repay the debt I owe you for the entrance exam. Is that okay, Hayate Immelman?"

Mirage turned and smiled. He knew that Freya had a complicated smile on her face, but he pretended not to understand. If he didn't, something would happen to him.

(Right now it's war.)

\*

Before dawn, Macross Elysion soars into the night sky. The towering giant body rises into the sky and heads towards the sea of stars. The battle begins.

