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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“*Negative, I’ll handle it!*”

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

Speaking of…

“*Justice, going in!*”

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

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

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

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

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

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

“*Shit!* *Sensors are down!*

Lunamaria gasped. “*What happened?!*”

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

Her hands tightened on her controls.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Even if it cost him his life.

No… not on her watch.

Lunamaria gasped, and her vision was filled with stars.

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

Time… seemed to slow down.

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

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

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

The state unofficially known as ‘SEED Mode’.

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

And she knew what to do.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

X~X~X~X~X

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Everything okay?”

“Yeah, no issues at all”

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

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

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

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

“…It was,” He said with a low voice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Am I good enough?”

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

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

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

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

“Shinn…”

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

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

Stella, the name he sometimes mumbled in his sleep…

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

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

“I should have trusted Kira today…”

“His orders weren’t the right ones”

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

He was silent for a moment.

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

Luna decided she had enough.

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

Shinn stared at her his eyes marginally wider than before.

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

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

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

X~X~X~X~X

Luna was happy to have helped Shinn during that moment of vulnerability. She wanted the two to be open with each other and be able to help one another during emotionally tumultuous times. Shinn was a good man, and he deserved the best, so she was there for him in his time of need in his journey to improve himself. He certainly needed someone to think well of him because he wasn’t going to do it himself…

Given how he was dealing with so many things in his head, she put her desire to be physically intimate on the back burner. They’d have other times.

Meanwhile, Luna would have to deal with all this excess pent-up frustration another way. And there were only so many showers she could take…

Right now Luna was finishing working on her cardio with the treadmill. This specific gym wasn’t too large compared to other training facilities around the base, and fortunately, she was the only one around right now. That’s good, she needed some time for herself to just burn away this excess energy and thing.

Though maybe she had been too lost in her thoughts, the counter on the treadmill showed she had been running for longer than she intended, and the strain on her legs and lungs wasn’t what she had expected either. Even for a Coordinator, she had been running for a long while.

Stepping off the treadmill, Luna caught her breath. Her toned stomach rising and falling, sweat starting to seep into her burgundy sports bra and tight pants. Which were feeling tighter than usual. A press of her fingers over her thighs allowed Luna to feel the toned and hardened muscle underneath, slowly they trailed up to her stomach and found the lines that separated her abdominals were deeper than before, or perhaps it’d be fairer to say her core muscles had become more prominent.

It was rather embarrassing, to think she was spending so much time working out because she was *not* having sex with her boyfriend…

It was humiliating. Why wouldn’t he *touch* her?

Frustration and anger gave rise to a new wave of energy, and Luna leaned down on the bench, her knuckles almost popping with how tightly she grabbed the bar. She huffed once the bar was held aloft, panting as she lowered it to her chest before repeatedly lifting it up and down. Her eyes shone with steely determination as she focused on her task, not on the source of her wants. She had to be patient, she repeated in her head over and over like a mantra. Shinn was a good man, he was dealing with a lot, he just needed time…

…They’ve been dating for a *year*.

How long would she have to wait for him? Was she even attractive to him? After everything they’ve been through was it really *that* hard for that thick-headed fool to grasp the fact that she *wanted him?!*

Luna grunted as she felt her muscles *burn*. She thought it was the intensity of the workout, fueled by her frustrations. So absorbed she was in her task she failed to notice how the arm muscles started swelling with each repetition, with her forearms widening and her biceps inflating with mass and power. Her chest muscles grew tighter and more defined, the line separating was becoming more prominent with each passing second.

Yet it wasn’t just the muscles of her torso that were expanding, her stomach pushed out the rows of abs even further, while her calves expanded in girth, the different muscle groups becoming more defined with each passing second, while her calves expanded beyond her shins.

Luna felt *good*. This workout burn made her feel so invigorated, so alive, adrenaline and endorphins were rushing through her veins at amazing speeds, filling her completely.

However, when Luna felt a pressure build up in her stomach, she decided to stop. She put the bar back on its rack and stood up, panting for breath. She didn’t know why but had the feeling that if she kept going then ‘something’ would happen… and she wasn’t sure what ‘it’ was but it gave her a bad feeling…

“Ohh my, you really been hitting the weights lately huh?”

That voice was enough to make Luna jump out of the bench with all her instincts screaming *danger*. She stared nervously at a woman in her early twenties with shoulder-length orange hair and an eyepatch over her right eye. Dressed in workout clothes much like her own, Hilda took the chance to drink in the sight of Luna with a smile on her face.

Lunamaria hated being alone with Hilda at any given moment. The woman was utterly *shameless* in her want for her, and more than one time got far too close to her personal space, not to mention the times Hilda had actually groped her.

Where was HR when she needed it? …Did Compass even have an HR department?

Probably not…

Lunamaria realized she had made a crucial mistake, she got distracted for a single second when in Hilda’s presence. The older coordinator had somehow vanished from sight, but the hot breath on Luna’s neck let her know she was right behind her.

Before she could move, a pair of lithe yet toned arms wrapped themselves around her, with one hand pressing over her stomach and another caressing her shoulder. “You got really cut in such a short time, haven’t you, Luna~?”

Luna blushed, yet a part of her was confused by Hilda’s statement… and with the woman’s fingers fondling her, she soon understood why.

Her abdominals were more prominent, her thighs were wider and more muscular, her shoulders rounder and fuller, and her biceps had become larger and more powerful. She… She wasn’t this fit before, how could she have developed so much muscle in such a short time?!

Luna accidentally released a moan when one of Hilda’s hands roamed over her chest, while the other squeezed her bicep.

“Hmm, solid as mech plating~”

She should tell her to stop, she should have ended it right here… But Luna felt good. It felt nice to have someone touch her, to feel her body in such an adoring way. Was this what she’s been missing for so long? The touch Shinn neglected to give her? Luna felt appreciated, *venerated*, in such an intimate way…

She barely realized she had lifted her arms and flexed them with a mighty pose, inviting Hilda to touch them more. Which she did, the orange-haired pilot fondled her with great eagerness, lavishing her peaks with soft touches and lustful kisses.

Luna was panting with arousal. *More*, she craved. More touch, more…

This what she *wanted*, what she needed, what she failed to achieve with Shinn…

With… With Shinn…

When Hilda’s hand slipped under her pant’s waistline, Luna came to her senses.

She swiftly removed herself from Hilda’s erotic embrace, looking at the one-eyed woman with shame and astonishment. Hilda for her part just looked so confused and annoyed, “What, that’s it? Tch,” She clicked her tongue. “Tease…”

If she said anything more, Luna didn’t know. She *ran* for the bathroom and hurriedly locked herself in one of the stalls. Her shaky hands locked the door as she desperately tried to reign in her breathing, or the *heat* coming from between her legs.

She tried everything, cold thoughts, logistics, mech engineering, nothing was working. It all eventually went back to Shinn, her desire for him… and the erotic moment she shared with Hilda. Luna bit her lip, noting how her nipples were painfully hard.

M-Maybe if she just… *dealt* with it, it’d pass.

That was all the justification she needed to shove her hand down her pants and begin pleasuring herself.

She moaned, sending sparks of electricity through her spine. The heat was overwhelming her. Luna bit her lip as her hand’s strokes increased in tempo, another hand fondled her breasts over the sports bra.

Her muscles palpitated, they rippled and *grew*. Firm veins throbbed their way to the surface as the pleasure kept rising. Supported by powerful pectorals, her breasts inflated, straining the material until a few rips were heard.

Her legs buckled under the pressure, flexing as a result and spreading tears over the fabric of her tight pants. Luna hunched over as her back widened, her hand kept working overtime as she drew closer and closer to-!

Luna moaned pitifully as she finally came, her balance weakening as she was forced to lean against the stall’s wall.

It took her a minute to regain her breathing, upon which she looked down at her now larger and more muscular form.

What was happening to her…?