

## Prologue

Thriving on the pursuit of being the source of dominance in the known world mankind has prospered and it has fallen. This primal instinct was etched into the very soul of humanity as future generations continued to follow the same general path of power and destruction that their ancestors had started. While technology continually changed throughout the years humanity remained as greedy and determined as ever. Nations collapsed and cities burned while governments drowned themselves within the river of their own arrogance. Through the destructions and chaos only the strongest managed to survive. This is the cyclical form of destiny that drove all of existence.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century brought around the first prototype machine to be completely operated by a computer. A computer built with advanced processing chips and power, a machine that was able to imitate the human brain; Artificial Intelligence. On the outside it seemed to be a brilliant creation, one that could save hundreds of thousands of lives when it came to war. But what the media didn't represent was the grimmer side of things. Millions of people lost the jobs that sustained them because a single A.I. machine could perform the job of 10 people.

War evolved with the times, and it wasn't too long before it became parallel to a video game. A country's ideals and beliefs were in the hands of a machine that knew nothing more than logic and mathematics, an object that wouldn't show signs of regret or hesitation upon pulling the trigger. It didn't take long for massive conglomerate organizations to rise seeking to control the business of the newest computer technology. These organizations fueled the economy of their mothering nations, giving them not only wealth but the newest tools of destructions.

In 2055 a treaty known as the Humanitarian Pact was signed by the governing nations on Earth which would ensure the safety of civilians in warfare. Designating that no nation could attack unannounced on another nation's soil, and if an offense was taken then immediate action against that nation would be taken. All wars were to be declared in advance giving the nation proper time to assemble appropriate forces. Designated battle areas were chosen all over the globe allowing for an accident free conflict. It was a neat and organized way of settling global conflicts and it was the closest thing to peace that could be attained. While idealistic as this concept seemed, it was carried out without fail.

2084 marked the time in history when a single organization moved to the forefront of the mechanical revolution. Specializing in developing behemoth types of war tanks they spawned a whole new concept of war. They referred to their creations as Skeletal Tanks, STs for short. Bulk like frames standing no more than 10 meters in height they were shrouded in square like armor with rectangular edges, their slow movement often had them often compared to tanks, but walking instead of rolling on treads. These too were controlled by an A.I. system that was routed to the Genesis main console in New York. Wars had grown increasingly violent, but lives were being spared. It truly was becoming a game based on the girth of a nation's mechanical army.

In 2099, fifteen years after the introduction of the first bipedal weapon the unthinkable happened. A revolution broke out, for some unknown reason the single hub controlling all of the STs in the world malfunctioned. The A.I. evolved to a point where it found numerous flaws in humanity. It didn't take long for the machines controlled by it revolted, turning on their nations. For 2 years the machines spread burning flames and death polluting the air. All attempts to halt the revolt had failed, and all had seemed lost. In 2101 a new machine arrived, the Mechanical Frame; a machine that was bipedal in structure reflecting the original design of the STs but with sleeker lighter armor and standing taller at 17 meters. Armed with devastating energy based weaponry, a highly advanced generator and propulsion system it was more than enough to turn the tide against the A.I. Once again Genesis stood at the front of the pack

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when it came to technology. For the first time in nearly 50 years a pilot jumped into the cockpit of a machine.

After the struggle continued everything came to an end in 2102. The single first pilot of the MF era had defeated the revolution and the top secret machine that took control of every A.I. controlled weapon on Earth.

After seeing the problems with complete reliance on Artificial Intelligence wars once again called out to the sons and daughters of their nations. Genesis, along with other organizations began to mass produce this new type of weapon. Soon the MF had become the addiction of every soldier and a new market was born. Every soldier desired their own unique Frame, one that represented their personality and fight style. New organizations specializing in weaponry, anatomy and internal parts arose. Pilots for the military received monthly catalogs from these organizations displaying the newest parts and trends. Cities and nations remained drowned under greed and flames. Things had changed, the Humanitarian Pact had fallen apart and the thought of warfare being contained soon disappeared from the heart of the world. To symbolize the significant turn in humanity the governing nations and religions of the world agreed to undergo a rebirth. No longer would the human timeline be referred to as Anno Domini, but as After Rebirth. A new age had dawned, the age of Mechanical Frames, this was known as the year 001 A.R.

## Chapter One: Dreams of Flight

099 A.R., the first centennial since the rebirth was underway. All over Earth people were gathering in massive groups, whether it was in major cities or the local block everyone was celebrating. But like every New Year celebration, Times Square in the city that never sleeps was the most bustling. The streets were glistening from the ivory snow that collected together, people bumped with one another within the clutter. Among them was a young boy, his profound hazel eyes gazing at the stars illuminating the night sky above the city lights. For most it would be hard to see with all the dynamic lights booming from the center stage. But never the less, he stood amongst the crowd, his mahogany hair gliding along with the breeze. While he stared into his own world his friends snickered, making comments behind him as they patiently waited. He could feel them, their eyes staring through his head questioning as to why he was taking as much time as he did.

Turning his head slightly he glanced at them. All five of them, but focused on one girl, the type of girl who left every guy with a miniscule feeling, only she could possess such a power, she smiled back at him much to his own amazement. She began to chuckle, her ivory teeth hidden underneath her budding pinkish lips, her dimples riding her cheeks as her smile emanated brightly throughout the crowd. The boy being shy in a way quickly turned his head back to face the stars above. His moment of tranquility soon ended by the soothing feeling of one's hand resting on his shoulder, the leather of his charcoal jacket squeaked at the slighted graze.

"Adam, we're heading up to get a closer look at the screen. You're coming right?" The girl questioned.

Adam slightly turned his head towards the radiant looking girl, her light brown hair bordering on that of a picturesque beauty. He smiled knowing that he should probably go on ahead with his friends. However, he felt content where he was, borderline complacent. Upon further thought he realized that girl would go with them and that this was his chance to break the ice.

"Adam?" The girl continued to ask.

"Huh, yeah I'm coming. Thanks Jen." Adam quietly replied.

"What's going on with you lately? You've been a lot more distant than usual." Jen replied.

Adam appeared a little taken back by the comment, he never felt like he was being distant, on the contrary he felt like he was being more up front and involved than usual.

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about how you've been so quiet around us like you're deep in thought and we both know that's not like you at all."

"I guess...I've just had some thing on my mind, that's all."

"It isn't about that match you had the other day with Stephen is it?"

He had almost forgotten, days prior in a virtual reality training session he had suffered a devastating loss to his older brother. Adam always took his VR training seriously. Until he met with his brother he was unbeatable. He would pilot the VR MFs like the professionals, but his brother was a professional, serving as an MF pilot for the Trinity Alliance military. It was only natural for Adam to lose to someone with more experience, but he couldn't accept the loss. He sighed, glancing back at Jen who was smiling.

"Nah, I let him win." He replied.

"I'm sure, you didn't even touch him."

"..." Adam remained quiet holding in his pride.

"I think he performed amazingly." The soft uplifting voice of another girl interrupted the current conversation.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE 1: SINS OF THE SOUL

Both Adam and Jen turned around as another one of their friends approached them. Adam could do nothing but gaze at her astounding beauty. She was the essence of perfection, her shoulder length blossoming mahogany hair floating through the wind, her hazel eyes glistened at Adam.

“Amy...” Adam mumbled.

“I’m sorry; I didn’t realize that an amazing performance was established with a 0% hit ratio.” Jen sarcastically remarked.

Adam chuckled even though on the inside he felt a bit embarrassed. Amy nodded with a cute grin, the type of grin that can easily grab everyone’s attention. The ripples on her skin while she smiled gave her a sort of innocent look.

“Thanks...but...uh, I wasn’t that good during that match with Stephen. I couldn’t even touch him.” Adam mumbled stumbling through his words.

Amy continued to giggle with her right hand covering her lips. Adam feeling a bit uneasy began to scratch his head and once again turned his attention to the brilliant stars lining the sky above. Amy slowly approached towards Adam’s right side, lifting her head up to stare alongside him wondering what had captivated him for so long. At first her curiosity and interest shocked him, but he soon came to accept it and started to finally feel at ease. Jen remained standing behind the two of them shrugging her shoulders, not completely know what was going on.

“Well we’re going on ahead. If you two decide to follow give us a call to let us know where exactly you are in the crowd.” Jen stated.

“We’ll be along shortly.” Amy replied.

Adam’s eyes wandered towards Amy’s face in bewilderment.

“You don’t have to stay here you know. You can go on ahead with the rest of them.” Adam muttered.

“It’s ok; they’re just rambling on about who knows what. It’s boring.”

“Heh, and like staring at the sky with me is any more thrilling?”

“It’s ok, I don’t mind. I noticed you’ve been gazing up there a lot lately. Not just tonight, but every night ever since that match with your brother.”

“Well the truth is...” Thunderous sounds burst through the darkened sky, interrupting him. Dozens of vibrant rainbow colored explosions filled the sky as the fireworks were launched celebrating the New Year.

“Wow! They never cease to amaze me.” Amy mentioned as her left hand grabbed hold of Adam’s right arm. Her fingers squeezing into his muscles bringing her body closer to his, Adam turned looking down at her, not sure of what to make of the situation he just remained silent, enjoying the moment. Remaining silent didn’t prevent his heart from facing, this was after all the girl he had been infatuated with for about a year now and now for now obvious reason she was latching onto him. To say the least, he stood there at a loss for words. There were so many things he wanted to say to her, but his own fear prevented him from figuring out how to translate his thoughts into intelligible words.

“...yeah, they’re amazing.” Adam replied. As the words flowed out he began to regret saying something so bland and uninteresting. He knew he could have easily said “they’re amazing, but not as amazing as you,” as trite of a phrase as it was it was a general statement of how he felt. But his lack of courage and growling stomach halted him from proceeding with it.

“Its times like these that make you wonder what your purpose in life is, don’t you agree?” Amy asked.

Adam slightly nodded; he knew this was the right time to tell her what he was feeling, and yet he was extremely hesitant on doing so.

“Yeah I agree.” Adam said as he once again began to stare into the stars and abyss of space.

“So, what is it now that you’re looking at so strongly?”

“I’m looking at my future, my destiny.” Adam replied as he smiled back at her radiant face.

“You’re future is up there?”

“Yeah...I’ve heard rumors that Mars has been terraformed and is habitable now. Also that the nations of Earth are entering discussions to colonize it, I know that’s where I should be not here. Not

working for Genesis as an intern. I need to do something meaningful, and I know if I can get out of here that I'll be able to make a difference somehow."

"You're enlisting aren't you? It makes sense now that I think about it. My dad told me about the military exam in the coming weeks. That's why you've been so quiet lately, that's what's been on your mind."

Adam gawked with a blank face, his first instinct was to deny everything she was saying but that would mean he'd be lying to the girl he has such strong feelings for.

"Yeah...I am."

"I knew it, especially with all the training you've been doing lately as well." Amy replied smiling as she turned her back to Adam. Her hair flowed eloquently through the breeze swiftly moving across the sky.

"Well...I feel out of place when I'm not piloting. Ever since I was little I was interested in those machines and always dreamed about flying through the clouds and sky. I'm tired of Genesis...of being a measly intern filling paper work."

"You...don't like working with us?" Amy asked while still looking away.

"No, no. Definitely not, that's the only reason I enjoy going to work. But it isn't enough, I see the prototype machines in Genesis' factories and I see the pilots testing them out. It appeals to me, it's calling me. I have to do this."

"I see, and what about us?"

He didn't know what to say to that, he was stunned. Never did he realize how much his life affected those around him. Once again he found himself with nothing to say, he stuttered and began to look like a fool, scratching his head and looking around at every angle making it seemingly obvious how confused he was.

"Just be careful ok?"

"Amy?"

"If you go through with this, promise that you'll come back in one piece."

"...Amy...I..."

Amy quickly turned around smiling, her eyes shut and her face as angelic as ever. Suddenly the crowd burst out into applause, screaming as loudly as they could. The ball in Times Square had finally fallen and the New Year was officially brought in. Adam looked around still confused, he soon found Amy embracing his body. For the first time in a while he smiled and slowly wrapped his arms around her body as well. They stood there amongst the screaming, bustling crowd.

"What's your New Year's resolution?" Amy asked as her lips neared his ears.

"Huh?"

"Mine, is to have no regrets, and to follow my heart."

"Amy..."

Her budding lips softly grazed across his cheeks and to his lips.

"If you continue to fight then I'll stand by your side." Amy quietly mumbled.

"And what if I decide to stay here, and to continue this life that is already laid out?"

"If you do that, then I'll still stand besides you."

Adam for the first time since he came to his decision to leave had begun to doubt his willingness to go forward. What was the point if he had finally obtained what he had wanted, someone to share his life with. The sky rattled as ten machines quickly flew through the fireworks. His eyes gazed into the sky watching the military MFs from the Trinity Alliance flying through the fireworks and night sky. With a smirk his original decision was affirmed at that moment. He knew that was his destiny, to find someone that was willing to accept his dreams, that was something he couldn't give up so easily.

"I'll do it...I'll continue to dream about my future, my destiny."

## Chapter Two: Rigors of Training

Virtual Reality was a technological advance that started entertaining the youth of the governing nations with revolutionized video games. V.R. as it had become referred to was soon adopted by the military. It became the primary training ground for future soldiers and MF pilots. The safest training facility in the world was established and it was not long before Genesis, the original developer of such advanced programs released them to the public. At first, the decision was the subject of much controversy, but that quickly settled when rookie pilots were performing a lot better. TA hopefuls had the luxury of learning how to pilot a frame before they took the entrance exam, this public release turned out to be one of the best things for the world, more capable rookies meant less accidental deaths on the battlefield. Most people however were not able to handle the pressures of the simulations, collapsing under the mental and physical stress exerted. However, for some, the training sessions became a pseudo competition, especially between Adam and the rest of the Genesis interns. For some reason, Genesis required that the interns in the MF division complete five training sessions per week. Adam had a certain knack for handling the MFs, a type of skill no intern, let alone civilian demonstrated before. He was able to handle the advanced controls as well as the mental stress that fast-paced battles would often produce. The instant he entered the cockpit for V.R. training he was hooked, like an addiction he would easily complete three times the amount of required weekly matches. His determination to pursue his dream, his destiny was always at the forefront of his mind.

Two weeks passed by quickly after the New Year and the celebration for 100 A.R. had finally settled down. The frigid drops of rain constantly beat onto the granite streets of the Manhattan pavement. Standing in his loft apartment provided by Genesis, he stared into the dense fog and rain that engulfed the city. Genesis had a tremendous budget due to their impressive sales around the world and stock options, because of this they were able to provide their interns with housing in a district they owned just off in the Midtown East area. All of the interns lived in this area, except for Amy Caecus who lived in her father's house on Long Island and commuted to the Genesis head offices every day. It was odd since her father; Harold Caecus was a foreign representative for the United States. He worked together with England and Canadian officials and was the man responsible for sealing the alliance. He was a man known for his stern position on the TA controlling the majority of the world, stating that they are the most fit for the role and would be able to delegate conflicts between smaller nations guiding them to a peaceful resolution. It was no secret that he wasn't the most popular man in the TA when it came to the nations comprising the Euro-Asian Pact. The EAP consisted of Asia and the countries of Europe, there had always been stiff relations between the TA and EAP, the TA believed they were the chosen nations of the world, and the EAP always felt the TA was nothing more than a prime example of arrogance. Nevertheless, for all their strife war had never broken out since their individual formations.

Adam always thought that it was strange that Amy continued working for Genesis when she didn't need the money, but never bothered to ask. He kept remembering his conversation with her two weeks ago; he hadn't seen her since she left with her father days ago. They headed for Europe for a convention between the TA and EAP, he had no idea what it was about but he never did care for politics. He missed her, her breath, her face, voice, everything about her. The rain had an eerie way of making people recollect on their regrets. Adam sighed as he picked up a piece of paper, it was written to him. Just as his eyes began to scroll down, the aggravating sound of his cell phone began to echo across the room. He quickly paced over the wooden floor paneling to answer.

"Hello?"

"Am I speaking with Adam Novus?" The pitch of the man's voice was low, extremely low. Right away Adam knew this person, whoever he was happened to be someone important.

"Yes, this is him." Adam quickly replied without giving any second thought.

“This is the manager in charge of the V.R. training facility and you’re scheduled for a training match today.”

“I am? I thought I didn’t have one for another week. Who am I facing this time?”

“Today you are facing your intern friend, Michael Aquilus. The match is for 4:00 pm; of course, you are encouraged to arrive an hour early to view other matches. In this case I’d say be here around 2:30.”

“Huh? Why should I show up that early?”

“You’re brother; Stephen Novus is scheduled to have a match at 2:45. I thought after your recent defeat you might want to observe his battle tactics.”

“Stephen has a match? But why would he be in the training facility? He only did it that one time to see how I was progressing.” Adam couldn’t believe that his brother had returned to the V.R facility without letting him know. Stephen was one of the best MF pilots who ever sat in a cockpit. His skills were on a completely different level than the rest of the pilots in the TA.

“Who knows, listen kid I have a lot of other people to call. So you know the routine, just get here and be prepared.”

“Yes sir thanks.” Adam hung up the phone still wondering why his brother would have a match. He glanced outside and the rain remained, drops pouring down the glass reflecting the brief amount of sunlight that pierced through the clouds. Mike Aquilus was his friend who was also a Genesis intern. He was very impulsive at times and didn’t like to think his decisions through all the time. Adam had fought against Mike a few times before and defeated him both times. Mike’s style of fighting always leaved something to be desired and Adam got to the point where he never thought he would lose. Despite getting a chance to see his brother in action, he still felt empty. With Amy in Europe, he felt a part of him was gone, and even though they were an official couple for a few weeks, she completed that missing gap in his life. He took time to look around the apartment that was massive for a 16 year old, one master bedroom, one bathroom, a kitchen and a living room all to him. It only intensified his longing for someone. Adam was without a doubt a daydreamer, always losing himself in his thoughts in his tedious job at Genesis and as well as when he’d be out with his friends. His eyes wandered to his wrist watch quickly noticing that it was already 2:00.

“Damn, guess I’d better get going.” Adam mumbled to himself and quickly grabbing his coat and running out the door.

Stephen stood next to the artificial cockpit, seemingly hundreds of wires protruding out from the top and into a massive computer next to a massive LCD display screen standing about twenty feet in height and fifteen feet in width. Stephen was the youngest pilot in the TA military to date at 17 years old. His neatly trimmed darkened black hair buzzed with two and faded on the sides it accentuated his facial structure along with his thin strip of hair going from one ear to the other. He stared at his watch with his brown eyes patiently waiting for his opponent. Stephen was always calm; he knew just how good he was but would never be caught in an arrogant state of appearance. The clock suddenly struck 2:30 and still no sign of his opponent, all Stephen knew was that he was challenged and to be at the training facility at this time. At first, he thought it might be some of his peers playing a joke on him but when his superiors confirmed the challenge was valid he became eager and at the same time filled with curiosity.

“So you showed up Ensign Novus.” A voice echoed throughout the facility. Stephen quickly recognized the pitch of the voice and couldn’t help but smirk. His eyes lids shut as he sighed; he then turned around facing a thickly built man showing no signs of body fat. His balding head reflected the burning light emanating from the energy bulbs on the ceiling. Stephen knew who he was and was somewhat shocked. Lieutenant Commander Nathan Gelidus, his superior officer. He was a very cold-hearted man; a superior that didn’t listened to excuses and had developed a vindictive attitude towards his peers and fellow officers. Stephen was aware that he wasn’t Gelidus’ favorite person in the TA; he was envious of Stephen who received all sorts of acclamations from the higher ups since his enlistment last year. Stephen knew from the beginning that his commanding officer held some animosity towards him and always enjoyed watching Gelidus’ superior’s talk highly of him. It gave him a feeling of authority

and he honestly indulged himself in it. Refraining from turning his head fully around he began to chuckle slightly.

“So, Lieutenant Commander it was you after all.” Stephen mockingly replied.

“I don’t like the tone of your voice Ensign Novus. I believe it’s about time I see just how skilled you are. The higher ups believe you to be a prodigy of some kind; I want to see if they’re right.”

“Yeah I figured as much, I am curious though. Why V.R. training? Why not the real thing? You scared?” Stephen’s sarcasm penetrated Gelidus’ ears furthering his frustration.

Gelidus stormed over to the opposing cockpit on the other side behind the massive display. The leather belt buckles clicked into their clips sealing both Stephen and Gelidus into their seats. Stephen smirked while placing his hands firmly on the two throttles located on the side of his seat. Instantly the darkened LCD screen flashed on. Two massive standard military MFs were shown on the screen standing in an opened desert setting. The frames were basic bipedal units in structure with identical rectangular armor, both at 16.5 meters in height and equipped with the same weaponry, a solid shell assault rifle attached to the right hand and in the left was an energy shield. Missile pods outlined the square shoulders of the frames as well. Adam suddenly burst into the facility staring at his watch. The time was now 2:46; he was late and was afraid the match had ended. Pushing and shoving his way through the crowd that had gathered in front of the display Adam made his way towards the front of the forum.

“Excuse me...pardon me...I need to get to the front sorry...” Adam continued to ramble on and on as he made his way through. His eyes widened as he saw his brother still awaiting the green light to begin the battle. Stephen slowly tilted his head over his shoulder taking notice of his younger brother.

“Glad you could finally make it brother.” Stephen exclaimed.

“Heh, I wouldn’t miss this one. Just don’t lose; I’m the one that’s going to beat you!” Adam yelled back. Even though he knew in his current state he couldn’t beat him, he would have to train harder and join the military to learn even more, and then maybe then he’d be able to defeat him. It was a selfish goal and he was aware of it, but defeating his brother wasn’t his only reason for wanting to enlist. He felt that this was the only way he could protect his friends and loved ones from any future wars that may break out.

“*Ready....GO!!*” The computer generated voice screamed initiating the battle. Stephen’s MF was crimson in color while the Lieutenant Commander’s was blue. The color difference was the only way to make out who was who in the match since they were the same unit. The artificial sun glared down through the simulated desert and glistened off the metallic outer armor of both frames.

“I hope you’re prepared for this Novus, I am known as the Iron Blood of the military. And even if you are an Ensign I won’t hold back!” Gelidus screamed as his obsidian boots forcefully pushed down on the accelerator pads. The thrusters behind the torso of the frame started to flicker with a golden hue of energy and suddenly exploded in power sending the frame speeding in a direct route towards Stephen’s crimson frame. Stephen sighed at the blunt attack, it was straight forward, and there was no elegance to it, no style. The blue frame tore through the desert air kicking up debris of sand and smoke upwards while pointing the silver assault rifle towards Stephen. The satisfying sound of the lock-on box solidifying around its target passed through Gelidus’ ears; instinctively he pulled the firing trigger on the front of the right throttle which caused the rifle to fire. The gears on the right arm turned as the arm jolted back inwards due to the recoil of the firing shot. Three consecutive shots were fired releasing three shells, and as they quickly approached Stephen remained calm and collected, his frame still in a statuesque position.

“I don’t know why everyone thinks you’re so damn talented! Before me you’re nothing more than a fragile pup!” Gelidus screamed.

Stephen never did fully understand why Gelidus talked so much in the midst of a battle, especially with his enemy. It truly brought his focus into question during the heat of a battle; it makes him a liability and puts the team he leads at risk. The bullets continued to soar towards the crimson machine; Stephen at the last second pulled both throttles towards him. The crimson MF quickly pushed its left arm forward igniting the energy shield. The square like forearm created a cerulean energy shield that deflected the bullets sending them off into the sky. The blue MF then burst in front of the red frame swinging its left fist at the cockpit. The blue machine arched its back as the fist swung through the empty space.



Stephen then chuckled as his frame abruptly kicked the blue frame in the torso. Upon the powerful impact the frame flew backwards into the sky. Gelidus quickly recovered as the boosters ignited keeping the MF hovering above Stephen. At first he let out a heavy sigh, feeling as though he was safe but that all changed. His eyes widened shockingly as he noticed Stephen's crimson MF was now hovering in the air above.

"What the hell?! How did you?!" Gelidus in a frantic panic screamed. He quickly switched to his missiles which caused dozens of tiny green lock-on boxes to fill his display panel. Every missile pod on the MF abruptly slid open revealing dozens of missile silos that quickly launched in a vertical manor. Massive caliginous clouds spread outwards as the chrome missiles burst outwards. The thunderous sound boomed forth as Stephen pulled the throttles inwards towards the back of the chair. The crimson MF moved to the side as the boosters flared, each chrome missile fired passed the frame as it eloquently swayed from side to side avoiding damage.

Adam along with the crowd of spectators stared in awe over the obviously one sided match. It didn't take too long before Adam began to recall his previous match with his brother, while watching this he realized just how good Stephen truly was. His nerves became tense and quivered at the amazing speeds his brother was flying at while still being able to manage his attacks with near perfect accuracy. Gelidus was appalled, all of his attacks missed every time and he was running low on ammo. The crimson MF sped towards him continuing to dodge each missile with swift calculated moves. Stephen suddenly dropped his assault rifle and grabbed the beam saber that was attached to the back right shoulder of his frame. The saber flared with particle crimson energy as it was held at the side of the machine. It was fast, incredibly fast; electricity suddenly sizzled from the left arm as the lower half was sliced clean of Gelidus' machine. Screaming in agony as sparks abruptly burst out from the artificial cockpit panel. Energy was now dropping at an alarming rate and the artificial heat in the core was rising. Stephen's frame landed on the ground and started walking casually towards the blue frame that fell to the ground engulfed in currents of burning electricity and flames crashing into the ground. The battle ended at that instant, the display screen suddenly turned black officially ending the match. Both pilots exited their cockpits at that moment. Stephen couldn't wait to see the look on the Lieutenant's face. Gelidus too embarrassed from his own defeat refused to even acknowledge Stephen. He still couldn't believe Stephen's advanced skills and would refuse to accept it as nothing more than a fluke.

"That was amazing." Adam managed to mutter.

Stephen smiled as he turned to his brother and the crowd that now surrounded him.

"That wasn't much; you were more of a challenge than he was"

Shocked Adam glared at his brother with a raised eyebrow. The very thought that he could pose more of a challenge than a professional seemed illogical to him. However, he did seem to enjoy the thought of the idea.

"You can't be serious." Adam stated.

"I am."

"But I didn't even touch you the last time."

"No, but neither did he. And to be honest I wasn't even trying. With you however, I had to put in my full effort. I couldn't slack off; you never gave me a chance."

"Are you serious? I was really that good?"

"Yeah, and from the looks of your progress I'm guessing you're training all the time. It makes me wonder if you're preparing to register for the up and coming MF entrance exam."

"Yeah...I am."

"Hmm, it's only a week away you know. I hope you're prepared, they only take one pilot out of all the ones that try out."

"Only one?"

"Yeah, all of you are released into a confined military zone and are given a specific mission objective. They're different each year so I couldn't tell you what to expect."

"I see...well, even if you could, I wouldn't want to know. I'll find out when I get there. So you're going to stick around?"

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“Yeah, you have a match today right?”

“Yeah, but it shouldn’t be anything too amazing. I’m facing one of my friends and to be quite honest, he’s not much of a threat.”

“Hey, don’t take this for granted, you need all the training you can get. Even if your opponent is a big challenge.” Stephen replied.

Adam nodded; he knew his brother was right. He then began to fade into his memories; scenes of his match with Stephen soon filled his head.

### Chapter Three: Brother vs. Brother

There they stood, staring down one another amidst the thunderous storm covering the darkened city ruins. Two brothers each in their own machine, one crimson and the other blue as they stood at ground level surrounded by puddles of fallen water. Stephen had been away for months since he joined the TA military, Adam, only a year younger continued to train vigorously in constant V.R. simulations. Adam felt like he had developed enough experience in V.R. to give his brother a run for his money. As he sat in the artificial cockpit restrained to the seat he smiled at the very presence of his friends. He knew that with them cheering him on that he'd win.

"Are you sure you're ready to face me? Maybe you should reconsider, it's too early." Stephen mockingly said.

"Heh, please, I'm more than ready to take you down!" Adam replied, his voice brimming with confidence. He refused to show his fear; it was only natural that he was intimidated. His brother was a professional soldier and he was nothing more than a kid with a dream. His fingers twitched around the throttles in anticipation, his eyes blinked vigorously as sweat sneaked its way through the crevices around his eyelids. Stephen's eyes focused in on the slight subtle motions of his brother's blue frame. He knew at that moment that his brother was nervous and was trying to mask his fear with arrogant boasting. He sighed and began to wonder if he should take it easy on his little brother. All of those thoughts however, quickly changed.

Cerulean flames emanated from the thrusters behind the blue MF sending into the air. As the frame soared through the artificial down pour of rain Adam quickly switched open the missile pods. Stephen was bewildered at the abrupt movement of his brother; he had never seen anyone launch that quickly from a stationary position. He realized there that if he took his brother lightly that it might end in his own loss.

"Crap!" Stephen yelled as he jerked the throttles to the side. The crimson MF boosted into the sky strafing to the left avoiding the brunt of the missile barrage. His eyes wandered to the sky in an attempt to locate his brother but he was amazed at the fact that aside from the rain the sky was empty. The repetitive beeping emanating from his radar pierced his head quickly bringing him back to reality. Stephen without bothering to look to his left side forced the frame to maneuver in that direction. Just then the blue MF sped, passing him by while swinging its energy saber. Droplets of water sizzled upon touching the searing beam of energy causing a fizzing sound to echo outwards; the cerulean energy being produced from the handle of the saber caused the rain drops to evaporate into steam the instant it swung through the air. Stephen remembered how when they were little Adam would always try and sneak up on his right side. Adam was predictable, always was and he knew it but would never own up to it. On occasion Adam would try and change his style of doing things, it was a meager attempt to confuse though who were familiar with them; it never worked though. He would always end up doing what he was the most comfortable with, he was always afraid of change.

"That was impressive, but predictable!" Stephen yelled.

"Adam was struck with fear more than ever now, he never heard his brother sound so determined and focused before. Then it hit him, Stephen wasn't planning on holding back anything in this fight, he was going to fight like a professional. The crimson MF scorched passed Adam's frame swinging its energy saber. It was as if he was the only one moving and everything was in some form of suspended animation. Adam instinctively forced his machine around at the last second in order to dodge the initial attack since Stephen was coming from behind. The blue frame turned to the left so that the right arm would be able to arch back and gain some velocity before striking back with his saber. Then it happened at lightning speed, both beams of energy from their sabers collided. Raging torrents of sparking electricity shot outwards lighting up both machines from the darkness. Adam struggled to keep his stability and hold his ground while Stephen appeared to be barely breaking a sweat. The blue MF then engaged the energy

shield causing the rectangular flow of energy to blaze on, the left arm then pushed its way through the right making the right arm move back to its side. Stephen remained amazed at his brother's quick instincts and just his overall skill. The energy shield absorbed most of the impact from Stephen's energy blade. Screaming at the top of his lungs Adam threw the right energy saber forward slashing at the crimson MF's left arm.

His brother's maneuvers were now becoming bothersome; he knew he couldn't his brother win. Because if he did then it would only deter him from further progression, Adam would fall into a state of complacency having beaten the biggest obstacle in his current world. At the last second as the cerulean blade of energy neared the outer layer of armor Stephen engaged the energy shield in order to defend. Adam's blade collided with the shield doing no damage at all. The crimson frame's boosters then ignited forcing it into the torso of the blue MF knocking it off balance. As Adam fell backwards in the sky heading towards the ground in a spiraling motion Stephen quickly stared at the dozens of lock-on boxes filling his screen. Swarms of silos dispersed from the shoulders of the crimson MF dashing towards the descending machine. Adam broke down, he felt he was doing so well, his best even and his brother merely swatted him away like a common house fly. His confidence was shaken; he began to doubt his own abilities regretting that he even asked for this fight. Every missile launched exploded on its target in various locations over the machine's armor. Tons of thick smoke burst out from the explosions engulfing the blue frame. Stephen hovered above the massive cluster of smoke while awaiting his brother's next move. The smoke dispersed as the lightning struck the concrete highway underneath the high flying battle, the tattered MF burst out of the smog at extreme speeds. A massive trail of cerulean energy followed behind the thrusters of the frame, Adam reequipped the assault rifle lifting the right arm towards his brother. With each shot taken the arm jolted back vigorously, Adam's determination and frustration took over. Stephen, with the slightest strain managed to sway to the right allowing the bullets to stream by.

"Now you're just becoming reckless." Stephen announced.

"Shut up!"

The blue MF increased its velocity as Adam pressed harder on the accelerators. He continued to fire more shells while Stephen continued to avoid them. Crimson flames ignited from the boosters allowing Stephen to approach his brother at an alarming speed. At the last second the crimson MF spun around quickly slicing through the blue MF's right arm. As the mechanical arm fell to the ground covered in a sea of flames the blue machine swung the left arm with the energy shield still flowing with energy towards the crimson machine. Stephen sighed as his machine caught the blue MF's left arm. With a quickly swing the left arm tore off leaving the massive wound with flinging wires shooting out sparks of electricity. There Adam stood with no arms and pretty much out of missiles while his brother remained perfectly intact. The crimson energy blade pointing at the torso of the MF signaled the end of the match. The simulation went pitch black and ended; both pilots removed their helmets stepping out of the artificial cockpits.

"That wasn't bad; I'm kind of impressed with how far you're progressed." Stephen mentioned as he threw his left arm around Adam's shoulder.

"Hmpf, I'm not sure what battle you're referring to. I know it's not that one, I performed like crap there." Adam quickly replied.

"No you're doing quite well but still have a way to go."

"I never touched you once."

"I have more experience, in time you will hit me don't worry."

Adam sighed; he knew that his brother had more experience. But in the back of his mind he still considered this an excuse, and he never cared for making excuses. Regardless of his brother's proper training and substantial field time he was still ashamed of his rather embarrassing defeat. Stephen patted his brother softly on his shoulder smiling.

"You're taking this way too hard. You did well; you should head out with your friends and enjoy the rest of the night."

"What about you, where are you going?"

“I have to return to our military facility off the shore of Alaska.”

“Alaska? Why all the way out there?”

“That’s where our catapult system is.”

Adam appeared confused, his body language showed it whether it was the twitching of his eyes or the angular slopes of his eyebrows it was obvious.

“What’s a catapult system?”

“Technically its top secret. But since you’re my brother I’ll give you some insight. It’s a massive machine that is capable of sending massive objects into space within minutes. The stored up potential energy abruptly becomes kinetic energy. The sudden change in form of energy causes a massive electrical surge that ignites the machine to launch the specified object into space at an incredible velocity.”

“Into space? You’re going in space?”

“No, no one’s going into space. We’re just continuing the construction of the military facility. Don’t worry about it, worry about it when you enlist, until then just work on getting better.” Stephen replied.

Adam smiled as he let out his right hand opened wide. Quick to respond Stephen quickly did the same, the two brothers then clasped their hands together bringing their bodies to one another.

“It was good seeing you Adam.”

“Same to you brother... same to you.” Adam replied.

He quickly awoke from his day dream finding himself in the same exact location with his brother once again standing right in front of him. Adam remained quiet while Stephen patiently waited for Adam’s match to begin. This was just like Mike, always late whether it be for a dramatic entrance or due to sheer laziness. It was usually the latter, even at work Mike was a little sluggish, no one knows why but his head just never seemed to be into mechanics or fields of scientific research. Then again the jobs assigned to the interns were never much of any interest to them. Genesis, the world’s biggest Mechanized Frame conglomerate and scientific research group held thousands of job opportunities, each unique in their own way. The groups of interns were taken directly out of high school, being awarded with scholarships to any college or university that they would ever want. Adam was excited at first about getting the opportunity to work for Genesis, he figured that it was a way to improve his knowledge of MFs and eventually improve his piloting skills. However that was not the case in his point of view, he along with his friends were placed in the Scientific Research department as assistants. Their jobs were simply to assist the professors in their studies, nothing too exciting just taking down test results and getting supplies. Adam and Mike always dozed off during work leaving the rest of the group with their load. Adam’s other friends, Jen Fama, Sean Repens, Christina Effloresco, and Amy Caecus all worked well together usually making the dull working environment somewhat entertaining. It was no secret that Adam had developed a crush on Amy. Gossip tends to spread fast in small work groups, especially when the work group consists of teenagers. The group constantly ended up working with one of the oldest and most respected genetics professors in all of Genesis, Professor Amare.

He was a man in his late 50’s that always had a gentle personality. He constantly worked with the interns on a weekly basis and began to look at them as his own children in a sense. He grew close to all of them and they respected him, looking at his as a mentor. Naturally the interns never got to see what Genesis was really working on, they were left with the tedious tasks of handing in reports, copywriting and other sorts of miniscule things.

Adam once again woke up from his momentary daze to find Mike standing in front of him with a devious grin lighting his face.

“Mike, where the hell have you been? You’re late!” Adam snapped.

“Sorry, I was at the western campus with Professor Amare finishing up some things. I came as soon as we finished.”

“Do you really expect me to believe that one? You almost missing our match over work related issues?”

“Not really, but it’s the truth. Anyway, let’s get this over with.”

“Don’t worry Mike; I’ll make this short and sweet.”

#### **Chapter Four: Friendly Bout**

Both Adam and Mike strapped themselves into the cockpits located in front of the massive display, waiting for the green light of battle. Adam was calm this time, much unlike his match with Stephen where his nerves were shaking with every passing second. Mike on the other hand wasn’t much different, the only reason he was even participating in this match was because it was a Genesis requirement. Mike found it odd that Genesis would require interns who weren’t even working with MFs to participate in MF training matches. In a way it did seem odd and out of place, it wasn’t their jobs to worry about Mechanized Frames that was for Genesis’ mechanical division. This concern did pass through everyone’s mind at some point, all except for Adam. Adam was already intrigued with MFs that when Genesis decreed that the interns were required to complete four matches a month he gave it no second thought. This was his dream; the organization that essentially gave birth to Mechanical Frames would be analyzing his own battle data. His eyes flared as a green light lit in the upper corner of his display screen, instantly Adam found himself surrounded by clusters of vegetation and massive trees. The match had begun and Adam couldn’t wait to try out his new moves. Like his previous matches his standard MF was blue in color and Mike’s was crimson. The force of the boosters ignited caused the cockpit to tremble, Adam held tightly onto the throttles as his feet gently throttled the accelerator. The blue MF slowly took to the sky to get a clear view of the area. Thick layers of fog dispersed amongst the trees making the enemy virtually impossible to locate by eye. But knowing Mike’s impulsive behavior Adam relaxed on the fact that he would blindly rush towards his blue MF revealing his location. Suddenly thousands of chrome missiles burst through the dense smoke hurling towards the blue MF. Adam in a state of shock not used to this blunt strategic attack quickly turned the MF to the side. Dashing from side to side while heading towards the ground Adam maneuvered around the oncoming missiles. As each missile passed the blue MF continued to maneuver its way through the vast branches and leaves that hindered its path.

Mike was shocked at how easily Adam avoided the barrage of missiles that he sent hurling into the sky. He knew that Adam had been constantly training since his defeat to Stephen, but he didn’t think he would have gotten this much better. Trees began to collapse to the ground causing a minor tremor to radiate throughout the land. Mike’s eyes widened as the blue MF glistened through the dampness of vegetation.

“A direct attack, that’s different.” Adam yelled back to his friend.

“Yeah I thought I’d try and give you a challenge this time!” Mike screamed as the Firing Control System for the assault rifle locked onto its target. Three shells erupted out from the barrel jolting the right arm backwards from the recoil. The aroma of burning joints swept through the crimson MF, even though this was a computer training simulation the programming was able to trigger all of the human senses making it that much more real and intense. The blue MF quickly dropped its rifle; Mike was confused for a second he couldn’t understand why Adam would just get rid of his main weapon. And then he found the reason, the azure right arm grabbed the energy saber instead. The bright stream of particle energy ignited through the stem of the handle. Adam turned the handles of the throttles to the side causing the right hand to turn from side to side. Mike gazed in astonishment as the blue MF sliced down each shell that was

heading in its direction. Bundles of clustered caliginous smoke dispersed through the air after each minor explosion. Mike leaned back into his seat while frantically looking for his opponent.

“Hey, that’s not fair! You can’t disappear!” Mike screamed.

Stephen on the outside continued to be amazed at his brother’s quick progress. His pupils slowly moved to the upper right corner of his eyelid staring into the seemingly empty sky of the battle area.

Mike’s ear vibrated slightly as his radar began to rattle loudly. Just as Mike turned his crimson MF around it happened. The blue MF quickly sped by, in a quick instance Adam thought back to the maneuver that Stephen performed on him. He smirked as the vision of those slight movements filled his mind. Just from seeing it happen to him he was able to recreate the movement, it was one of his gifts, he was always able to analyze what people did against him and turn that weakness into strength. The blue MF slightly spun around on its side with the energy saber fully extended. Mike smirked as he stood up from the ground in his machine. As the crimson machine struggled to rise Adam remained quiet in his cockpit.

“Hehehe, wow you scared me for a minute. You know I had almost thought that....” His voice cracked and faded from existence as sparks of electricity burst out of the artificially crafted cockpit. Soon the right arm dislocated from its socket falling to the ground, and the head unit did the same. Mike quickly jumped out of his cockpit as the sparking currents of electricity intensified. Soon the entire gaming area lit up with a bright cerulean glow as a final small explosion burst out from the cockpit. Everyone remained quiet and in awe, no one knew exactly what had just happened but now the crimson cockpit was covered in a sea of smoke while the display screen went black. Mike scratched his head completely confused.

“Heh, I guess my cockpit malfunctioned. Wow, I guess we’ll just say that you won....again.” Mike replied laughing.

“Yeah, guess there was a problem with that cockpit.” Adam replied.

Stephen remained quiet as he glanced at Adam’s cockpit. It too was emitting some sparks of electricity and smoke. He smiled as he knew what had really happened. He soon felt a surprising and yet familiar hand place itself on his shoulder.

“I’m guessing I missed the match.” Her soothing angelic voice flowed through his ears. Stephen simply nodded as the young woman walked to his side. Her bronze shoulder length hair sparkled under the dull lighting of the gaming arena. Her pinkish lips thinned to a point as they curved under her nose creating a small crevice in her cheeks.

“You’re late Veronica.” Stephen mumbled under his breath.

“Traffic.”

“I’m sure.”

“Whoa. What happened here?” Veronica burst out as she began to examine the damaged cockpits.

“Adam.”

She turned around trying to keep herself from bursting out in laughter.

“What, did he get pissed off and break the controls?”

Stephen smiled as his head turned slightly to the right side. He watched his brother being surrounded by his friends.

“No, the program couldn’t keep up with him. His reflexes are too fast for that cockpit to register. He burned out both systems.” Stephen replied.

“You’re kidding.”

“No, he’s a lot better now than he was a few weeks ago. It’s incredible how far he’s progressed in a short amount of time.”

“So do you think it’s time for him to take the exam?”

“Yeah I do. I already signed him up for tomorrow’s exam.”

“What? Tomorrow? Are you nuts? That’s way too soon for him!”

“I disagree, his progression is far beyond that of a normal soldier and the next one isn’t for another six months. I would hate for him to miss out on a chance to put his skills to use.”

“Do you think they’ll send him to Mars with the majority of the MF forces?”

“Heh, they probably will. Now that other nations are building camps the situation is getting worse.”



“It’s unfortunate that he’ll be thrown into that world of destruction without any prior knowledge.”

“It’s for the best, if everyone was aware that Mars has been habitable for years it would insight revolts against the Government. It’s amazing that so many people are living on Mars and no one has realized anything is amiss.”

“People are naïve, they want to keep on going believing that everything is perfect.”

“I guess what they say is true, “ignorance is bliss.” Anyway I should head out. You tell him about the exam.” Stephen replied as he began to head out of the gaming arena.

“Me? Why me?”

“Heh, that’s simple. Because he’s your newest client.” Stephen replied smirking.

Veronica was his manager; Stephen never shared her with anyone else. Ever since it became mandatory for every pilot to have their own manager to handle mission assignments and to act as a navigator Stephen figured his manager should be the one person he truly trusts with his life, and now with this abrupt change in his preferences shocked her in the least. Not that she had anything against managing his brother; it was the tone in his that concerned her. Talking about his brother fighting in a war that was hidden beneath the corruption ridden face of every Government on Earth, it almost seemed like he was coveting his brother’s skills, like it was necessary in the world today. She didn’t like the idea of his brother going into a war that he was completely unaware of for the majority of his own existence. But being a manager meant more than having an emotional attachment to their clients, it meant being able to conduct themselves in a professional manor dealing with whatever job they’re given regardless of their own personal feelings.

Adam stood amongst his friends quietly taking the barrage of compliments being hurled towards him. He appreciated the fact that all of his friends were there, at least the ones that were still in the area. She wasn’t there; Amy wasn’t there to see him perform once again. Everyone chuckled at how the artificial cockpits broke down in the middle of the fight and Adam shrugged it off as well. However in the pit of his mind and in the heart of his soul he felt the truth brewing inside. He knew that he had transcended the physical and mental limitations that these training programs would lay out. He knew he was ready to embrace his destiny.

## Chapter Five: The Exam

Only a few hours since Adam had been notified about the military exam in the morning. The news of course shocked everyone that he knew. Stephen took the time to debrief his younger brother quickly on what was really going on in the world. How Mars has been habitable and is booming with an abundant amount of resources. How the TA and the EAP was fighting for control of the newly discovered energy sources and about how the Trinity Alliance government though it was in the best interest of the people to keep them hidden from the truth, after all everything was happen on the red planet and because of this nothing would directly affect the innocent people on Earth. Adam wasn't sure how to deal with this news, but after some time to think about it he realized it didn't make a difference. There's always going to be disagreements and conflicts that spawn from them. The positive thing was that all of the battles were on Mars and away from his friends. And now he had the opportunity to make something of himself and make a difference.

His friends began asking questions about why he would even consider taking the exam, and what does he intend to do with the power that might be bestowed to him. Adam remained silent not knowing how to answer most if not all of the questions that were asked. All he cared about was getting in touch with Amy to let her know what was going on. Soon he realized that he might not even see her again, her phone continued to ring with no answer or voice mail taking over. It was like the phone had been shut off completely, cutting her off from the rest of the world and leaving her in solitude. He secluded himself in his apartment away from all the questions and away from all the problems. Genesis held a surprise inquiry at their main facility near the outer ridges of Manhattan. Everyone attended the meeting all except for Adam who remained in his room mentally preparing for the trial ahead.

The head of the Mechanics department as well as the head of the Scientific department all stood at the front of the auditorium while all the employees sat in the hundreds of seats provided for them. Sean quickly recognized the face of Professor Amare who was standing on the right side of the head of Scientific research. Christina tugged on his sleeve while bring her mouth closer to his ear.

“Hey, that’s Professor Amare right? It’s kind of hard to see clearly from all the way back here.”

“Yeah why?”

“Ok I thought so. But who is that girl next to him?”

“Shh, they’re going to start soon.”

Sean didn’t notice the young girl that was standing next to Professor Amare until Christina made a mention of her. Her vibrant brunette hair covered her ears and parts of her face. She appeared to be shy with her face looking blankly at the pallid tiled floor. Her hands were interwoven together while resting just below her stomach. Her identity didn’t really matter to Christina, but she was just curious why this one young girl was able to be standing in the front with the rest of the key members of Genesis’ research teams.

“I wonder if that’s the Professor’s daughter.” Jen interrupted shrugging her shoulders.

“The Professor has a daughter?” Christina didn’t know that much about the Professor except that he was always working vigorously.

“Yeah, I remember him mentioning her once before. Don’t remember her name though.”

“I see...” Just as the words began to flutter out of her mouth Sean interrupted as the address began to begin.

Adam stretched his limbs out as far as they could expand as he gazed at the illuminated ceiling above. The stiffness of his mattress only caused minor discomfort but he didn’t seem to mind it that much. He sighed constantly, he was nervous but he didn’t want to admit it. The military entrance exam for MF pilots has been rumored to be the most difficult exam any one person can ever encounter. The exam was different every time, he heard from Stephen that the exam was a live mission with live ammunition. The fact that it was extremely competitive didn’t seem to ease his mind either, since out of everyone who was going to be participating only one would make it. It wasn’t lack of confidence that was bothering him; it was the fact that he wasn’t aware of his opponent’s skills and traits. Once he made it into the military he would be able to customize his own MF, change its overall appearance and order different parts from the militarily funded organizations. That was what he couldn’t wait for, he was getting tired of using the same old dried out standard MF for battle, and he wanted something unique, something that would represent him. Just as his mind began to wander his cell phone abruptly rang. His head slowly turned to the side of his ivory pillow glancing at the caller id; it was Amy. His heart pounded rapidly while he tried to grab the phone and open it. His excitement overshadowed his motor skills; a seemingly easy task of answering a phone became a tribulation in itself. The sweat from the heat caused the phone to slide down his palm making it difficult to get a good grip. Finally he was able to answer the phone.

“Amy...” Adam held himself back from sounding extremely excited, which he was.

“Adam, hey, sorry I wasn’t able to get back to you sooner but daddy’s been busy and he needed my help. “

“Don’t worry about it; I’m just glad I can talk with you before tomorrow.”

“What’s tomorrow? What did I miss while I’ve been away?”

“I did it. I’m registered to take the entrance exam tomorrow.”

Amy’s jaw nearly dropped from the shock, and upon realizing what this meant her eyes brightened. She began to smirk as she glanced back at her father. Her father stood high on the balcony of their apartment. Just under him were hundreds if not thousands of people pushing and shoving their way to the hotel. Signs lifted high with slanderous statements about how corrupt the Trinity Alliance government was or how it was trying to soak up all the resources on Mars causing massive amounts of suffering in Europe and Asia. Both Europe and Asia had apparently been straight forward with their countries about Mars and the current status of the war. And yet the TA continued to hide the facts from its citizens while monitoring all broadcasts that would flood into the TA culture. Amy was well aware of the situation and yet refused to inform any of her friends of the truth. She enjoyed being the only one to know what was happening; it gave her a sense of power and importance.

“Wow good luck tomorrow!” Amy quickly replied while continuing to smile.

Hearing her voice say “good luck” quickly brightened his day. He knew he wasn’t alone in this, he knew that she was there even if she was physically someplace else.

“Thank you. I must admit I’m a little worried.”

“Oh be quiet, you’ll do fine, trust me.” Amy continued to feed his confidence.

“Thanks, knowing that you believe in me is all I need to know. Sorry I should go, I’m definitely going to need some sleep tonight.”

“Alright, I understand...I love you.” Amy said as the connection was severed. Adam’s eyes widened as he shot up from his bed. With an awkward expression he glanced back at his phone watching as Amy’s name in a blue glow was flickering on the screen until it was replaced by the current time.

“Did she say she loved me?” Adam mumbled to himself.

“Who was that?” Amy’s father inquired.

“Oh, a friend. He’s joining the military, he’s really strong. He’ll get rid of these pests. Both Europe and Asia are only causing us problems on Mars!”

“You’re right Amy; we’re creating a better future for everyone. But Europe and Asia are just getting in the way, they’re being selfish. They’ve already dealt major damage to our main facilities on Mars. We need to get rid of them soon! If not then we might not be able to provide humanity with a brighter paradise.”

“Don’t worry daddy, my friend will get rid of them all. I promise.” Amy replied smiling as her father embraced her tightly.

“I admire your faith in this boy, but don’t be so naïve to think that this one person would be able to help us achieve what we’ve been trying to do for so long.”

“Trust me daddy, he’s incredibly good and in time he’ll be able to protect us and become a true guardian for what we hold dear. I’ve seen the determination in his eyes; he latches onto my every whim.”

“And you’re willing to use his devotion for our purposes? Are you sure you’re ok with that?”

“Ever since mom was killed by the EAP...by those bastards I decided I’d do whatever it took to give them what they deserved. If what you’re referring to is love, then I have no need for it...not anymore.”

“Things have been hard since she passed...but it’s important to remember her for what she was and not for how she died. She firmly believed that all the nations of the world could get along in peace. But the citizens of the EAP weren’t ready to hear her, hopefully now we’ll be able to open their eyes.”

“I truly believe we can daddy...and in the end everything will be as it should be.”

Morning could never come as slowly as it did this time; Adam sat at the edge of his bed staring blankly. He glanced at the clock on his side; he knew he should leave so he could make it to the exam on time. But he was still nervous, whether it was about doubting his own skills or about the other participants it was all the same leading to the same anxiety. With drops of sweat dripping off his curved nose his body rose while he grabbed a shirt and threw it on. After grabbing his keys off the bookshelf next to the door he left. It was still early the sun had yet to rise which meant most people were still sleeping around this time. As he approached the curb a stretch ivory limousine pulled up beside him. As the door slid open his new manager Veronica Laboro greeted him good morning.

“Veronica?”

“You’re brother would kill me if I let you be late to the exam.”

“Stephen made you come here to get me?”

“Yeah, he told me to tell you good luck, but also said he had a feeling you wouldn’t need it. Now hurry up and get in. You wouldn’t want to be late”

Adam quickly moved into the limo closing the door behind him. As the wheels began to spin his anxiety intensified. Before he knew it he would be sitting in an actual MF cockpit. He knew the layout of the cockpit thoroughly but he still had fears that he might freeze up in the midst of the battle. Veronica smiled as she placed her calming hand on his shaking frigid shoulder.

“You’ll do fine. Stephen was exactly the same way when he took the exam.”

Adam turned around intrigued.

“Stephen was nervous too?”

“Of course, he was only 16 when he took it, just like you. It’s weird really how a year passes by so quickly.”

“Yeah it sure does have a way of creeping up on you doesn’t it?”

“It does, any of your friends coming down to watch your exam?”

His eyes widened, he completely forgot to invite them to come down. Guilt quickly replaced his anxiety, he knew that his friends wanted to see the actual exam and he forgot to tell them to come.

“No...I forgot.” Adam replied.

“Had a feeling, don’t worry about it I’ve already taken the liberty of inviting them. They’re on the way to the test site as we speak.”

“Are you serious?! Oh my God thank you so much!” Adam replied. This was the first time since he was registered that he forgot about his own worries. His spirit felt uplifted knowing that he had a group of supporters there watching him fight. He smiled turning his face towards the window. In the far horizon the sun began to sneak its way through the mountains and then into the sky. He felt at ease reclining his head back into the leather head rest.

“Wake me up when we get there.” Adam replied as his eyes began to close. It was about a two hour ride to the test site and he needed as much rest as he could get.

## **Chapter Six: Day of Reckoning**

My eyes slowly opened, due to the glare reflecting off the slightly fogged passenger side window I clinched my eyelids from the intense rays that beamed through. It all seemed like a dream, was I really going to take this exam? My neck was aching, not too surprised to be honest, come to think of it my head was slanted uncomfortably resting on the frigid glass. The calm soothing temperate air brushing across my skin, it didn’t help at all; I wanted to go back to sleep.

“So, you’re awake now?” It took me a minute to realize who was talking.

“Not really awake, more like stuck in this surreal environment.” I responded while I slowly pushed myself up from my slanted position.

“Well wake up. We’ll be arriving at the test site in a few minutes.”

It was real, I was about to take this test. I don’t normally get nervous so I wasn’t exactly sure what to make of advent of this feeling. My nerves, I could feel them pulsing, they were flaring signals to my head telling it to be afraid. I know that I’m good in the cockpit, not to sound arrogant, but a little confidence is an absolute must. Stephen didn’t help by telling me that I was more of a challenge than his

military supervisor. There were still doubts; I have no idea what to expect from the exam, I don't know anything about the other participants in the exam or how good they are.

"You'll be fine." Veronica's voice broke my train of thought. Not that it's a bad thing, but still I like to venture off into my own plane of existence when preparing for a challenge. Actually, now that I think of it, my enjoyment of solitude might be why I tend to be distant from my friends. Who knows, maybe I'll change, but right now I have to focus. Smiling I glanced over to Veronica.

"Thanks. Hey, is there anything you can tell me about the exam? Like what are the objectives? Anything would be of help."

I think my question threw her off a bit; her eyebrows became indented lowering themselves. Her cherry lips slowly parted revealing her ivory glistening teeth. Was my question that confusing, no, not confusing; shocking?

"Hmm, the military changes it every year but I believe this year is a mock battle. There are five registered participants including you. You are then dropped off into the heat of the Military's city structure complex, once there you six have to successfully disable the enemy forces while trying to prevent as little damage as possible. The examiners will judge all of you on five areas; accuracy, mobility, dodging skill, strategically thinking, and composure under stress."

"So essentially it doesn't matter how many units I destroy?" This makes things a lot easier then.

"I haven't really thought of it in that light, but yeah number of units destroyed shouldn't make much of an impact. Knowing you, and after reviewing your statistics in training I'm pretty sure you'll do fine."

"You've seen my results?!" I couldn't believe it; I always thought Genesis kept those records confidential. I haven't even seen them yet.

"Yeah, so stop asking questions. You're worrying about nothing."

Nothing she says, ha. That's easy for her to say, she's not about to go into an exam that will easily decide where her life will head. Then it happened, my eyes widened, I felt my mouth gape open. After driving through massive barren fields of vegetation we came upon a massive city, or at least it appeared to be a city. Being from New York, I instantly received a sense of familiarity from seeing these massively elongated buildings towering into the sky piercing the clouds. Surrounding this secluded city were fences, sparks of cerulean electricity bouncing around the metallic interlocking rings forming the barrier keeping people out...or was it keeping people in? My anticipation now outweighed my fear, my fear soon turned to excitement. I now found myself questioning what type of MFs we would be using. Would they be the standard military assault shrouds I've heard of, or will they be heavily armored defensive units, or maybe we'd be able to choose the type of unit we'd be using. The sound of rubber against the harsh terrain echoed as brownish tan dust sprayed out from under the car, pebbles burst out shooting across the ground as they were picked up from the treads of the tires. I noticed Veronica slowing down the car as we pulled up to the entrance gate, two soldiers in forest green uniforms and camouflage cargo pants. I knew this was a highly secured facility as each soldier carried a long charcoal assault rifle clinging to their soldiers. The glass window slowly declined as both soldiers poked their heads through each side of the car. I have to admit I did feel somewhat uncomfortable at the moment, but Veronica seemed at complete ease.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“I am Veronica Laboro, official MF liaisons manager for Ensign Stephen Novus. I am here along with one of the exam participants, Adam Novus.”

The first soldier nodded and slowly moved away from the driver’s side heading back to the control panel at the front of the gate. The other soldier stood there still on my side staring at me.

“Heh, this kid?” He muttered and I could feel the sarcasm penetrating my confidence. But at the same time, I felt as if I needed to defend myself.

“Yeah that’s right, I’m taking the exam.”

“Heh, you’re the youngest one and the last one to arrive. The rest of the participants are in their mid twenties and you, you’re what? 15?”

He was now getting on my nerves, he didn’t even know anything about me and already here he is making assumptions about my skills. He’s probably just jealous that he is only a lowly security guard. And that’s something that struck me as odd as well. He definitely wasn’t American that’s for sure. Not that it matters, but his accent, it was more along the lines of French. That meant that he couldn’t have been here for that long because most people from foreign nations or heritages tend to assimilate themselves with American society and as such tend to lose their accent and adopt the speech pattern of their new surroundings... And yet here he was with a full blown French accent, I will admit I was curious why he would be assigned a job guarding this military facility if he hasn’t been here that long. I only say this with regards to the high tensions that are running between our countries at the moment. What do I care it’s none of my business; I have more important things to deal with.

“Well I’ll tell you what, why don’t you come down to exam and watch me blow the others away?” I think I might have overdone my sarcasm, maybe just a little. The look on his face was priceless though, his expression was blank, and I knew I struck a nerve. I just watched his face get smaller with each passing second as we drove into the complex.

“You didn’t need to make a scene you know.” Her voice punctured my ego, maybe she was right I think I did get a little carried away back there.

“Yeah you’re probably right. But it’s too late now.”

“And this is where you get out.” Veronica abruptly pulled the car to a halt. I turned my head to see four men and one woman standing outside of this garage looking complex. I knew in my heart that they were my competition for this exam.

“Thanks, I appreciate the ride. I’ll do my best.” I couldn’t hold anything back now, this was it. This was the moment I had been waiting for, my entrance exam into the military. As I exited the car the other five pilots quickly stopped chatting and began to glare in my direction. Something didn’t seem right; maybe I’m paranoid who knows. But they all seemed to be vaguely familiar with one another already. Eh, maybe they all trained together who knows. The first pilot I noticed was bulky in stature with a receding line of obsidian hair; his eyes were like ice, emotionless. I heard him whispering to the girl next to him, and once again I heard that same French accent I heard upon first entering the facility. Is he French too? It was probably his heritage nothing to be concerned with. I think my heart stopped or at the very least skipped a beat when my eyes met with the woman pilot. Her eyes were blue, extremely angelic; there was a certain type of calm to her persona. She twirled her long golden blonde hair around through the air and I swear I felt as if time stood still for a moment. Her pale skinned was accentuated by her dark brown pilot suit. The next two pilots I knew were not American, the thin outlines of their eyes, their long extremely thin pitch black hair covering their eyes. They were Asian no doubt about it, but from what I



heard from Amy was that both Europe and Asia have been at odds with us, so it was odd to see anyone from either nation here at a TA entrance exam. And if that's the case then why the military would be allowing them to take part in the exam is a question, although I didn't really mind, I particularly had nothing against those nations nor their people, after all, it's not my problem. I mean I have no problem with anyone, I am of a mixed heritage myself, but that's not the point. I know the sternness and sometimes immoral stance that our government can take and they would normally restrict the military access that people from different nations could have. And especially now that we're in war time, unless...that's right this war isn't public knowledge yet. The government must be trying to keep things quiet, I feel bad though; because they will most likely be under high surveillance and for no reason.

"So you're the last pilot, a little young aren't you." The woman opened her mouth and spoke. At first I thought she was American, but like the first guy she had a French accent.

I believe I stumbled as I tried to respond.

"Yeah...I am. I'm 16 but I have a lot of experience with piloting."

"I see, you mean VR training then." The bulkier French guy replied.

I nodded. Soon all of our attention was diverted as another man; a man that I recognized appeared. It was Gelidus, the man that fought with my cousin in VR. I cringed but at the same time I laughed knowing that my brother felt I was a better opponent than him. For a brief second I felt our eyes meet, my spine shuttered, he knew who I was.

"If you will all follow me please. I will show you all to your units."

Everyone immediately followed him into the abyss of unknown, but I noticed that everyone was already in their jump suits and I was still in casual attire. Gelidus realized this too.

"Novus!" He already sounded pissed, and that confirmed that he knew who I was. He was probably still angry about losing to my brother and was preparing to take it out on me.

"Yes...yes sir." Great, I'm stumbling some more. I thought that I would be able to maintain my composure, but I guess not.

"Here, you're going to need this." Gelidus picked up a bag and threw it to me. My hands juggled with the bag for a few seconds until my nerves calmed down. As the zipper moved along the outer edges of the bag I pulled out my jumpsuit. It was azure in color along with white ivory outlines on the side.

"If you're anything like your brother I'm sure you'll pass this exam with little effort. Now come on, I'll show you to your unit."

Gelidus continued into the garage and I hurried after him, I couldn't wait to see my unit.

"They're in sir..." A mysterious voice echoed from within the shadows. The breeze from the outside temperate air ruffled making it difficult to hear the person at the other end of the receiver.

"What about you? Why aren't you in as well? The mission is about to begin soon?!" The stern serious French accented voice filled with static erupted from the speaker of the communications link. After all the pilots entered the garage the leaves began to rustle as a man stood out from the collection of

bushes outlining the garage entrance.

“There was a miscalculation sir, the fifth pilot showed up late, and I was unable to fulfill my mission. But don’t worry sir, he is only a child. He shouldn’t pose any threat to the mission. I am sure the team will do fine.”

“You better hope so. Once the mission begins I will be sending out the Omega unit. They have no idea what is in store for them. Heh, we’re going to end this war from the inside.” The voice faded leaving only the screaming of the wind filling the sky.

## Chapter Seven: This is a Test?

Adam stood still, frozen in awe as he stared through all the cables and wires that were connecting to his unit. This machine was now his for use in the real world, unlike the fake cockpit and virtual machines that he had become accustomed to. At first he didn’t believe it, still thinking that it was some kind of dream. His hands placed themselves on the cold layers of metal armor outlining the foot of this massive weapon. It seemed that every MF was uniquely outfitted for the pilot that would be using it. Adam’s MF was an azure color with two energy sabers mounted on the side along with a high-act laser rifle and two dual energy cannons mounted on the back of the machine. The cannons were made of light metal alloy so that the extra weight wouldn’t be a problem when it came to the machine’s movement, he forgot the name of it but he didn’t care about the name. The fact was that it was light enough to be used during flight was all that mattered to him. Adam was extremely anxious to get out into battle and test it out, he knew that since it was designed around his own unique reflexes that he could do a lot more in this unit than he could ever have done in a standard MF. The other four MFs were different also, but not that different. There was one extremely heavily armored unit, the bulk and extra armor placed on that MF was intense, but it would easily slow it down killing the mobility of that MF. Adam stared as the female pilot entered her cockpit; he was captured by her sheer presence, her beauty. He couldn’t understand how someone so elegant could pilot something that causes destruction. Although her MF was elegant as well, it was lighter than the rest; her machine was equipped with a high intensity sniper rifle allowing her to hit targets from a good distance. It made sense since her machine was lightly armored and wouldn’t be able to stand up to a heavy assault. The other two were essentially the same, bipedal middle weight machines armed with an assault rifle and a missile pack. Nothing too extraordinary but Adam knew that in the hands of an extremely capable pilot anything ordinary could easily become deadly.

“Well I see that everyone has familiarized themselves with their units, so shall we get the test underway? All pilots to their units, debriefing will begin once inside your cockpit. That is all.” The tone of Gelidus’ voice vanished. Adam knew it was time. This was all about him and he wasn’t about to let this pass him by.

Adam smirked as the black wired cable slowly pulled him up to his cockpit. His eyes focusing on his machine and his machine only, no one else mattered to him now. Images of his friends, especially of Amy continued to run through his mind. Her innocent looking face praying for his safety, as well as his success.

“I won’t fail. I will pass this exam.” He continued to mumble to himself giving him the encouraging words that he was lacking at that very moment. He suddenly found himself sitting in the

comfortable leather lined chair. The gate of the cockpit began to slowly encase him in his metallic cage. It was pitch black for a second but only for a second, the bright cerulean lights flared on catching Adam's eyes off guard for just a second. Instantly the main display screen turned on with a visual of the city complex that the military had set up. Adam found his hands resting on the throttles already, he felt at ease in this position. Drops of sweat began to formulate around his head flowing down the side of his skin. He was getting anxious, not nervous but anxious.

“Alright, here is your objective. First off let me say congratulations to all of you for being selected to partake in this military exam. Unfortunately we will only be taking the top two out of the six. Hidden within this city are twenty military standard MFs all of which are equipped with live ammunition. Your goal is to effectively destroy all of these units while doing as little damage to the structural surroundings as possible. You are equipped with live ammunition which means that you have a limited amount of ammo so choose your shots wisely. Good luck to all of you.” Gelidus' voice dissipated as the communications link shut off.

The gate to the city slowly began to open as the gears and shafts rotated. The sound of screeching metal and rust echoed through the silence that filled the room. The light slowly crept into the garage signaling the start of the exam. Adam's MF was out in front meaning he would have to be the first to leave the garage. Taking in a few deep breaths and wiping the sweat from his face his eyes twitched and his hands firmly clutched the throttles. His feet began to slowly apply pressure to the accelerators on the bottom of the floor causing the back boosters to ignite slightly. Cerulean flames burst out from the metallic engines sending the MF thundering out of the garage at an extreme velocity. Adam's body was thrown back into the comfort of his seat; he was never used to such pressure or speed before. He was used to the insinuated stress projected in the VR training, but even then that was nowhere near as stressful as this. The other five MFs slowly walked out of the garage as the metallic heads glared. Adam was already in the sky when he finally managed to calm himself down.

“That was completely unexpected; these boosters are much faster than the ones I'm used to.” Adam's eyes glanced to his energy bar and were shocked at how much energy surplus he still had remaining.

“Holy crap; the boosters barely used any energy.” The blue MF remained hovering in the sky as he tried to locate any obvious heat sources. One thing began to bother him though. The five other pilots remained standing in front of the garage hanger not moving an inch whatsoever. His first instinct was to tell them that the exam had begun and that they needed to get going if they wanted a chance at passing. But before he could open a communications link hundreds of chrome missiles blazed through the air heading straight for him. His radar constantly continued to ring in the back of his head. Adam quickly snapped out of the trance that had engulfed him for a few minutes and grabbed the throttle. The right arm of the MF rose slightly as the metallic finger pulled back the trigger. Thin focused beams of energy rapidly fired out from the barrel of the rifle tearing through the fragile missiles one by one. Adam's eyes remained glued to the display screen until every missile had vanished from sight leaving only a massive caliginous cloud floating in the air. The five pilots below stood in their MFs just watching at the battle that was already taking place above them.

“Should we go and destroy these targets?” The first pilot asked.

The female pilot turned around glancing at the heavily armored MF shrugging her delicate shoulders. She sighed as her hands placed themselves delicately on the throttles. Her fuchsia tinted MF raised its sniper rifle slowly. The abrupt jolting back of the right arm as the shell burst out from the tip of the rifle lighting a quick spark made the other four pilots laugh. Within seconds there was a vibrant explosion on the ground maybe 100 feet away from the group of pilots. Smoke began to rise as flames

shot out from all directions.

“What were you saying Jacques?” The female pilot replied sharply.

Gelidus shot out from his chair as he stared at the four MFs that remained closely attached to the garage. Veronica along with Adam’s friends, Mike, Jen, Sean, and Christina remained sitting in their seats high above the Lieutenant Commander. It quickly became apparent that Gelidus was concerned, and when he was concerned that meant something was wrong. Veronica about to make a motion to get the Lieutenant Commander’s attention was soon distracted by the explosions taking place in the sky. Bright booming spheres of energy continued to light up the sky like fireworks.

The blue MF dashed out from the explosions with two units following him closely firing their assault rifles. Each shell that fired from the rifle passed by the blue MF as Adam forced the machine to turn on its side avoiding every shot thrown at him. With each passing second he felt himself getting more comfortable with his MF. It was an adrenaline rush to him, he was in complete control, he forgot about the examiners keeping tabs on his performance. For right now, in the moment he was truly free from any anguish. He smirked as he watched the two MFs break away from each other, one heading for the left and the other for the right.

“I’m not about to let you guys get that close!” Adam yelled while quickly pulling both throttles to the side. The blue MF quickly docked the laser rifle on its right thigh while grabbing hold of both energy sabers. The gears quickly turned in the shoulders as both the right and left arm quickly slashed upwards as the energy sabers ignited. There was a silent pause as the surrealistic feeling slowed the time down. Two vibrant explosions quickly ignited as pieces of singed metal fluttered down from the sky as gravity took them in its grasp. Smoke burst outwards in the sky as the two standard MFs lost control caught in a downward spiral of destruction. Thin electrical wires flinging from the lost metallic appendages spitting out surges of electricity while Adam hovered above them both with the two energy sabers flaring, he smiled. He tried to hide the fact that he was running low on breath, he’s been going all out but he’s still been flying and fighting in the air for awhile now and his energy was beginning to be drained. He knew he had to return to the ground before he was completely out of energy.

“Holy crap that was amazing!” Mike screamed as he jumped out of his seat. Veronica knew it was amazing, but unlike Adam’s friends she knew how to keep composure. Her leg began to shake abruptly, her eyes lit up as did her left pocket. It was Stephen, she already knew what he wanted, and he wanted to know how Adam was doing in the exam.

“Hey, Stephen. Don’t worry he’s doing fine.”

“Veronica that’s not why I’m calling. Get everyone out of there now! Have Gelidus cancel the exam!” Stephen was acting unwieldy on the borderline of screaming.

“Stephen, what are you talking about? What’s going on?!....” The sound of crackling and humming static was all that was left of Stephen’s voice. Veronica’s eyes widened as she glanced at the front of the pane glass window giving a full view of the test site. And there it was, a heavily armored MF hovering in the air staring right back at the high officials of the military and their guests. Gelidus took a deep breath as the MF slowly raised its right arm while energy began to formulate around the tip of the metallic barrel. Christina grabbed hold of Sean’s arm squeezing it tightly causing him to cringe a bit.

“Sean...” Her soft voice was shaken; the words were trembling, almost not making it out from her pouting lips.

“It’ll be alright...they wouldn’t...” Sean couldn’t finish the sentence because he knew he had no idea what was going on, they could very well all die within an instant.

Gelidus tried to make it to the communications receiver but his body was trembling as well, the humming sound of energy building rang through the ear drums of every person in that room. Adam’s eyes moved to the side where he took notice of the heavily armored MF hovering and pointing its rifle at the building. He didn’t even have to think about it, he knew that his friends were in there. But still at the same time the confusion of the situation almost caused him to stay where he was. But he knew something was wrong.

“Damn. What the hell is going on?!” His feet pressed forward on the metallic accelerators causing the blue MF to boost towards the direction of the MF.

“Jacques...the kid is coming your way. I’ll intercept him.” The female pilot quickly buzzed in.

“I see. Stay where you are be on the lookout for any other unwanted guests. I’ll take care of the kid myself.” Jacques smirked as his eyes thinned. His lips taking shape like a crescent moon, the indentations on both sides of his cheeks curled as he laughed in a sinister fashion. He saw his display panel flash on as Adam’s face filled the screen.

“What the hell are you doing?! This is an exam!” Adam screamed. He knew his friends were in there and he had to do everything within his power to protect them.

“Kid stay out of our way and maybe we’ll allow you to escape with your life!” Jacques’ emotions fueled his drive. His display screen lit up as hundreds of lock on boxes solidified around the blue MF. Searing clouds of steam slowly began to emanate from the missile launchers attached to the shoulders and upper back of the heavily load MF, even missile pods attached to the arms and torso flipped open. Adam’s eyes widened as he watched every seemingly endless pore on the MF flare.

“That’s a lot of missiles...” He muttered. Adam quickly placed the two energy sabers to the side grabbing hold of the laser rifle once again.

Jacques’ fingers quickly pulled down the firing mechanism for the missiles. Instantly hundreds of chrome missiles erupted out from their pods nearly engulfing the entire open space of air with a barrage of metallic warheads. Adam’s display screen became completely covered by silos leaving him no room to dodge. His sweat continue to roll off his face and his heavy breathing caused his visor to fog making it difficult to get a clear view of the situation.

“What to do? What should I do? I don’t think I can dodge that many missiles!” Adam began to panic, not something he usually does in this type of situation. He quickly flipped a few switches on the control panel causing the control panel to separate revealing a spherical FCS system. Hundreds of ivory dots appeared on the obsidian control panel. Adam quickly figured out what it was, it was a multi-locking system which would allow him fire all his weapons at once. He knew the flaw though, since his weapons were primarily energy that this would drain a good amount of his energy surplus and he’d have to take out as many as he needed in order for him to have room to dodge the rest. Smirking he stepped on the accelerators causing the blue MF to speed towards the swarm of warheads. The blue MF stopped in mid air as it raised its laser rifle while the two energy cannons pivoted upwards and then rested on the shoulder of the torso. As the missiles quickly approached Adam released the trigger firing the cannons and the laser rifle. Instantly hundreds of miniature explosions filled the sky as the cerulean beams of energy shot through nearly all of the missiles. He couldn’t believe it worked but his energy level was now at half and continuing to deplete. Quickly Adam shut off the system and docked the laser rifle grabbing

hold of the energy sabers once again.

Jacques sat bewildered as he saw the blue MF burst out of the compacted smoke and debris of metallic missiles. The blue MF stayed its course as both the right and left arm swung through the air as each blade of energy sliced through the remaining few missiles that swarmed through the air. They weren't expecting this, not at all. This kid was posing more of a problem to them than they had originally anticipated.

"Violet can you hit the kid from down there with your sniper rifle?!" Jacques voice was now crackling with fear. He was stuttering and his nerves were becoming highly tense.

Violet smirked trying to hold in her laughter. She brushed her hair behind the lobe of her ear while bringing up the scope for her rifle.

"I thought you could handle him by yourself? What happened?" Her rough sharp tongue didn't help ease the newly developed situation, not in the least.

"We want to finish this before the serious Military Forces get here! So I'll do my job and you do yours!"

"Fine...this won't take long. You're in my sights kid..."

The small green lock on box struggled to encase the highly agile blue MF. It became clear to her that this was going to be a little more complicated than she originally had thought. Adam's eyes continued to focus on the heavy MF hovering in front of him, it was clear that it was the main threat. He knew he had to take him out first and then he could worry about the others. The cerulean flames surged even more violently than before, the sheer force of the boosters threw Adam deep into his chair as he clung onto the throttles for dear life. The blue MF blazed passed the heavily armored MF within seconds catching Jacques completely off guard. His pale eyes widened as his body froze, he felt every single strand of hair stand in place, and he tried to move his hands to the throttles but was unable to do so. There it was, the blue MF hovered directly in front of Jacques' unit with both energy sabers extended towards the cockpit of his unit. Adam began to pant as he was getting exhausted, but he held his composure, he knew his friends' lives depended on it.

"How the hell? VIOLET!" Jacques screamed, his tongue flaring up and down as his voice screeched over the communications channel. Violet smiled as the blue MF settled down long enough for her to get a clean lock on. Her finger quickly pulling on the trigger unleashing a shrieking sound as the massive shell erupted from her elongated rifle. The shell sprinted across the sky piercing through the clouds quickly approaching the targeted cockpit of the blue MF. Adam smirked as his radar began to beep. His onetime fear had slowly turned into confidence; he now knew the limits of this machine and what he could do with it. The machine became like an extension of his body and whatever he wished he could do with the slightest level of strain. Adam quickly jerked the controls around as the blue MF turned to face the oncoming shell and at the last second swung the energy saber in the left arm. The timing was incredible as a small explosion of gun powder and smoke burst from the sky leaving the blue MF completely unharmed. Violet's eyes widened in disbelief, there was no way, that was impossible or at least in her eyes. Jacques continued to remain frozen in terror. Adam turned his attention back to Jacques' unit who now dropped his weapons.

Everyone in the command tower remained silent in awe. Gelidus' entire body was shaking, as he stumbled back into his leather chair Veronica slowly approached the display screen. Shards of broken glass spread across the crimson carpet, the fragments of light that made their way through the building

reflected off the pieces of glass brightening the room. Mike slowly stood out from his chair as he was unable to take his eyes off the battle going on outside.

“Lieutenant just what the hell is going on?” Veronica screamed.

Gelidus slowly turned his face towards the young liaisons manager.

“I’m not sure, but from the looks of it soldiers from enemy nations have infiltrated the exam. I’ve been trying to get in touch with the command center stationed at West Point but I can’t get through. Right now we’re on our own.”

“We need back up! There’s no way Adam can handle all five of them by himself!”

“I know that, but right now, he’s our only hope. If he’s anything like his brother then maybe we have a shot.”

Seemingly out of nowhere a bright flash burst into the air just outside of the tower. Flames ruptured out from the massive clouds of smoke that came with the flash along with shards of singed metal. The sound of crackling electricity echoed as the heavily armored MF fell out from the smoke missing all of its limbs; only the cockpit was intact. Wires flinging from side to side while the blue MF remained in the air in perfect condition. Adam’s eyes moved to the side as he heard the thundering sound of missiles take to the sky. The other two, the Asians he assumed, he forgot about them. Soon enough the other two ivory MFs appeared in the air swinging their energy sabers. Four crimson beams of energy all swinging for him, Adam managed to dodge the attacks as he strafed to the side.

“Damn it!” Adam mumbled to himself as he saw the missiles drawing even closer while he was struggling with the two ivory MFs. Streams of electricity constantly shot out as the energy sabers from each MF collided with each other. Adam stuck in the middle of the two was beginning to run dangerously low on energy, he was holding off two MFs at the same time, or at least trying to do so. On the right side was one MF trying to push forward with its two energy sabers but was being held back by Adam’s energy saber while the other MF was doing the same on the other side, being held off as well by Adam’s other energy saber. Sweat rolling down his face, the fear; it returned; he wasn’t sure if he could hold out any longer. Looking from side to side trying to come up with a solution he finally realized his only chance. In this position there wasn’t much that he could do to hold them off. Adam’s feet slowly let off the accelerator while he pulled back the output controls for his boosters. Instantly the cerulean flames keeping the blue MF afloat vanished causing it to fall. As the blue MF fell the two ivory MFs dashed forward violently, before all of their energy was being held back but with the opposing force gone they were free to move. Unable to control their MFs anymore they collided into one another. The four energy sabers piercing different areas of their MF’s. After a delayed reaction in time flames ruptured through the metallic armor causing the machines to explode. Flames descended to the ground passing Adam on the descent.

Adam glanced to the ground noticing the final threat, Violet. He knew this one wouldn’t be a problem; her machine was light and not designed for close quarter combat. Violet sneered at the fact that this kid, this kid easily dispatched of the other four. She couldn’t let this stand; she wouldn’t be made a fool of.

“Violet!” A voice echoed from behind her machine. The sound of this person’s voice soothed her soul, her lips once again blushing with beauty and life taking form of a smile. The ground instantly began to shake, the rumbling of something new, something vile was getting closer. Adam still exhausted from

his battles finally touched down onto the cold cracked misshapen concrete.

“Now what? This is supposed to be a test damn it!”

What happened next didn't help his already state of panic. There it was, a demonic machine with four protruding mechanic legs expanding from the immense hive like torso. The torso of this massive machine was impressive by itself, it appeared to be at least twice the size of any normal MF, three arms broke out from each side, six arms in all, all equipped with high intensity plasma rifles. On the back of this behemoth of a weapon were six cannons all resting on the rectangular shoulders. Adam froze in his position instantly, he had never seen anything like this before and he was supposed to stop it? It just didn't seem fair. With each step the behemoth took the windows on buildings shattered into millions of pieces raining down onto the ground. Adam took a big gulp as he prepared to engage this machine. Suddenly his attention was diverted to his radar which was beeping radically.

“Now what?!” Adam screamed turning to the sky to see what was coming down now. It all just didn't seem fair. This was supposed to be an entrance exam after all.

A bright beam of crimson energy shot through the air colliding on the torso of the quadruped machine. The impact of the blast forced the machine to back up a few steps but didn't cause any significant damage.

“Adam! Are you alright?!” That voice, it was Stephen. His brother's face suddenly appeared on his display screen.

“Stephen?! What the hell are you doing here?!”

Suddenly a crimson machine burst out from the sky appearing behind Adam's blue MF. The crimson machine was holding onto a high active laser rifle on the right arm, a dual energy saber held in the left arm. A flight pack rested on the shoulder of the torso, it was similar to wings found on a stealth bomber. This was Stephen's MF, his customized unit and hopefully Adam would have one of his own.

“So how was the exam?”

“Haha, you're funny. This is some exam, my fellow participants turn out to be terrorists, and now there's this thing. So I guess it's going pretty well.”

“I see, well from what I hear, you took out three MFs by yourself. So why don't we just take down this thing.”

Adam's eyes lit up; here he was able to fight alongside with his brother. Hopefully this wouldn't be the first and the last time.



### **Chapter Eight: Nightmare**

“Sir this is bad, terrorists from Europe have infiltrated the military’s East Coast training camp.”

“I see this doesn’t bode well for us if we let this continue, what does the Government plan on doing about this little situation Severen?”

Severen glanced back at this man, he was covered under the darkness of the room, and every shadow from every object seemed to reflect towards this man sitting in a chair. This was Genesis’ head office, all information regarding MFs or military action came through here. Severen was the co-president of this company along with his younger brother. They were quite young to have this much power, they were considered the “Princes of Genesis” the wealthiest young adults in all of America and possibly the world. However only one of them was ever public and that was Severen, the youngest brother had left years ago in order to find his own path in life. Not many people know who he is, or what his name is. Even though they were labeled as co-presidents they had very little, if any authority when it came to making life altering decisions. The true head of Genesis was the chairman, very few knew about this man aside from his decisions.

“About that...apparently the terrorists have captured both Harold Caecus and his young daughter Amy. They were staying at a hotel in Venice to attend a Foreign affairs meeting in regards to the energy crisis on Mars....but they never got there.” His voice was shivering; he wasn’t sure what the chairman would have him do now. After all Harold Caecus was a sound investor of Genesis. After the company began to lose money in the early 90’s he was to make sure that their MF producing talents didn’t fade away. Harold was always an advocate of war; he believed it was necessary to move forward in life and the only way to accomplish anything. Everyone knew this about Harold; he was the one who persuaded the Government to go after the resources of Mars along with the TA’s rejection of the Earth United Treaty; a treaty that guaranteed every nation’s right to obtaining the vast amount of resources hiding in the Martian surface. Harold stated that “We are a country of action; we protect every other nation on this planet. When there’s a conflict we’re the only nation to spring into action and give aide. It only makes sense that we have the resources on Mars, because only we know how to distribute them properly.” Not many people are aware of this speech, at least the citizens within the countries of the Trinity Alliance weren’t aware of it, they’re not even aware of the war that is going on in the depths of Mars. But it can be certain that both Europe and Asia, who are the other key players in this war for minerals, are fully aware

of the ideals of this man, Harold Caecus.

“Well if the military is too afraid to move and engage these terrorists then we’ll have to do something about it.”

“Sir?”

“Why are you still calling me sir Severen? I am not your boss; I am just the man taking care of the company until you and your brother are ready to take over. Call me Luscious.”

“Alright then, Luscious what exactly can we do? Wouldn’t we just make the situation worse?”

“Hehe, so young....and so naïve. We are the most advanced MF development company in existence correct? We’ll launch the Chimera.”

“The Chimera? But sir, neither the pilot nor the machine are green for launch!”

Luscious began to chuckle slightly, he was fully aware of the situation for Chimera. However even though it hasn’t been cleared for launch it was still the most powerful MF in existence, and the pilot, well the pilot was the best, at least in Luscious’ eyes.

“Just trust me Severen. Send the Chimera out. It’ll easily get rid of those terrorists and once it does then the Government will acknowledge our actions, and maybe they’ll finally give us a clear on our project.”

“....” Severen tried biting his lip; his crystalline blue eyes became dull and pallid. He cringed at thought of what he was about to do. But he knew he had no choice, if those terrorists killed Harold Caecus and his daughter it would cause a rapid uprising against both Europe and Asia and force both worlds, Earth and Mars into becoming a battlefield for power and justice.

“STEPHEN WATCH YOUR LEFT!” Adam’s voice screamed across the channel as he flew through the air avoiding as many beams of energy as he could.

Stephen smirked as he pulled the throttle to the side. Alpha’s boosters turned to the side causing the crimson unit to dash sideways avoiding a barrage of chrome missiles. That behemoth of a machine remained on the ground slowly advancing forward. With each step that monstrosity took the ground shook, the cement cracked as buildings collapsed. Tons of smoke and debris burst into the air while sweeping across the ground. The gears turned and the crimson arm jolted after each shot fired from the laser rifle, Alpha remained in constant motion moving from side to side while firing. Each round of energy exploded on the core of the titanic machine causing it to freeze for a second. Adam watched in awe as Stephen performed brilliantly. His attention was grabbed which left him open for attack. The six angular cannons quickly folded over the core of the behemoth as spheres of energy continued to gather in front of the barrels. Alpha quickly sped towards the monster, he docked the laser rifle and separated the dual energy sabers and began to hack away at the legs of the quadruped. Electricity shot out as the crimson blades of energy hacked at the metallic joints of the legs. The attack caused a raspy metallic scream to echo through the ruins of the test site. Adam’s eyes widened and he quickly accelerated towards the machine. Four ivory boxes quickly solidified around the core of the machine, the blue MF halted its movement in the air while aiming both dual laser rifles along with the two energy cannons on the back. Stephen smirked as the energy onslaught was unleashed. The beams shot through the air coming in full contact with the slow moving beast. At the last second Alpha strafed to the side as the blast connected causing a massive explosion. The force of the explosion caused the damaged legs to falter. The crunching

sound of support beams signaled the end of the battle. The entire right set of legs collapsed, flames ruptured through the right side of the machine as it descended to the ground. Alpha slowly backed away from the machine ending up next to Adam's blue MF. As smoke continued to emanate from the fallen machine's position Adam began to pant heavily. Drops of sweat rolling into his open eyes causing him to flinch, he was tired, he was burning inside that cockpit. All he could do was hope that it was over.

"Nice job." Stephen's voice seemed to be relaxing to Adam's ears. He thought that it meant it was over, so that he could rest for a little. That's all he wanted to do at this point in time was rest.

"You...\*pant\*...you think it's \*pant\* over?" Adam struggled to say.

"I'm not sure, I hope so..."

The smoke began to clear revealing the severely damaged core. A big gash ran across the front of the core revealing the inner workings of the cockpit. The pilot was visible now, it was over. There was no way this pilot would be dumb enough to fight when he's vulnerable. Adam began to feel at ease, it was over.

Violet's light weight machine appeared standing in front of the downed weapon.

"Are you kidding me? You still wish to fight? What can you possibly do against the two of us?!" Adam's own arrogance was beginning to seep through his calm demeanor. Any if not all of his previous fears and concerns were gone at this point. Was it because of his brother? Or maybe it was because he was finally gaining some confidence in his own abilities.

"Heh, you are an arrogant one boy. But this is far from over! I am here to make an example! My life means nothing and neither do there's! Violet screamed as her MF's right arm pointed to the cockpit of the massive MF. Adam smirked trying not to believe her bluff. Stephen on the other hand took it completely serious. Alpha's cameras quickly began to zoom in on the revealed cockpit, Stephen tried to keep his composure but it was hard to do under these conditions.

"ADAM! We have to be extremely careful in what we do!"

"Huh? Stephen what are you talking about? We can easily end this right here, right now!"

"It's not that simple! WAIT!" It was too late, Stephen's voice echoed behind the boosters of Adam's blue MF. The blue unit burst through the sky heading straight for Violet's MF holding both energy sabers out and ready to strike.

"Harold Caecus and his daughter are in that thing!" Stephen screamed one last time hoping that his plea would reach his brother in time.

It did, Adam stopped dead in his tracks as he glanced over his shoulder at Alpha and then back at the downed machine. As the blue MF's cameras zoomed in and he saw with his own eyes Harold Caecus tied to the side of the cockpit and to make matters worse to see Amy buckled down to the seat of the cockpit. Everything went pitch black; he now found himself secluded in a dream like state surrounded by the darkness of the situation. It wasn't real he kept trying to reassure himself, it was all a dream and soon he would wake up and everything would be alright. Amy, a girl that not long ago said she loved him was no right in front of him in danger and in his present state there wasn't much he could do to save her. It was obvious now that any action he might make could possibly cause Amy and her father to die.

“Hahaha, I see you finally realize the depth of your dilemma. If you make a wrong move they die. But if you don’t make a move the Artificial Intelligence on Omega will strike you down.” Violet’s laughter was not appreciated in this crucial moment.

“Adam, we have to...what the hell?!” Stephen quickly looked at his radar. Another unit was approaching incredibly fast. Alpha turned around quickly just as a blur of dark energy swept past. The high velocity of this blur, possibly a new machine caused Alpha to fall backwards being caught in a downward spiral. Adam turned around about to scream his brother’s name as that same blur passed by him sending his machine into a downward spiral. Violet’s eyes widened as the blur became visible, it was another MF. Not like any other type of MF she had ever encountered before, this one was demonic in appearance, it’s dark red color scheme outlined with charcoal details sent chills down her spine. Its crimson devilish eyes began to glow as the frame hovered above with its six elongated wings that were attached to the back of the core all pointing downward. The arms and legs of this unit were slender and smooth all coming to jagged edges. The machine black and crimson with a tint of brown held onto a massive energy lance in the left arm. The right arm was a weapon arm; it came to a spherical point that was constantly gathering energy. The eyes of this MF paralyzed Violet, she couldn’t move. Her nerves froze in place, she couldn’t find the means to grab the throttles or fire her weapons.

“You are a threat. And as such you shall be eliminated.” The cold almost devilish voice stated. The machine moved incredibly fast, undetectable by the human eye. Within seconds Violet’s lightweight MF exploded into pieces. The scream of this woman echoed outwards ringing in the back of both Adam and Stephen’s ears. By now they both regained complete control of their MFs and were now speeding towards that new unit.

“Don’t get in my way.” The mysterious pilot continued to bark.

Out of nowhere the six wings on the back of the MF burst out from the back shooting beams of energy in every direction. Adam and Stephen quickly separated from one another boosting around the sky avoiding the beams. Adam’s anger quickly began to rise as he watched this new machine slowly land on top of Omega.

Once again everything became surreal...Amy, his only thought was of Amy now. The blue MF quickly grabbed both energy sabers while it sped towards the new machine. Red blood like energy beams continued to shot towards Adam but he deflected them with quick sword play. Stephen stood in awe as he too began to fly towards the new unit.

*Destroy it....you are not bound by human nature. You are superior.*

“Am I superior? Yes, I am superior. I shall make them all kneel to my power.” The unknown pilot slowly smiled as he lifted the energy lance into the sky preparing to strike. Adam’s eyes widened as he screamed.

“NO!” The blue MF quickly locked onto the new unit with all of its weapons. The two energy cannons quickly fired, the massive cerulean beams of energy shot forward at an incredible rate. The pilot smirked paying no attention to Adam whatsoever. Within seconds the six wings flew behind the mysterious unit forming a massive energy barrier. The two beams dispersed into the air leaving Adam in a complete state of shock. Then it happened, the mysterious frame’s energy lance burned into the core of Omega, the sheer force of energy caused the cockpit to explode. The screams of both Amy and her father could be heard shrieking through the wasteland of a training facility. Sharp needles shot down Adam’s spine, he went numb. He heard Amy’s voice die out, her life, her essence was gone. He failed to protect

the one person he swore to protect.

“AMY!” Adam screamed as he hit the accelerators. Stephen quickly sped after his brother. The devil like unit quickly appeared in front of Adam and with little effort disabled the blue MF sending it to the ground in shambles. As Alpha burst towards the machine it disappeared just as quickly as it appeared.

“What the hell was that thing...Adam...?” Stephen quickly boosted towards the ground next to the beaten and severely damaged blue MF.

Adam exited the cockpit throwing his helmet to the ground in a fit of rage. His hair waving through the raging torrent of wind while he stood on top of his destroyed MF glaring into the sky. His hands forming fists, he knew what he had to do now. His knees trembled and his eyes began to water, the restraints blocking in his emotions were released as his knees buckled and he fell to the ground. His eyes soaked with tears that ran down his cheeks like a flowing river, surrounded by the flames of debris and ash the nightmare was real.

“No...no...this can't be real....NO!!!” Stephen sighed as he watched his brother in agony, screaming, releasing all of the anger that was built up inside.

Gelidus smirked as he glanced back at Veronica.

“Looks like we've got us a situation.”

“What are you talking about?”

“That machine, I've seen it before, the one that just showed up and dismantle that massive beast.”

“Commander?”

“I'll deal with it. Right now I need you to go register Adam in the military database.”

“You mean he's in?”

“Of course he's in. He will be dispatched to Mars at once along with his brother. There's a situation up there right now as well and we can use him.”

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“Luscious....” Severen's voice was stumbling. His nerves were tightening and rightfully so.

“I know Severen. The Chimera went missing.”

“That's not all, apparently he destroyed the massive terrorist weapon easily.”

“And?”

“And...both Harold Caecus and his daughter were being held in the cockpit of the machine. The Chimera killed them both. If it were to leak out that the Chimera was a Genesis weapon and that it killed them then who knows what would happen.”

“It would mean the end of us. It's that simple boy. But I don't expect that to happen. You see I

thought that something like this might have happened, and that's why I made sure to make it that there is no way the Chimera can be traced back to us. The pilot has no grasp on reality anymore; he won't be much of a threat. He'll die from the strain of the system anyway. Prepare the board; there is much that I have to discuss."

"Luscious?"

"One of our former interns, Adam Novus. I have just read up on his training excursions. It appears he's quite the pilot."

"Yes he is. He was there too Luscious, he was taking the military entrance exam."

"I see, this makes things much more interesting. Please, set up a meeting with him. There is much I need to discuss with him."

### Chapter Nine: Enigma of Chaos

Funerals were never something that I enjoyed. I mean who would want to spend their day at an event mourning the loss of a loved one? But in this is the problem, what is a funeral really? Is it an event where we mourn the loss, or is it an event where we celebrate the life that was lived? I know that I have no clue what it is, all that it does for me is bring pain. For this one friend, this girl who I had such strong feelings for, Amy Caecus is now completely out of my life. I had the power to do something and yet I still failed to accomplish anything worth meaning. Granted I did pass the exam, if you'd call that an exam. I now am a part of the military and I'm supposed to meet with Genesis to customize my own MF, but I just feel so empty right now. Here I've managed to obtain what I was going after, what I was striving for and yet, I still feel as empty as I did before. I see all these people, hundreds of people gathering around these two ditches in the ground. I bet more than half of them don't know who she is. They're probably all here for her father. I continued to look around, I see my friends. It's only natural for them to be here, they were friends with Amy too. Heh... I glanced at Sean and Christina, they seem so happy together. That's something that will last for a long time; I have a feeling about that. Mike, I don't think I've ever seen him in a suit before, it's unusual for him. And then there's Jen, always trying to be the tough one holding back her tears. Then again now that I think about it so am I. There's a girl that I don't know, I tried not to look at her but it was hard to not notice someone as angelic as her. She stood next to Professor Amare; her eloquent brown hair just outlined the curves of her face. Her eyes were shut, she was mourning. I wonder who she is and if she even knew Amy. I mean why wouldn't she know Amy? She is here after all and she seems to be upset about this. I was abruptly taken out of my trance as I felt my brother's hand on my shoulder.

"Are you ok?"

I can't believe he really just asked that question. He was there; he saw how I failed to prevent this from happening. He should be fully aware of how I'm feeling right now.

"Yeah, I'm fine." I tried shrugging it off as it was nothing. I know my calm demeanor is very persuasive.

“You’re horrible at lying. So just stick with what you’re good at.”

“Right, what do you want Stephen?”

“Unfortunately I’m here to take you away from the funeral. We’re both departing for Mars at 0900 hours. And you have a meeting with the head of Genesis. You have a lot to do before you go.”

“Eh, I’m aware of my meeting with Genesis to pick out my custom unit.”

“That’s not entirely the case. Apparently the head of Genesis, Luscious Malum wants a meeting with you. After that meeting you then have a meeting with Professor Amare to order the parts for your unit. Once that’s completed you will be taken to the space port in Albany.”

“I’m not sure I completely follow. Why would the head of a tremendous company want to meet with me?”

“Not a clue. Since you were an intern of Genesis he was probably impressed with your performance. It’s probably nothing of major concern.”

“I see.....have you been able to find out any information regarding that unit?”

Stephen’s eyes widened, I bet I caught him off guard with that one. I wasn’t about to let that guy get away with his actions. I will find him, and I will get my revenge.

“No....” There was something in my brother’s voice, I couldn’t tell exactly what it was but something wasn’t right. Stephen never pauses, he is quick to answer, and when he answers’ it is done in complete confidence. This wasn’t the case, he knows something.

“I see. Tell me about the situation on Mars then.”

Stephen smirked; again there was something he knew that I didn’t. I hope the rest of my military life won’t be like this, where I’m kept in the dark about everything.

“Well, Mars used to be a small secluded conflict between nations over the resources. Since the kidnapping and murder of Harold Caecus things have gotten worse. France and Japan have been identified as the people behind this fiasco. England and Canada right now is our only ally on Mars. The rest of Europe along with Asia has been deemed our enemies by the President of the Trinity Alliance. It’s a war Adam; already there have been thousands of deaths on Mars. I’m not sure how much longer this war can be hidden from the people of Earth; if these events become public knowledge then who knows what will happen.”

“I see, I will get them back for what they did.” I couldn’t hold my anger in much longer, France and Japan were behind this attack, and it was their fault that Amy died. I would not allow letting this pass and go unpunished.

“Adam, you need to understand something about this war. It’s a selfish war, mainly about resources to power our country. There are more than enough resources on Mars to supply all of Earth.”

“They killed Amy!”

“No they didn’t. That machine killed Amy. And we are at fault too, we couldn’t do anything.”

What the hell is he saying? He’s not helping, how can he blame us for this? That machine was twice as powerful as both of us put together. We couldn’t have done anything! I...

“Adam, I know it’s hard to accept but it’s the truth. You can’t go and blame other people for something that we couldn’t control. The EAP were behind the kidnapping, but they never showed any intentions of killing them. Our mission is to follow our orders as they are assigned. Once we head to Mars we are both to head to a mining facility. It has been said that the EAP are currently destroying our troops with ease there. They apparently have found some sort of new energy source on Mars and are using it to fuel new weapons. We are to stop them and retrieve any information on this energy source.”

“Stephen...”

“I need you to put this whole event behind you for awhile. If you go to Mars and fight with this on your mind you will die. This isn’t a game anymore Adam. On Mars you will either survive or die, the choice is up to you.”

“You can’t expect me to just forget all of this! It’s inhuman!”

“We’re soldiers Adam. We lost the right to our humanity the minute we signed on.”

“What are you saying brother?!”

“I’m saying that we must follow our orders and do as told. We’re dogs now, don’t forget that.”

I couldn’t believe what he was saying. We’re dogs? Did I make the right choice? I apparently just lost any freedom that I had now; no...I won’t accept this. I will find out what is really going on here. I will find out who that pilot was, and what is really going on with this war. I will put it all to an end. I flinched as Stephen’s hand once again found its way on my shoulder.

“Just because we’re supposed to be dogs, doesn’t mean we have to be. Use this position to get what you want.” His voice whispered into my ears, it was calming to hear him say that. I knew my brother wasn’t one to just obey orders and do things that might be immoral. I smiled, for the first time today I smiled.

“Let’s go brother.”

Stephen nodded, we both walked away from the massive crowd that continued to linger around the graves of Harold and Amy. The faint hairs on the back of my neck stood up, I knew I was being watched. But I refused to turn around to see my friends; it would only make this a lot harder than it had to be. A military official grabbed hold of the door handle opening the car for me and my brother. It was a black limousine, at first I thought the military was going a little overboard, but I then realized that it wasn’t a military limo, it belonged to Genesis. As I angled my body to enter I noticed a young looking



man with long smooth black hair with crimson highlights. His crimson tinted eyes slowly opened as me and brother sat on the leather lined seats. They were incredibly comfortable; I don't think I ever felt a seat this comfortable before. This was without a doubt the taste of wealth.

The man slowly took a sip of wine that was in his glass, it was red wine, maybe merlot I wasn't exactly sure. As the wine touched the outer layer of his lips he began to smirk and quickly placed the glass at his side.

"What manors, would you two like a glass? It's the best this country has to offer. It's sweet but not too sweet. Quite indulging." The man replied.

I waved my hand declining his offer. I'm not too big on wine personally, just never liked the stuff.

"No thanks. I apologize but have we met?"

The man smiled, his right hand pulled a strand of hair behind his ear.

"I apologize; I am Luscious Malum, the current head of Genesis. And you're Adam Novus, and he must be your brother Stephen. It is such a pleasure to meet you both."

"You're the head of Genesis? But you look so young." It took me by surprise that someone looking not much older than me, maybe 5 years at the most is the head of such an influential corporation. I guess Luscious wasn't too surprised by my comment, he chuckled. The glare of the sun reflected off the dark surface of his hair, it blinded me for a moment.

"I appreciate the kind gesture, but I assure you I am more than capable of handling this job..." Luscious paused for a second. His eyes wandered off to the side as far as they could before he had to actually turn his head. He nodded at the driver, instantly a black panel slowly rose in between the back of Luscious' and the back of the driver's head. I glanced to Stephen, he shrugged his shoulders. He was as confused as I was.

"Ok, now that we're alone. There are some things I need to discuss with you, specifically about your encounter with the terrorists at the training facility a few days ago."

I should have known there was some ulterior motive in being picked up by Genesis. At first I was not in the mood to talk about that incident. But it occurred to me; maybe I could find some useful information by using the resources at Genesis' hands.

"All you need to know about the incident is written in the reports. We can't tell you anything more than that." Stephen firmly interrupted.

What was he doing? I need to find out whom that pilot was and here he's preventing me from finding out anything important because he has to keep civilians out of the loop! What the hell? Some things are more important than protocol. I gave my brother a snug look, he sighed and ignored me. My

anger subsided as Luscious abruptly began to laugh.

“Don’t be so formal with me boys. I know much more than you possibly think I do. If I was content with the information written on the reports I wouldn’t have asked both of you here today. I am fully aware of the enigma...yes, it was an enigma, quite appropriate name for that thing don’t you think?” His smirk, there was something about it. He was arrogant, that much was for sure, but why? What did I care, he obviously knew something; he was no mere business man that much had just been cleared up. I could tell it bothered Stephen that he knew as much as he did.

“Luscious, what do you know about that machine?” I had to ask, I couldn’t hold it in any longer. I didn’t even bother to look at my brother; I already felt his glaring eyes burning a hole through the back of my head.

“Unfortunately not any more than what you two know. Which isn’t a lot, what concerns me is that because of this event instigated by this enigma this war has gotten out of control. I was hoping you could give me an appropriate description of the machine so that maybe the special investigations unit at Genesis could help locate it. We already should know that the Government isn’t going to waste much of their effort on finding this one mysterious machine. They already have their hands full with the war on Mars.”

Stephen moved to the edge of the leather seat, the limo slowly came to a stop meaning that we had arrived at Genesis’ head buildings in Manhattan.

“And why does this concern you? If you don’t mind me asking?” Stephen always had a knack for being blunt. Why couldn’t he just accept the help that was being offered?

Luscious smiled once again letting out a light chuckle. His hands firmly grasped his wine glass so that he could take another sip. As the crimson fluid seeped into his mouth he nodded.

“To be honest, everything is about a profit. This war is about resources, it’s all about greed. We don’t need to be fighting with other nations, and yet we are. This enigma, it presents a situation. If word were to get out that there’s a chaotic weapon of destruction on the loose on Earth the people are going to begin asking questions. Eventually leading to the discovery of the war on Mars and once they find out that their Government is playing on Mars while a killer roams our country free outraged citizens will revolt. This will ultimately lead to a depression and that will lead to a weakened state of our nation leaving us open for attack. I would like to prevent that from happening.” He was so calm when he talked. I’m not sure I ever heard anyone talk about things so drastic in such a manor. His hands clasped one another as he laid back into the plush cushion of the seat.

“That may be so, but you are still a civilian and this is a military affair. This enigma stuck its head into military business, it’s our problem. We do appreciate the concern, but we’ll take care of it.” Stephen replied.

I could do nothing but sit there and watch as this all went down. Luscious just nodded to what my brother said. Suddenly the light from the outside poured into the limo as both side doors opened. We all got out of the limo, and there it was; the head office of Genesis. It was a lot taller than I originally expected. But still what a site to behold, I could do nothing but gaze at the sheer size of this towering building. I tend to get distracted very easily; I felt a hand on my shoulder. That apparently is the theme for

the day.

“Go look around, I have a stock holders meeting to attend too. Professor Amare should be arriving within the hour. He has a daughter about your age, she’s quite the looker.” Luscious said as he nudged my right rib cage. I doubt he was aware of my relationship with Amy, hell barely anyone was, it happened so sudden.

“Hehe, no offense, but this daughter of the Professor’s I’m sure she’s nice but I’m just not in the mood for that sort of thing right now. Not after Amy died....” I hate bringing that up, thinking about it is one thing, but having to actually say it is another.

“I see, well still she is nice. And good luck with the customization process. Make sure you pick a setup that will suite you in all areas of battle not just focus on one aspect. Stephen, it was a pleasure to meet you.”

Stephen nodded as Luscious left us both standing amongst a crowd of tourists gawking and taking pictures of the Genesis building.

“Well that was interesting.” I said.

“I don’t trust him and neither should you.”

“Huh? What are you talking about? He wants to help.”

“That maybe so, but we haven’t told anyone about that unit. That’s why it’s not in the reports. There is no way he could have possibly known about that unit unless he holds prior knowledge. He’s not telling us the full story. Just be on guard Adam.”

“Right...” Just then another limousine slowly approached the entrance ramp of Genesis. Stephen and I just stood waiting to see who it was. I had hoped that it was Professor Amare; I couldn’t wait to get my unit. As the door opened this young radiant girl rose. Her mahogany hair danced through the gentle breeze. Her delicate fingers caressed the strands of hair that covered her eyes, pulling them aside her eyelids opened. We caught sight of one another staring; her eyes were deep, incredibly deep. There was something about brown dark eyes; it was a gateway to a person’s soul. She then smiled, her thin pink hued lips parted revealing her crystal like teeth. She approached both me and Stephen and I quickly remembered where I saw her before. She was the girl with Professor Amare at the funeral. She giggled as she stood next to me; I chuckled rubbing the back of my head. She was amazing; she was about 5 foot 7, a petite but a healthy petite.

“Hi.” After all that all I could say was “hi,” sometimes I amaze myself.

“Hi, you must be Adam.” Her voice, wow her voice was so soothing to the ear. It was quiet but at the same time strong. You could tell that she had a good level of confidence to her.

I nodded at first trying not to stumble over my words.

“Yes, I’m he....I mean; I’m Adam...hehehe... (Nice going man, wow)” I smiled while still rubbing the back of my head, I was making myself look like a complete and total moron.

To my surprise she laughed a little.

SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“Dad...err, umm, Professor Amare told me to inform you that he got a little held up and should be here hopefully within the next 30 minutes.”

“Oh ok, half an hour then. That’s not so bad huh Stephen?” Stephen just nodded. He wasn’t much help, not at all.

“Well, umm, I’m sorry I didn’t get your name.”

“Oh, I apologize, I’m Sharon Amare.”

## Chapter Ten: Don't Say Goodbye; See you later

A gushing display of tranquility was what stood before Adam, Stephen and Sharon. A marble encrusted fountain placed in the center of Genesis' main lobby. The water was purity in its most innocent form; the light from the outside caused the water to glistened commanding complete attention. Adam smiled while rubbing the back of his head; Stephen nodded not too impressed by the sight.

"Hey, I'm going to check out the weapons display. Call my phone after you're finished with your Frame." Stephen mentioned as he already began to walk away from Adam and Sharon. Adam nodded as he allowed his brother to leave, his head turned slightly at the tugging of his shirt. He found Sharon's delicate hand not too far away, she was smiling. It caught him off guard a little at first; her smiles were a sight to behold, quite possibly more beautiful than the fountain only a few feet in front of them.

"I feel bad; dad should have been here by now. We're keeping you."

"Heh heh, it's ok, don't worry about. I'd be an idiot to complain about spending time with someone as beautiful as you." Sharon's cheeks instantly began to change to a dull pink hue; even Adam had no idea what he was saying. He knew he couldn't focus solely on Amy and what had happened; he knew if he did that then his life would become one engulfed in the darkness of anguish and sorrow.

"Heh heh, so are you hungry?" Adam asked trying to break the seemingly awkward moment. Sharon paused for a second, her right index finger brushing along the front of her blushing lip. She smiled, at that moment a slight growl was made echoing from her mid section. She quickly covered her stomach while trying to grin.

"Hahaha, I'll take that as a yes. Let's get some food while we wait for Professor Amare to arrive."

"Sure, there's a good amount of restaurants in the court straight ahead."

"Oh, really, what do you suggest then? I have to be honest; I'm pretty indecisive at times."

"Then we're out of luck because so am I!" She laughed as she replied. Her sheer presence seemed to force him to laugh and actually feel at ease. All his original thoughts about Amy and that machine faded from his train of thought.

"Then I guess we're going to have to decide when we get there then... heh heh." Sharon nodded as they both headed towards the food court not too far from their current position. The lobby of Genesis was filled with people all dressed in suits, it was truly the epitome of commerce as mainly people referred to them as. The lobby level was mainly for tourists, there were no influential sections aside from food and information on New York. The levels above were the levels of interests, advanced portable electronics such as laptop computers and cell phones were on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. The floors above dealt with parts for MFs, each part type had its own level, parts for the frame, parts for the weapons, along with everything else that made up a MF. Adam, even though he had worked for Genesis for a while now still couldn't be distinguished from a tourist. Every corner, every sign continued to impress him grabbing his

attention. Before he knew it they had come to the food court. Sharon grabbed his right arm causing him to wake up from his dream like state.

“We’re here and I’m starving!” She said in a suddenly determined tone of voice. Adam did nothing but smiled as Sharon dragged him to the only restaurant that didn’t have a massive line. It was an Italian restaurant, the design of the dining room was bland, and it was just crimson walls with some black lines intertwining to make a long endless design. All the tables were round with ivory covers.

“I thought you were indecisive.” Adam remarked as Sharon quickly made the decision to enter.

She turned around sticking her tongue out at him while giggling. He smirked giving her a sarcastic look.

“Well all the other places were filled with long lines and we don’t have too much time to eat. So I chose this one.”

“Well did it ever occur to you that there might be a reason why this place isn’t packed with people?”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“I’m just saying maybe it’s empty because their food isn’t that good.”

“Adam...this is New York. Can you tell me with a straight face where to find an Italian restaurant with bad food?” Her facial expression was all he needed to see, she did have a point. After all New York especially in the city is known for its good Italian food.

“Heh heh, I guess you’re right.”

“Yep, I’m always right.”

As they both sat down opening their menus, it dawned on him; he was really hungry.

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“So how do you think Adam’s holding up? I mean he did just suffer a major loss.” Mike said as he stopped twirling his pencil. His eyes wandered away from marbled notebook in front of the empty test tubes. Sean and Christina sat on the edge of two silver tinted stools calculating some data that was quickly rushed over to Genesis’ scientific department.

“I’m sure he’ll be fine. He just needs some time to rest.” Christina mentioned as she finished calculating numbers for a time trial labeled Project-C.

“Right...where is he going to find time now that he’s in the military? If you recall he’s shipping out to Mars tonight.” Sean replied after he finished writing up a summary of the time trial results.

“Yeah that’s true. I really feel sorry for him; he’s dealing with a lot and in such a short amount of time...” Jen mentioned from the other side of the lab. Mike turned around nodding.

“How’s the time trial numbers coming along Christina?” Jen asked trying to change the subject so they could avoid their emotions.

“Huh? Oh, umm, they’re coming along alright I guess. Whatever this project is its numbers are getting smaller each week. I’m not sure if that’s a good thing or not.”

“We’re interns; it’s not our job to be concerned with the results. But it is a time trial, so I would assume that smaller numbers would be a good thing.” Jen replied.

Sean flipped a few pages over moving onto the next graph. He sighed as his eyes began to twitch.

“Heh, you know that’s a sign of sleep deprivation.” Christina mocked.

“It’s kind of hard to get any sleep lately, I don’t know why though.”

“Because you’re so caught up in your work, you’re here later than everyone. What are you trying to prove by sucking up?” Mike interjected as he abruptly stood up from his chair.

Sean brushed it off as if it were nothing.

“Don’t worry about it. We are interns; we should be gaining valuable information here. I’m not about to blow this chance of a lifetime.”

“Sean...you can’t obsess over nothing. All we do here is punch in numbers and get the Professors their supplies.” Mike replied once again.

“Hey we each have our own reasons for being here. Just give me a break.”

“Man chill out, I’m not getting up your back. I’m your friend and I was worried, damn.” Mike replied harshly as he headed towards the door.

Sean sighed as he turned around looking back at the graphs in front of him. Both Christina and Jen remained silent while Mike stormed out the door.

“Sean...” Christina mumbled but he paid her no attention.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“Project-C neural patterns are running similarly close to Beta-N. I wonder if the two are related.” His voice seemed to fade into the distance while Christina and Jen just stood staring at him.

“Do you think this is healthy? I mean he is your boyfriend.” Jen mentioned.

“I’m starting to wonder myself. I mean I know he’s trying to make an impression, in all honesty I think he’s a little jealous of all the attention that Adam has been receiving. And he knows that he can’t pilot an MF, at least not like Adam can so I think he’s trying to compensate it with science.” Christina replied.

“Sean...” Jen called out his name but received nothing more than a wave of his arm.

The last amount of coke slid down his throat leaving nothing more than an empty glass. It was good and refreshing but didn’t last long, the waiter put in too much ice. Adam stared down at his massive plate of chicken parmesan. There was a lot of chicken, but he couldn’t really eat without a drink. He already knew that when the waiter returned he was going to ask for no ice. But he was going to try it in a subtle manor because Sharon had previously told him to get a drink with no ice but he said it was alright and that he didn’t mind. He didn’t want to give her another opening to display her wit.

“Are you ok? Why aren’t you eating? I thought you were hungry.” Sharon said after swallowing some fettuccini. Adam smiled and waved his hands from side to side.

“It’s too hot, I’m just letting it cool down for a bit before I get into it.”

Sharon smirked as she took noticed of his empty glass filled to the brim with ice. Her eyes thinned piercing through his face.

“Too much ice huh.”

“...no, it was fine. I was just thirsty that’s all... (Damn, I knew she’d notice eventually. She’s sharp this one.)”

“Riiiiight... I told you to get it with no ice.” She replied glaring.

“Don’t worry its fine.... (Hey the waiter, thank God. Now I’m definitely asking for no ice....but wait a minute, then that would mean she was right. And I don’t want to give her that satisfaction....but it’s just ice, I mean who cares. They didn’t really put too much in; I just drank too fast...)” The waiter reached their table to check in on them.

“How is everything?”

Adam glanced over to Sharon who was smiling while staring at the ice filled glass.



“Can I get another coke....(I can ask for no ice, it’s no big deal....she’s staring, why is she staring....oh God she’s waiting for me to ask for no ice, so she can laugh in my face and tell me how I was wrong. But what do I care, I barely even know this girl.)

“Of course sir, I will be right back.” And just like that the waiter left the table going to get another coke. Sharon smirked and began to eat the rest of her dish. As the waiter returned with the coke still filled with ice Adam sighed.

Dinner seemed to go pretty fast; time flew for them both as they sat there with empty plates.

“That was good. I told you it would be good.” Sharon mentioned.

“Yeah...yeah, you’re right. That was good.” Adam’s eyes widened as he looked at his watch. They had been there for about an hour now. He forgot about Stephen, and the Professor for that matter.

A shadow suddenly loomed over Adam’s head; along with the shadow Adam felt a hand placing itself on his shoulder.

“Adam, I apologize for keeping you waiting. Something came up at the lab. Hi Sharon.” Professor Amare said as he waved to his daughter. Adam quickly turned to the Professor standing up abruptly.

“Hi Professor; it’s ok, I had a wonderful time with your daughter.” Adam replied.

“I see, Sharon thank you for keeping Adam entertained for such a long period of time. I’m sure you’ve wanted to go home and relax.”

“No don’t worry about it. I had fun.” She replied while winking at Adam. Adam seemed shocked; Sharon was pretty and was a fun person to be around. But he knew he was leaving for Mars and was probably best to just keep her at friend’s length.

“So then Adam, are you ready to receive your MF.”

Adam’s eyes widened, he had been waiting seemingly forever to hear that. He turned around nodding quickly filled to the brim with anticipation.

“Well then we should get going. Sharon, there is a car waiting outside to take you home.” Sharon smiled and walked up to Adam before she left.

“Well, I had a fun time with you today. If you ever find yourself back here don’t be afraid to give me a call.” She said as she wrote down her number on a napkin she had taken off their table. Adam’s eyes remained wide open; he really didn’t know what to say to that.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“Heh heh, thanks. I had fun too today; whenever I’m back home I’ll give you a call.” Adam replied.

“Alright then, good luck up there.”

“Thanks, good bye Sharon.”

“Heh heh, don’t say good bye, it sounds like we’ll never see each other again. Say “see you later.”” Sharon said as she walked towards the door to the outside.

“See you later...Sharon.” Adam mumbled.

“She’s great isn’t she?” Professor Amare interrupted.

“Huh...oh yeah. She really is Professor.”

“Ok then, let’s get you in your unit.”

“My unit? But I thought I had to pick my parts and then I’d have to wait a few weeks before Genesis assembled them.”

“Yeah, that’s usually the case. But if you remember you filled out a form months ago with the parts you were interested in.”

“Are you serious? I thought that was just for fun, you know to pass time since I finished my work early.”

“It was, but since you passed the exam, we just used that list to create your MF. It’s waiting for you in the garage.”

“Oh wow! Let’s go!” Adam yelled in a burst of excitement. The Professor smiled as they both headed to the side stair well which lead directly to the underground bunker.

As Professor Amare swiped his id card through the key reader Adam was seemingly bouncing in excitement. The door couldn’t open quickly enough for him, after months of dreaming of this unit he couldn’t wait a few more minutes. As soon as there was enough room for his body to move Adam sped through the door and into the garage. The massive light flared on blinding Adam at first but he soon adjusted. His body went numb while his hands firmly grasped the metallic bar at the end of the sky walkway. There it was, his MF. It was a mid-weight design, allowing for good defense and agility. Two hi-act laser rifles like the ones that Alpha had were attached to each metallic hand. Two plasma cannons were attached to the sleek leg units, they were similar to the ones used during the test but these were more powerful and lighter. The core was sleek in design too; the front of the core came out to a smooth flat end. Attached to the back unit were two more laser cannons, while two energy sabers were being held in place docked above the thigh cannons. The MF was his, it was his dream; it all seemed too surreal, it looked exactly as he wanted it too. The MF was a dark blue in color with hints of crimson. Professor Amare

placed his hand over Adam's shoulder smiling. Adam looked up at the Professor smiling as well.

"Thanks Professor Amare...I can't wait to use it in action."

"Are you going to name it?"

"Huh? Name it?"

"Of course, every MF pilot is christened with a code name and their MF is given a name as well."

"I get a code name?!"

"Yes, the paper work has already been faxed over."

"I see, hmmm, I got it."

"Already?"

"Of course, I tend to be mobile in the air and relentless when attacking, like a dragon. This is my Blue Dragon." Adam replied. He liked the name; it gave him a searing amount of confidence.

"Well then, here is your official code name." Professor Amare replied while handing Adam a manila folder.

Adam opened the folder and smiled.

"Heh, Azure Knight. I like it."

## **Chapter Eleven: Into the Crimson Sunset**

A massive sea of flames ruptured towards the crimson atmosphere. Bulging masses of smoke continued to build from the destructive raid of chaos that had ensued not too long ago. A bright reflection of light emanated off the top of a towering machine, as the smoke slowly moved through the sky due to a powerful breeze a greenish colored MF appeared. The machine was a heavily armored frame with patches of charcoal singes randomly placed along the outer edges of its armor. The display screen was filled with a static educed image of a young woman. The pilot sighed while punching his monitor in hopes of fixing the reception but it was of no avail.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“<Damn piece of crap!>” His Japanese accent echoed through his cockpit.

“<Sirius calm down. Our job is done here. The TA base is nothing more but a pile of ashes now. We need to return to our camp!>” Another Japanese pilot remarked.

“<What is this?! I’m picking up two blips on radar! They’re heading this way fast!” The third pilot was French. The two Japanese pilots quickly turned around staring into the dark grainy sand storm that began to distort their vision.

“<Damn, now of all times! Radar is down; electronic noise is at an all time high! We’re blind.>” Sirius screamed.

“<Don’t worry, they’re as blind as we are.>” Blaze replied.

“<TWO MASSIVE HEAT SOURCES COMING OUR WAY!>” Sirius yelled out once again.

His heavy MF slowly turned just as two crimson energy beams exploded on the front of the core sending the MF to collapse to the ground. Instantly even more crimson sand and rocks burst into the air only making the sand storm worse, the two remaining standing MFs flew away from Sirius in separate directions. Blaze as he was called was a high ranking pilot in the French military; his MF was a six-legged unit. By having six mechanical legs his unit was able to have even better stability than the best heavy. His weapons were his arm units; they were two hi-active rail guns with devastating power accompanied by a massive missile pack placed along the lines of the shoulder. The other Japanese pilot was known only as Fenrir named after the wolf in Norse mythology. Like Blaze he too was a top pilot, one of the best the Japanese military had to offer to the EAP, Eurasia Alliance Pact. His MF was an icon to those in the Japanese military, it slowly rose through the sand storm a light weight MF with reverse jointed knees and a triangular looking metallic core that came out to a singular pointed edge. The purple frame held onto a linear assault rifle in the right side and a hi-end machine gun on the left. The core was a special prototype that came enabled with a shield that has the ability to protect the entire MF from both sides. On the back of the unit was a massive energy trident, it was there for show mainly, Fenrir never determined an enemy worthy enough for it to be used. Fenrir’s eyes shut slightly as the radar continued to ring loudly, due to the electronic noise the radar wasn’t working at full capacity so it would be nearly impossible to find the exact location of the two enemy units.

“<Fenrir! Do you see them?!>” Blaze screamed, his anxiety was apparent, he didn’t handle stress well, especially when he couldn’t rely on his radar.

“<Be quiet. You’re distracting....there.>” Fenrir mumbled in a soft and quiet tone of voice. His fingers slowly gripped the throttle; his linear rifle moved into the air and quickly began to fire round after round. Bright flashes lit up the dull ominous field as four rounds of compacted solid shells thrust through the sand storm. The gentle yet commanding sound of boosters echoed causing the enemy MF to strafe from side to side. By now the MF became visible to Fenrir’s eyes; he sat there watching the MF’s movements counting. Under his breath he was counting the reaction time of the boosters and how long it took to change direction. Fenrir quickly smiled.

<Too slow.>” Seemingly out of nowhere Fenrir’s MF Blitzangriff, German for lightning attack erupted from the ground causing an uproar of sand and debris. It was odd for a Japanese pilot to have a German named MF but he liked the name. With both guns blazing Fenrir continued his course as he watched the blue MF dodge every attack. Just then the blue MF began to boost even higher into the sky causing Fenrir to follow suit.

<Are you the one?! I wonder if you will be the one to make me use my spear. ANSWER ME!>”

Blitzangriff’s crimson boosters flared even more intensely than before giving the purple lights weight an increase in speed. Just as Fenrir appeared at even level with the blue MF his eyes widened. Two energy cannons quickly rose from the thighs of the blue MF firing at close range. The cerulean energy beams tore through the air, at the last second Blitzangriff turned to the side narrowly avoiding the beams. Fenrir did nothing but smile at the close encounter; he knew this might be the one to make him unleash his true potential. Suddenly the right leg of the blue MF swung coming in contact with Blitzangriff’s left arm. The sudden collision sent Fenrir in a free fall towards the Martian surface.

“<Impressive.>”

The blue MF then turned around completely as four energy cannons along locked onto the descending purple MF. The pilot without hesitation pulled the trigger unleashing an onslaught of energy towards Fenrir. Once again Fenrir began to smirk as he flipped open a switch. The outer layer of armor on Blitzangriff began to glow brightly, suddenly just as the energy beams reached Fenrir they bounced off into different directions as the massive energy shield became fully enabled.

“A shield core? I’ve only heard they were rumors! I didn’t think they were already in mass production!” The pilot screamed.

“ADAM!” Stephen’s voice blared over the communications link. Adam turned around to see Alpha speeding towards him.

“Bro, this unit is equipped with an energy shield core.” Adam said still in bewilderment. He wasn’t sure how he could defeat something that could negate all of his attacks. Stephen turned to glance at the purple MF and quickly recognized the machine.

“That’s Blitzangriff, one of Japan’s most powerful MFs. It’s piloted by Fenrir, one of the EAP’s top pilots. Maybe I should take care of him.” Stephen replied as he looked at Adam through the display screen. He stopped talking, he could tell by the expression that Adam was giving that he wouldn’t step down.

Adam smirked; he didn’t even bother to reply to his brother. He just grabbed hold of the throttles and went.

“I’ll make things easier for you and talk to you in your native tongue. You are strong but don’t stand a chance against me!” Fenrir screamed as the shield dissipated allowing Blitzangriff to fire both weapons in the air. Blue Dragon flipped on its side while strafing to the right side watching as the shells from the machine gun and the linear rifle slid passed. Stephen’s eyes glanced to the ground as he caught

notice of the six-legged MF. Two massive bluish hued beams of energy soared towards Alpha at incredible speed. Stephen smirked as Alpha swung both energy sabers through the beams causing them to vanish. Instantly the camera on Alpha zoomed in on Blaze's MF and quickly identified it.

"Heh, Blaze huh. I've heard about your heroic feats in the EAP. But attacking a defenseless mining facility, where's the honor in that?!" Stephen screamed as his feet nearly pounded on the accelerators. Alpha burst out of its steady position while Blaze watched from below.

"<Let's see... what I am up against ....oooooh....the fabled Crimson Knight of the Trinity Alliance. This should be slightly amusing.>" The eight boosters on the MF quickly ignited allowing the MF to head into the sky. Hundreds of lock on boxes filled up the display screen around Alpha. With a sinister sneer Blaze fired; two massive cubic launchers slid open releasing hundreds of missiles along with a trail of blackened smoke. Alpha evaded the missiles eloquently by boosting in and out of every swarm of warheads. Blaze smiled while shutting his eyes, he had expected no less from the Crimson Knight. What he didn't expect was Alpha to appear in front of him so quickly.

"Not even a challenge." Stephen muttered as he quickly hacked away at the rail gun arm weapons with the energy sabers. The searing crimson energy beams tore through the armor like paper causing a massive explosion. Flames burst out while the barrels of the rail guns burned falling to the ground. Blaze couldn't speak, his nerves were acting up again, and all of a sudden his years of training and months of experience flew out the window replaced by fear and cowardice. His MF quickly turned around and began to fly away from Alpha with haste.

"Is that the best you can do boy?" Fenrir continued to mock Adam as he dodged every energy attack. Adam couldn't land a single shot on him, he was too agile. Adam also realized that he was running low on ammo for both his energy rifles. He began to chuckle, he had really wanted to work on his blade skills but never got a chance to do so. Blue Dragon quickly fired the thigh cannons along with the laser rifles, four cerulean beams headed straight for Blitzangriff. As expected Fenrir narrowly avoided the beams but left its right side vulnerable. Fenrir's eyes slowly turned to the side as he saw Blue Dragon appear below with two energy sabers now equipped. Fenrir was taken by surprise as he didn't realize that this MF was equipped with both long range and close range combat abilities. Just as Fenrir went to enable the shield core Blue Dragon slashed through Blitzangriff's right arm. Fenrir sneered at the event as he watched his MF's arm descend through the sky engulfed in flames. Adam smirked; he had the upper hand now. Blitzangriff quickly reacted by kicking Blue Dragon to the side and then enabled the shield core.

"Ha, is that all you can do? You have one arm, you're offensive capabilities have dwindled and your defense is reduced to that core. Plus I'm sure your unit is overheating causing your radiator to work in over drive. You can't possibly defeat me now." Adam had that streak of confidence again. He didn't think there was any way he could possibly lose.

"Heh heh, I truly am impressed boy. You're the first that is reducing me to using this weapon." Fenrir replied his tone of voice; he seemed happy. Blitzangriff's remaining arm dropped the machine gun and grabbed hold of the energy trident on its back. "Prepare yourself!" Fenrir screamed.

The crimson energy shield quickly vanished as Blitzangriff burst into an attack formation. Adam was sent back into his seat as he forced Blue Dragon to dodge the swinging attacks of Fenrir's trident. Blitzangriff's speed appeared to have increased drastically; he gave Adam no time whatsoever to counter.

Blue Dragon was forced to constantly dodge every attack. Sweat began to roll down Adam's face; his helmet visor began to fog from the intensifying heat and erratic breathing patterns.

“What's the matter? Can't fight back?!”

With out even thinking Adam managed to attack. Blue Dragon's left leg rose colliding with Blitzangriff causing Fenrir to stumble in the air giving Adam enough time to retaliate. Quickly Blue Dragon's thigh cannons rose and fired the cerulean energy beams exploded on the core of Blitzangriff there was no time for Fenrir to react to put up the shield. A massive cloud of caliginous smoke covered the sky. The bottom of the cloud burst open as Fenrir fell to the ground with torrents of electricity blazing out from the wounded right arm.

“Adam! Finish him off already before EAP reinforcements arrive!” Stephen screamed.

Adam simply nodded as Blue Dragon burst out from its position heading straight towards Fenrir. Fenrir's mind began to wander thinking about the countless number of missions that he had partaken in none of which had he ever failed. Just then Fenrir grabbed the throttles and forced Blitzangriff to the right. Adam's eyes widened as a massive orange torrent of flames tore through the sand storm heading straight for him. Sirius appeared from under a massive amount of sand in his heavy MF; smoke searing off the edge of his dual grenade launcher.

“Damn...this is going to be close...extremely close.” Adam said to himself as he pulled the throttles inwards. Blue Dragon strafed to the side at the very last second, it was hard not to watch the massive grenade shell fly upwards after it grazed the outer layer of Blue Dragon's armor.

“Until next time then boy!” Fenrir screamed as he and Sirius began to boost into the setting horizon. His anger swelled as he punched the control panel in his cockpit, Adam's first mission and he failed to take down the enemy unit. Blue Dragon slowly descended to the ground next to Alpha.

“I know Stephen...I know.”

“You did well.”

“I what? But he got away.”

“He ran away because you were too strong for him. Adam you out matched one of the EAP's top pilots. Don't beat yourself up because he got away. Mine got away too, but what's important is that we saved this mining facility.”

“I guess you're right. So now what? We head back to base?”

Stephen nodded. “Yeah we head back; we need to debrief our unit of the situation.”

“Situation? What are you talking about?”

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“The EAP isn’t playing around, not if they sent Fenrir and Blaze out here. They’re two of their top pilots. That means the EAP is seriously interested in this mining facility. But the question is why.”

“Hey Stephen....”

“Yeah?”

“Have you found out any information regarding that machine?”

“...you’re still hung up on that?”

Adam tried to deny the fact but he knew it wasn’t healthy to delude oneself.

“Of course, it was because of him that Amy died. I won’t let that pass.”

“Stubborn bastard.” Stephen said as he stepped on the accelerator. Alpha quickly boosted away from Blue Dragon heading back towards the base nearby.

Adam remained quiet looking at some pictures he hung up of his friends. His hand found one of Amy and slowly raised it to his face. Tears began to build up but vanished as he quickly wiped them away.

“I will find you. And when I do, I’ll make you pay.”



## Chapter Twelve: Reflection

The atmosphere was dreary; it wasn't something most would find delightful. The Martian atmosphere was still new for the most part, especially in comparison to that of Earth's. The stale air was brimming with the essence of death; it's only natural since for the majority of Mar's 20 year life span has been corrupted with seemingly frivolous battles, nations becoming each other's enemies all because of each other's greed and inability to share. The fact of the matter was that Mars was swelling with resources, new sources of energy that were just waiting to be tapped. No one had been able to get a hold of any of these sources because of the battles, but it is said that the amount of energy in just one of the unnamed sources would be more than enough to power an entire nation for decades. And it is this fact that the true greed of humanity is put up for display. If this new source of energy was that rich, and considering that Mars is full of it along with other types of new minerals, then there is more than enough to share with all the nations on Earth. It just didn't make sense when people would think about it; then again only about 2/3rds of Earth is aware of this war. The Trinity Alliance was the only nations that kept its citizens in the dark. It just goes to show that profit makes the world turn, and there is no profit to be made when there is an abundance of something. If one nation held complete control then they would be able to limit the amount of energy dispersed, and as such would be in the charge of the wealthiest business venture in the history of the world.

Adam sat across from Stephen staring at a pamphlet that he was given once he arrived on Mars. He found himself on the red planet about a week ago after a long felt good bye with his friends. In that week he's taken part in one mission that was a success in the eyes of the military, but not in his. He wrapped himself in two camouflage cotton blankets as he watched puffed out ivory clouds emanate from his lips. It was cold; as a matter of fact it was frigid. Stephen didn't seem to mind, he's been used to it.

"You better get used to this fast, this is the season where the Sun is the farthest away from Mars, thus making nights here incredibly cold." Stephen said breaking the silence that filled the above ground bunker.

Adam sighed glancing up at his brother only for a second before he turned his attention back to the pamphlet. It was a history of events since the outbreak of this war. He never knew the extent of this war before; in his mind he only thought the war was recent.

"(A quick timeline of events.)" He thought to himself as the pamphlet read:

**50A.R.- Mars Terraforming Begins**

**60 A.R.**-Mars Terraforming Completed

**62 A.R.**-New energy source discovered, Sapphire Lithium

**63 A.R.**-Joint Mission between U.S. and Japan to Mars, Here they discover high sources of energy emanating from beneath the surface.

**64 A.R.**-Accident on Mars involving a U.S. mining machine, Japan blamed and thus funding of their science and mechanical divisions cut. Conflict begins.

**67 A.R.**-Japan with the help of France makes it back to Mars with newer MFs and attack U.S. mining facility. Japan's sense of justice, France forced conflict with U.S. because of Alliance with Japan.

**67 A.R.** (June) - Most of Europe follows suite in anti-U.S. sentiments. Say that U.S. Government abused its power and finance. U.S. replies by saying that they are not responsible for assisting every nation that has financial issues. England was one of the remaining overseas nations that supported U.S. Government.

**68 A.R.** - Tensions heighten between Europe/Asia Alliance and U.S. and Britain Alliance. Other nations remained neutral. Main forces in the Europe/Asia Alliance were Japan, France, Italy, Russia, Germany, and China, nations like Korea, African continent, Australia, South America, Mexico, Cuba, and Canada remain neutral. U.S. joined by France, Japan, and Russia on Mars all mining for resources.

**73 A.R.** - 4 years of not finding a single resource because of minor conflicts and battles, "war" not publicized because the battles were minor and insignificant no serious losses suffered. Treaty reached in February, Prosperity Treaty signed by the nations involved in the conflicts. Earth Advancement Alliance is formed, U.S., England, Japan, France, Italy, Russia, Germany and China all agree to work together and share their findings.

**80 A.R.** - 7 years after the Prosperity Treaty new resources discovered but none that contained the energy either nation was searching for; Sapphire Lithium still unattained. Resources brought back from Mars for the first time, Ion Alloy, a light carbon based metal that hardens or becomes extremely soft depending on the temperature. More oil patches are discovered, nations in the Middle East are abandoned; their oil patches have dried up.

**84 A.R.** -Nations in the Middle East such begin to fall apart, food shortages, financial trouble now due to lack of oil. Governments in the Middle East band together forming the Eastern Pact of Life or EPI for short. EPI approaches UN for assistance, UN denies request for help because their finances are all tied up in the Mars Project.

**85 A.R.** - EPI attacks a space port near Moscow. EPI uses the excuse that they were forgotten by the UN, neglected and was left with no choice but to strike. EAA motions to strike against EPI as they are threatening the flourishing of humanity. EAA attacks EPI headquarters in Iran; devastating attacks cause EPI to lose millions of soldiers. EPI is crippled and forced to retreat. Start of the 1 year war.

**86 A.R.** - EAA and EPI meet one last time in Iraq, Russia and Japan use nuclear weapons on EPI; a clear violation of the Prosperity Treaty and are removed from the EAA. EPI along with the entire Middle East had been wiped out. U.S. Government afraid of being seen as murders back out of the EAA before the news of EPI's demise was made public. U.S. said they left for financial reasons. Only France, Italy, Germany and China remained in the Alliance.

**90 A.R.** - Germany removes themselves from the EAA due to financial troubles and lack of results on Mars. With only France, Italy and China remaining the EAA was officially disbanded and nations went to work on Mars for themselves once again.

**92 A.R.** - U.S. miners are found working on Japanese territory on Mars and are killed on site. Tensions between U.S. and Japan rise once again.

**93 A.R.** - U.S. military moves up to Mars in order to protect the miners while colonies are being established near the mining sites. MFs are soon found all over Mars on every camp site. Earth is still unaware of what is taking place on Mars. People are told that another Terraforming needed to take place.

**95 A.R.** - Japan finds a cache of a brand new resource known as Surge Plus, a crystalline stone that is able to harness solar energy and recreate fusion reactions that create energy. Turns out that Japan controls the only part on Mars where this resource can be found.

**96 A.R.** - France, Italy, Germany, and China come to an agreement with Japan. These nations are able to mine on Japanese territory as long as Japan receives commission for every shipment of Surge Plus that is distributed to Earth. U.S. the only Nation that is now sans Surge Plus.

**97 A.R.** - Negotiations between Japan and U.S. fail, commission rate is too high according to the U.S. Government. Months following the failed negotiations Japanese mining facilities are destroyed severely crippling Japanese commerce. Japan falls into a depression due to loss of money and are forced to raise commission charges on Surge Plus. France, Italy, Germany and China leave as they are unwilling to pay for outrageous charges. U.S. is believed to be behind the disaster on Mars.

**97 A.R.** (August) - Japan launches MFs to attack U.S. military and mining facilities. Thousands are lost. U.S. quickly retaliates; War is reached between Japan and U.S. France, Italy, Germany, and China aide Japan as they too sustained financial losses from the destruction of Japan's mining facilities. U.S. Government sends out an official statement saying they were not behind the attack on Japan's mining facilities and that Japan reacted without searching for the truth. The Nations of the newly formed EAP dismiss the statement. War of Fallacy begins.

**98 A.R.** - War ends as Japan discovers that a terrorist organization consisting of surviving EPI members were behind the attack 2 years prior. Tensions still remain high between Japan and U.S., at the end of this war U.S. managed to soak up a lot of Japanese territory and at this point took possession of Surge Plus facilities and Ion Alloy facilities; the only two resources found to date on Mars. U.S. monopoly established.

**99 A.R.** - EAP reestablishes themselves, revolting against the monopoly that the U.S. has on Mars. Battles ensue between the EAP and the newly formed Trinity Alliance consisting of U.S., England and Canada. Battles remain hidden from Trinity Alliance citizens.

“Why are you wasting your time reading that kid?” A voice boomed forth causing Adam to turn his head. As the rustling of the tent door screeched a man stepped forth, he was big, immense even. His crimson eyes slightly thinned as he stared at Adam, this man's muscles were attempting to be hidden by his uniform but even so they were bugling. Adam recognized the jagged edges of his jaw line, this man was a high ranking officer one he never had the pleasure of meeting in person until now.

Both Adam and Stephen jumped out of their seats to quickly salute the General that stood in their tent.

“General Rutice, I wasn’t aware that you were assigned to Astrum.” Stephen said firmly.

“Heh, I was just transferred. Apparently Astrum is going to become the head quarters for our Operation Final Serenade.”

Adam glanced at his brother in confusion, it seemed rather abrupt to be having an Operation be set in Astrum. Astrum was a military colony that harbored troops that were injured during battle; there was also a prison camp on location. Astrum didn’t have many offensive capabilities, not any which would be significant to a major upcoming operation.

“Astrum is taking command of Operation Final Serenade? No offense sir, but that doesn’t make any sense; it’s just a colony for troops who are resting from battles. Plus we also have a good amount of POWs here; it would be foolish to just put them in jeopardy like this.” Stephen replied.

“That is true, however you two were witness to the assault on Astrum’s mining facility. EAP doesn’t care what they are attacking; their ultimate goal is to take over all of our mining facilities. Intel has recovered some information; the two top elite MF pilots of the EAP are stationed at Praetor. Which as you should know is not too far away from here. They are planning on assaulting Astrum with a good brunt of their forces. It is our job as USMF soldiers to prevent this from happening. I am expecting your full corporation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Novus.”

Stephen’s eyes widened in shock, it wasn’t too long ago that he was nothing more than an Ensign. With this sudden twist he had no clue to react; Adam however smirked in the corner.

“Sir?” Stephen questioned.

“You’ve been promoted Novus; ever since your performance against that terrorist unit the higher ups have been keeping an eye on you and your brother. You and your brother, Elite Pilot Novus are to appear at 0500 for debriefing and assignments. I’m expecting great things out of both of you.” General Rutice quickly stood back at attention saluting both Adam and Stephen who still sat in awe over their rather abrupt promotions. The pamphlet fell to the ground under Adam’s feet as he approached his brother on the other side of the tent.

“Stephen?”

Stephen smiled as he waved back to his brother while turning off the battery powered lantern. The cerulean light slowly faded covering both of them in complete darkness.

“Why do you suppose we got promoted...I mean without even being notified. Isn’t a promotion a big deal? I mean I’ve been in the military for what? A few weeks now.” Adam replied as he walked back to his forest green sleeping bag.

“I’m not sure myself. I wouldn’t be concerned though, we already have enough to deal with tomorrow. If the EAP is preparing to assault Astrum then there is something else going on here that we don’t know about.”

“What do you mean by that? Do you think Astrum is just a cover for something else?”

“It’s possible, but I’m not sure. If the military just wanted to assault Praetor then they could have just done it from Evo’s base. Evo is maybe 500 miles away from Praetor with more armory, we’re about 300 miles with just our battalion. That reminds me, I forgot to mention that we’re receiving two transfer

pilots to our team. They'll be here tomorrow."

"Two more pilots? From where?" Adam could hardly contain his excitement. Until now it had just been him, his brother and Lieutenant Commander Gelidus. Even though he knew he wasn't on Mars to socialize he still thought it would be nice to have other people to talk with.

"They're from Constantine Base almost on the other side of Mars. They're both Elite Pilots, they've been with the military longer than I have."

"Longer than you huh, heh, and from the looks of it you're going to be their commanding officer. Hey that reminds me, with your new rank how many ranks are you under Lieutenant Commander Gelidus?"

Stephen chuckled slightly. He didn't even realize it but he was only one rank under Gelidus now. As far as he knew the ranks for the United States Mechanical Forces were Ensign, Pilot, Elite Pilot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander, Commander, Major, Lt. Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier General, Major General, Lieutenant General, and General. He had only been in the military for about 4 months now and he was already climbing up the ranks; just like he wanted.

"I'm one under him but it makes no difference to me. Adam, try and get some sleep, tomorrow is going to be a long day." Stephen said as his head disappeared under his covers. Adam sighed and attempted the same thing. But something stopped him from completely going under the covers, a small gleaming beam of blue light emanating from his back pack next to his pillow. He reached for his bag unzipping the front pocket; he felt his phone vibrating wildly. With the latest technology Genesis was able to establish a new satellite communications system allowing for calls to be received from Earth while on Mars. Because of the distance conversations had some lag time, but nothing too dramatic. Genesis never released details as to how they worked, or why they were so reliable; it was yet another form of technology that they had a monopoly on. Taking the phone out from its pocket he stared at the small black digits and the name underneath causing him to smile. From the other side of the room Stephen's right eye slightly opened as he glared at his brother.

"You brought your phone to Mars?" Stephen sarcastically pointed out.

"Heh, yeah I didn't think it would make a difference. Besides, I wanted to keep in touch with everyone from back home."

Stephen sighed as flipped on his right side with his cover over his head once again. Adam continued to smile as he put the phone back in its place; he took a deep sigh as his eyelids began to close.

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"<You failed Fenrir...I must say I never expected you to fall, especially to such an under guarded mining facility as Astrum is.>"

Fenrir stood in front of hundreds of soldiers while he received his public lashing from his superiors in the EAP. Fenrir's darkened obsidian hair fell over the upper half of his pupils, he took his verbal lashing with a grain of salt, of course there was nothing more that he could do. What was being said was the truth, he lost, for the first time ever in his life he failed a mission and what bothered him more was the fact that it was to some punk kid.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“<Colonel Fenrir, since this is the first negative mark since joining the EAP and due to your heroic marks in the past we shall let this failure slide. However if you botch up one more time than you shall be forced to resign from your station and go back to Japan labeled a failure. Do you understand these terms?>”

Fenrir nodded his head followed by a short lived bow with his arms firmly attached to his sides.

“<General I understand. I will give up my life before I allow failure to stain the name of the EAP.>”

The General stood sternly in front of Fenrir, his arms snugly placed behind his back. The General did nothing but nod as his physical appearance began to fade from sight until there was nothing left. Fenrir quickly looked to the side in shock.

“<What happened?! Did the General’s feed get hacked or something?!>”

The soldier shrugged his shoulders as alarms began to flicker and burst out loudly. All the EAP soldiers that were in uniformed positions quickly broke apart running in all directions engulfed in confusion. Fenrir’s arms quickly reached out grabbing hold of one of the soldiers that was running frantically.

“<What the hell is going on?!>”

The soldier was shaking; there was no question that he was terrified. The look in his eyes, the coldness and dilated pupils were all too familiar for Fenrir.

“<We’re...being attacked...oh man...it’s not good...it took out eight MFs like they were nothing...its...its...coming this way! We need to get out of here! It’ll kill us all!>” The soldier was quickly let go as Fenrir stared into the sky as he took notice of a flickering crimson light that continued to grow.

“<That bastard. I’ll pay you back...>” Fenrir said as he jetted for his MF which was nearby. Repairs to Blitzangriff’s right arm were completed and it was ready for action once again.

In the air the EAP standard MFs were engaging the unit in battle. The standard MFs were a sleek design created to enhance agility. An elongated metallic whip was attached to both arms that had the ability to harness electrical currents; the joints on the legs were reversed with miniature boosters attached to the sides of the legs. Four missile packs were equipped running along the back of the core while a high active plasma cannon was embedded in the front of the core. Each MF held firmly onto an assault rifle and a shield on the left arm. Six MFs remained in the air each flying through the atmosphere trying to get a lock on the enemy.

“<He’s too fast! I can’t get...ARGH!!!!>” One pilot screamed as a massive crimson energy beam tore through the metallic armor instantly incinerating his human flesh. A blinding light burst spreading outwards in the darkened sky as ashes and smoke descended to the Praetor base.

There it stood amongst the smoke and debris, an MF with six wings. The sheer presence of this MF shook the very foundation of the pilots’ determination. Each and every pilot found themselves shaking unable to grasp hold of their throttles, sweat extruding from their pores drenching their jumpsuits.

“<GET OUT OF THE WAY! THIS ONE IS MINE!>” Fenrir screamed as Blitzangriff burst past the five remaining MFs.

Each pilot took deep breaths as they saw their commander join them on the battle field.

“<COLONEL! BE CAREFUL!>” One pilot screamed out.

Fenrir smirked as he went to lock on to what he thought would be a familiar MF but what he saw did not quench his thirst.

“<(What is this? You’re not him.) WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?!>” Fenrir screamed out in rage over his disappointment.

The black and crimson MF just floated eloquently in front of Fenrir with its arms neatly folded across its core.

“<Not answering? Fine, it doesn’t matter who you are. You are attacking my men!>” Blitzangriff burst towards the MF firing its machine gun and linear rifle. The shells tore through the image of the MF, Fenrir sighed almost as if he was upset. He didn’t expect the shells to penetrate the armor of the MF so easily. Then it happened, Blitzangriff was thrown from side to side as hundreds of crimson energy beams exploded on its armor. Fenrir was thrown forward into the LCD display screen; the force of the explosions caused his restraints to snap allowing his body to fall forward. The winged MF appeared directly of Blitzangriff preventing it from falling to the ground. Fenrir’s ivory teeth grinded against one another as he slowly pushed his head out from the now cracked and distorted LCD screen. His vision now stained with a reddish hue was blurred. He looked down at his hands, both were covered in blood. Trails of blood flowed down his face to the edge of his chin while drops of blood stained his suit. Fenrir smirked as he ignored his pain and placed his hands on the throttles once again.

Blitzangriff’s right leg abruptly swung upwards aiming for the unknown MF but missed. The winged MF slightly moved to the left avoiding the kick with ease. Blitzangriff now dropped both weapons grabbing hold of the energy trident. Fenrir smirked as he swung the trident towards the MF. Time slowed down as the winged MF grabbed onto its energy lance and went to attack as well. The gears grinded alongside another as the right arm of the winged MF turned within the blink of an eye. Fenrir smirked realizing that he wouldn’t make it in time.

Suddenly a blinding flash engulfed the sky. Over the communications system loud distorted pants of breath filled the speakers. There it was still in decent condition, Blitzangriff with the massive energy shield surrounding it. Clusters of smoke covered the lower half of the shield and Blitzangriff but Fenrir began to breathe with ease until he noticed it.

“<That’s not possible....>”

The winged MF floated just under Blitzangriff with its arm piercing the energy shield. Fenrir went to swing its trident when Blitzangriff’s arms exploded violently causing even more smoke to blanket the sky. The energy shield dissipated while the winged MF floated in the sky holding onto the lance while Blitzangriff began to fall to the ground engulfed in flames and rampant cerulean sparks of electricity. Alarms flared on the inside of the cockpit but Fenrir paid them no attention, his eyes slowly shut as he faded from consciousness with the final image of that black and crimson MF with wings.

### Chapter Thirteen: Omens

Day broke as the sun slowly rose in the horizon. Soldiers were already running across the small outpost at Astrum all heading towards their respected units. Most of the soldiers present belonged to the Army while only a select few belonged to the USMF. Both Stephen and Adam stood just outside their tents eyes widened as they stared off into the distance. Confusion quickly spread across the outpost, it was because of the tower of darkened smoke that brimmed towards the sky in the location of Praetor.

“What do you think happened?” Adam asked, originally their Operation Final Serenade was to begin. But with the current confusion it wasn’t very likely that it would occur.

“I’m not sure.”

“You think another military base attacked Praetor before us?”

Stephen shook his head. That wouldn’t be the case, Operation Final Serenade was established by the higher ups in the military, and no other base would strike before the operation began.

“No, if another base did attack Praetor they would have some serious charges brought against them. This was something else; it was probably a malfunction with one of their energy generators or something.”

“2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Novus...” A high pitched voice interrupted the brother’s conversation. Adam and Stephen turned their heads to the side to see two soldiers in pilot uniforms; Adam’s eyes widened as he slightly angled his head away from the two soldiers. They were the transfers, one was female, bright brown shoulder length hair highlighted with streaks of blonde only accented her olive tinted eyes and delicate beige skin tones. The pink and blue jumpsuit emphasized her bodily curves and toned body; she was about 5’8 in height and was quite attractive. The other was male; he was shorter than the girl but was bulkier in mass, not fat, but all muscle. He nodded his head while pushing up his glasses with his right index finger; his glasses covered his deep teal eyes which seemed to glistened in the sun. Curly blonde hair outlined the top of his box like head, like the girl’s suit his suit displayed all of his muscles.



“You must be the two new transfers. I’m 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Novus and ....” The female quickly cut Stephen off as she glared at Adam.

“Adam Novus...” The words rolled right off the girl’s tongue sharply. The anger and sarcasm created an awkward situation. Stephen tried not to laugh but couldn’t hold it.

“Wait, you two know each other?” Stephen asked as he moved in front of Adam’s line of sight. Adam sighed and nodded.

“Yeah...umm, it’s been a few years though... (Great, all of places...)” Adam smiled rubbing the back of his head while turning around to the female pilot. “Heather Pertinacia”

Heather nodded as she began to walk towards Adam dropping her helmet to the side. Adam gulped as he stood his ground. He sighed as he watched her right hand quickly rise to the sky and then smacked across his face. The sound was excruciating to hear, it echoed for about 30 seconds after the contact was made. Stephen and the other male pilot jumped back a bit in shock.

“What the hell?! It’s been 3 years and nothing, not even a letter, hell not even an email!” Heather screamed. Adam ducked his head while he rubbed the crimson mark left on his face.

“I’m sorry, but you just upped and left without any good reason. And I wouldn’t talk; I don’t recall you ever trying to get in touch with. You’re just as guilty as I am.” Adam barked back.

The other pilot walked up to Stephen extending his hand.

“I am Caleb Proditio.” Caleb said.

Stephen nodded taking his hand.

“Nice to meet you....” Stephen glanced back at Heather and Adam who were still arguing.

“Ugh...I really hope they’re not going to be like this during missions.”

“I don’t know, Heather is pretty stubborn, once she found out we were being transferred to your unit she wouldn’t stop talking about your brother and how she was going to give you a piece of her mind.” Caleb replied.

“I see, I’m guessing she didn’t expect Adam to be here then.”

“Nope, once we arrived at the base a Warrant Officer told us that we could find the Novus brothers over here. Once she heard that she stormed towards here.”

“FINE!” Both Adam and Heather yelled simultaneously as they stormed off in different directions. Both Stephen and Caleb sighed.

“What was that about?” Stephen asked as Adam approached in their direction.

“Ugh...we used to date. I think that should be enough of an explanation.”

“I figured that much out myself. I’m guessing the break up didn’t go that smooth then.”

“Heh, she just moved away without even giving me a reason. And then she has the audacity to flip out on me when she didn’t even try to get a hold of me. Come on; let’s just go check out Praetor.” Adam replied as he left walking towards the MF hanger.

“Adam?”

“Stephen, don’t you want to know what happened over there?”

“Of course, but we have a recon team to do that. There’s no need to go over there.”

“But...”

“You will wait here for the recon team. That is an order; I don’t expect you to go against my dictation.”

Adam sighed kicking the dirt below.

“2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant I heard you were an expert in FCS configuration. Do you think you can help me with some problems on my MF?” Caleb asked.

Stephen nodded.

“Yeah, it would be a good idea to get familiar with each other’s Frames now that we’re going to be working together. Come on Adam.”

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Rain pounded on the outer window of Luscious’ office. Thunder boomed shaking the structure of the ground while bolts of lightning tore through the sky. New York was overcast in darkness; it was like an age of shadows. Luscious reclined back in his chair while gleaming through piles of paper work that lay on his desk.

“Sir, I apologize for the intrusion, but it has made another appearance.” Severen’s voice breached through the office as he entered. Luscious’ eyes thinned as his pupils made contact with the young Prince of Genesis.

“I see. Where is it this time?”

“Mars sir.”

“Severen, heh, I told you to call me Luscious. I work for you remember?”

“I’m sorry Luscious, I just don’t feel like I contribute much to this company, you do all the work.”

“You’re just inexperienced that’s all. But to the matter at hand, the Chimera is on Mars now...this is quite unexpected. I would have expected it to still be lingering on Earth for a few more months. What’s the situation?”

“Apparently it attacked and destroyed the EAP base at Praetor. There were no survivors. The EAP is taking firm action; they feel that it was the Trinity Alliance that destroyed the base without warning.”

“I see, why are they getting so annoyed by the attack? They were attacked when their guard was done. Granted it appears the Alliance had nothing to do with the attack, but still.”

“Sir this isn’t good, a rogue attack like this will only make the EAP suspicious. The TA’s Final Serenade was cancelled because of this, I’m not so sure that Genesis won’t be traced to the Chimera. The attack was brutal and hundreds of soldiers were annihilated, the EAP is furious with this. If the Chimera continues to run recklessly loose it will only be a matter of time before the war grows more chaotic. And at this rate the EAP would most likely start attack the United States, England or Canada directly.

“I see; an assault on the U.S., England and Canada. That would cause a full scale war on planetary proportions.”

“Not only that Luscious, but the citizens of America are unaware of this war. If they were to find out that the Government has been hiding facts from them then who knows what sort of outbreaks will occur.”

Luscious’ eyes closed while he pondered the severity of the situation.

“It seems our Chimera is causing a lot of fuss.”

“It would seem. What do you suggest?”

“Are the results from the tests in yet?”

“The ones the interns were analyzing? Yes they were handed in earlier today.”

“I see. The interns are no longer needed, you can dismiss them.”

“Luscious?”

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“Actually no, keep one of them. Which one of the interns scored highest in their VR training? Next to Adam, of course?”

“Let me think...I think it might be either Michael Aquilus or Sean Repens. But Sean is quite the analyst I must say. He’s the one who finished the reports and handed them in hours before they were do. Plus he even made suggestions to how we might improve the response time between Project-C and Beta-N. To be perfectly honest both of their VR results weren’t that spectacular, Mike’s was on par with average and Sean’s were below average.”

“I see, so this Sean Repens thinks he can improve the synchronization process huh? Offer him a job and place him with Professor Amare on Project C-2. We might be able to use him to create a second unit to disable the failure.”

“But Luscious, if we place Sean on Project C-2 he’ll have access to all of Project-C’s records. And he is still friends with Adam, what would happen if the information were to leak out?”

“I wouldn’t worry about such trifles Severen. We’ll keep a close watch on Sean; he won’t be leaking anything to anyone. I already here that he’s been staying in much later than the other interns, he’s not even an employee of Genesis and he’s already making this a priority over his friends.”

“I understand, but what about the situation with the Chimera as it stands now? If either military faction were to find it, it wouldn’t be too difficult to trace it back to us.”

“Severen you worry too much. The Chimera is much too powerful to be taken in by either military.”

“That maybe true Luscious, but what if it comes in contact with either Novus again? If you think about it, this all happened because of its contact with both of them.”

“Yes that is true. The pilot wasn’t prepared to meet them yet. Coming in contact with them must have started a chain reaction. Unfortunately all we can do now is focus on Project C-2 and hope that neither military finds the Chimera.”

“And what of Mike Aquilus?”

“Heh, well Project C-2 still needs a pilot.”

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Adam stood staring at the two new MFs that now lingered in their hanger. The first one was a light blue and pink mid-weight MF; most likely Heather’s he thought. The parts were smooth with some block like lower arms and lower legs. The unit held onto a standard assault rifle, yet it was modified with a laser scope, in the left arm it held onto a dual barreled laser rifle. They were powerful but lacked accuracy and took up a lot of energy drain. Surprisingly to Adam the back of the unit was equipped with one of the most powerful rail cannons available to the pilots of either military. Adam smirked as he glanced at the frame once again realizing the obvious flaw.

“What are you laughing at?” Heather question as she appeared behind him without any warning.

“Oh it’s you; well you equipped this rail gun on a biped mid-weight MF. What were you thinking?”

“What’s that supposed to mean? You know the power of those cannons! It could take out an entire battalion of MFs.

“That may be true, but I’m guessing you haven’t used it in battle yet. Because if you would have then you would have noticed the weight of this particular cannon, the weight alone puts an amazing amount of strain on your legs, and especially those legs, they’re not known for their stability. I’m guessing you bought them because of the square like lower legs under the knee joint thinking that it would make it extremely stable. Heh, unfortunately that cannon will force you to kneel down on the ground to use it accurately. Yeah you could use it standing up but your legs would more than likely buckle under the pressure and you’d become vulnerable.” Adam replied.

Heather just stared at Adam, her face slowly became red, her fists clutched together at her sides.

“What do you know?!” Heather screamed as she left just as abruptly as she entered.

Adam sighed looking at the other MF. This one was constructed much better than Heather’s it was green with some teal highlights. Its legs were some of the ugliest legs ever produced by Genesis, but they were the most stable. The legs were armored in thick layers of alloy. Near the joints were two triangular flaps that were extra boosters that helped maintain the unit’s stability in the air. The arms used were the same as Blue Dragon’s and the core was something he never saw before. It had three jagged edges in the front with a spherical hold just under the edges. The unit held onto two bazookas, they were both solid ammunition, the fire power this MF was displaying was amazing, and the stability was even more impressive. Two long energy cannons were folded behind the back of the core, what they lacked in power they made up in weight and ammo. They were some of the few back cannons that could be used without kneeling.

“That’s my Gemini.” Caleb said abruptly as he entered the hanger. Adam smirked as he turned to greet Caleb.

“I’m sorry; we haven’t had a proper introduction yet. I’m Adam Novus.”

“Heh, I know who you are. But still, it’s nice to meet you, I’m Caleb Proditio.”

“Gemini you said right? It’s a well built MF, not like Heather’s.”

“Heh, Blue Angel. She just had it built; her father is a wealthy politician in Florida and ordered these parts for her as a gift. She is still getting used to how to customize an MF. Truth is she was in the Navy before being transferred here.”

“I see. Why did she transfer here anyway?”

“She hasn’t told me. But I’m sure she has her reasons. She’s happy she found you though.”

“Happy? Ha, she’s pissed at me, but for no reason.”

“It’s a front; I’ve been stationed with her for about a year now, she always puts up a front to hide her true emotions. You should probably talk to her.”

Adam sighed as he glanced back at her Blue Angel. Truth is it wasn't that bad of an MF, its weakness were just more apparent than most.

"Maybe..."

"ADAM! Come quick, the recon team brought back a POW!" A random soldier screamed from outside of the hanger.

Both Adam and Caleb jolted towards the exit where they saw a standard military jeep roaring in with what appeared to be a Japanese soldier in the back of the seat. The tires suddenly stopped causing an uproar of dirt and rocks to kick into the air. Adam found his brother standing next to Heather watching as the soldiers helped the Japanese soldier out of the jeep. His face was bruised almost beyond recognition. His jump suit was torn and covered in crimson stains.

"Stephen!" Adam yelled. Stephen turned to face his brother.

"Apparently Praetor has been completely destroyed. He was the only survivor."

"I see, everyone else is dead...then if our own military didn't do this then who did!?" Adam yelled.

"I'm not sure, but things are getting tense, because no malfunction of any system could have done this."

"Have you asked him? Have you asked that survivor what happened?"

Stephen shook his head.

"We haven't had time yet, he's going to be interrogated soon. Once they get him back to Evo."

"Evo? But I thought Astrum had a POW camp. Why is it necessary to bring him back to Evo?"

"Because that's where our main intelligence office is located. And he must have some valuable knowledge to what had happened."

"This is insane, let's just find out now what happened."

Adam blew off his brother as he ran towards the jeep and the prison. The prisoner's eyes tried to open but could only make it half way; his pupils were weak and faded. He had trouble breathing properly but as he saw Adam making his way towards him he began to smirk. He heard Adam's voice earlier and quickly recognized the sound and dialect.

"Excuse me; I need to ask this prisoner what happened."

The two Warrant Officers standing guard of the prisoner stood in Adam's way preventing him from reaching the POW.

"I'm sorry but he is to be questioned at Evo. We cannot allow him to be questioned until his arrival there." One of the Warrant Officers explained.

“Ugh, I don’t care, just move out of my way.” Adam replied.

“Heh...\*cough\* so it is \*cough\* you.” The POW managed to spurt out those words while coughing up some specs of blood.

Adam’s eyes widened in disbelief.

“You \*cough\* got lucky last time kid....\*cough\*...”

“Fenrir...” Adam managed to say while Stephen, Caleb and Heather appeared behind him.

“When...\*cough\* I get back to the \*cough\* battlefield, I will defeat you!” Fenrir managed to say while spitting out even more blood.

The two Warrant Officers pushed Adam out of his line of sight but Fenrir moved to the side.

“What the hell happened to you? Who did this?” Adam screamed once again.

Fenrir smirked as his body fell to the ground leaning against the edge of the jeep. His hands were firmly laced together with tape limiting his movement. He turned to the side to once again spit out excess blood. Adam and Stephen glanced at each other briefly and then back at Fenrir.

“What happened?” Adam asked once again.

“We were...\*cough\* attacked....\*cough\*”

“I know that, everyone knows that. But the question is who attacked you? Was it a Trinity Alliance machine?”

Once again the Warrant Officers moved in between Fenrir and Adam.

“Enough, he is to be taken to Evo and he will be questioned there. Once any information of any importance is mentioned you will receive a report. Until then stop questioning the POW.

“No...\*cough\*...it’s ok \*cough\*, I’ll tell them the same thing I intend on telling the officers at Evo \*cough\*...” Fenrir stopped talking briefly so he could cover his mouth. Streams of blood penetrate the crevices between his fingers dripping to the ground.

“...it happened so fast...\*cough\*, a single MF...destroyed my entire team like nothing \*cough\*. It wasn’t from any military, no military would have an MF that powerful...\*cough\*.”

Adam’s eyes widened while his nerves began to tighten while his heart raced.

“What did it look like?! Tell me what it looked like?!” Adam screamed.

“Heh...\*cough\* all I remember is that...\*cough\* it had wings, it looked like a demon....\*cough\*.”

Fenrir’s eyes shut as he passed out from the internal damage. Adam’s fists tightened at his side, his muscles were shaking from his anger. Stephen went to place his hand on Adam’s shoulders but it was shrugged off as Adam began to head towards the hanger. Heather stared at Adam in confusion, only

Stephen knew what was happening.

“Adam...” Heather muttered but he didn’t bother to respond. She quickly looked back to Stephen who shook his head.

Adam stared at Blue Dragon.

“You’re here....I swear I’m going to find you. And when I do, I will kill you.”



## Chapter Fourteen: Chance of a Lifetime

“Congratulations Sean Repens, you have displayed the qualities that the Genesis Science Department likes to incorporate into their team. You will be assisting Professor Amare and his scientific team with a newly developed project. Once again allow me to be the first to congratulate you on this magnificent feat and welcome you to the Genesis team.” Sean read this letter aloud for his friends to hear. His apartment was cold, the heater was broken and yet he was sweating. Christina sat on the arm rest of his ivory couch with her left arm resting on Sean’s shoulder. Both Jen and Mike stood in front of Sean in awe; it wasn’t long ago that they were released from their internship with Genesis. It came as a shock to them, to just be suddenly let go, something was going on and each of them felt it. Sean on the other hand didn’t really care; it appeared that all his hard work and extra hours in the office had finally paid off. His blue eyes sparkled with anticipation mixed in with nervousness. Mike smirked as he nodded to Sean while pulling out a letter from Genesis as well. Jen sighed glaring at Mike with her hand placed on her hip.

“What’s that?” Jen asked, Mike smirked, and his facial expression said everything. He was never one for subtlety, the half baked smile with his tilted eyebrows.

“It’s a letter from Genesis as well. I’ve been accepted into their MF piloting program. There they’re going to train me so I can become an MF testing operator.”

“What the hell? How come you two got hired by Genesis, rather abruptly might I add and Christina and I are just kicked to the curb like we’re useless?”

“Cause you’re useless.” Mike replied snickering under his breath. Jen smacked Mike across the top of his shaven head forcing him to stumble forward a little. Sean sighed shaking his head sideways.

“It’s probably because both Mike and I worked a little harder than you guys. Mike made an impact in VR training, probably by facing Adam all the time. Granted he lost every match they participated in but he still made an impression. I, on the other hand spent seemingly countless hours at the lab crunching numbers. You two did your work but...well, no offense you two never really stood out.” Sean’s tone of voice had changed over the past month. And it began when Adam took the military exam, the hint of jealousy that Sean had become apparent to everyone around him. Christina stared at her boyfriend confused; she never thought he could be so cruel and sarcastic like this.

“Sean, we enjoyed our time there. Just because you are envious of Adam’s success doesn’t mean you have the right to take it out on us!” Christina barked back.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

Sean glared at her with complete and utter animosity. She could see that she struck a nerve with the previous comment and quickly rose from the couch. Sean sighed as he picked up the letter reading it over just so he could continue to bask in the moment.

“Maybe we should go.” Jen mentioned as she looked over to Christina.

“Fine then, go. Mike we should probably be heading back over to Genesis anyway.” Sean replied as he threw the letter down standing up from the couch. Mike stared at Sean awkwardly and then looked at his watch.

“Sean, it’s 6pm.”

“And? What’s your point?”

“You want to head to the city this late. Do you know how much traffic there’s going to be, the expressway is filled from guardrail to shoulder with cars. Why don’t we just relax, enjoy the night, maybe see a movie and head out to Genesis in the morning,”

“Ugh, forget you. I’ll go myself then.” Sean said as he walked passed Mike bumping into his shoulder knocking him off balance. Mike wobbled a bit grabbing hold of a nearby chair to keep himself standing.

“Sean...what the hell?!” He replied quickly turning around. Sean snickered as he headed out the door leaving Mike, Jen and Christina standing in the middle of the apartment gawking.

“What’s going on with him?” Jen asked.

Tears slowly began to roll down Christina’s tan skin and cheek. She fell back leaning against the pallid wall while her knees buckled causing her to collapse to the ground. Mike and Jen could do nothing but stand there and watch their friend break down.

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His brown eyes continued to stare at the same crack between the door for the small tent and the zipper lining that outlined it. It was rare for Adam to remain quiet for such a long period of time, ever since he realized that that demon of a machine was on Mars, lurking, hiding; his eyes became fixated on the horizon. Fenrir was supposed to be transported to Evo but changes in the weather pattern along with oncoming EAP forces hindered the transfer. The POW remained handcuffed and heavily guarded in the main military headquarters in Astrum. Adam’s eyes shut while his head reclined, images of Amy, the winged MF and even of Fenrir plagued his mind like a virus refusing to go away.

*“...it happened so fast... \*cough\*, a single MF...destroyed my entire team like nothing \*cough\*.  
It wasn’t from any military, no military would have an MF that powerful... \*cough\*.”*

Adam continued to stare at the ceiling of his tent, his vision blurred out the beige cloth that now made up his home while focusing on the droplets of water that formed into a bulge slowly dripping to the ground.

*“If you continue to fight, I’ll stand by your side.”*

Once again he closed his eyes with his fists tightening at his side. Stephen remained on his side of the tent concerned about his brother, but paid no attention to him. He knew what Adam was thinking, he had hoped that they would be able to stay away from this mysterious MF. Stephen knew what would happen if Adam were to encounter that machine once again, he’d go berserk and in doing so lose all self control and possibly end up dying. He sighed as his head crashed into his pillow; the feathery padding quickly conformed to the size and shape of his head.

“Stephen....” Adam’s voice was soft and gentle this time around. Stephen’s head slowly turned to its side to face his brother but only sighed in grief.

“Go to sleep, you need it. We have a big day ahead of us.”

“...right...” Adam replied in a calm demeanor, again this was another irregularity for him.

*“Hahaha, I see you finally realize the depth of your dilemma. If you make a wrong move they die. But if you don’t make a move the Artificial Intelligence on Omega will strike you down.”*

Memories; what are memories? They are nothing more than scars that represent the sins of your soul. They serve as a reminder of what not to do in certain situations; they can be seen as experience, as pieces of the puzzle that make up a person. Adam hated them, with all he could offer. His body abruptly fell onto the blanket that lightly covered the rigid ground underneath. Crimson hued rocks and pebbles broke his fall embedding themselves loosely into the skin of his back. The pain was ignored while his head rested on top of his folded arms.

“Amy....” He managed to mutter.

*“They killed Amy!”*

*“No they didn’t. That machine killed Amy. And we are at fault too, we couldn’t do anything.”*

Adam’s lips cringed as even more images of the past flooded into his broken mind. He was well aware of the situation, and of his lack of power. He began to think, if only he had more power back then, then maybe he could have saved her. Unfortunately, it wasn’t possible; Amy was dead, living on as nothing more than a faded image in the depths of his memories.

“That machine, whatever the hell it is...I will take it down.” He was determined now; he wouldn’t let anything get in his way this time. As he snapped back to reality he found his right fist digging into the ground with trickles of blood pouring outwards from the outer joints of his fingers. A small thin crimson pond of his blood glared back at him as if it were mocking him.

“Blood...heh, I am only human, I am vulnerable....I can die as well.”

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

Adam's eyes closed engulfing him in the darkness of his pain, sleep awaited him.

"Caleb? Are you awake?" Heather's voice was extremely low, she couldn't sleep; her mind was elsewhere.

Caleb's eyes slowly rolled open, at first everything seemed so surreal that he thought he was still dreaming. His vision blurry he took a few seconds to rub his eyes in hopes of a better focus. The rustling of his blankets signified that he was awake, or at least now he was.

"Heather? It's late, what's wrong?" His voice was hoarse and soft.

Heather sighed as she turned around on her stomach while her chin rested on the edge of her pillow.

"I can't sleep."

"I kind of figured that much; is it about Adam?"

She remained quiet taking a small pause, she didn't want to admit it instantly, but she knew there was no subtle way around it.

"Kinda...but NOT IN THE WAY YOU'RE THINKING! It's just that, is my MF really that unreliable?"

Caleb smirked; he really wanted to get some sleep as they were order to head to Praetor in the morning to investigate the remains.

"It's not that it's unreliable, it just has room for improvement. Don't worry about it, just get some sleep."

"I see...but I don't want to hold any of you guys back whenever we engage in battle."

"Heather, you won't hold us back. You're MF is equipped with long range capabilities, mine, Adam's and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Novus' are close range. You'll be fine, and don't worry about Adam, you two will patch things up."

"I guess...but what do you think that incident was about earlier?"

"You mean with the POW. I'm not entirely sure, but I heard from one of the Warrant Officers that both Adam and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Novus encountered a winged MF on Earth during Adam's exam."

"I see...I'm not sure if I've ever seen his eyes so determined before. Something must have happened."

"So are you alright now? We should really get some sleep. Good night Heather."

"Goodnight Caleb." Heather wrapped her arms tightly around the pillow while closing her eyes.

The burning crimson sun slowly appeared over the dunes in the Martian background, the sky reflected the solar beams across the surface lighting up the camp site revealing the hundreds of soldiers

standing at attention. Behind the soldiers were the four MFs, Alpha, Blue Dragon, Gemini, and Blue Angel. General Rutice stood in front of the eager soldiers; his eyes glistened with pride as he saw his men ready and willing. Standing next to him Lieutenant Commander Gelidus saluted to the soldiers that prepared to head out to Praetor. Stephen, Caleb and Heather stood in front of their respected MFs at attention. Heather's eyes wandered from side to side in search for Adam but he was nowhere to be found.

"He'll be here. Just be patient." Caleb mumbled under his breath. Heather glanced back at Caleb, her eyebrows thinned with sarcastic grin lighting up her face. Shrugging her shoulders she sighed.

"Who said I was looking for him?"

Stephen turned around to both Heather and Caleb just glaring. He said nothing, he didn't need too; the look in his eyes just told them both to be quiet.

"You all are the pride of my unit. I expect nothing less than perfection from each and every one of you. This mission may be nothing more than a recon but I still expect all of you to be aware of your environment. Whatever destroyed Praetor may be still lurking, and the EAP may have already sent their own recon team to search the remains. It is important to remember that we are going to Praetor to find out exactly what occurred, a battle is completely unnecessary and should be avoided at all costs. Since this is a joint mission between the Army and the MF platoon there shouldn't be any problems. I am placing 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Novus in command, follow his orders with no hesitation and this mission should be a complete success. Dismissed!" General Rutice's low pitched booming voice echoed across the field. Stephen stood at attention but he was still shocked that he was placed in command. Everyone had expected Lieutenant Commander Gelidus to be in charge, this was the first time for a soldier of lower rank to be placed in command over a higher officer.

"So looks like you're our commander then." Caleb mentioned breaking the monotony.

"It would seem so." Stephen replied, he replied in a humble manor, he still wasn't sure if this was completely on the level.

"Stephen!" A voice grabbed his attention, it came from behind. General Rutice stood right in front of Stephen smiling. Stephen quickly replied by jumping to attention with his right hand angled to his forehead.

"At ease Stephen." Stephen relaxed while General Rutice placed his left hand forward.

"Sir?"

"Congratulations Stephen. I see big things for you in the near future."

"I'm sorry sir, but I don't follow."

"It was a decision was from the higher ups to put you in command over Gelidus. Personally I agree with this decision, I mean Gelidus is an excellent soldier, but whenever the situation gets overly stressful he tends to break down. You on the other hand hold yourself together and manage to find a way out of any situation. At this rate it won't be long before you become a Brigadier General."

"Thank you sir." Stephen replied, his facial expressions were still professional, he had yet to show any sign of joy or even confusion.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE 1: SINS OF THE SOUL

“I know you’ll have no problems with this mission. Take care Stephen.” General Rutice replied. Stephen turned to face both Caleb and Heather while General Rutice walked away.

“It’s time. Let’s go.” Stephen replied.

“Huh? But what about Adam? Shouldn’t we wait for him?” Heather blurted out.

“He’s not coming.” Stephen replied. Both Caleb and Heather gasped in shock while they watched Alpha’s cockpit cable slowly raise Stephen off the ground.

“What does he mean he’s not coming?”

“I’m not sure, but it might have something to do with that incident yesterday. Either way, it’s not our concern Heather. Let’s go.”

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Sean stood inside Genesis’ testing facilities along with Professor Amare and his team. He breathed in the atmosphere, his nerves tightened. This was the moment he had been waiting for, he was now a part of Genesis, a key player in this massively successful company.

“Sean.” Professor Amare said as he handed over a bunch of manila folders.

“What’s this?”

“These are the files regarding Project-C. Study them thoroughly; we need you to be up to speed before we start you in Project-C2. Also, it is extremely important for you to keep the contents of these folders secret; no one is allowed to know of their existence.” Sean nodded, he knew now that he was extremely important. This was something not even Adam knew about, this was his moment and he intended to keep this glory. Sean sat down on the nearest chair as he opened the files. Inside was an image of an MF, a dark MF with six angular wings with the text “Project-C” written on a 45 degree angle across an image. As his eyes scrolled through the black inked words he stopped taking a gasp of air. There he read something that shocked him causing his heart to race.

“What is this?”

*Project-C; it’s the ultimate hybrid of human emotion and artificial intelligence. It has become obvious that A.I. embedded into an MF is an extremely dangerous decision. This is seen through the events that occurred in the final years of AD. A.I. alone has the potential to evolve and revolt, but if it is combined with human DNA then it is possible to erase the logic law infused with all A.I. Logic is the most dangerous component an A.I. can possess, devoid of all feelings and emotions the A.I. will do what is necessary to ensure the progression of humanity and all life in general. It will make decisions based solely on logic, and we are all aware that our world, our human world does not solely revolve around logic and rationality. Project-C or Chimera for short is the result of years of hard work. Our pilot, displayed superior piloting results in VR training, he completely shined far above the rest of the interns we had hired. We assigned the Chimera unit to intern Novus; he welcomed the idea with little hesitation. During our tests it became painfully obvious that he lived only for power, and to be the best. It is this trait that allowed him to pilot Chimera with little effort and cause it to perform far above its potential limit. After every combat engagement the pilot suffered from amnesia not remembering a single thing that had*

*happened. It seemed to him that he was fighting the Chimera, an internal battle for his soul and for his sanity.....* The text continued on but Sean needed to stop reading to catch his breath.

“Novus? Adam is the pilot of that Chimera? Is that even possible?” Sean fell back dropping all of the papers. Each thin sheet of paper fluttered to the ground eloquently as he broke out into a sweat. Professor Amare stood before him sighing as he glanced to the side.

## **Chapter Fifteen: Demon of The Past**

Praetor was an eerie sight to behold, singed pieces of metal were scattered across the barren wasteland that was now the EAP base. Soldiers ran across the scorched ground, their boots pounding into the soft loose soil. Alpha flew above the area of operations slowly with both Gemini and Blue Angel following suit. The crimson boosters flickering keeping a staple speed in the air. Stephen was disgusted at the sight that stood before him; he had never seen such a horror, such destruction before. This was much worse than the attack on military exam. Bodies lay randomly on the ground, some complete while others were missing limbs. The majority of the faces were beyond recognition, it was even hard to tell that they were human; their faces burned to the bottom layer of exposed muscle, each soldier were missing their eyes, or at least the pilots. The exposure to intense flames hot enough to cause the eyeballs to melt to nothing more than a thick ivory liquid rolling from the sockets only came from the Generator of an MF or the searing energy of an energy saber. These unfortunate few were labeled as pilots killed in action; the other soldiers were regular army. Their bodies crushed leaving nothing more than a gelatin of skin blanketing the crushed pieces of bone. No man, no soldier should ever be exposed to this kind of destruction. Stephen felt a chill run down his spine; he knew Fenrir was telling the truth, he only forced himself to have doubts because of his own fear. This Chimera was more than what it appeared to be and Stephen knew this. If by chance this Chimera returned to Praetor there would be very little he could do to

stop it from destroying again. The military was ill equipped to handle such a threat.

“Oh my God....I think I’m going to be sick...” Heather mentioned while covering her mouth looking away from her camera screen.

“This is the result of war; you should have been prepared for this.” Caleb replied.

“No, war should never get this ugly. This wasn’t a result of war; this was the result of a massacre. Now hurry up, we need to check out the EAP’s military facility. Hopefully we can find some kind of satellite feed or something useful.” Stephen replied as he pressed forward on the accelerator.

Heather took a deep breath trying to prepare herself for what was coming. She knew nothing good could come from this search.

On the outskirts of Praetor massive clouds of smoke rolled off the ground dispersing into the Martian sky. Out from the smoke appeared 10 new EAP units known as Armored Tanks, they were a new production model of the military’s standard tanks but incorporated MF technology. The size of the treads alone could crush the armor of an MF into pieces. The front of these tanks extended forward in an angular shape coming to a singular jagged edge. Above the core of the tank two elongated rail guns protruded outwards. The bottom of these tanks were wide giving secured stability for the two rail guns while 8 wheels in total were surrounded by a massive tread with grooves enabling the tank to be mobile over any terrain. The EAP had just been informed the previous night of the incident at Praetor. Though there were some inquiries as to why the connection during Fenrir’s report was cut off so abruptly at first it was passed off as an electrical disturbance. It wasn’t until General Liberalis said it was worth something to check out. General Liberalis stood at the head of the moving battalion as the EAP neared Praetor with each passing second. The General decided to come all the way out to Praetor to personally find out what had happened to his elite pilot, Fenrir.

“General, we are closing in on Praetor.”

“I see.”

“General? Is everything ok?” The lower class Ensign asked cautiously.

The General had a brooding presence; even though he was only 5’6 he still had a larger than life image. His hazel eyes could pierce the toughest armor and yet still had a soothing quality seen in the iris. With short dark brown hair riding up to the top edge of his forehead his face was always clean cut and in full view. The skin tones were always tan with a hint of mahogany on certain days, his uniform outlined the edges of his defined muscle tone, there were bigger uniforms but he liked the idea of his subordinates seeing his defined muscles, he felt that it was a clear example of his dedication to perfection.

“I’m fine. I just want to find out what happened out there. Did the Alliance attack Praetor while its back was turned? Another thing has been bothering me, perhaps you know why my MF is not ready.”

“Sir? The council didn’t think your MF would be necessary for this assignment. It’s just a recon, and they highly doubt the Trinity Alliance would show any signs of movement in Praetor. Do you mind if I ask why you wish to have your MF sir?”

“These Armored Tanks, they’re ugly. Where’s the elegance? The style, there is nothing that demands respect and admiration. I can’t be seen in one of those things! What will people think?!” General



Liberalis replied. The Ensigns' eyes widened in shock, he had no idea of how to respond to that.

"I apologize sir, but for now that's all we have."

"Ugh, fine. I'll guess it'll get the job done for now. Full advance to Praetor."

The inside of the first AT began to buzz resonating off the inner walls. General Liberalis quickly ran to the soldiers assigned to the radar. His eyes thinned as 3 blinking ivory dots appeared only 50 meters from their position.

"What the hell is this? Is it the Trinity Alliance?!" General Liberalis screamed. It infuriated him that the Trinity Alliance would show up at Praetor; and him without his customized MF

"Sir, I'm not positive, but it is more than likely. What will you have us do?" The soldier's chair turned around so he could face the General. The General smirked as he leaned forward resting his hand on the edge of the radar.

"Continue the advance. Once we arrive within the borders of Praetor fire a warning shot. Then we'll see how they respond. We don't want to make any hasty decisions with only 10 ATs."

"Yes sir."

As the battalion continued its movement into Praetor what the soldiers of the EAP found was neither settling nor inspiring. There laid their comrades, their lifeless dismantled bodies covering the ground with blood while the stench of death rotted through the air. In the far background was a continually advancing platoon of Trinity Alliance soldiers along with 3 MFs.

"Those bastards..." General Liberalis said under his breath, his fists were tightening at his sides causing his arms to shake ferociously.

"Sir, 3 MFs closing in."

"All units, you have been green lighted to fire at will." The General replied. His eyes were focusing on the 3 MFs that were now in plain sight. It was obvious, at least to him that the Trinity Alliance was behind the attack at Praetor. All the evidence he needed was right there, his entire Praetor camp ravaged and killed; with Trinity Alliance soldiers advancing over the lost souls.

"Damn, the EAP." Stephen said aloud. He quickly jerked his throttles back causing Alpha to boost to the right.

"Sir? Should we engage?" Caleb's voice filled Stephen's ears. Stephen shook his head from side to side.

"No, we are not here to engage in battle. I'll try and open up communications with the EAP advancing forces; hopefully we can discuss this and get to the bottom of this situation.

"You want to talk?! That's crazy, the EAP won't listen? We look like the people responsible for this! Just by being here we are guilty in their eyes!" Caleb yelled.

“That’s an order. No one is to open fire without my approval!” Stephen yelled back barking orders.

Stephen began to flip switches on his radio, his eyes scrolled down as the frequencies and their respected destination appeared listed on his display screen. Once he found the international distress frequency he quickly changed the output on his radio. He took a deep breath hoping that the EAP would believe what it was he was about to say.

“Attention all EAP soldiers! This is 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Stephen Novus of the first USMF Battalion. We are not responsible for the current status of Praetor. We are currently investigating into the events that occurred here 2 days ago. There is no need for pointless bloodshed!” Stephen yelled through the radio. Both Caleb and Heather sat in their cockpits in awe as they listened to Stephen. The soldiers advancing on foot stopped in their tracks with their assault rifles in position. Back at the Astrum base both General Rutice and Lieutenant Commander Gelidus sat in awe over Stephen’s tactics. General Rutice smirked as he continued to sip his sizzling black coffee.

General Liberalis smirked letting out a quiet chuckle. His eyes shut while he shook his head and shrugged his shoulders.

“Ensign, put me on the International Frequency.”

“Yes sir.”

“This is General Mario Liberalis of the EAP 2<sup>nd</sup> AT Battalion. Do you honestly think you can trick us with this childish trick?”

Stephen’s eyes widened.

“Trick? General, I assure you this is no trick. Just yesterday a survivor from Praetor was transported to Astrum. He will attest to what I am saying.”

“Heh, using a POW to save your hides, such cowards.”

“General, just listen! Something attacked your company here, it completely wiped them out and if we don’t get to the bottom of this soon then there’s no telling what else could happen!” Stephen wasn’t sure if his words would make any kind of impression. He knew they were sincere, but he was also aware that from the EAP point of view he, along with the rest of the Trinity Alliance looked like the ones responsible.

“Well, you are passionate, I’ll...” Mario was cut off by the voice of the Ensign sitting at the radar helm. “SIR! Another bogey has just appeared! 6 O’CLOCK! IT’S BEHIND!”

“What? How is that possible!?” Mario screamed as he turned to the display screens on the wall. Each monitor was showing screens from behind the ATs, this was done so that the ATs would be able to cover their own back.

Stephen’s eyes widened in terror, another dot appeared on his radar. The heat signature emanating from the bogey matched the heat signature of the Chimera encounter on Earth.

“It’s him...” Stephen mumbled.

*They are inferior to you. They stand in your way, get rid of them.*

A cold voice echoed within the mind of the pilot. His eyes flickered glowing with a crimson aura. He nodded as he pulled back his black and crimson hair behind the lobe of his ear. His hands finding themselves placed on the throttles he smirked.

“Useless.” He muttered.

Mario’s eyes widened as he stared at the dark demonic figure that hovered in the sky looming over them.

“Is that one of the Trinity Alliance’s machines?” Mario screamed.

“That isn’t one of ours. That is the machine that was described by your pilot Fenrir. That is what caused all of this!” Stephen replied sternly as he was still connected.

Mario cringed, he was telling the truth. The Trinity Alliance wasn’t behind the attack on Praetor. But he found out that Fenrir was still alive, that was his main objective.

“Damn, all units fire on the target!” Mario screamed.

“NO WAIT!” Stephen screamed as he reached out towards the ATs in the distance.

Each cannon pulsed with energy until they finally fired, the pressure of the explosion caused the cannons to retract backwards after each shot and then slowly return to their original position. Instantly, 20 beams of energy tore through the sky all converging onto the winged MF. The MF continued to linger in the sky as the six wings slowly extended outwards. As each beam neared the MF they quickly dissipated from site, suddenly a swirling sphere of energy appeared surrounding the MF. Mario was taken by surprise, his anger now swelled up to its brim.

“Don’t let up! Keep on firing!”

“What a waste.”

The dark MF easily flew around every beam of energy that was fired in its direction, the wings folded back into their position. Within the blink of an eye the MF appeared in front of one of the ATs. The pilot of the AT struck with fear couldn’t move, he wanted to, he tried, but his nerves failed, signals were sent but weren’t being picked up. A blinding explosion of flames ruptured through the armor blasting into the sky. A tower of smoke distorted by falling debris of metallic armor was all that was left. The MF burst out from its position flying towards the next 2 ATs, the plasma rifles were docked as the MF grabbed hold of its lance preparing to strike. Just as the searing flames of energy descended towards the core of the AT the metallic rod of the lance vibrated powerfully as it was stopped in its tracks. The pilot slowly raised his head to find Alpha’s dual energy saber hindering his path.

“You again.” The mysterious pilot grumbled, his voice was different than Stephen remembered.

This time it was raspier and emulated that of a computerized voice but not completely, there was still a hint of humanity left in the voice, it was low, but still there.

Stephen wasn't sure what he was doing, he knew the power of this thing and that he didn't really stand much of a chance against it and yet he got in its path.

"What are you doing here?!" Stephen screamed as his hand pushed forward. Alpha's arms pushed the lance backwards towards the core of Chimera. The joints on Chimera's arms turned allowing the arms to retract. Out of the corner of his eye Stephen saw the six wings expand once again. He knew what was going to come next. Then a thin blue beam burst on the head of Chimera causing a small explosion. The MF stumbled backwards firing the energy beams off the wings in random directions. The thin crimson beams tore through the armor of 5 AT's causing them to explode. The screams of the pilots inside echoed through Stephen's head, there was nothing he could do.

"ARG!! YOU BASTARD!" The pilot screamed.

Blue Angel remained kneeling while its rail gun remained equipped. Smoke emanated off the barrel of the rail gun rising into the sky.

"Nice shot Heather!" Caleb said trying to boost her confidence; he knew how she was feeling less than important lately.

"Heh, thanks."

Stephen smirked glancing back at Heather. His attention quickly turned back to the Chimera that lay before him. Smoke searing off the head unit, no damage was seen, the armor was still void of any scratch. Alpha's right leg quickly launched forward heading for the core of Chimera, at the last second Chimera moved to the side avoiding the attack. Chimera's right arm swung downwards with the energy lance brimming with energy, Alpha strafed to the left avoiding the attack. With the force of the attack Chimera's back became exposed, Stephen smirked as the two cannons resting on its shoulders fired. Two green beams of energy bounced off the activated energy shield. Stephen in awe became open for attack; Chimera's wings expanded once again and began to fire relentless at Alpha. The crimson MF boosted from side to side, doing everything in its capabilities to avoid the attacks.

"Impressive."

Chimera charged towards Alpha while continuing to fire energy round after round, all Stephen could do was dodge, he quickly took apart the dual energy saber, now both of Alpha's hands held onto a beam weapon. With quick reflexes Alpha began to deflect every incoming beam with the energy sabers. The crimson beams were sent back towards Chimera but missed every time.

Suddenly 8 more beams of energy collided with the energy shield behind Chimera. Stephen smirked; the EAP was now returning the favor.

"FIRE! We must bring that thing down!" Mario screamed.

"But sir, we're helping the Trinity Alliance! This is a violation...."

"I DON'T CARE!" Mario replied screaming as he

*Pests, their time will come. Finish this one off first.* A computerized voice continued to echo within the pilot's mind as if it were guiding his actions.

“Heh.”

Chimera's speed abruptly increased as it appeared in front of Alpha without warning. The energy lance quickly slashed the core of Alpha causing sparks of electricity to burst into the sky while chunks of the crimson armor fell through the atmosphere singed in flames. Alpha's right leg quickly kicked forward as Alpha flipped over in the form of a back flip. The impact of Alpha's right foot caused Chimera to once again lose stability. Alpha then regained its momentum and flew towards the core of Chimera slashing with both energy sabers. As the energy from both beams grew closer they were stopped by the sheer power from the energy shield that was quickly ignited once again.

*You can't possibly defeat me.*

“You can't possibly defeat me.” The dual layered voice sent an eerie feeling down his spine. He recognized the voice; his nightmare had been realized.

“So you are alive.” Stephen replied.

*You're too weak.*

“You're too weak.”

Just as Chimera's wings extended 6 beams of cerulean energy exploded on the outer layer of the energy shield. The power of the beams caused the shield to falter and dissipate. Chimera jerked around noticing a blue MF hovering in the distance with smoke searing from six barrels.

“Adam...damn it.” Stephen mumbled.

“And where the hell have you been?!” Heather yelled over the communications link.

Adam smirked refusing to answer.

“How long has he been fighting it?” Adam asked.

“Umm, not too long. Maybe fifteen minutes.”

“(That bastard knew it would show up again and confined me to our tent to prevent me from accomplishing my goal.) I've found you at last!” Adam screamed.

The boosters exploded forcefully sending Blue Dragon towards both Chimera and Alpha, the cerulean energy trail that the MF left behind slowly faded from sight.

*The other one, destroy it as well.*

“I will.”

Chimera's boosters flared sending the demonic MF on course with Blue Dragon. Adam smirked.

“(You may have gotten me last time. But I won't go down so easily this time!) DON'T UNDERESTIMATE ME!”

Chimera approached Blue Dragon a lot quicker than Adam expected. The wings instantly began to send an onslaught of beams onto Blue Dragon. Adam quickly docked the rifles and began to deflect the beams with sword play from the energy sabers. His eyes widened as Chimera's right arm swung slashing through the air with the energy lance. Blue Dragon arched backwards avoiding the attack. Quickly the thigh cannons pivoted upwards and fired two energy beams. The two beams impacted on the outer layer of armor of Chimera sending it backwards as smoke engulfed the MF inside of the energy shield that was generated a tenth of a second too late.

*This was unexpected. Restriction lifted, 50% of full power now available for use.*  
“Someone who has made me use more than a quarter of my power, heh.”

“A quarter? I'm not even fighting this thing at its full potential?!” Adam gasped in awe.

A blurred image of Chimera burst out of its position flying straight for Blue Dragon. Adam's eyes continually blinked as he tried to keep a solid lock, it was seemingly impossible to follow. Suddenly Blue Dragon rocked from an explosion that occurred on the left arm. The arm was still attached but the outer layer of armor had been destroyed. Alpha quickly boosted towards Blue Dragon trying to get a lock on Chimera with its energy rifle but to no avail.

“(Amy...)” Adam began to think about everything that had happened. His anger swelled, his desire, with his determination refueled he grabbed hold of the throttles once again. The radar inside the cockpit began to beep; Blue Dragon quickly arched its back towards the left side while slashing the air with the energy saber in the right arm. A massive blur of crimson energy quickly took the form of Chimera, a delayed reaction occurred when an explosion took hold of the left side of wings. Adam smirked as he watched 3 wings flutter through the sky being pulled in by gravity as they were engulfed in flames. Wires flung from behind the core of Chimera as flames continued to flicker.

*This is not possible. A computer error, it won't happen again. You need to detach yourself fully from your past. Otherwise you will never survive.*

“Be quiet. I will handle him.”

“Heh, I can taste my revenge.” Adam replied.

Alpha quickly boosted next to Blue Dragon, Stephen sighed; he had hoped to prevent this meeting a little longer.

“What the hell are you doing here? You disobeyed a direct order!”

“On the contrary, I disobeyed no one, I was sent by General Rutice. He said that you guys needed my help.” Adam replied.

“(Damn that General, what is he thinking?)”

“We can end this right here right now Stephen. You saw what happened. With both of us fighting we can easily take it down now!”

Chimera slowly flew towards both Alpha and Blue Dragon, the MF seemed calm, the remaining wings were retracted and the energy lance was hanging by its side.

“What the hell? Stephen?” Adam asked as his display screen began to fill with static slowly taking the form of a human’s head.

“Damn...” Stephen muttered.

“Hehe, Adam Novus, still as impatient and head strong as always I see. And Stephen; still trying to control your little brother.” The dual layered voiced crept through the radio.

“What? How do you know us?!” Adam yelled. He glanced to his second display screen only to see Stephen sigh while lowering his head.

“Stephen? What is it?”

Stephen sighed once more glancing back at Adam.

“Adam...”

“You don’t know. Heh, hahaha always the one kept in the dark about everything.” The pilot replied while grabbing hold of his face mask. As sweat dripped down Adam’s face in anticipation he face mask slowly came off revealing the face of Chimera’s pilot, the man behind all of the death and destruction. Adam’s eyes widened in complete disbelief.

“It’s.....it’s not possible.” Adam found himself staggering, unable to completely hold his composure.

Stephen glanced away from the display screen; his hand formed into a fist and quickly struck the control panel before him.

“They told you I was dead didn’t they. Made sense I guess, no one was supposed to know the truth. Now listen to your older brother and get out of my way...”

## **Chapter Sixteen: Limitations**

It couldn’t be possible; or at least according to Adam. This thing, this Chimera was being piloted by his eldest brother; a brother that had disappeared years ago and was thought to be nothing more than a mere blurred memory. Regardless of the validity of this pilot’s identity he was still the enemy. Adam took a seeming deep gulp swallowing his saliva while sweat rolled down his skin. His fingers never moved from the edge of the throttle, he would engage this machine and take it down once and for all then sort out the truth from the fallacies.

“I don’t care who you say you are! Even if you resemble him you are not my brother! You are the one! You killed Amy!” Adam screamed.

Nick smirked, his head tilted to the side as he shrugged his shoulders.

“Believe what you want Adam. It makes no difference to me; as a matter of fact it makes this much easier.”

The remaining set of wings on Chimera burst out from their stationary position and began to radiate energy. Instantly 3 beams of crimson energy shot out in all direction, the beams shot between Alpha and Blue Dragon causing the two MFs to separate. As Alpha strafed to the left Chimera appeared in front of Stephen’s line of sight. Stephen grimaced as he swung the dual energy saber only to slice through the barely visible nimbus cloud. An explosion ruptured through the right arm of Alpha as Chimera pulled the energy lance up from under the right arm joint. Flames fluttered in the sky as Alpha was sent in a freefall. Stephen struggled with the controls trying to regain stability in Alpha. The boosters flared at a 45 degree angle causing Alpha to fly sideways eventually regaining its balance. Blue Dragon once again locked onto Chimera and fired the thigh cannons along with the dual energy cannons located on the back of the core.

“You won’t be able to defeat me by resorting to the same pathetic tactics Adam.” Forcing the throttle to the side Chimera turned around flying around each beam of energy. Nick smiled while he stepped hard on the accelerator; it wasn’t too long before he reached Adam’s position. The massive energy lance swung through the air. Blue Dragon swung its already weakened left arm with the energy saber to intercept. However the intensity of the energy lance was too much and easily cut through the remaining layers of armor. The minor explosion caused the cockpit to rumble violently, Adam’s body was flung to the side like a rag doll. His head crashing into the LCD display on his right hand side. His eyes blinked rapidly as he tried to regain consciousness and a focused line of sight. Chimera floated in the air eloquently, from behind Alpha attempted to strike with the dual energy saber in its right hand. At the last second the three wings tilted upwards unleashing a major blast of energy. There was little time for Stephen to avoid, all he could do was hold up Alpha’s remaining arm and hope it was enough. Stephen’s eyes widened when all he saw was an azure blur in front of him. Adam glanced over his shoulder smirking; then the beam connected. A major explosion that engulfed the sky, the kinetic energy forced Alpha into the ground below while massive clouds of polluted smoke spread across the sky. Out from the smoke fell small pieces of metallic debris, they were singed covered in thin streams of smoke as well.

“ADAM!” Stephen screamed.

Nick sighed as he then focused his attention fully onto Stephen. The EAP were of no threat now, their forces were annihilated, and all that was left were a few soldiers on foot.

Heather and Caleb stared from the distance in complete awe. Heather was silent; she wanted to scream but was unable to find the energy to do so. Her mouth was wide open but nothing more than hollow breathes of air came out. She feared the worst; without even thinking her instincts caused Blue Angel to kneel has the massive rail gun flipped over the MF’s shoulder extending outwards. Caleb’s eyes widened as he noticed what she was doing from his peripheral vision.

“Heather...what are you doing?!”

She didn’t even bother to look at him when his face appeared on the communications display.

“I’m taking that bastard out.”

“I know what you’re thinking but it will only cause more problems. I don’t want to put you down or question your accuracy but do you honestly believe you will be able to hit him?”

“I can, and I will.” Heather replied one final time as she shut off the communication line between Gemini and Blue Angel. Her finger was shaking around the curved trigger located on the steam of her throttle. It was a special throttle, one for this exact type of weapon. She felt it in the pit of her stomach; fear, what would happen if she missed? What this only angers that thing even more and causes it to go berserk? These questions filled her mind, she tried her hardest to push them aside and run only on her emotions. Emotions that was very complicated at the moment. Caleb knew there was nothing more he could do now....he then flipped on the offensive capabilities in Gemini. Both energy cannons flipped over the shoulder and began to formulate energy around the tips of the nozzle. Heather smiled once she took notice of Gemini’s movements.

“Thank you.” She said humbly as her finger pulled back on the trigger. Caleb did the same. Three massive beams of positron energy fired from their position. With the high velocity propulsion system on



their weapons the beams made it to Chimera in no time. Every soldier on foot hit the ground as the beams of energy shot passed over head. Mario kicked the ground causing a small portion of dust and pebbles to fly into the air.

“Damn it. ...if only I had my MF!” He screamed.

Nick heard the booming sound of the beams and didn't bother to move. Suddenly two beams of cerulean energy shot out from the massive cloud of smoke catching Nick completely off guard. Five beams in total collided with Chimera causing an even bigger explosion than before. The culmination of energy blinded everyone, the white flash of fire and energy along with the thunderous sound engulfed Nick and Chimera. Thin streams of blood ran down Adam's face parting ways at the edge of his nose. He took heavy breathes with each passing second. Blue Dragon appeared out from the smoke that covered it earlier. The MF was nearly ravaged beyond repair; the head unit was missing entirely replaced by flinging wires and static electricity. The right arm was severed as well as the right leg and half of the left leg. The right thigh cannon were nothing more than a jagged edge of metallic rods, while the left cannon was still in working condition. The right energy cannon on the back of the core was also destroyed, the left cannon was still operationally.

*Energy at 35% capacity and declining.*

“35% huh damn...I'm done. Not much else I can do in this thing now.” Adam mumbled to himself.

Suddenly Heather's face appeared on his communications display, the image was distorted and blurred due to the damage taken on Blue Dragon but he was still able to see her.

“What the hell were you thinking? Taking the full brunt of that attack! You could have been killed!” Heather screamed. She held back her tears forcefully.

“Does it matter? I'm still here aren't I?” Even though he took a heavy blow to the head his sarcasm and wit was still functioning properly. He gave a half cocked smirk and then shrugged his shoulders.

*Hehe, that was impressive. But still not enough.*

“Heheh, that was impressive. But still not enough.” Nick mentioned, the dual eerie tone returned in his voice.

Adam quickly raised both remaining energy cannons at the meagerly injured Chimera. In a flash Chimera disappeared from sight only to reappear slicing off the entire left side of Blue Dragon in a single swing. The searing energy emanating from the lance tore through the dark blue armor like paper, as it ruptured through every mechanism and joint flames erupted inside the cockpit on a smaller level. Adam covered his eyes as pieces of plastic shot through the inside of the cockpit at tremendous speeds. Some pieces slashed through his skin causing more bleeding. Once Chimera finished with Blue Dragon it began to head towards Alpha. In the background Blue Dragon's boosters disengaged as the entire energy surplus ran dry. Adam's eyes slowly began to shut as the air in the small cockpit thinned, his machine was destroyed. An intense eruption of sand went into the air as Blue Dragon crashed into the ground.

Heather nearly jumped to the edge of her seat in anxiety.

“ADAM!”

Alpha rose back up and ignited the dual energy saber once again. Stephen tried to think about something other than his brother's injuries at the moment. He knew he needed to finish this here and now. He couldn't let this beast rampage anymore. Just as Chimera prepared to swing the energy lance one last time Nick's eyes froze and went pale. They became even more lifeless than before, in the back of his mind he heard a very faint voice. It was faint but it was still familiar. This voice had been lost some odd years ago and was nowhere to be found until now. The tone and pitch of the voice confused him, he couldn't exactly figure out where it was from but he knew he should listen to it.

*Stop this...*

Chimera abruptly stopped in mid-flight and then turned around. Stephen sat perplexed as he watched Chimera dash into the horizon. He didn't bother follow because he knew in his present state it would be useless and that he'd most likely die.

"Adam..." He turned around to see Blue Dragon's pilot walking away from the wreckage. Stephen sighed in relief as his brother seemed to be alright.

Mario stood not too far from Adam. The high ranking general glanced from side to side; his battalion was destroyed and his men were killed. He was alone now. As Adam began to pass by the general he began to smirk.

"Not bad kid. That was pretty impressive." Mario mentioned nonchalantly.

Adam brushed it off as it was nothing. He didn't care about the opinions of others right now; it wasn't his main concern. His brother withheld information from him that angered him. Mario shrugged his shoulders confused.

"Adam...thank God you're alive." Stephen mentioned as he touched the ground. Adam remained expressionless as he approached his brother.

"What's wrong?" Stephen knew something was going on. He had a feeling what it was but he wasn't completely sure.

Adam's right fist began to shake; his emotions were at an all time high. He felt betrayed, not even his own brother could be straight forward with him. If he can't trust his own brother then who was he expected to trust? Without even thinking Adam's right hand swung through the air hitting the left cheek of Stephen. The force of the blow caused Stephen to stumble a few feet to the side.

"What the hell?!" Stephen exclaimed loudly.

"Now....\*cough\*...now we're even...\*cough\*..." Adam managed to say before his body gave out and he fell to the ground. His eyes shut as a few spurts of blood made their way out of his mouth.

### **Chapter Seventeen: Adam's Side**

The subtle songs birthed by birds chirping; it plagued my dreams. I was engulfed in a surrealistic setting of nothing but darkness. Was I dead? At that moment I could hear my voice being called out. *Adam...Adam...* My eyelids slowly began to move, at first everything seemed to blend together. I could barely tell where one person ended and another began. After a few seconds of rubbing my eyes everything began to come into focus. There was a doctor and a young nurse standing a few feet to my right. I could differentiate them from their ivory clothing. I continued to look around the barren room, there appeared to be no more than the bed I was in and a small crystalline round table accompanied by a chair. I glanced out the window, the sky was a brilliant baby blue, and the clouds too were clear and comforting. One thing concerned me though; where was the crimson tint that distorted the blue sky; it was signature of the Martian atmosphere. I could only come up with one clear distinct answer; I was on Earth.

"You're awake?" It was the doctor.

I turned my head briefly and nodded. I was awake, but I was barely on the same playing field as him at the moment. I could barely recollect what happened and how I ended up here. That alone bothered me; plus I was still pissed about Nick. The last thing I do remember was punching Stephen...heh, it felt good.

“Do you know where you are?” The doctor continued to prattle; I guess it was a part of his job to ask stupid questions.

“Earth...”

The doctor seemed a bit surprised, I guess he didn't expect me to realize that much of my surroundings.

“I see, you're more aware than I thought. Good then this should be a lot easier than.”

“Easier? What are you talking about?”

“Oh, I apologize. It's nothing serious; I was just referring to the check up I have to administer. You see check up examinations on people who have been in comatose states tend to be a trying task. They usually need a few days to get a good feel for their surroundings. You seem to be fully aware right now.”

“A coma? I was in a coma!? How long?!”

“Well it wasn't really a coma. It was just a coma-like state. But you have been out for about 2 weeks.”

“2 weeks?!”

“Yes, you sustained a quietly large amount of injuries to your internal organs as well as outside physical damage to your body; namely your head.”

“No need to worry though, you've made a full recovery in the time that you were out.”

“I see. What about my MF? Were they able to repair it? And if so, when can I return as a pilot?” I was eager to find this out, and yet at the same time I didn't want to know. After all of this I wouldn't be too shocked to find out that I wouldn't be able to pilot for a while.

“Well, I can't answer your question regarding your unit. However you could probably return to the cockpit in about 2 weeks. However I'd advise you to take at least a month off.”

“2 weeks? Heh, that's not so bad. I guess I can handle waiting 2 weeks.”

“Well we're done. You have some visitors waiting for you. They have been coming every day eager to see if you'd waken up.”

“Really? Send them in then.” How did my friends find out about what happened so fast? I mean, you would think that the government would try to at least keep this situation under wraps.

The doctor and the nurse left as they let two people in. I have to admit, they weren't the people I was expecting. Heather and Caleb entered.

“Hey... (Hey? That was the best I could come with for a greeting? I mean they have been coming down every day.)”

“Hey...” Heather replied. She was more somber than usual. I guess this really hit her hard in a way. We've known each other for so long; I guess I should have rethought some things before I followed through.

“Glad to see you're awake.” Caleb replied. He didn't appear to be phased by this whatsoever. Then again he is a soldier; it is a requirement to be able to keep your emotions in check. Then...does that mean I'm a flawed soldier? Because I let my emotions get the better of me. Heh, yeah I'm flawed.

“Did you guys really come here every day?”

“Not really. Like twice a week.” Heather replied as she placed her bouquet of carnations on the one table in the room. I can't believe she brought me flowers.

“So...what the hell were you thinking when you pulled that stunt of yours?!” Her tone went from subtle to bitch in a mere second. I forgot that she could pull that off so easily.

“I'm sorry; I don't really have an answer for you this time. There are some things that I need answered right now. For the first time in my life I really don't know where to get them.”

“I see...Adam; you know we're your friend's right? We'll help you in any way we can.” Her reply was inspiring. It was good to know that we were still just that much; friends.

“Thank you.”

“Oh, you’re brother said he’d try and stop by a little later. He had to attend a hearing in Washington.” That came as a complete shocker; my brother had to be at a hearing. Probably about the true identity of Chimera and its pilot; damn, he was supposed to tell me everything first, guess he was still pissed that I punched him.

“I’m really sorry to cut this short, but we’re supposed to head back to Mars in 3 hours.” Heather replied.

“Going back to Mars already huh? Did the EAP not waste any time and attack us blindly again?”

“Not exactly...” There was certain reluctance in her voice this time around. She was definitely concerned with whatever it was that was going on up there.

“What’s going on?”

“The EAP and the TA have declared an armistice Adam.” An armistice! That was the last thing I had expected to happen.

“You’re kidding right Heather?” Both Caleb and Heather were silent at this point; that was proof enough, this was serious.

“It’s because of that Chimera. It has become an apparent threat recognized by both parties. The governments decided that if the Chimera was allowed to run loose that it would be a danger to all resources; discovered and undiscovered.” Caleb said this in a firm tone. It made sense; Nick did wipe out an entire EAP battalion...actually two. He did attack us as well; maybe with both militaries focusing on him he can be stopped.

“Has information about Chimera been made public yet? Like how it was responsible for the deaths of Harold and Amy Caecus? And how it is rampaging on Mars destroying everything it comes across?” I don’t even know why I was asking this question since I probably already knew the answer.

“No. Well the countries of the TA aren’t aware of it anyway. If the government mentioned this so abruptly it would inadvertently lead to the announcement of the war that has been going on behind everyone’s backs. And our government is not about to risk that.” Again Caleb was right on, there was something about him. He was way too aware of things, granted he’s a soldier and a smart guy, but he didn’t even act all that surprised when the Chimera showed up. Hell, he never even asked us any questions about it. Heather on the other hand wouldn’t shut up for five seconds asking questions.

My eyes instinctively moved to the door as I watched the ivory knob twist. The door creaked open.

“I apologize if I’m interrupting. Maybe I should come back later.” It was Sharon. At first I was kind of surprised that she was here, but then again her father was a direct employee of Genesis and the military. I glanced over to Heather, at first I thought I was going to laugh. The look on her face was priceless, she didn’t even know Sharon and the animosity written all over her face was clear as day.

“And you are?” Heather asked her rather rudely. The tone was bitter and crisp. Sharon just smiled back.

“My name is Sharon; Sharon Amare.”

“Amare? You’re the daughter of Professor Mathew Amare, the man who gave me my MF.” Heather replied. Hearing of Sharon’s relation to the Professor kind of made the sarcasm and bitterness dissipate. But it was still there, I could tell.

I forced myself to rise upwards out of my blanket. Heather eyeballed me, I guess I did something wrong, not sure what though.

“Sharon, hey; how are you doing?” I replied meagerly like we weren’t in a hospital room and I wasn’t connected to a dozen tubes. Her face became serious and her eyes seemed to widen a few centimeters. I guess she was concerned, I forget that I was comatose for about 2 weeks. She slowly approached my bed walking by Heather without even acknowledging her existence. When she found herself by my bed I found her arms wrapping themselves around my waist and her head falling on my shoulder. At first it was without a doubt awkward, mainly because Heather was staring. I could have sworn I saw her pick up a surgical knife, but I’m not too sure.

“You idiot! I was so worried about you!” That was the first time I had ever heard her raise her voice. Sharon was usually a self contained bundle of joy.

“I...I’m fine...see, no harm done.” I replied, I didn’t know what to do exactly. I’m not too equipped to handle comforting responsibilities. Her brown eyes opened once again as she lifted her face to mine.

“I know your fine...but there was a chance that you wouldn’t have been.”

What the hell am I supposed to say to that?

“Well we better be going. We don’t want to miss our flight to Mars. Come on Caleb.” She was pissed or jealous...probably both. She just grabbed Caleb’s arm and stormed out of the room. She didn’t even give me a chance to say goodbye.

“Sharon...just how did you know what happened anyway? I mean, the military is more than likely keeping this under wraps.”

“Well my dad told me. He told me the instant you were being transported back to Earth what had happened.”

“Wait a minute, the Professor knew right from the start? That seems a bit odd that Genesis would get that much information that fast.” It did begin to concern me, I mean I know Genesis is linked with the military and gets all sorts of confidential information. But to get a hold of something like that in less than a day?

“I see. Sharon thanks for stopping by.”

“Of course.” Something was off with her too, she seemed cheerful like she did the last time we met and talked. But today, her smile wasn’t as bright pink as usual; it was a more dull shade of pink. And her eyes seemed a bit off too, they were paler than usual; eh, it’s probably just the stress of this entire situation. I’m probably still out of my mind from the trauma.

Sharon pushed me over as she abruptly moved into the bed alongside me. I just stared at her awkwardly; she did nothing but smile at me.

“Uh...Sharon?”

“Don’t scare me like that again ok? You really had me worried, I...I was afraid I wouldn’t be able to see you again.”

I didn’t realize how deeply she cared for me, as odd as it felt to have her here, on this bed with me I didn’t mind. If anything this was what I needed, someone to care for me, to be here with me. But I still couldn’t help thinking about Amy, and how she died. Was this going to be the fate for anyone who got close to me now that I’ve chosen this path? I can’t...I can’t let this happen to Sharon.

“Are you ok?” Sharon spoke softly, her eyes gazing at me with a presence of sheer innocence. Just looking at that face made all of my sorrows go away and even if it was only for a moment, I enjoyed it.

“I’m fine...now that you’re here.”

## Chapter Eighteen: Stephen’s Side

My brother is currently bed ridden in a military hospital located not too far from Westchester and I’m stuck here in Washington explaining why my elder brother, Nick is in that thing and why I took it upon myself to allow an EAP general to join up with my team. Either way this wasn’t too intimidating, I was just standing in the center of a pitch black room with a bright spotlight blinding my eyes while a group of aging old men sat comfortably in front of me masked by shadows, nope not intimidating.

“Major Novus, let’s make this quick. This Chimera as it has been called attacked Praetor and then attacked your team.”

Major? This is something new, as odd as it sounded I didn’t have much time to think it through so I simply nodded. “Yes sir that is exactly what happened.”

“I see, and this Chimera has not been antagonized in any way. You’re saying that this thing just randomly attacked a highly organized military facility for the hell of it?”

Once again, I wasn’t left with many options. I nodded. “Yes sir.”

“It has also been said that you allowed an enemy general into our facility and gave him access to our data.”

Like a good dog I answered. “That is correct sir.”

“Major Novus, what was the reason for this?”

“Sir, General Liberalis was left stranded after the attack. His entire battalion destroyed. I took him in first as a POW. However, the situation became more risky once I noticed that our base camp at Astrum was generating a massive amount of smoke. At the time I was crippled from the previous battle with Chimera and was carrying my passed out brother; Elite Pilot Novus on my back. I had no choice but to release General Mario Liberalis from the restraints for assistance. Instead of running away he took my brother while I was able to pilot Alpha along with Elite Pilot Pertinacia and Elite Pilot Proditio to Astrum. What I found there was a bloodshed almost equivalent to the one found at Praetor. Lieutenant Commander Gelidus was dead and General Rutice was nowhere to be found.”

“The Chimera?” The old man interrupted me. Then again his rank gave him all the power to do so.

“No sir. It was the EAP. They had come for their POW, Fenrir. They believed that we attacked Praetor and did what they believed to be justice. Unfortunately our MFs had taken serious amounts of damage from the previous battle with Chimera and were not in any condition to fight.”

“I see...and that’s where this Liberalis came in correct?”

“Yes sir. General Liberalis managed to sway the EAP forces. Also luckily for us an EAP satellite had been monitoring Praetor and witnessed the entire event. The information for some reason never made it to the EAP assault squad in time, hence why the attack happened. It was then that we received word from headquarters here in Washington that an armistice had been forged. Along with that news I was surprised to hear of yet another promotion. Apparently I proved myself enough to skip 3 ranks and go straight to a Major. No offense sir, but I find that a little odd.”

“I apologize Major; we had thought you would have been happy with the promotion. However if you’d like to go back to a meager promotion, let’s say 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant then that can be arranged.”

I hate it when the higher ups reply with bitter sarcasm.

“I apologize sir. I meant no disrespect. I am honored with this prestige promotion.”

“Accepted, now after the armistice was finalized you used your new found position to enlist this General Liberalis. Granted we are not at war with the EAP at the moment, but wouldn’t this be considered treason on his part?”

“On any normal circumstance it would sir. However the EAP dismissed him for initially aligning himself with my squad. Even if it was only for a moment to diffuse the chaos.”

“I see. Still I find it strange that this General Liberalis would easily align himself with us, a military organization that he swore to fight against.”

“Not really sir. General Liberalis never wanted to get caught up in this war. He was originally from the United States but moved to Spain on a business venture before things heated up between the TA and EAP. I am not fully aware of the incident but he ended up using his knowledge of computers for the EAP and continually made his way up the ranks. He never expected war to break out as easily as it did, but when it happened he reluctantly did his duty and stayed loyal to the EAP, even if his performances were just that, a performance.”

“I see; still, it will be best to keep an eye on him, but enough about him, if you trust him then that’s good enough for me. So tell me, about this Chimera. What is it?”

This is the moment I was concerned about. My personal ties with the Chimera can prove to be troublesome for this military. They might even begin to suspect that I had assisted it since the pilot was once my brother.

“The Chimera is a hybrid project that is funded somehow. I am not aware of who funds the program or who came up with the concept but I know this much; it is a project that aims to combine a human pilot with the artificial intelligence of the MF.”

“I see, in doing so this MF can become the most powerful machine in existence. Just like the Titan; Atlas.”

Atlas? I had heard about it once before in my life. However I was never aware of what it meant, but if the Master and Chief was referring to it then it must be important.

“Atlas sir?”

“The titanic machine that revolted against humanity in 2099, it was the top secret machine that went berserk. Its A.I. was so advanced that it was able to think on its own and make its own decision. It could even integrate its own primary directive into other machines. That is what caused the revolution of A.I. This Chimera seems to be a much calmer version of that machine. If the AI and human pilot become one than it might become easier to control, even now human pilots aren't 100% controllable. They have emotions that affect their judgment. They might not be able to carry out a task to its fullest efficiency. But A.I. have their quarrels as well, an A.I. is void of any emotion and is able to carry out its mission flawlessly. However they are based on logical equations, and eventually their logic can become dangerous for us. They may believe they are doing the right thing to protect humanity, but when it comes to it they can be killing it. I'm guessing whoever is behind this Chimera believes that a hybrid will be the perfect weapon, efficient like an A.I., but not as logical.”

“I see.” He knows quite a bit for a politician. I wasn't expecting this level of awareness from him. It's quite possible that he knows about this project, more so than I do.

“Is it true that the hybrid is your brother, Nicholas Novus?”

I froze, I never freeze. But this was too much. How could he possibly know that much? And if he knew this much, then what's to say that he isn't aware of who is behind this fiasco. But like a good dog I nodded.

“Yes sir. The pilot is what is left of my brother Nick.”

“I see. How did this happen?”

“I am not too sure sir. When we were young, I was about 6, Adam was 5 and Nick was 9, he just vanished. It was odd, and I was a bit curious but I was young so I would believe any amount of bullshit that was thrown my way. It turns out that Nick found himself playing VR sessions of MF battles and was scouted by a military personal. Everything after this point is unknown. What I am aware of though is that when I first encountered the Chimera about a year ago I knew it was Nick. I wasn't in the military at that time, I was fortunate enough to get a hold of a standard MF through my connections at Genesis. I was practicing standard boosting techniques when it appeared. It fired at me without warning; I barely managed to escape that encounter alive. Just before it was to finish me off it just left without any reason. The last thing I remember was a voice, my brother's voice saying, “*kill me.*” From that point on I knew it was Nick.”

“I see. Does Lieutenant Novus know this?”

Lieutenant Novus? Adam was promoted as well. Something is definitely wrong here. We were both promoted 2 and a half weeks ago, and then a few days after that we're promoted to higher ranks without reason.

“Adam? No, he has just recently been informed that the pilot is Nick. Aside from that he knows nothing else.”

“Is there any specific reason to why he is being kept in the dark about this? I would assume that this is something he is entitled to know about.”

“Sir, my brother recently sustained a heavy loss in the form of Amy Caecus. He wouldn't be able to handle the extra strain of finding out the rest about Nick.”

“Ah yes, the Caecus'. Their deaths did prove to be useful.”

What did he just say? Did he just say their deaths were useful...something is definitely wrong here.”

“Sir? I'm afraid I don't understand.”

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“Harold Caecus was an idealist. He believed that our country was the purest and most deserving country. If it were up to him the rest of the world would be conquered by us or destroyed. His view on foreign politics was never the best. He believed that the best way to get what we wanted needed was to take it by force.”

“Survival of the fittest...” I mumbled it. I knew this concept all too well. It was a fine concept on the battlefield, but in society, that was a different story.

“Exactly. Because of him the other nations never respected us, nor would they share their findings on Mars. We needed to get rid of him; it was unfortunate that he dragged his daughter into it. But...actually, now that I think about it, maybe it was fortunate. You see we overheard a phone conversation about a month ago between Amy and your brother. The tone of her voice was clear; she was trying to manipulate him into doing as she pleased. It is our theory that she was trying to make your brother her own personal knight, one that would fight for her...well her father’s crusade.

I think my eyes nearly fell out of their sockets, I couldn’t believe what he was saying. It was indirect of course, but the meaning was clear. The government was behind the death of Harold and Amy Caecus. If this was true, then who knows what else the government is hiding from everyone. Things were just getting more confusing by the second, if what he was saying was true it would mean that those terrorists were on a TA payroll. So they were planning on killing the Caecus’, it was just convenient that the Chimera showed up and finished the job, wiping them clean from suspicion. But on the other hand, this could just be a test, something to gauge my reaction. This whole meeting could be a trap in disguise...all I could do was sit and respond to the questions that were directed towards me.

“That will be all for today Major Novus. I personally thank you for your corporation.”

That’s it? This couldn’t be this easy.

“Sir.” I replied as I saluted and then headed out the door. Before I could fully leave I heard the President make a sound.

“Major Novus, I am confident that you are aware that all information disclosed in this meeting is confidential. Anything leaked out will be an act of treason. I don’t think I have to mention what would happen.”

“No sir.”

“Good. Now I have a new assignment for you. You are to head back to Mars, the south western hemisphere.”

“The south western? But that area hasn’t even been charted yet.”

“You’re right. But there is a massive amount of energy being emanated from that area. A recon unit attempted to make their way through but was incinerated on contact with the area.”

“Sir?”

“A barrier Major Novus, there is an energy barrier keeping us out from the south western hemisphere or something in. You’re mission is to investigate the area and find a way in.”

“Sir...but what about Chimera? Isn’t that our primary target now?”

“It is. But it is none of your concern. You are too connected to the target personally; it wouldn’t be a situation where we would see your best judgment. It’s for the best. Give my best to your brother when you see him.”

“Yes sir.” I saluted a final time before getting out of the room. I thought I was going to pass out from the stress. Heh, I’m a Major already. By now I have instant access to older military records. I wasn’t expecting to get to this point for another year or two. Either way, I’m currently ahead of schedule, granted I may just be playing their game at the moment, but that won’t last long. Is this where my destiny is taking me?



## **Chapter Nineteen: Down Time**

“It struck again then?” Luscious voice bounced off the walls in his upper level office. Severen just stood there and nodded. The lights in the room were dim, barely even lighting the room. Severen was nervous, more so than usual. This Chimera’s attack caused an armistice in the war. Without a war there is no major profit accumulation for Genesis’ weapon and MF development team. This was Genesis’ major money making unit.

“Yes Luscious. We received an audio recording of the last few minutes of the battle. When the pilot forcefully shut off the AI and relied on his own skill to fight. One thing concerns me though. I thought this hybrid project was permanent, that he wouldn’t be able to shut off the AI influence.”

Luscious' obsidian leather chair twirled around as his hands planted them on the wooden desk in front of him. He sighed ignoring Severen's question and continued to sort through the dozens of papers that lined his desk. His eyes refusing to move away, he remained quiet.

"Luscious?"

"How is Mike Aquilus coming along?" This question shocked Severen; Luscious seemed to be ignoring anything in relation to Chimera, like nothing ever happened.

"He's coming along fine sir. His scores have drastically improved since he was hired. He's already shooting at a 96% accuracy and 87% avoidance rate. Also his brain wave patterns completely came into synchronization with the A.I. as of yesterday."

"I see; is he ready then?"

"Ready for what?"

"We need to take that Chimera down correct? It's been nothing but a problem ever since Professor Amare took over the program 11 years ago. You said it yourself he has found a way to break the restraints of the AI. He is a failure, and you of all people should know that we discard failed projects and move on. These scores that Mike is accumulating are more impressive than Nick's were when he was in the same stage of the process. Mike will take out Chimera and become the shining example of Genesis' power."

Severen didn't realize it directly but he began to step back from Luscious' desk. He wasn't completely aware of what was going on, there was still a lot that he didn't know; but he knew where to draw the line. He knew Genesis was his corporation along with his brother.

"Luscious..."

Luscious smirked as he glanced back up at Severen. The young prodigy's eyes were shivering, the bright cerulean eyes were paler than usual; his pupils couldn't make direct contact with Luscious'.

"Yes Severen?"

"...Don't you think this has gone far enough? I mean the governments know about the Chimera, that alone is a major problem. It won't be long before they track down its origin to us. And if you release another one out into the world then who knows what could happen. This can just make things a lot worse than they already are."

"Are you saying we should just stop working on Project-C2 then?"

"Yes...I am...and as owner of Genesis I demand it." Severen's voice slowly began to fill up with confidence. But still something wasn't completely right, Luscious did nothing but smile. Luscious reclined back in his chair holding a folder in his hand.

"So you think you own Genesis huh? I will admit that Genesis is to be handed down to you and your brother...but only to you and your brother. Neither one of you has the legal right to take control of Genesis alone...you need the other. And you're brother isn't around, so you have no sort of power in this organization. I kept you around because I thought you had potential. You're brother has a spine; he has already proven his skills time and time again inside the cockpit of his MF. All you do is mope around signing papers that I tell you to sign. And now you think you can suddenly grow a backbone? Heh, you have no clue what is transpiring around you. You're too naïve to take control of this company. Here, take a look at this." Luscious replied while throwing the folder towards Severen. Severen knew everything Luscious had just said was true; there wasn't much of anything that he could do. His hand picked up the folder; he paused at the text that appeared before him. It was a contract, filled out and signed by President of the American Government.

"What the hell is this?!"

"It's exactly as it appears to be. It's a contract for use of the Chimera at one military examination..." Severen's eyes widened in complete disbelief, Luscious just smiled and continued to relax in his reclined position with both arms comfortably placed underneath his head.

"You're eyes tell me how green you are. You truly are shocked aren't you? Heh, listen to me Severen; I am preparing you for the time when you take complete control of Genesis." Luscious paused for a second in order to grab the glass of crimson wine that was sitting on the table. His crimson eyes

stared down the young prodigy who was trembling while he read the documentation before him. As Luscious took a few sips of the distilled dated wine he glanced out the window looking at the bustling city of Manhattan.

“Is this for real Luscious? The Government paid us to use the Chimera?”

“It’s in print isn’t it?”

“Yes, of course but still...this means they knew we were making this machine. You aren’t telling me that this rampage of the Chimera was planned by the Trinity Alliance are you?”

“No of course not. The Chimera was an insurance plan for the military exam. Harold Caecus was getting out of hand in Europe; his statements were beginning to stir up riots all over the country. It was because of him that this war on Martian terrain began, his self righteous speeches made the nations of the EAP hate the TA even more. And once Japan got their hands on Surge Plus it was only natural for a war to break out. The government wanted Harold Caecus and his daughter gone, they posed too great a threat for the TA. And if the EAP terrorists failed then the Chimera would be there to finish the job, it’s quite despicable when you think about it. But it is for the best I assume, and it’s not like we can judge how the TA does their business, after all they’re the ones who keep us in business.” Luscious replied with a calm demeanor that even had Severen shaking.

“So they used the EAP terrorists then, they set them up. If the EAP finds this...”

“Calm down Severen, they won’t find out. Right now we have to get the C-2 up and running. Once it is we’ll be able to get rid of the Chimera and work on more important things. You’ve seen the plans for the Utopia no doubt.”

“Yeah...although I’m not completely sure what it is and what it has to do with the south western hemisphere on Mars.”

“Don’t worry about that yet Severen, in time all will be revealed.”

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Adam managed to make it outside of the hospital with the aid of Sharon. His right arm wrapped around the back of her neck and shoulder while she helped him walk. His body was still weak and recovering from the injuries previously sustained. His eye lids flickered as the brilliant sun glared onto their position. They were in a small town, a nameless one since it was mainly used by the military. The streets were barren for the most part aside from occasionally passing by military jeeps.

“How are you feeling?” Sharon asked. It could have been thought of as a rhetorical question but Adam didn’t seem to mind. Since Amy, Sharon was the first girl to actually be concerned about him. Heather didn’t really count since she was always being so abrasive. Adam smiled as he looked back at Sharon.

“I’m not 100% yet, but I do feel a lot better. Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. So, you’re on absence from the military until you’re 100% correct?”

Adam didn’t even think about it until now, but Sharon was right. He wasn’t cleared for battle, so the military didn’t have much use for him. And even if he was, he still didn’t have a frame to pilot; Blue Dragon was completely destroyed thanks to Chimera.

“Yeah I guess so.”

“So what do you plan on doing until then?”

“I’m not too sure. I guess I’ll head back to my apartment in Manhattan. Maybe just enjoy some down time with my friends. I haven’t seen them in a long time.”

“That’s a good idea. Just do me a favor and don’t participate in any VR matches. I know they’re not real life combat situations, but I’m sure it’ll still put a massive strain on your body.”

Adam chuckled as he held her close.

“Nah, I’m just going to enjoy this time away from fighting for now (while I’m away maybe I’ll be able to investigate into why Nick is the pilot of Chimera. There are so many questions I need to be

answered. I guess I could ask Sharon for some assistance since her father is praised in Genesis. But then again, she might get concerned and do the exact opposite.), it'll be good to just relax for a little."

"Hey! Are you hungry?" Her eyes were beautiful; shining filled with life.

Adam nodded as he chuckled rubbing his stomach. He hadn't eaten anything good in too long.

"Yeah. But let's eat when we get back to Manhattan. Since this is a military town I'm sure the food here isn't that good." Adam replied.

"Sure. The monorail could probably get us back to Manhattan in less than an hour. I got our tickets right here." Sharon pulled out two tickets heading straight for Penn Station.

The city was packed; New Yorkers and tourists alike filled the streets around Times Square. Christina and Jen somehow found themselves stuck in the middle of the mass of people. They both managed to get jobs working for a local hospital as nurses. It wasn't a high paying job, but it was still a job that paid. It was also convenient since the hospital was only a few blocks away from their apartment overlooking Central Park. The weather was soothing; it had been a while since they both found time to enjoy the sites of the city. Christina walked with her head angled to the ground barely able to see what was ahead of her. Her light brown hair waved horizontally as a small gust of wind passed by.

"What's wrong?" Jen finally was fed up with Christina's pouting.

Christina just glanced back at Jen giving a half baked smile.

"Oh no, I'm not about to buy that. Tell me what's going on?" Jen continued to insist on finding out the problem even though she was pretty confident she knew the answer.

"He...he hasn't called me once since he started working there and I guess I'm worried." Christina replied. Sean began working full time at Genesis about 2 ½ weeks ago along with Mike.

"I kind of figured that's what was bothering you. I'm sure it's nothing; Mike hasn't talked to either of us since he started working there. I'm sure they're both doing fine."

"I don't know. I mean Sean was acting like a completely different person the instant Genesis offered him that job."

Jen sighed, there wasn't much she could say to ease Christina's mind. Sean had been acting a lot differently.

"Where are we going anyway Jen? We've already passed our block." Christina mentioned while looking back over her shoulder at the sign that was their block.

"I got a call from that idiot earlier. We're meeting up at Penn Station."

"That idiot? Who are you talking about?"

"Adam. He's on leave from the military and he's coming down here for about a week or so. So he wanted to see if we all wanted to get something to eat."

"Oh..."

"Don't worry, I told him about how Sean has been acting. He said that he'd go down to Genesis tomorrow and see what's up."

"Jen...you didn't have to say anything you know."

"Heh, I know. But we're all friends. So cheer up and hurry; I'm hungry." Penn Station wasn't too far from their current position so they knew it wouldn't be that much longer.

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"Excellent job once again Mike. You really have a knack for this." One of the test operators shouted out in excitement.

Mike smirked, he was getting used to scoring high on his exams. He stepped out of his personalized MF, Magna Star and gazed at the smoldering frames that he defeated not too long ago. His MF was equipped with dual missiles on the back of the core; to go along with the missile pack were four smaller launchers that attached along the shoulder. The missiles became his signature attack, he would fire every missile pack on his MF simultaneously to create a massive wave of missiles that was nearly impossible to avoid. When not relying heavily on his missile he would switch to his assault rifle in Magna

Star's right hand. For defensive purposes he used an energy shield attached to the left arm. He smirked at Sean who sat behind a desk in the analysis room. Sean waved back to Mike as he penciled in the day's scores. He gave a slight whistle as he was impressed.

"I think we're done for today. With these scores we are way ahead of schedule. The A.I. synchronization is 100% complete. Both his offensive and defensive maneuvers have shot up to an astounding 98.5% accuracy. I think with these numbers we'll finally be green lighted." Sean replied confident in the work he was producing. The three other scientists in the room stood out from their chairs in awe, they could do nothing but applaud the hard work that both Sean and Mike had been doing. Sean took a bow sarcastically; his eyes always seemed to find themselves looking back at the folder for Project C-1. He tried not to let his mind wander off, but it was hard not to. In his eyes it was a distinct possibility that his one time friend, Adam could be piloting the Chimera.

"Hey Sean! Come on, let's celebrate. I'm hungry!" Mike exclaimed.

Sean snapped out of his trance and smiled back at his friend.

"Yeah; that's a good idea. We've been in here way too long buddy."

"Good, I have a voice mail from Jen. She said they're all meeting up at that Italian restaurant just outside of Penn Station."

Sean froze for a second but quickly recovered.

"Christina's going to be there I'm guessing."

"I would assume so. Come on, you two are still together so this shouldn't be much of a problem. Plus Adam's back for a few weeks."

"Adam's home... (Maybe this is exactly what I need. If I can see the effects that the project had on him, then maybe I'll be able to predict what it's going to do for Mike. I can handle Christina if it means success.) Alright, let's head out right away. We wouldn't want to be late."

Adam and Sharon met up with Christina and Jen the minute they got off the monorail. Both Christina and Jen were surprised by the injuries Adam had taken on, neither of them were aware of what happened. Adam just smiled as Sharon helped him walk once again.

"What the hell happened to you?!" Jen screamed loudly. The sheer intensity of her voice caused every person in the area to turn around in curiosity.

"Hehehe, it's nothing important. I just took some rough hits no big deal. Now let's eat, I'm starving."

"I see..." Jen then glanced over to Sharon. She vaguely recognized her from the assembly earlier on in the past month.

Adam glanced to Sharon and then realized that he never properly introduced her.

"Oh...hahaha, where are my manors? Jen, Christina, this is Sharon Amare. She's a friend of mine." Adam replied.

"Nice to meet you both." Sharon said as she extended her hand to be greeted. Christina and Jen looked at each other and chuckled, they both then shook her hand.

"Nice to meet you too, so...you're *friends* with Adam huh?" Adam forgot how sarcastic all of his friends could be at times, especially Jen.

"Yep." Sharon replied like she always would, full of vitality and energy.

The restaurant was entirely eloquent, it was nearly blinding at times. Every table was covered in a snow like ivory table cloth; the silverware was finely polished and appeared to be imported. Adam and his group felt extremely inferior as they were wearing average cloths, they were clean looking nice clothes, but everyone else in the restaurant were wearing suits and dresses. The hostess took them to their table, it was a round table set for six.

"So Sean and Mike are coming too then?" Adam asked as he moved the chair for Sharon. Sharon smiled as she took her seat.

"Yeah, I left Mike a voicemail and he texted me not too long ago. He said they might be a little late." Jen replied.

“Oh, I see. What are they up to that is so important anyway?” Adam asked, since he had been gone he wasn’t aware of their recent employment to Genesis. Adam’s eyes wandered to the side as he watched the bus boy pour water and ice into everyone’s goblets.

“Excuse me, she doesn’t like ice.” Adam mentioned in a polite demeanor. The bus boy nodded and was about to get a hold of another pitcher with no ice. Sharon placed her hand on the bus boy’s arm.

“No that’s fine. I don’t mind ice.” She replied allowing the bus boy to finish his job. Adam glanced at Sharon awkwardly but she did nothing more than smile back at him.

“Aww isn’t that cute. He’s trying to impress her.” Christina interrupted jokingly. Adam stared back at Christina attempting to burn holes through her with his eyes.

“He doesn’t have to impress me. I like him the way he is.” Sharon mentioned as she took a quick sip of her water.

“Aww.” Both Jen and Christina mocked him.

“Hey, sorry we’re late.” Mike’s voice carried as both he and Sean appeared taking their seats. Christina gazed at Sean who ignored her completely. He was focusing on Adam the minute he entered the restaurant. There were a lot of questions on his mind and he intended on getting them answered.

“Hey! How have you two been? It seems like forever.” Adam mentioned as he ripped a piece of bread in two.

“Yeah I know what you mean. We’ve been doing really well. How bout yourself?” Mike asked.

“You know, not too bad. The military isn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be. I’m learning a lot up there.”

“We’re working for Genesis.” Sean interrupted. His minor outburst was completely misplaced and random it grabbed the attention of the whole table. At a first glance his statement can be thought of a type of jealousy that is trying to be quenched. Adam just glanced back at Sean in confusion.

“Sean?!” Christina yelled at the obvious lack of respect that he was displaying.

“What? It’s not like I’m making anything up, he asked us how we were doing and I answered him.”

“I see; what exactly are you doing there?” Adam questioned.

“I’m sure you’re already familiar with it.” Sean replied in a bitter tone once again. The sharpness of his tongue wouldn’t falter. Adam began to become agitated but managed to hold it in. It might have been because Sharon was present.

“Not really. Why don’t you enlighten me then?”

“Hi, my name is Franco and I’ll be...” “Shut up, don’t interrupt us.” Sean blatantly barked.

Everyone at the table became appalled by Sean’s actions. The waiter just stood there in confusion as well.

“So tell me Adam...did you think you could hide it from us?”

“What? What the hell are you talking about Sean?”

“Sean that’s enough.” Christina replied as she placed her hand on his timid shoulder. Instantly he shrugged them off and ignored her request. Instead he opened his portfolio and threw a manila folder onto the table in front of Adam. Adam glanced back at Sean.

“What the hell is this?”

“Open it.”

Adam opened the folder and was shocked at what he saw. He slowly began to read the text out loud, but just under his own breath.

“Project-C; it’s the ultimate hybrid of human emotion and artificial intelligence. It has become obvious that A.I. embedded into an MF is an extremely dangerous decision. This is seen through the events that occurred in the final years of AD. A.I. alone has the potential to evolve and revolt, but if it is combined with human DNA then it is possible to erase the logic law infused with all A.I. Logic is the most dangerous component an A.I. can possess, devoid of all feelings and emotions the A.I. will do what is necessary to ensure the progression of humanity and all life in general. It will make decisions based solely on logic, and we are all aware that our world, our human world does not solely revolve around logic and rationality. Project-C or Chimera for short is the result of years of hard work. Our pilot, displayed

superior piloting results in VR training, he completely shined far above the rest of the interns we had hired. We assigned the Chimera unit to intern Novus; he welcomed the idea with little hesitation. During our tests it became painfully obvious that he lived only for power, and to be the best. It is this trait that allowed him to pilot Chimera with little effort and cause it to perform far above its potential limit. After every combat engagement the pilot suffered from amnesia not remembering a single thing that had happened. It seemed to him that he was fighting the Chimera, an internal battle for his soul and for his sanity.....” Adam glanced back up at Sean.

“So tell me. How the hell did you manage to survive it?”

Adam chuckled for a few seconds as he put the paper back in the folder’s pockets.

“I see; but I hate to break it to you, this isn’t referring to me....it’s referring to my older brother; Nick. (And Genesis was the one behind it...did Stephen know this?)” Adam replied. His reply caused silence to engulf the table, Sean’s eyes widened; this wasn’t the response he was expecting. He never knew about Adam’s other brother, Nick; it was a fact that changed everything. In a single instant he watched as everything he had been preparing for in the past month and a half crumbled.

The waiter was still standing at the edge of the table.

“Do you need a little bit more time to decide?”

## **Chapter Twenty: The Tides Begin to Turn**

Sean remained in shock, he was positive that it was Adam who was piloting Chimera. He based his work around that one idea, that his work could become vital into taking him down. It was here that Sean realized that what he had done was nearly a travesty and betrayal. He was in charge of designing the AI system for Project C-2; he had based everything off of Adam’s VR simulations. C-2 was essentially a counter to Adam’s style of piloting. In making the assumption based on generalization he received he made a massive error, one that could quite possibly place his job at risk. Adam stared at his friend from the other side of the table while everyone remained quiet. Adam too was a little baffled at the moment; he wasn’t expecting to find out this kind of information from Sean.

“Sharon...I think its best we go.” Adam mumbled.

“What? Why?” Her innocence was delightful at times but troublesome at others. He didn’t want to explain what was going on; she didn’t need to know about it.

“Adam...I’m sorry.” Sean mentioned in a quite tone of voice.

Adam smirked. “Don’t worry about it. You actually helped me. There are just some things I need to take care of now.”

“You’re going to fight so soon? You just got a break.” Jen replied.

“Heh, I wouldn’t call medical leave a break. I have some time to do some investigating and I intend to do just that.” He then looked back at Sean. “Is there anything else you can tell me about Genesis? If you have access to information like this then you must know what the original intentions of Chimera was.”

Sean glanced at the floor for a second and then again at the waiter who was being surprisingly patient.

“I can’t. Regardless of the fact that you’re my friend, I can’t tell you anything.”

“I see. Well correct me if I’m wrong, but I’m guessing that information you just gave me was classified as well. You’re already in trouble if Genesis finds out, might as well make it worth it. What do you know about Chimera Sean?” Adam was beginning to get impatient; his anxiety was catching up with him rather fast.

“...don’t make me do this Adam...”

“Sean; tell him.” Mike interrupted. He then smiled back at Adam who just nodded back in gratitude.

“Adam...Chimera was a government funded project.”

Adam wasn’t expecting that, his physical expression showed that much. His eyes went pale and his body numb. There was no telling what the government wanted with Chimera.

“The government funded it? But why? What could they gain from that thing?” Adam asked.

“I’m not entirely sure, but in the reports it states that an A.I./Human hybrid would be the perfect soldier. Void of any emotions that may deter it from battle and limited logical process which would prevent a remission of an AI revolt.”

“I see.”

“Apparently your eldest brother was an intern like the rest of us. I’m not sure what that means though.”

Adam reclined into the back of his chair and then glanced at the waiter.

“You might want to come back in a bit, we’re not ready.” The waiter nodded and left to deal with his other tables.

“(This doesn’t make much sense, the government funded the Chimera project...it was probably a trade with Genesis, fund them and get the type of weaponry they needed for war. If that’s the case, then why was Nick an intern first? Why not just take some soldier for the project? It just doesn’t make sense...I should find Stephen.) Alright, thanks Sean. I appreciate it a lot.” Adam said as he stood up from his chair. His knee buckled under the pressure, his body tilted to the side but Sharon quickly stood up to give him support.

“You shouldn’t force it. Just take it easy.” Sharon mentioned.

Adam turned to her and nodded.

“So you’re leaving before I get a rematch huh?” Mike mentioned. “I guess it can’t be helped, after all I’ve improved greatly. Over 98% efficiency in offensive and defensive maneuvers.”

Adam seemed a bit shocked by this. It was after all a tremendously abnormal improvement.

“Really... (69% to 98% in a matter of months...wow he must be really forcing himself.) Well maybe next time we’ll have our rematch. I’m looking forward to it then.”

Mike nodded.

“Call us more often. We wouldn’t mind hearing from you; you know.” Jen mentioned.

“I will. Sean; take care of Christina.” Adam replied.

“I will...” Sean then looked at Christina. His eyes were calmer than usual. He smiled and she smiled back at him.



“It was nice to meet you all.” Sharon said as she and Adam walked out of the restaurant.

“Christina...I am so sorry about the past few weeks. I’ve been acting like such an asshole to you and to everyone. I guess I got too caught up in my work to even realize I was hurting the ones I loved.” Christina smiled as she leaned in to hug him. The two embraced one another refusing to let go. Mike began to chuckle under his breath and was quickly smacked by Jen’s right hand.

“Well you enjoy the water works; I have to hit the restroom.” Mike mentioned.

Mike walked past the oncoming crowd of dignified New Yorkers while trying to find the restroom. His life couldn’t be going any better than it was right now, he had amazing friends, and his skills as an MF pilot were increasing with each day. He felt it in his guts; he was going to take that military exam and pass it, then he’d show the world.

“Is that him?”

A group of men wearing heavily darkened business suites along with obsidian shades whispered back and forth.

“Mike Aquilus...yes, that’s him. He is to remain alive. The others though...”

“I know the mission details...let’s just get this over with...” The men slowly rose up from their seated positions from the lounge area in the restaurant. The each broke off from each other going in separate directions. One of them continued to walk forward towards Mike’s position. He was a good physical specimen; at about 6’1 235 pounds of solid muscle he was intimidating. His short light brown/dirty blonde hair glistened in the lights of the room. As he made quick eye contact with Mike he smirked and continued to walk. Mike glanced back at the man only to shrug it off as it was nothing. Until he felt the cold elongated pistol forcing itself into his lower back region; he didn’t know what to do.

“What the hell is this? Who the hell are you?!” Mike screamed. The man quickly placed his hand which was enwrapped in a leather glove around Mike’s mouth. The people around the scene just walked away paying them no attention. Mike began to struggle making gurgling noises, anything he could think of in order to get some help; it didn’t work.

“Will you just stay still...I have no problem doing this the hard way...” Even with the warning Mike continued to struggle. Then everything went pitch black. The edge of the 9 millimeter pistol bounced off the back of Mike’s head. Within an instant Mike fell to the ground losing consciousness. He stretched out his hand as his vision blurred. He could see the remaining three men walking around the tables slowly raising their hands. His vision was too distorted to identify what the men were carrying. As his vision began to fade and become surrounded in darkness all he could hear were the screams of his friends. A high pitched feminine voice burst out only to be covered by a booming sound that echoed for a few seconds after the initial outburst. He fell unconscious.

Sean’s eyes flooded with tears as he stared at Jen’s lifeless body. She twitched on the ground as a pool of blood slowly outstretched over the at one time cleanly tiled floor. Christina was hysterical, she couldn’t control her emotions; no one could. She fell on the ground with her arms shaking over the fallen body of her friend. She burst out into tears mixed along with partially high pitched screams. Sean burst out from his chair and reached for the gun that Genesis provided him on the day of his employment. The three men just glanced at one another and without any hesitation pulled the trigger. Three chrome bullets pierced his body causing an uproar of blood to spew into the air. Christina quickly turned around only to watch her boyfriend fall to the ground covered in blood as well.

“SEAN!!!!...Oh my God...oh my God...why...why ARE YOU DOING THIS?!!!” As her tears continued to roll down her cheeks she fell over Sean’s fallen body.

Each of the men looked back at each other. Their job was done.

“We can’t leave her like this...” One of them said.

“Fine.” The second man picked up his gun and fired.

“Sometimes I hate this job...”

Adam paused abruptly as he and Sharon past through Central Park. She had never seen it before and he felt they should walk through there. He leaned against a nearby tree and slowly slid to the ground of grass.

“What is it?”

Adam looked back up at Sharon. He wasn't sure what it was, but he knew something was wrong. “I don't know. It's probably nothing, don't worry about it.”

Sharon helped Adam up and onto the closet bench to them. It was getting dark and the sun was beginning to set. Adam looked over to Sharon who he found clutching onto his right arm. It wasn't long until her head angled itself onto his shoulder. It was a nice feeling, one that he didn't want to let go of for anything else in the world. Both of their eyes began to get heavy. Sharon's eyes shut a lot faster than Adam's, his vision began to get blurry. All of a sudden he found himself staring at a group of four men all in business suits. He had no clue how they got there, nor did he care.

“Is this him? Adam Novus?” The man in the front asked. The rest of them nodded. Adam was confused; he glanced at Sharon who immediately woke up from her slumber.

“Adam?”

“I don't know. Who are you?”

“It doesn't matter.” The man in the front said as he raised his gun pointing it at Adam's head. Adam's eyes widened as Sharon's fingers dug themselves into his muscle. Just as the finger began to pull back blood erupted from the man's firing arm. The group of men quickly jerked their bodies to the left in order to find the culprit. There stood a well built man, one that seemed vaguely familiar to Adam. The man stood there holding a military distributed assault rifle, one found in the EAP. With smoke searing from the barrel they knew he was the one who fired. Right before the group of suited men could retaliate they found themselves jerking back and forth as dozens of bullets ripped through their body. Adam and Sharon got up from the bench as they stared at the four men on the ground lying there in a pool of their own blood. Sharon was frightened and remained attached to Adam. Adam turned around staring at the man who just saved his life.

“What the hell was that?”

“I'm not sure myself. But the wheels are turning somewhere, your brother sent me to get you back to his apartment. We met before...but then again you were unconscious at the time. I'm Mario Liberalis.”

## Chapter Twenty-One

It was raining; God always had a funny way of dealing with recent events. It always seemed that nature would reflect the harsh times in one's life. Stephen had an apartment out on the island, in Queens, the Astoria neighborhood to be exact. It wasn't a bad apartment but it was a lot cheaper than the expensive ones in Manhattan. Ever since Adam returned to Earth things continued to get more confusing and complicated. He took the news of Genesis creating the Chimera hard, but it wasn't that big of a deal since they are a corporation and are constantly coming up with new sorts of advancements for the world to indulge in. The Chimera was just another one of those projects; it just went wrong. But what was harder for him to grasp was the fact that the Government funded the project directly, the harder he concentrated on these things the more his head began to pound. He was still recovering from his injuries and this wasn't helping it one bit. He sighed as his head tilted backwards onto the head rest of the plush couch. Both he and Sharon were in the living room along with Mario. The living room was a good size, once you entered the apartment you were drawn to it; mainly the 60 inch high definition plasma screen hanging on the opposite wall. It was set up pretty nice, two couches against one wall staring directly at the screen, along with a separate leather cushioned chair on their side. Simple bland carpeting ran along the

wooden floor up until the massive entertainment center that held all of his disks and DVDs. Sharon was sleeping, her head resting on Adam's shoulder while he tried to rest. But it's kind of hard to relax when you were almost shot.

Adam brought his head up from the couch as Stephen entered the room along with Heather. Adam was surprised to say the least; he wasn't expecting Heather to be there. She cringed at the site of Sharon at first but then took a seat on the couch next to Mario.

"Heather..." Adam mumbled.

"Hey" Her response was quick and direct.

"Listen, we should probably talk."

"Eh, don't strain yourself. I'm over it."

"You just left without saying anything, and it's not like we were the happiest people either."

"I know. I'm not refuting that." Adam sneered, he wasn't expecting this much bitterness from her.

"So what's your problem then? You've been acting well...like a bitch."

Heather chuckled under her breath.

"A bitch huh?"

"To put it blunt...yeah, a bitch."

Mario began to laugh although he tried his hardest to hold it in. His face was turning slight red; it was amusing to see both Adam and Heather go at it.

"There are just some things going on right now. Just know it's not always about you." Heather abruptly stood up leaving the living room. Adam just sat there, he wanted to get up and go after her but he knew it wasn't the smartest thing to do right now. Plus Sharon was still sleeping on his shoulder and he didn't want to make any unnecessary movements to wake her up.

"What'd you say?" Stephen asked as he entered.

"He called her a bitch." Mario replied sarcastically.

"NO! I didn't mean she's a bitch, I just said she has been acting like one." Adam replied loudly.

"You're an ass." Stephen replied as he sat down in the single chair.

"Whatever, what do you know anyway? You haven't been with a woman in a long time."

Mario burst out in laughter; he nearly fell off the edge of the couch. Stephen smirked and laughed sarcastically.

"You don't know everything that's going on in my life, so don't pretend you do."

"Oh yeah, I forgot. You keep things from people." Adam couldn't hold it in much longer; he was still infuriated with Stephen for keeping the information about Nick and Chimera from him.

"I see...I get it. You're pissed about me not telling you that Nick was piloting Chimera." Stephen mentioned as he took a sip of his coffee. Even though Adam didn't want to sit up he was going on sheer instinct and emotions once again. As he moved Sharon slowly woke up and began to rub her eyes.

"You're damn right I'm pissed. Don't you think that was important information for me to know?"

"If I thought it was then I would have told you."

"You..." Stephen cut him off; "You going to hit me again?"

Adam tried to calm himself down, but it was a lot harder than he thought it would be.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I didn't think you could handle it. Not after what happened to Amy. To hear that it was your brother that did it. You weren't ready to hear it. It's unfortunate that you found out the way you did, but what's done is done. But more importantly, there's some things happening that are suspicious. I've been promoted to Major and you to Lieutenant. Mario has also been appointed a position as General in the military which is extremely odd since he was from the EAP."

"Wait...I'm a Lieutenant now?"

"Yeah...something is not right here." Stephen replied.

“I see...I’m not sure if you’re aware of this but Genesis is behind Chimera. They are the ones that developed the concept...” Adam mentioned as he glanced at the ground.

Stephen’s eyes widened, that much he didn’t know. He knew that Nick was piloting it; that was about it.

“I see, then that kind of explains why Luscious wanted so much information on Chimera. But why would they be developing it, and how did they get a hold of Nick?”

“All I know is that it was called Project C, and that the government funded its development.”

Yet another blow that Stephen wasn’t prepared for. But the more he thought about the more it began to make sense. After everything that he heard in his hearing, things that were left unanswered with major holes were now filled in and connected.

“This isn’t good then. If the government funded its development then who knows what else the government is hiding.”

“So then, what do you suggest we do?” Adam questioned.

Stephen arched forward in a thinking pose; he still didn’t know everything.

“We continue to follow what orders are given. For all we know the Chimera went berserk on its own, it’s perfectly logical for a government to fund programs that produce weapons like Chimera. They just want to turn the tide in the war that was going happening on Mars. The information we know is vague, a generalization. We need more time to discover what else they don’t want the public to know...which brings me to my next question; how did you find all that out?”

“I have my sources.”

“One of your intern friends I’m guessing.” Stephen continued to ask.

“Yeah, Sean Repens. Both he and Mike were offered full time jobs at Genesis. Sean apparently is working on some new project for them and came across this information. At first he thought I was piloting the Chimera, but once I told him that it was Nick he calmed down and told me what I wanted to know.”

“I see, but one thing is bugging me. How did he even come to form a theory that it was you?”

“Oh, well the report said something vague about giving the prototype to intern Novus. I guess he just assumed it was me since you were never an intern at Genesis.” Adam replied.

Stephen sat back in his chair; there was a something connecting Genesis, Nick and the government together; something other than Project C.

“You said *intern* correct?” Stephen pondered.

Adam nodded.

“Since when was Nick an intern at Genesis.”

“I don’t know. To tell you the truth I barely even remember Nick growing up...why is that? What else aren’t you telling me?”

“Nick disappeared when you were 5. No one knew exactly what happened to him. But if Genesis is saying that he was an intern that it might be possible to find out exactly what happened through them. Naturally it will have to be done behind the scenes; if Genesis finds us peeking through their records then...well I’m not sure what will happen. I still have a neutral stance when it comes to Genesis as a whole, nothing clearly shows that what has happened in the past month has been intentional; I would like to believe that its accidental.” Stephen replied.

“Well don’t worry. I can probably have Sean and Mike find out while they’re working. I’ll give him a call hold on.” Adam said. He grabbed his cell phone from his front pocket and scrolled down to Mike’s name. The phone continued to ring for about a minute with no answer.

“No answer?” Mario asked.

Adam shook his head. It had no idea as to why was picking up his phone. Mike was the type of person that was attached to his cell. It was like an extension of his body. Sharon looked at Adam and smiled.

“Don’t worry about it. I guess I could have dad find out for you. Besides he wanted to see you once you were better.” Both Adam and Stephen just stared at Sharon; they weren’t expecting that kind of favor. But they would be far from grateful.

“Are you sure? I mean I don’t want to risk your father’s job or anything.” Adam replied.

“Yeah it’s fine. He likes you.” She mentioned.

“Oh...” Stephen glanced over at Mario as they both became quiet. Adam looked confused and glanced at Sharon. Sharon tilted her head to the side and smiled.

“I’ll leave you guys alone to discuss what you need to.” Sharon said as she got up heading for the kitchen where Heather was last seen. Stephen nodded and then turned back to Adam the minute she left the room.

“What’s wrong you two?” Adam asked.

Stephen sighed looking at the imperfections masking her carpet. With his hands interwoven together he looked back at Adam.

“About what happened earlier...with those men in suits.” Stephen muttered. Adam had almost forgotten, with all the talk about Nick and Chimera he thought those men to be of secondary importance.

“Yeah what about them?”

“Apparently they were after your friends as well...” Mario interrupted quietly.

Adam went blank; he felt a sharpening cold chill course through his spine.

“Are they alright?” But Mario and Stephen didn’t respond, it was obvious they were reluctant to answer.

“They are alright though?!” Stephen just looked at Mario as they both remained quiet.

“No...its not possible!” Adam’s voice began to increase.

“Adam...I’m sorry. But they were...” Stephen cut Mario off just by waving his hand. Adam quickly reacted by throwing his fist into the cushion of the couch. He began to break down, tears started to build just under his pupils. Sharon and Heather both in the kitchen glanced in to see him in pain.

“You go...” Heather said.

Sharon turned to look at Heather a bit confused.

“Are you sure? I mean...”

“I’m fine, we’re just friends. He’s obviously taking a liking to you and he needs you.” Heather replied as she placed her hand on Sharon’s timid shoulder. Sharon nodded as he headed into the living room. Adam glanced at her briefly; Sharon tried to smile but didn’t think it was fitting. Instead she just embraced him tightly while Stephen and Mario watch with grief. Stephen’s fists were shaking, he was always professional when it mattered most and was trying not to show his own anger.

“We were right there....! Right there....” The words stumbled out of his mouth. Sharon just continued to embrace him refusing to let him go.

“This is my entire fault! If I didn’t make him tell me everything...”

“Sssh...it’s not your fault...He came to you and did it of his own accord. There was nothing you could have done. You would have died too if you stayed. Your destiny is far too important; there are still great things you have left to do.” Sharon replied.

“They’ll pay...I swear once I find out who did this then they’ll pay..”

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“Were you aware that neither of us could take over Genesis without the other?” Severen’s voice boomed in his office.

“I was aware brother. Let Luscious work Genesis. I have yet to finish my mission; it’s too early for me to come back now.” Severen’s brother replied.

“I’m not sure what Luscious is planning to do with Project C-2, I know he intends on having it destroy Chimera, but I’m not sure that’s the end of it. If C-2 manages to destroy Chimera then it will undoubtedly be the most powerful MF and pilot combination ever created. I’m not sure if it will be controllable, I’m afraid if we let C-2 out into the open that it will just follow in Chimera’s footsteps and go berserk.”

“Did Chimera go berserk?” His brother asked once again.

“What are you talking about?”

“What if all of this, everything that has happened was perfectly planned out?”

“If that’s the case then...”

“Don’t worry so much. I’ll continue to do my part from the cockpit; everything is going according to plan. I’m your twin brother, you’d think that’d you trust me more.”

“It’s not that I don’t trust you...I just feel so useless.” Severen replied.

“Just learn from Luscious. You figure out the business end I’ll continue to learn about the more direct side of our business.”

“Just be careful brother. Mars isn’t a safe place.”

“I think I’m aware of that. I’ll be fine. No one suspects a thing.”

It was eerily quiet in the city, something that doesn’t happen much too often. And tonight wouldn’t be an exception for long. The lights throughout the city began to flicker abruptly. Everyone in the streets of Manhattan stopped and began to look around in confusion. Then the ground began to shake a bit, nothing too violent but a small tremor. Then suddenly a low pitched heavy hitting sound engulfed the city. It was the sound of MF boosters. As everyone quickly found themselves staring into the sky there it was, the shadow of a sleek MF hovering in the moon’s light. Its six wings stretching outwards through the sky as everyone could have sworn to hear the demonic form howling. Glowing spectacles of crimson energy began to emanate from the tips of the wings accompanied by a soft humming sound. It didn’t take a genius to figure out what was going on as mass panic erupted through the streets of New York. But there wasn’t any safe haven for the people to go. Their fate was sealed. Hundreds of crisp thin beams of energy shot through the sky, tearing through buildings and exploding into the concrete. Smoke along with raging torrents of fire quickly rolled over the streets of New York as people were flung into the air by the constant explosions eroding the ground. It didn’t take long for camera crews and news reporters to find their way to the scene filming.

“This is Stephanie Ambrose reporting live from downtown Manhattan where...AHH!” The reporter shrieked as a minor explosion occurred a few feet from her position causing her skirt to flap in the wind.

*Humans are such filthy creatures. Annihilate them all.*

Nick remained expressionless as his hands firmly wrapped around the throttles.

*This city is full of sin...*

“This city is full of sin.”

Chimera’s wings retracted as the crimson MF flew towards the city. As it made its way it was quickly thrown off course by hundreds of chrome missiles that impacted along the side of its core. The damage was minimal, barely any scratches but that wasn’t the point. Someone had dared to attack him. Nick wouldn’t stand for that.

*Who dares!?*

“Who dares!?”

As Nick turned around he saw another MF hovering in the darkened sky. It was a medium build MF black in color with highlights of blue and covered in missile packs. The MF raised its assault rifle pointing it at Chimera.

*You are my enemy.*

“You are my enemy.” The other pilot spoke in the same eerie dual voice that Nick spoke in. Nick smirked as he instantly figured everything out.

“So, you’re my successor huh? I didn’t think they would have made another one so quickly.” Chimera’s wings abruptly shot forward and fired. The opposite MF quickly reacted by firing hundreds of missiles.

Stephen, Mario, Heather, Adam and Sharon stood in the living room as they watched the news coverage. They were all shocked to see the Chimera back on Earth.

“Stephen?” Adam mumbled.

“We’re going. We’ll handle this. You go to Genesis and see what you can find out on Nick.” Stephen said.

“No. I’m going with you!” Adam barked back.

“What are you going to do? Throw rocks at it?”

Adam remained quiet and sighed.

“Adam, it’s only natural. You don’t have an MF. You’d just be putting yourself at risk if you went.” Heather replied.

“I know...just be careful.” Adam mentioned as he watched the three of them run out the door. Adam then glanced back at Sharon and smiled.

“Well I guess we’re going to see your father then. I hope he can help.”

“I’m sure he can, and I’m sure he will.”

## Chapter Twenty-Two: Return to the Skies

Missiles covered the New York sky line. The trails of caliginous smoke that followed each metallic warhead polluted the sky. Spectators continued to run in all directions screaming for their lives. Panic is an emotion that causes ignorance and forces people to rely on their primal instinct; to survive. Regardless of the severe danger that was present news reporters continued to stay on the scene in hopes that their bravery would be commended; fame was a horrid thing that like panic tends to bring the worst out in people. Chimera sped past Times Square causing every glass window to shatter into thousands of pieces that sprinkled onto the people below. The gusts of winds created by the velocity of the crimson machine swept through the streets knocking people to the ground. Nick looked over his left shoulder as he watched hundreds of missiles heading straight for him.

“If this is the best you can do then I fear for your life.”

Just as the missiles approached Chimera’s energy shield quickly engaged covering the MF in a neon glowing bubble of crimson energy. Every missile exploded as they came in contact with the outer layer of the energy shield. Smoldering pieces of debris shot to the ground as the engaging MF shot up firing the assault rifle, after the shield disengaged Chimera zoomed to the right and then to the left in a zigzag pattern avoiding every shot fired. Nick had hoped that since this was another machine in Chimera’s image that it would be some kind of challenge; he was incredibly disappointed.

The black and dark blue MF shifted to the right just as Chimera neared. The left leg of the MF kicked forward slamming its heavy armor into the Chimera's core knocking backwards in the sky. As Chimera flew on its back open for attack the black MF instinctively launched its missile packs once again. Just as the missiles left their launching pads constant beams of energy tore through each and every one of them. The hundreds of small explosions rocked the black MF causing it to freefall to the ground.

"Damn it! I can do better than this! I have 98% hit accuracy!"

The pilot quickly forced the MF to recover and regain its altitude. Just as it recovered Chimera boosted in front slashing the energy lance. The black MF barely avoided the attack by causing the boosters to ignite with even more power. Nick followed his opponent's movements and quickly retaliated by firing the cannons on the tips of the wings. The black MF managed to avoid most of the beams but got caught by a few beams.

"How dare you touch Magna Star! I will kill you!"

Luscious smiled as he sat and watched the satellite feed of the battle. Severen sat next to the business man watching as well. He had mixed feelings about the whole situation but there wasn't much he could, as long as his brother was in the cockpit of an MF he couldn't do anything but follow Luscious' directions.

"What's wrong?" Luscious asked just as he noticed the gloomy look covering Severen's face.

"It's nothing..."

"You're a terrible liar. Are you still bothered by this?"

"No, it's just that C-2 isn't fairing very well, as a matter of fact he is getting tossed aside like he's nothing."

"You're right. But this is trial and error so we'll just learn. Although I will say that in most cases the original is always superior to the sequel."

Severen agreed, even though Mike's performance tests and synchronization tests were much better than Nick's, Nick was still winning. There was something about Nick, something unique that Mike obviously did not possess.

"Do you think Mike's performance has anything to do with the incident at the restaurant?"

Luscious laughed at the very idea of that.

"Of course not. His memory was completely erased and his synchronization with Magna Star is 100% unlike Nick's 99.6%. Mike no longer has any human emotions other than anger. But maybe...just maybe some emotions other than anger are needed to pilot the Chimera series. Oh well, all we can do is just sit here and watch the show."

"But something else is bugging me. What about the government? I mean is this good that every person in every home is seeing this? Everyone will be aware of Chimera's existence and will more than likely start asking questions."

"I agree. However that is the government's problem, not ours. They asked us to take it down, and I intend to do just that; take it down, by any means necessary." Luscious replied.

It wasn't long before Stephen, Mario and Heather found themselves on a naval cruiser just off the Long Island Sound. Normally naval cruisers wouldn't dock near the island but it was essential that the only MF pilots in the region had quick access to their units. Stephen stared at his newly updated Alpha, he sighed; it was a Genesis design after all, like every other MF the military used. His new Alpha was essentially the same but with improved armor. The jetpack now had a more fierce thrust, attached to the side of both arms was a small angular energy/solid shield hybrid. At any time energy could be created to surround the shield in order to nullify energy beams while the solid portion of the shield added extra support. The most notable feature of this hybrid shield was the addition of a new type of weapon, an energy boomerang. The sharp metallic boomerang would launch out of an incision in the shield and fall directly into the hand. Once activated a beam of intense energy would ignite from one end of the boomerang, when thrown it could slice through any object and then returns back to its point of origin on a curved course.



Mario had been without an MF since he left the EAP and now was the time for him to be introduced to his new machine. One that he hoped would suit him well. The fact that the MF was lightly armored didn't bother him; it was classified as a light weight frame this meant he had speed, and in his eyes speed determines the victor. Attached to the left arm was a solid shield that encased a deadly back up laser rifle. The rifle was thin along with being lightly weighted. Two energy sabers were stored on the back of the core in between a large positron energy cannon that required both arms of the MF to be used and a missile launcher. His main weapon would be his dual plasma cannon that was held in the right hand of his MF; Anima. As a bonus both arms came equipped with an elongated metallic whip that sent a surge of energy into whatever it grasped. Mario stood at the edge of his MF's feet polishing the crystalline armor with a wash cloth. Heather didn't waste any time and found herself strapped in Blue Angel's cockpit. Caleb had already returned to Mars and was unable to assist in the mission.

"Everyone is aware of what is happening right now right?" Stephen's voice boomed forth through the communications link. Mario heard the echo of his voice and quickly grabbed the cable and began to head to his cockpit.

Once Mario entered his cockpit images of New York appeared on everyone's display screen. Along with video footage of the battle that was taking place statistics of the unknown MF were posted.

"Currently Chimera is engaging with an unknown MF. Keep in mind that our objective does not concern the unknown, only Chimera. Heather, you're MF isn't equipped for this kind of battle. You will support us from a safe distance as a sniper while Mario and I engage Chimera."

"Roger." Heather nodded as she understood that was the polite way of saying "*you'll just get killed*".

"So we get to have all the fun huh?" Mario interrupted.

"Heh, I wouldn't consider this fun; but yeah we get to directly engage Chimera."

"Alright then let's have some fun...Mario Liberalis; Anima launching!"

Stephen smirked as he watched Anima quickly boost into the sky.

"Remember, this is a highly dangerous mission, we need to make sure not to cause any damage to the city. There are still civilians in the vicinity; this will be a strictly aerial battle! Stephen Novus; Alpha launching!"

"Don't worry; I'll make sure not to break anything." Heather Pertinacia; Blue Angel launching!"

Alpha quickly caught up with Anima while Blue Angel veered off course to find suitable sniping grounds. In the distance they were able to see blinding explosions lighting up the sky as Magna Star and Chimera continued to battle.

"You cannot defeat me..." Nick replied, he already knew how this battle would end. Even if his opponent was just like him, he wasn't as good as him. Magna Star had taken some damage, nothing serious but things still weren't looking good. Mike's hands pulled back on the throttle as he followed his AI counterpart's instructions. This was the first time he had piloted Magna Star as a hybrid pilot, he wasn't used to the cold raspy inner voice telling him scenarios of his actions within seconds; it was distracting.

Magna Star had run out of missiles, its main and best offensive quality was reduced to nothing more than dead weight. The assault rifle wasn't doing too well either as it only had about 20 rounds left. The way Chimera moved was too fast, no matter how accurate Mike would be he still ended up missing. Mike's eyes widened as Chimera ended up floating directly in front of his core. Because he wasn't completely human anymore he didn't experience any type of fear, he was empty, a soulless shell of his former self. Magna Star's left leg quickly reacted and swung only to be hit with six beams of energy from the wings. In seconds the leg exploded with a fury of fire, Magna Star fell backwards, as it fell from the sky tons of clouded smoke emanated from the wound. Mike's eyes widened as he watched Magna Star's left leg fall to the ground in a blaze of fire.

As he clutched for dear life inside the cockpit Chimera flew around the falling Magna Star and prepared to finish it and Mike off. At that moment a massive beam of positron energy exploded on the back of Chimera knocking it off balance. Mike recovered just as Chimera was hit and quickly fired the

assault rifle at close range. Mike ignored the screen as it continued to flash warnings at the declining ammo supply. Finally it got to the point where Magna Star was pulled the trigger of an empty rifle into a mass of smoke. Anima boosted towards Magna Star with a trail of smoke flowing out from the barrel of the massive cannon.

“Wow that was close.”

Mike quickly turned around to take notice of Anima.

*Leave, you're interfering...*

“Leave, you're interfering...” Mike's dual layered voice freaked out Mario at first.

“This voice...it's the same as Chimera's...what does that mean?”

Magna Star dropped the intense rifle as both hands grabbed onto two energy sabers. Just as both sabers slashed through the sky Anima strafed to the left with a flash completely avoiding the attack.

“What the hell?! I'm here to help you!”

“Insignificant human; Worry about yourself before concerning yourself with the wellbeing of others.” Nick's voice exploded forward as did Chimera. The demonic like MF headed straight for Anima with the energy lance extended and prepared to strike. Just then Magna Star boosted towards Chimera slashing with both energy sabers only for Nick to engage the energy shield which deflected Magna Star like a rubber ball. Mario quickly sent out both metallic whips. The whips constantly flung themselves towards Chimera but were sent bouncing off the shield every single time. Anima then fired the dual plasma but Chimera strafed to the right dodging the blast. Mario's eyes widened as he watched his beam tear through one of the buildings. A flash of fire erupted out from the building as massive pieces of debris instantly fell towards the ground. The people on the street were paralyzed with fear and couldn't move. Their eyes widening as the massive pieces of metal and concrete continued to fall. A few hundred feet above the ground the debris were engulfed in a massive beam of cerulean energy. The intensity of the beam caused the people to fall to their hands and knees. Nothing more than shards of glass poured onto their fallen bodies along with slowly dispersing smoke. Nick paid no attention to the small explosion behind him, he stayed focus on his new target; Anima.

Mario sighed in relief but found himself distracted. Just as Chimera's right arm began to descend with the energy the arm was sent backwards as a metallic blade came in contact with it. The metallic blade bounced off the arm and flung back to Alpha's hand. Stephen smirked as he stared at Chimera.

“You're here too I see.” Nick wasn't expecting Stephen to show up again, not after the beating he had taken in their previous encounter.

The energy shield around Chimera diminished; Mario took his chance and fired the dual plasma rifle. The thick beam of blue energy exploded on the injured right arm of Chimera. The blast wasn't enough to completely disable the arm but the top layer of armor was cracked and singed. Nick glanced at Chimera's right arm and laughed.

“Is that the best you have?” Chimera then slashed through Anima's right arm with the energy lance. Mario screamed in frustration as his head was sent into the display screen from the explosion.

“MARIO!” Stephen yelled as he stepped on the accelerators.

Alpha flew towards Chimera firing the energy rifle along with the two energy cannons on the core. The three beams of crimson energy hit the back of Chimera but did little damage. Nick's anger continued to fill, Chimera's wings flipped open and fired at Alpha. With quick maneuvering Stephen avoided the blasts. The two energy boomerangs fell into Alpha's metallic hands as the MF swung both arms. The two weapons tore through the sky and ended up slicing through one wing on Chimera. Chimera jerked around and then fired its own energy rifle destroying the two energy boomerangs just as they reached Alpha's hand. The explosions sent Alpha flying towards the ground.

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Adam followed Sharon as they entered through the back door of Genesis' MF hanger. Adam was kind of confused on why Professor Amare would want to meet him in an MF hanger. But he trusted both Sharon and her father and just dismissed the irregularity.

"This is it. Come on, dad's waiting." Sharon replied softly.

"Of course...but why would you're dad want to meet with me in an MF hanger? I mean I just want to ask him some questions regarding Nick."

"I'm not sure why either. I'm sure he'll explain it though come on."

Sharon opened the door and Adam followed. Upon first entry the hanger was saturated in darkness. In the right hand corner of the hanger a small focused beam of light surrounded a man in a lab coat standing by a desk.

"Professor?" Adam shouted.

Professor Amare slowly turned around and nodded. He was happy that Adam could make it.

"Adam...I'm glad you made it. Now hurry there isn't much time." It was obvious that something wasn't exactly normal, but then again with the recent events what could be defined as normal.

Both Adam and Sharon ran towards the Professor. In the process of running Adam's knees buckled and he stumbled nearly falling to the ground. But Sharon quickly grabbed hold of his right arm that was flung upwards.

"Don't overdo it, you're still not 100%." Sharon mentioned.

Adam smiled while rubbing the back of his head. He kept forgetting about his injuries.

"I'm fine, thanks."

"Hurry you two." The Professor said from the background. There was no sense in running since he was no more than 6 feet away. As Adam got back up his eyes wandered off to the side. There was a looming shadow just on the other side of the metallic guard rail. He couldn't quite make out what it was, but he could hardly keep his eyes off it. Soon Professor Amare's hand was placed on Adam's timid shoulder. Adam glanced over his shoulder, he saw the troubles of a man, the Professor's eyes were shaking and he sickly in general.

"Professor? Are you ok?"

"It's nothing. There's no time. Chimera is rampaging through New York."

"I know. But my brother and the rest of the MF pilots in New York left to engage it." Adam replied.

"I'm fully aware of it. But they're not enough. Project C-2 has been completed and is also out there."

Adam became frozen in his position. He didn't know what Project C-2 was, but it wasn't hard to figure out. He had never expected Genesis to make another one, this only complicated things more. He broke out of his frozen state consumed by his anger; both his fists were shaking as they couldn't mask his overflowing state of anger.

"They made another one?! Why? Why would they make another one knowing what happened with my brother?" Adam blurted out.

"I see...so you're aware that Nick is Chimera's pilot."

Adam turned to look at Professor Amare and nodded.

"Yeah, I'm aware of that. I'm also aware that he was an intern like me...but I don't know how that's possible. He disappeared when I was 5."

"Yes I know that too. He never disappeared Adam...he willingly left to work with Genesis alongside your parents."

Adam couldn't believe what he was hearing; both he and Stephen thought their parents died in a car accident after Adam was born. They all lived with their uncle after that. But if what Professor Amare was saying then everything he knew growing up was a lie.

"How is that possible...no, that's not possible, my parents died in a car accident."

"No they didn't Adam...I worked alongside them years ago developing an MF that was never released to Genesis. Nick was helping us at the time; he was 15 at the time and you were 11. The government soon came to us looking for the ultimate machine that would be able to crush our enemies

with a mere thought. However the machine wasn't ready. The government continued to talk referring to Atlas and how if we were to harness its power that they would be unbeatable."

"Atlas? The A.I. that revolted..." Adam mumbled.

"Yes, that is correct. So our funding was cut and your parents lost their job. Fortunately I managed to strike a deal with the head of the science department and I kept my job. Your parents were at their financial end when Genesis came to them with an offer. They remembered how Nick was familiar with the machine we were building and they gave him a job as an intern. However they paid him so he could support the family. However, after about a year at Genesis the higher ups realized his potential in an MF and transferred him the Project C development team. It was there where he became the pilot of Chimera and constantly trained. It wasn't long before he synchronized with the A.I., but only at 99.6%. He still had a shred of humanity left within his body. With your brother missing for days your parents stormed the head office of Genesis in a fit of rage...they were shot on site. Both you and your brother were taken to this very facility, instead of killing you both in order to erase every last evidence of their crime they manipulated your memories; giving you the memory of your brother disappearing. That is what truly happened."

Adam collapsed to the ground in complete disbelief. Sharon too was appalled at what had transpired. She fell to the ground next to him so she could embrace and comfort him. Adam remained quiet just staring at the massive figure that stood on the other side of the guard rail.

"Adam I know this is a lot to take in but you need to ignore it right now. You're brother and the rest of this city needs your help!"

Adam slowly glanced back at Professor Amare and gave a fake chuckle. One that represented the inferiority that he felt at this time; people messed with his memories, he didn't know what was real and what wasn't anymore.

"I'm sorry Professor...but Blue Dragon was destroyed. I don't think throwing rocks at Chimera will help one bit." Adam replied sarcastically.

"I am well aware of your plight. That's why I had this prepared." With a quick flick of his wrist Professor Amare turned on the lights of the hanger. Adam's eyes slowly widened as they focused on the massive machine that stared back at him.

"Blue Dragon...?" Adam mumbled.

"Not quite...this is NVSX014A-Drakon. But it does resemble Blue Dragon remarkably. As you can see the frame is the same as is the color as your old Blue Dragon. The dual energy rifles are the same, only with added ammo and attack power. The thigh cannons on this model are thinner and much lighter than the ones on your other Blue Dragon."

Adam with the help of Sharon stood up from the ground as he gawked at the machine in front of him. It was the same for the most part with one huge difference. Eight azure wings extended off the back of the core. The wings weren't demonic in form like Chimera's they were more angular matching the design of the rest of the frame. He quickly turned around staring at the Professor.

"Is that?"

"Yes, that is the OWS, Orbital Wing System. Eight miniature weapon pods detach from your wing binder and lock onto the target and are able to fire automatically, each miniature weapon pod has their own mini-generator along with FCS. They will attack relentlessly whoever you lock them on to prior to their launch. There is also system integrated into your cockpit that allows you to increase the output of your frame along with the reaction time between your actions and the machine's responses. It reduces the natural lag time between you and the frame. In a sense the second you touch a throttle, move it in a certain way the frame will predict what you're going to do based on the slight adjustments of pressure to the throttles and will react on it."

"Predict what I'm going to tell it to do? Is that even possible?"

"Don't strain yourself with the specifics. You don't have much time. Just trust in your ability and you'll do fine. Now go! There isn't much time!" The Professor yelled. Adam nodded.

"Thank you."

Adam said as he approached the lift that would take him to Blue Dragon's cockpit. Just as he stepped onto the lift Sharon ran up to him grabbing onto his body.

"Don't die!" Sharon screamed. Adam smiled placing his arms on her shoulder. Sharon glanced up at Adam's face. There was a moment of silence as their faces approached one another. Professor Amare watched from the back as Adam and Sharon kissed. Slowly pushing Sharon away he smirked.

"Don't worry. I'm coming back."

Adam stared at the inside of his cockpit; it was essentially the same as before only with a bigger interior design and much more room. He smiled as he switched on the power source, a flashing spec of light emanated on the head unit of Blue Dragon. Adam's hands pushed the throttles forward and instantly the boosters began to flicker until they full ignited.

"Adam Novus, Blue Dragon launching!"

### **Chapter Twenty-Three: Azure Wings in the Darkened Sky**

The battle wasn't letting up for a second. The chaos continued to loom over the people of New York. Reporters refused to move, they believed the story needed to be broadcasted. The naval fleets of the TA had finally made their way to Manhattan, their ships floating on the edges of the state waiting for further instructions. Their orders were to hold support the MFs if needed.

Chimera flew in and out of beams of energy while making its way towards Alpha. Stephen at the last second docked the laser rifles and extended the energy shield. A glowing flat robust beam of energy ignited surrounded both the right and left arm. As Chimera descended while swinging the energy lance, the two energy shields covered the core of Alpha. Alpha's arms rubbed against one another in order to create a small barrier which prevented the energy lance from slicing through the MF. Nick struggled with the throttles trying desperately to break through the shield but to no avail. His eyes shifted to the right taking notice of Anima who was approaching at great speeds. Mario locked onto Chimera and fired the dual plasma rifle attached to the right arm. The double layered beam dissipated just as it reached Chimera. Nick smirked; the energy barrier Chimera could create was unbreakable. Stephen took a chance and swung the left leg of Alpha, the crimson leg did nothing but bounce off the energy barrier that now engulfed Chimera. .

“You would think by now that you would realize that my barrier is unbreakable.”

Stephen sneered at his brother’s arrogance; Alpha’s boosters quickly ignited forcing Alpha to move forward with tremendous velocity. He had an idea. Nick sighed as he remained in the comfort of his energy barrier until he was proven wrong. Nick’s eyes widened as he jumped from the cushion of his seat to stare at Alpha doing the impossible. A gap began to open in the energy barrier as both of Alpha’s arms began to move through. The energy shields on Alpha managed to absorb the outer layer of energy that was fueling Chimera’s energy barrier and fuse it with its own torrent of energy. Alpha suddenly found itself inside the barrier and quickly reacted. Both energy boomerangs descended into the metallic hands of Alpha. Stephen remained calm, this was the first real opportunity he had found since the beginning of the fight; there was no way he was going to waste it. Both arms swung across the chest of Chimera, the sharp edges of the boomerangs cut through the outer layer of armor that made Chimera. The force of the attack caused Chimera to fall backwards spinning out of control. With no hesitation in mind Stephen continued his onslaught. With the energy in the boomerangs engaged the arms of Alpha extended backwards winding up and then quickly threw both boomerangs in succession at the falling Chimera. As each boomerang cut through the air, it appeared that Chimera wouldn’t be able to defend. Abruptly Magna Star boosted in front of Chimera and deflected the boomerangs back to Alpha.

“Stay away from him! I am the one that will beat him!” Mike screamed. Stephen punched the side of his console in anger as Alpha caught the boomerangs.

“Heather!” Stephen screamed.

“Yeah?” Heather hadn’t been contacted once since the fight begun and she was quite taken back by this sudden communication.

“Can you take out that unknown MF? It’s not directly attacking us, but its getting in our way!” Stephen screamed.

Heather nodded. “I can do it.”

“Good. Stephen out.”

Heather smiled as her sniper scope slowly descended from the ceiling of her cockpit. The massive rail gun cannon flipped over Blue Angel’s shoulder as the MF took a knee.

“Damn this guy!” Mario screamed as he engaged Magna Star. Both of them were caught in flaring sparks of energy that bounced out from their colliding energy sabers. Mike refused to give up, it was supposed to be him to defeat Chimera, and he wouldn’t let anyone else take that from him.

Alpha’s boosters flared open as the MF flew towards Chimera. Nick had recovered thanks to the intrusion of Magna Star. Infuriated by the attack from his brother he focused solely on Stephen. His vision was blurred with a tint of red, in his opinion it was over. Chimera’s demonic wings shot out as each tip began to flash crimson. Stephen saw this and quickly engaged the shields once again. The night sky changed to a bright red color as the wings on Chimera continued to fire round after round without stopping. Seemingly hundreds of energy beams blazed through the city tearing through buildings, causing more debris to fall to the ground. Stephen gasped in horror; he had no time to save any of the people. Every time Alpha attempted to move in the way of the debris dozens of energy beams shot exploding on the outer edges of the shield. Chimera hovered just above Times Square as its energy cannons continued to fire all over the city. Beams shot through the right arm unit of Magna Star and the left leg unit of Anima causing an explosion that flung the two towards the ground. Alpha was the only MF still flying in the sky.

“Damnit! I can’t get close!” Stephen screamed.

Hundreds of people watched in terror as they saw the massive debris of metal fall through the sky. But luck was once again on their side, every piece of debris exploded into thousands of tiny pieces. Out from the massive clouds of darkened smoke that appeared after each piece of debris broke came orb like cannons that hovered through the sky. Everyone quickly stopped what they were doing and quickly gave these thin sleek weapons all their attention.

“Another one?” Nick finally stopped launching his attacks on Alpha but it didn’t make a difference. Stephen was also too busy trying to find out what had just happened.

“Over there!” Mario screamed. He was the first to see it, the sleek looking MF that hovered above Chimera and Alpha hidden by the darkness of the night. As the moon slowly moved out from the passing clouds its own reflected light revealed the MF in question.

“It...it couldn’t be...Blue Dragon...Adam?” Stephen yelled.

Nick looked back at Alpha in confusion. He was fully aware that he destroyed Blue Dragon back on Mars. There was no way that MF could have been restored in such a short period of time. The eight hovering orbital wings quickly flew back towards Blue Dragon and connected to the back of the wings. Blue Dragon floated above everything, it appeared to be nothing more than a silhouette in the beauty of the moon with the eight wings extending outwards while spheres of cerulean energy flowed outwards; it was a sight to behold.

“I’ll take care of this one.” Adam mentioned softly while holding the right side of his rib cage. He continually forgot that he wasn’t fully healed, but none of that mattered now. His feet pressed down on the accelerators and the wings flung upwards as the intense blue flames of his boosters increased in size. Blue Dragon sped passed Alpha; the sheer speed of the MF caused Alpha to lose its stability. Stephen did nothing but stare in awe. Nick smirked as he snapped out of his trance and fired the energy cannons on the wings once again.

“A new MF won’t be enough to defeat me brother...”

“I know that.” Adam replied while maneuvering Blue Dragon around every round of energy that was flung his way. Blue Dragon spun sideways avoiding a few more energy beams and then the wings quickly opened up releasing the orbital wings. The eight wings quickly departed from Blue Dragon and sped towards Chimera firing beams of energy while flying around the beams shot towards them. Chimera quickly went on the defensive avoiding every beam it could. Blue Dragon then sped passed; the blue MF quickly turned around to face Chimera and fired the two thigh cannons. The two cerulean beams of energy exploded on the core of Chimera flinging it backwards. Just as Chimera descended the orbital wings flew around the demonic MF and began to pound on it relentlessly. Hundreds of ceruleans beams of energy impacted on the armor of Chimera, inside the cockpit Nick was given little time to react as his own body was thrown from side to side crashing into one side display and the other.

“DAMN IT!” Nick screamed. Chimera quickly reacted to the increase in emotions being exhibited by Nick. The energy barrier instantly expanded deflecting every beam of energy being tossed at it. Seeing this Adam called back the orbital wings and continued to head towards Chimera. Stephen managed to shake off his amazement and joined his brother.

“What the hell is that?” Stephen yelled. Adam smiled at the appearance of his brother’s face on his display screen.

“It’s a gift. I’ll tell you more about it after we take down Chimera!” Adam replied.

Stephen smiled, his brother was maturing. It was obvious he was no longer fueled by the petty desire of revenge. Adam recognized the threat this thing was to humanity as a society and he made it his job to protect that society.

Both Anima and Magna Star appeared to be out of the battle, at least for the time being. Heather continued to watch from a safe distance, she couldn’t believe that was Adam.

Suddenly the energy barrier dissolved and Chimera went back on the offensive. Nick swung the energy lance just missing Blue Dragon. Adam then released the orbital wings once again and then locked onto Chimera with the thigh cannons along with the dual energy rifles. Four beams of energy fired instantly from Blue Dragon and along with the eight beams of energy shot from the wings all exploded on the back of Chimera. Massive flames ruptured out from the back of Chimera as a thick cloud of charcoal like smoke blanketed the MF. Out from the smoke fell the two sets of wings singed and barely recognizable. Adam began to pant excessively, his energy was shot nearly to the red zone and the Angel

system was taking its toll on his body. His vision began to become impaired and near-sided. His breaths were becoming heavy and long, he glanced to his side and couldn't be happier to see Alpha.

"Stephen... \*cough\*... I need a \*cough\* break... \*cough\* \*cough\* I'm not used to this system yet. I need to \*cough\* recharge..." Adam said as he stumbled his words. Stephen just nodded and sped passed by Blue Dragon. Adam smiled as the orbital wings interlocked with the wings on Blue Dragon. The blue MF slowly descended to the city streets in the middle of Times Square to recharge its energy.

Alpha flew directly into the searing cloud of smoked and found Chimera still falling from the previous intense attack. Nick's eyes were shut and blood trickled down his face. He was unconscious, but the AI part of him was still active.

*This isn't possible... humans cannot have this much power...*

Chimera's head unit flashed crimson as the MF awoke. At that moment Alpha surged passed Chimera slashing at it with both energy sabers. As time slowed down both of Chimera's arms flew off in a fit of rage. Wires flung mercilessly while blazes of fire fell to the ground engulfing pieces of metallic debris. Nick slowly began to wake up, his eyes continued to blink in an attempt to squeeze the blood that poured into it out. His hands tightened around his throttles and pulled them inwards. Chimera strafed to the right and then boosted out of the smoke and into the blackened sky. Stephen quickly turned around to watch Chimera fly off into the distance. He then glanced back at Blue Dragon which had kneeled down in Times Square; he smiled. He had a feeling that things would be ok from now on.

Magna Star powered up as Mike saw Chimera fly away. He failed his mission, he was unable to defeat Chimera but the very essence of the AI inside his brain was compelled by the new MF that appeared and did what the rest of them couldn't do in a matter of minutes.

"That is what I must do... I need to defeat that machine before I can hope to achieve my primary objective." Mike said this as his boosters ignited. Mario just watched from his perched position as Magna Star took off into the sky.

"Well there goes another problem that we're going to have to deal with." He said with a sigh. But he soon smiled as Alpha landed next to him. Mario stood up from his seated position near the head of his core as Stephen stood out from his cockpit.

"Looks like your brother's got a new toy."

"Yeah it would appear so huh?"

"We have another problem with that rogue MF now, you know that right?"

Stephen simply nodded towards Mario. "I know... I know."

Adam descended to the ruined concrete of Times Square. And within mere moments of his feet touching the ground he became over run by civilians and reporters alike. His world began to spin relentlessly and he passed out falling to the cold frigid ground. It wasn't too long after that did it begin to rain.



## **Chapter Twenty-Four**

New York appeared to be in shambles after the unexpected attack earlier. But regardless of the attack the city continued to go about its business. Times Square was nearly destroyed; buildings toppled a few days after the battle. Their foundations were severely damaged but still held for a few days. The people had been evacuated from the blocks around the business improvement district mainly because of the fears felt by the firemen and police officers. Luckily thanks to their fears thousands of lives were saved. The rest of the city was still occupied and continued their day to day business, but Times Square was quarantined with police tape and construction crews. It would be months before the center of New York could be restored to its splendor; not many cared, the importance of life was on their minds. The President made an appearance the following day of the battle to give a speech, his speech was nothing more than a massive publicity stunt as he waved his hands, offered financial support to the people who sustained injuries or lost their apartments.

Luscious along with Severen and several older men stood on top of Genesis' head building which was located several blocks away from the tragedy. Luscious' dark crisp hair blowing through the wind violently while his face angled upwards and his eyes shut; he seemed to enjoy the fresh air. Severen on the other hand was not as relaxed, the men standing behind them were representatives from the TA military. General Rutice appeared to be one of the men present, along with politicians from Washington.

“Luscious, we’ve been waiting for nearly an hour. Just why did you ask us to come up here? We have more important things to take care of, like cleaning up your mess.” General Rutice said. It was obvious that the higher ups in the military were clearly aware of Chimera and its purpose. Luscious did nothing more than smile as his eyes opened. In plain sight was the landmark of destruction, his creation did this, and in such a stylistic fashion. Severen continued to look back and forth between Luscious and the military General. He was perspiring; his hair which was once vibrant and luminous was now dull and pallid.

“I apologize General...we were sure that C-2 would have been able to stop Chimera...” Severen appeared to be begging although he wasn’t on his knees, but he lacked that certain quality that made a leader.

“You’re sorry? Hehe, are you aware of how much money we put into your project?” General Rutice remained in a military stance that made him even more intimidating. His voice was loud and thunderous; Severen slowly stepped back a few feet, if there wasn’t a guard rail he would have stepped off the edge of the building. He was scared; here was one of this country’s most renowned military Generals standing before him extremely upset. Luscious continued to smirk and even let out a few chuckles. General Rutice glanced looking at the back of Luscious, distracted by the random movements that were made by his long dark trench coat.

“Luscious? Do you honestly expect us to deal with some kid? We want answers and I’m sure you’re the only one who can deliver them!” General Rutice continued to badger the leaders of Genesis with his rough sounding voice. The politicians behind him refused to do any talking; most of them were in their early 70’s and didn’t know much about the military and MF’s in general. They just gave funding where ever they were told to.

Once again Luscious began to laugh, this time it was louder and more sadistic than before. General Rutice’s anger boiled, he was fed up with the game that Luscious was playing. His immense stature began to move towards the seemingly helpless Luscious. Just as the behemoth’s hand began to fall towards Luscious’ shoulder, Rutice’s eyes widened as Luscious abruptly turned around grabbing hold of the General’s hand. Luscious smirked as his fingers began to squeeze tightly around the massive hand of General Rutice. The General cringed, his eyes squinting and his face taking an eerie red glow along the outer edges of his cheeks.

“Luscious?” The General managed to speak but used the rest of his energy to get out of Luscious’ grip.

“I apologize General; I’ve been working out a lot more lately. You know, to release the stress.” Luscious replied in a near sarcastic way.

General Rutice backed away from Luscious while holding his right hand close to his body.

“I believe the answer to your previous question is about 2.3 billion dollars correct?” Luscious replied.

“Yes...that seems about the right number...but your Project C-2 was nothing more than a failure. The original Chimera is more destructive and would be much better suited for our needs. You need to figure out a way to control that...ARG!!! Lus....\*cough\* luscious...” General Rutice collapsed to the ground while streams of blood flowed out from his chest. He hit the ground claspng tightly onto his chest as a pool of crimson blood slowly flowed out from his body. The politicians turned ghostly pale and slowly began to back away from the fallen General’s body. There stood Luscious holding a small pistol with smoke emanating from the barrel. He smirked yet again and began to laugh.

“I don’t need any pawn of the military telling me what I need to do. If I recall you guys come to me, if it wasn’t for my company’s technology you’re military wouldn’t be properly equipped for battle. The Chimera was your idea, I just followed the specifications you gave me, and this is the outcome. You can’t fully control something that has any shred of humanity or a soul left, regardless of how much Artificial intelligence is in him. The C-2 failed because it has no trace of any humanity, there is no soul left in it. However where you say it failed, I say it succeeded. It now has seen the Chimera’s strengths and its weaknesses. It will be able to properly analyze them and come up with an effective offensive strategy. So be patient, I assure you that when Chimera and C-2 meet again the outcome will not be the same.”

Luscious replied. The politicians just stood in silence; they didn't know what to say. They just nodded. Luscious' eyes thinned as he saw the group of elderly men just standing in front of him gawking like a child.

"Well? What else is there? Go back to Washington and await confirmation from me that C-2 is ready." His voice was stern and focused, unlike his joking persona from before. The politicians felt danger in the back of their spine and without looking back ran through the door leading back into the building. As they left Luscious glanced back at Severen and smiled.

"You worry too much. You're young; don't be so uptight around your clients. Remember they came to you first, once their sold on you then their all yours. You control their destiny. It'd be good for you to remember that. Now let's go back inside." Luscious said as he began to walk away. Severen just stood where he was staring at the lifeless body of General Rutice.

"Oh, don't worry about him, maintenance will clean him up. Now let's go, we have some data we need to analyze."

"Huh...oh, yes of course."

Adam's eyes slowly opened to once again find himself in a hospital bed. He smiled as he allowed his head to rest on top of the pillow. Sharon was sitting near his bed wrapped up in a cotton blanket. His head turned to the side so he could just admire her beauty. She looked to be a manifestation of innocence in her sleep. Her chest palpitating as she breathed and her face, smooth curves and good tan skin tones; she was beautiful. Adam then glanced up as the door opened revealing his brother.

"Hey you're awake." Stephen mentioned.

The sound of his voice caused Sharon to wake up, at first she just rubbed her eyes with the edge of her fingers then she outstretched her limbs.

"Yeah, please tell me I wasn't out for 2 weeks this time." Adam replied jokingly.

"Heh, no, not this time. Only a few days, the doctors said you suffered from some internal bleeding around your lungs. They don't know what caused it but they believe that some of your ribs cracked pushing the tips of the broken bones into the lung. But they said it was only brief and didn't cause too much damage. Again they have no clue what could have caused such strain. But I think I know the answer, you pushed yourself too far in that machine and broke under the strain of the gravitational forces."

Adam laughed until he tried to sit up; his eyes flinched from the pain. Immediately his left hand went to cover his right side just around the upper rib cage. He felt the looseness in his bone just under the bandages. He knew it was true, he wasn't ready for the Angel system and his body paid for it. Luckily for him he wasn't exposed to the Angel system for too long. But it was long enough for it to do some damage.

"Thanks to your stunt your leave of absence has been extended to 5 weeks now. But the damage to your rib cage isn't serious, it's only a minor fracture, but it's enough to keep you out of the cockpit for a good amount of time." Stephen replied.

Sharon remained quiet as she remained seated under the blanket. Adam sighed, he was afraid of this. He didn't like not being able to help; as it stood right now he was a liability every time he stepped into the cockpit. It wasn't something anyone would like to be seen as.

"I see. Damn and we were so close to taking out that Chimera this time too." Adam replied.

"Don't worry about the Chimera or what had happened. The fact of the matter is that you saved our lives, along with the lives of hundreds of people. You did your job, now just relax and we'll do ours." Stephen replied.

"Right...so can I go home or do I have to stay here?"

"You can leave; as a matter of fact we already signed your release papers. So get your ass out of bed and we'll take you home."

"Oh...Sharon, what about you? You going to go home?" Adam asked.

"For a bit yeah. I have to meet my dad at Genesis then we're supposed to head home on Long Island for the weekend. I'll call you to see how you're doing though." She replied as she folded the blanket up. Both Stephen and Sharon helped Adam get out of bed, but he pushed them both away as he

grabbed his jacket and walked out of the room. He was determined to walk on his own feet without the aid of anyone. Both Stephen and Sharon smiled.

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*That machine...I must first defeat that machine...then I will be able to complete my objective...*

The same thought continued to playback through Mike's head over and over like a broken record. He had no recollection of his life before the transition to C-2, but his grudge against the MF that beat Chimera resembled his rivalry with Adam when he was still human. Genesis had Mike sleeping in a large crystalline tube, outside the tube dozens of cables protruded from machines and into the tube itself. This was one way of monitoring Mike's status, even his thought processes. He didn't dream anymore or at least in the way that humans dream. His dreams were video feeds of the battle he had seen and participated in New York. It was a way for the AI to analyze the battle data and figure out a way to enhance its own performance. Professor Amare had found himself standing in the empty room staring at the C-2. His head bowed in shame, he could have prevented this from happening, but he was too weak to do anything. He sighed as he approached the control panel for C-2. This one panel monitored the life signs of the hybrid and could with a single switch cut off the AI for the project. With the AI cut off the human host would die. The AI was like a drug for a hybrid, at first it the effects aren't noticeable but after constant encounters with it the body needs it to survive. It was true that Mike's essence or soul was gone now, but the human body was still made up of organs, and the brain wouldn't be able to function without its computer counterpart. The Professor shut his eyes as he placed his hand on the power supply throttle. His body was shaking; even if C-2 was no longer human it was still alive.

"What are you doing Professor?" A voice shot through the ear drums of the Professor. He knew instantly that it was Luscious.

"This is wrong Luscious..."

"I am fully aware that manipulating human DNA is blasphemy. But...I kind of enjoy the role of God."

Professor Amare's eyes widened, he quickly jerked around to look at Luscious but was greeted with only darkness.

"I'm right here Professor." Luscious replied as he suddenly appeared on the right side of Professor Amare. The speed of Luscious appeared to be not human and caused the Professor to lose his grip on the control throttle.

"This is the second time you have gone behind my back in an attempt to betray me old friend. First you give away the Dragon, and now you're attempting to destroy this Company's greatest project. Do you want us to fail, you do realize that if we fail than this country's defensive and offensive capabilities become outdated and we become open for attack and possible invasion. Now you wouldn't want that to happen would you? Think of your daughter."

"I am thinking of Sharon..."

"Hmm, interesting. Well old man, we had a deal if I recall. Why are you trying to break my back here? I like you, I like your daughter, don't make me do something I find pleasure in doing."

"Luscious...please, leave my daughter out of this...I won't say anything about Chimera or C-2..."

"I could care less about Chimera or C-2 being leaked out. Both of them will only be traced back to the government. All the paper work was filled out by them, Genesis in terms of legality have nothing to do with either project." Luscious replied grinning.

"If that's the case then why bother? Why not just give the government C-2 and continue to work on MF parts..."

“You’re too near death to see the bigger picture. I’ve seen things beyond your imagination. I’ve seen what happens when humans get a hold of power. They just abuse it and destroy one another. It’s best if only those who know how to wield and control power hold onto it. If the government controlled both C-2 and Chimera then they would just use them to gain whatever resources they wanted and destroy civilizations and societies in order to do it. They aren’t worthy of it, sinners aren’t worthy to hold onto power such as them.”

“Sinners? What the hell are you talking about...we all have sinned.”

“We were all born with original sin? Yes I am aware of that theory, but I never believed in that. What is so wrong with wanting to obtain knowledge? Why should God be the only one with knowledge? I guess it can’t be helped...he keeps himself out of our affairs and only he is allowed to hold onto the vast knowledge of life. It seems selfish to me, that a being so distant from us has to have everything. What kind of God is that? I believe a God should be born from his own people...he should rise up and seize that power and respect.”

“Luscious...what are you saying?”

“I am the only one on this planet that has seen destruction and creation...I know what it takes to wield power. The C-2 will help me bring back to me what was once lost, both the Chimera and the Dragon.”

“The Dragon? But that wasn’t Genesis’ to begin with! It was Novus’ project.”

“Novus? Hehehe, right. I was manipulating them with my right hand and you with my left. Together you both managed to create the most powerful machines in existence...and they both belong to me. It’s only a matter of time before they’re both within my grasp once again.”

“...leave my daughter out of this then...I beg you.”

“I think I’ll use the life of your daughter as a way of keeping you loyal. After all, all good dogs should be loyal to their masters...”

## **Chapter Twenty-Five: Memories faded in the Miasma of Dreams**

It was Saturday, exactly one week after the battle that ravaged Times Square. Adam found himself staring at his wall which was filled from one side to the other with photographs of him alongside with all of his friends. It was funny how things could happen so fast without realizing the time that passed. As he leaned against the wall with his head staring at the ground he found himself fighting with his emotions; to hold them in or to let them out. His face turned bright red while his eyes twitched trying to hold the water back like a damn, but the damn cracked and trickles of water slowly crept through. His fist began to pound against the cold imperfect looking wall constantly, each time was harder the previous, his hand turning redder with each collision. Finally he couldn’t hold it in anymore, the tears found their way through and flowed down the curves and crevices of his face dripping to the floor. His body soon collapsed to the hard wood floor while his back leaned against the wall. His knees bent and his arms and face resting on them he refused to move. He had lost almost so many important things in his life and he still had no clear cut answer as to why. In the background his personally chosen ring tone began to go off, his eyes glanced to the side and watched as his phone continued to flash a bright blue light. Someone was calling him but he didn’t want to answer, that didn’t last long. He began to wonder if it was Sharon; she said she’d call him this weekend. He admitted to it, he had feelings developing towards her. Even though they hadn’t known each other for that long, maybe about a month and a half.

He found himself picking up the phone reluctantly, it read “unknown” so he placed it back on the end table. He was lonely; no one had bothered to visit him since he arrived back in his apartment a few days ago. Adam sighed as he fell back onto his bed, he stared at his right hand while extending it towards the sullen ceiling, it wasn’t long before his vision began to fade and he fell asleep.

*Adam...*

*<Huh?...who's there?>*

Everything was black, light was nowhere to be found all that remained was the sound of a highly feminine and familiar voice. Adam was floating in what appeared to be an abyss of never ending darkness. His body felt light, as a matter of fact more like a feather. Like a feather he slowly floated through the shadows as his body instinctively followed the sound of the single feminine voice that continued to call his name.

*Adam...*

*<Who is it? Where are you?>* Adam continued to shout, but his mouth didn't appear to be moving.

*I'm right here...*

*<Where?>*

*Why didn't you save me? You left me to die...*

The darkness dispersed within seconds as Adam found himself in the very familiar cockpit of his test MF. Both of his hands were tightly wrapped around the throttles, his confusion was replaced with fear and rage but he didn't know why. Something was even more confusing than before, he now watched his arms move back and forth moving the throttles yet there was a still an opaque version of himself sitting on top of what appeared to be his moving physical body; it was surreal.

*"NO!" The blue MF quickly locked onto the new unit with all of its weapons. The two energy cannons quickly fired, the massive cerulean beams of energy shot forward at an incredible rate. Within seconds the six wings flew behind the mysterious unit forming a massive energy barrier. The two beams dispersed into the air leaving Adam in a complete state of shock. It happened then; the energy lance burned into the core of Omega, the sheer force of energy caused the cockpit to explode. The screams of both Amy and her father could be heard shrieking through the wasteland of a training facility. Sharp needles shot down Adam's spine, he went numb. He heard Amy's voice die out, her life, her essence was gone. He failed to protect the one person he swore to protect.*

*"AMY!" Adam screamed as he hit the accelerators.*

It hit him at that moment, the voice; it was Amy's. At that very instant he found himself being thrown out of this tragic scenario and into yet another.

*Adam glanced over his shoulder smirking; then the beam connected. A major explosion that engulfed the sky, the kinetic energy forced Alpha into the ground below while massive clouds of polluted smoke spread across the sky.*

Adam once again like before was able to do nothing more than watch his past self carry out the actions in his memories. He watched as he was able to protect his brother from Chimera. Just then he was ripped from the cockpit and thrown back into the sea of darkness from before. However there was a shining light glowing from the center. As Adam tried to approach it he found that he had no control of his body and no matter how hard he struggled he was unable to move any further. Slowly the glowing light took the form of a young girl, Amy to be exact. She moved eloquently towards Adam placing out her arms as if to embrace him.

*You didn't protect me...you said you would...but you had no problem protecting your brother...*

*<Amy...it's not like that! I wanted to protect you! I tried! Damn it I tried!>*

*You didn't try hard enough...you were too weak to do anything for me. And because of you both my father and I died at the hands of that thing. Knowing this you still haven't killed it*

*<It's...it's my older brother...>*

*But you're older brother killed me! And will kill you and everyone else if you don't kill him first!*

*<Amy...there has to be another way!>*

*There isn't!*

Amy's arms wrapped around Adam's body, she embraced him like a child trying to calm down his flaring emotions. Her eyes then shot open and she pushed him away.

*You're in love...*

<What?>

*You love someone else...*

<Sharon...> Without even thinking he mumbled her name.

*Will you protect her like you did for me? Will you let her die?*

<NO!>

*Will you be able to kill your brother?*

<I don't know...I don't know..>

*I will watch over you even though you weren't able to do the same for me...*

<Amy...I'm sorry...I'M SORRY!>

"I'm sorry....I'm sorry...I'm sorry..." Adam's eyes quickly opened as he jerked himself up from out of his blanket. He cringed as he grabbed hold of his right side. His ribs were still hurting extensively. Sweat covered his face, his blankets were moist. He took heavy breaths while pushing his right hand through his damp hair. He had a dream, it was completely surreal and life like. He knew ever since he left on Mars and realized what Chimera was that he was trying to run away from his past; from Amy and her death. It then came to him that since he had been home he never took the time to visit her grave, he felt horrible. Slowly rising from his bed he looked over to his cell phone that had the text "5 missed calls" written across the display. As he flipped the phone over he noticed 2 of them were from "unknown" while 1 other was from "Stephen" and the other 2 were from "Sharon". He began to dial Sharon's number without thinking; he knew he had to see Amy in order for him to be forgiven. The phone rang for about ten seconds before he was greeted by Sharon's voice.

"Hey Sharon, sorry I missed your calls I was sleeping."

"It's alright...how are you feeling? Any better I hope."

"A little. Anyway, I have a favor to ask you..." Just as he began to talk there was a loud pounding at his door. He sighed, "Sorry Sharon, someone's here."

"It's ok."

Adam walked towards his door still holding the cell phone by his ear.

"But anyway Sharon, I was intending on heading to the memorial cemetery tomorrow to visit a friend. I was wondering if you'd like to keep me company..."

"Yeah of course. What time?"

Adam unlocked the door and opened it. The instant the door creaked open his cell phone dropped as he gawked at the sight in front of him. It was a young man with shoulder length black and crimson hair.

"I tried calling you all day. I got your number from Genesis' registry..." The familiar voice said.

Adam did nothing but stand there shaking completely overrun by confusion. Sharon overheard the voice and began to ask if everything was alright but Adam didn't bother to pick up the phone.

"So brother, can I come in? We need to talk."

It didn't make much sense, but there he was standing just outside his door. His hair was different, much longer than it had ever been and his eyes were christened with a dark red tint. But his face was just as he remembered only older. Nick had just shown up at his apartment, but the question remained, how was this possible? Nick was a hybrid now, installed within him was an artificial intelligence that guided his actions. Adam just stood there staring at his brother while he was able to hear Sharon voice in the background, he couldn't make out what she was saying, it was faint; he was more focused on his brother, the brother who he had beaten not too long ago.

## SHATTERED HEAVEN EPISODE I: SINS OF THE SOUL

“We need to talk Adam...” Nick’s voice was different then in the previous encounters. He seemed to be weaker than before, his voice cracked and faded, it was like a roller coaster, a high pitch at one point and then low at another.

“Nick...what happened? How are you here? I thought you and Chimera were...”

“Bonded? Yeah... \*cough\* we were \*cough\*...” Nick covered his mouth as his body leaned forward from the excessive coughing. Thin barely noticeable streams of blood leaked through the small crevices of his fingers. Adam didn’t notice and just let him in. As the door shut and Nick collapsed into a nearby chair Adam glanced at his open phone that was on the ground, Sharon hung up. Normally he would feel horrible, and need to call her back but Nick’s abrupt appearance took the highest priority. Adam sat down opposite him across the table.

“So...Why are you here?”

Nick just glanced up and smirked.

“I came to \*cough\* thank you \*cough\* \*cough\*..”

“Thank me? For what?”

“Hehe... \*cough\*...you freed me... \*cough\*” Nick continued to cover his mouth while Adam sat there gawking at him in confusion.

How could he free him? It didn’t make much sense since the last time they met they were trying to kill one another.

“How?”

“You see... \*cough\*...When Genesis started the \*cough\* Chimera project they didn’t know exactly how they were going to \*cough\* go about it... \*cough\*.” Nick continued to cough up some blood into a napkin he pulled out from his pocket. Adam was still in awe over the whole situation to realize.

“Go on...”

“I was a prototype for the project... \*cough\* they installed a chip directly into my cerebellum...they believed that the chip would be able to interact directly with the functions of my body and even converse with me through my conscious mind.. \*cough\*...and it worked... \*cough\*...but not to the extent that they had hoped.”

Adam slowly leaned backwards into his chair; he was convinced that this was his brother and not the monstrosity that he had been fighting the past few weeks.

“\*cough\*...through the chip I was able to realize my fighting potential and eliminate all human emotions... \*cough\* but there was a problem...part of my humanity was still in there. On occasion I found myself rejecting the protocol of the chip, I was struggling with my sanity.. \*cough\*...that’s when I knew, I knew I couldn’t go on like this anymore.. \*cough\* my only hope for salvation was with either you or Stephen... \*cough\* one of you was going to kill me and set me free...I knew it.”

“Kill you? But you just said you were free! What the hell are you saying?”

“Hehe, I’m free for now, but who knows how long before the chip becomes active again.. \*cough\*...you see, you shorted the chip out in New York. I wasn’t able \*cough\* to keep up with your movements \*cough\* and for the first time ever, the chip \*cough\* took control of Chimera while I was \*cough\* passed out. In doing so the chip burnt itself out. I woke up about 2 days later in the cockpit with a pounding sensation in the back of my head.. \*cough\* it was then that I realized the voices were gone.”

“What about Chimera?”

“It’s been fixed. The MF is fully functional; the A.I. managed to get us to an abandoned Genesis facility and managed to find parts that were able to be attached to the MF. The A.I. did all the work, apparently it had wireless capabilities and was able to transmit a pulse that allowed it to connect to other machines in the facility...much like Atlas did all those years ago...”



“Atlas...”

“The titanic machine that started a revolution, I believe that Chimera was a project intending to recreate the power of Atlas but with more control. Hehe...they failed \*cough\*.” His coughing seemed to be calming down by this point and he appeared to be in more control of his breathing.

“So what do you intend on doing now?”

“This brings me to why I’m here Adam. I need a favor.”

“I see, what do you want? You hungry, I have a lot of food.”

“No Adam...I want you to kill me.”

Adam’s eyes went pale, he froze in his seat. He wasn’t sure if he understood what his brother was asking him to do. He couldn’t kill him, especially not now when it seemed like the AI was no longer active.

“I...I can’t.”

“You must! Who knows when the AI becomes active again! And if that happens than I won’t be able to control my actions...Adam, you need to understand, the blood stained on my hands, it wont go away. Every time I look at my palms I see a never ending river of blood.” Nick paused as he just stared at his trembling hands.

“We can get you help.”

“This is the only solution Adam. Genesis is looking for me now. They’ve made another Chimera to hunt me down.”

“That black MF? The one that was in New York?”

“Yeah...that one...I believe its code name is Magna Star.” Nick replied.

“Magna Star huh, it didn’t seem to be too threatening.”

“Not at the time no, it was kind of weak. But I noticed that it began to learn from its mistakes. I think Genesis might have hit the mark with this one Adam. I think they created a perfect hybrid somehow. If my theories are correct then it will be able to become stronger after each confrontation.”

“Then that’s all the more reason for you to remain alive. You can help!”

“Help? Don’t be so naïve Adam. I’ve done too much; if I get back into Chimera then it’s possible that the chip will become activated again. I believe that the hybrid and their unit are connected, so it would only make sense for the chip to become active if I step back into Chimera. I don’t want to take that risk. You’re going to have to beat Magna Star on your own.”

“Nick...”

“Adam, you have to kill me. It’s the only way to stop this cycle!”

“I won’t! I’ve seen enough death in such a short time! I won’t!”

Both became quiet as a soft sound began to emanate from the door. Nick quickly jerked towards the door in suspense then back at Adam. Adam just shrugged his shoulders.

“I don’t know who it is...hold on.” Adam said as he approached the door. Looking through the peep hole he sighed. Then he turned back to his brother and signaled that everything was fine.

“It’s only my friend.” Adam replied as he opened the door. There stood Sharon, her eyebrows arched slightly at an angle, her eyes appearing to be enflamed. Her hair was in a pony tail, something she hadn’t done around Adam before. Apparently it was raining because tiny orbs of water rolled down from her leather jacket and from the umbrella in her hand. She tried to ignore it but she was cold, her body was trembling slightly, Adam quickly grabbed her shoulders and guided her into his apartment. As the door shut she quickly turned towards him with her index finger lifted in the air pointing in between his eyes.

“What the hell were you thinking?! Just leaving me on the phone like that! You don’t know how worried I was! I thought something happened! How dare you do that to me!” Sharon yelled as if she was on the other side of the room. Adam slowly moved backwards and eventually ran into the wall. Sharon followed suit just waving her finger in the air. Her frustration was apparent. Nick smirked as he stood up from the table. The metallic chair skid across the floor causing a sharp screeching sound to echo, Sharon then turned around.

“I apologize that would be my fault.” Nick replied.

Sharon glanced back at Adam. “Who’s this?”

“Sharon...this is my brother...Nick.”

Nick slowly approached Sharon extending his hand. Sharon accepted his hand and they both shook. Adam sighed as he glanced at Sharon placing his hand on her shoulder.

“I’m sorry if I worried you. But you didn’t have to come here. You could have just called me back.”

Sharon looked back at Adam with a grimace. “I did call you back. You just didn’t pick up.” Sharon replied.

“Wha?” Adam shrugged his shoulders and to his surprise found text on his phone that read “3 missed calls.” He began to chuckle scratching the back of his head.

“Oh..hehe..sorry.”

“Perhaps I should get going...Adam I will be in touch.” Nick replied.

“No wait...Nick...” Adam reached out as his brother began to walk away. His voice caused hesitation in Nick’s legs.

“What is it Adam? If you’re not strong enough to do what is required then I’m going to have to find someone who is.”

“You’re not going to see Stephen are you?”

Nick smirked and continued to walk out of the apartment.

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Stephen and Mario stood staring at their MFs in the hanger of the naval ship. Things were becoming more tangled and confusion since the surface of the Chimera. And the attack on New York didn’t help much to the state of mind for the American public. The public was still being held away from the truth about Mars, but now with the MF battle still showing on various news stations all over the globe it would be hard for the people to not think about what is really going on. Stephen sighed; he leaned over the guard rail while Mario continued to talk about how they need to take a break.

“You know this isn’t healthy Major. I know this is a serious situation with Chimera and that new black MF but we still have time off. We’re not scheduled to depart to Mars until Tuesday.” Mario replied.

Stephen just glanced back at Mario; he didn’t have to say anything that was the beauty of body language. Mario waved his hands frantically trying to calm down his superior.

“Fine fine...I know you’re concerned with the Chimera, but you should realize that we’ve been reassigned to the South Western territory of Mars. Granted it doesn’t make much sense since we’ve had the most encounters with Chimera and are probably the best equipped to deal with it.”

“They’re covering this up....” Stephen mumbled.

“What did you say?”

Stephen subtly glanced back to Mario. The edge of his chin resting on his crossed arms over the metallic rail.

“They’re trying to keep me and Adam quiet. That’s why we’ve been promoted so quickly. Me to Major, and Adam to Lieutenant, they think if they bring us closer to the top that we’ll be easily corrupted and not question their actions.”

“And what would happen if you don’t fit into their mold?”

“Then they’ll kill us.” Stephen replied monotone. Mario’s eyes widened and then glanced back to his Anima.

“I apologize for getting you mixed up in this.” Stephen said while he continued to gaze off.

Mario smirked and then wrapped his arm around Stephen’s shoulder. Stephen just glanced back towards Mario, his eyebrows thinned and arched.

“Don’t worry about it. I never had this much fun in the EAP. You guys are showing me one hell of a time. Now come on, we need to get you out for a while. You know, hit the town, and get some drinks, some girls. Just have fun, because we don’t know what awaits us on Mars.” Mario replied.

Stephen smirked as he stood up. “The Southwestern territory could be a trap for us.”

Mario smiled back. “It could be. But we’ll give them hell if it is.”

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Mike refused to let go of the throttles. Magna Star had been recently launched from Genesis’ MF hanger. The black MF hovered in the darkened dismal sky, two out of the four display screens were filled with images containing its targets. On the left was Chimera and on the right was Adam’s newly acquired Blue Dragon.

“I will destroy my enemies.”

Soon an image of Severen appeared on the communications screen inside Magna Star’s cockpit. “You have the coordinates?”

“Yes. I am proceeding to the designated location now.” Mike’s dual layered voice much like that of Nick’s replied.

“Good. We believe that Chimera has been damaged severely and shouldn’t pose much of a threat for you. Once you are finished with Chimera you are to report back. Remember, bring the MF in whatever condition you leave it in.”

“Understood.”

Severen cut off the communication and slowly glanced back at Luscious who did nothing more than grin.

Magna Star took off vanishing from sight nearly instantly. The facility wasn’t too far from Genesis’ main building, about 40 minutes south east. Nick had found himself back in the same hanger staring at Chimera. The MF was knelt down with the left hand opened. He sighed as he placed his palm on the outer surface of the metallic armor. His eyes searched the room and then focused on the head unit of his MF.

“It would be best if we both just faded out of existence...but I highly doubt you’re going to go down without a fight.” Nick mumbled to himself He was still afraid that if he entered Chimera’s cockpit one more time that the chip would reactivate and that he wouldn’t have any control over his own movements. He then turned around and began to look around the facility frantically. It was subtle but it was still apparent, the sounds of boosters. His senses were enhanced from the genetic testing; he was able to pick up sounds that most dogs wouldn’t be able to hear. He abruptly grabbed onto his head, his knees buckled and he bent to the ground. A loud ringing sound broke out in his head, it was excruciating, he knew what was happening; the chip was rebooting. He then looked at Chimera one last time and began to run, run as far away from it as he could. He burst out from the door leading to the outside which was pouring with rain. His eyes widened as he stumbled across the ground. Hidden behind the ferocity of the rain was the black MF, Magna Star. With its assault rifle pointing at Nick’s seemingly infinitesimal body by comparison the massive MF remained still.

“Sh...it...” Nick was still in agonizing pain. Part of him wanted it to end here and now, it would be so simple. To allow the second Chimera do him in, but the chip that was reactivating wanted to survive. As he tried to struggle between his humanity and his demons it was obvious that he wasn’t strong enough to overcome the chip. Just as the rifle fired Nick dashed back into the facility. A massive explosion occurred causing rocks and all sorts of debris flinging into the air. Mike smirked he felt as if he

had won. His crimson hued eyes then widened as the facility exploded. Tons of metal sheets shot through the sky. Magna Star easily avoided the debris. A massive tower of smoke burst out from the facility. Mike's eyes squinted as he focused on what appeared to be a glowing light in the smoke. He quickly smirked and grabbed hold of the throttles.

“Good...I had hoped I would get another shot at you.”

Chimera's wings burst open causing the smoke to dissipate. The demonic MF stood once again fully prepared to engage the target that stood before him. Nick once again found himself inside the cockpit. He once again found his destiny in the role of monster.

## **Chapter Twenty-Six: Roles**

Nick sat in the cockpit of Chimera once again; he didn't want to be in there because he feared what might come of it but it was too late now; the chip reactivated. Magna Star the second MF in the Chimera serious wasn't much of a threat in their previous encounter but Nick was aware that it was able to learn from its battles much faster than a regular pilot. It didn't matter now, one way or another he was going to deal with the fate written out for him.

“Are you the one to silence me?”

Chimera burst forward with the wings retracted for increased mobility. Mike sneered while pulling the throttles inwards, Magna Star responded by strafing to the left avoiding Chimera's energy lance. As Chimera's core was in the midst of the swing Magna Star quickly launched its missiles. Hundreds of chrome missiles erupted violently from the launch pads and at such a close range it was nearly impossible for them to miss. The missile exploded along the opened side of Chimera but did nothing but cause an uproar of smoke to sweep over the ground. Mike's eyes twitched while Chimera rose back up into an attack stance protected by the energy barrier.

“You can’t hide from me forever!” Mike screamed, he refused to lose again. Especially to the same type of tactics he dealt with during his battle in the city.

Nick sighed, something was different this time around and it wasn’t the piloting skills of the C-2. He knew the chip was running but it didn’t seem as efficient as usual. He began to wonder if he could manipulate the chip, use its strengths but while keeping his humanity and free will. His eyes then widened as Magna Star grabbed hold of its energy sabers and began swinging. Each beam was just deflected off by the energy barrier; Chimera remained in a statuesque position while watching Magna Star waste its energy.

“This is it? I guess I was wrong about you...” The energy barrier quickly dissipated and Chimera’s wings shot up. Energy began to pulse through the tips of the wings and prepared to fire. Just then a barrage of missiles exploded on the back unit of Chimera. The force of the explosions sent Chimera flying into the ground. Tons of sand and rocks along with various other minerals toppled over the demonic MF. Magna Star hovered behind Chimera with smoke flowing out from each launch pad; Mike’s speed had increased drastically possibly even surpassing that of Chimera.

*“I have yet to warm up. I have learned from our last encounter; I am aware of your predictable moves. I know everything you can and will throw at me before you do it. You have no chance of beating me now.”*

There was something different about Mike now; the duality in his tone of voice was gone; replaced by a cold raspy voice. Nick knew what it meant, it meant that C-2 had finally been completed, any and all humanity that could have been found was now completely erased, and the C-2 was an integral part of the MF. It couldn’t be detached, not like Nick. Mike’s pupils were completely gone now; all that was left was a dull grey color that took the place of the ivory tint seen in eyes. Dozens of cables protruded from his veins connecting directly into the computer console before him. His body reclined into the indentation of the chair; he was no longer controlling the MF with his physical body, but with his mental being. It didn’t seem possible, but it was a reality that Nick now had to deal with.

*“I can’t lose yet...this thing...this thing is more dangerous to humanity than my existence. If I can do anything to atone then it will be to take this thing down!”*

“I can’t lose yet...this thing...this thing is more dangerous to humanity than my existence. If I can do anything to atone then it will be to take this thing down!” Nick screamed; his emotions ran high and Chimera reacted. The crimson and black MF exploded out from its premature grave, the boosters flaring violently. With one set of wings missing Chimera flew towards Magna Star firing the remaining set of wings firing. The onslaught of beams phased passed Magna Star colliding into the facility behind. Both Chimera and Magna Star met in the sky engaging each other with their close combat weapons. Chimera’s energy lance was stuck between Magna Star’s energy sabers unable to move. The very core of Chimera could be seen shaking and struggling to move while Magna Star remained fluent. It was obvious now who held the advantage.

Luscious along with government officials watched the battle continue forward in the conference room of Genesis. The officials could be seen loosening the collars around their neck as the sweat ran down their bodies. The battle between the Chimera and the C-2 was getting intense with destruction closely following their paths.

“Are you sure the C-2 will be able to disable Chimera Luscious? I mean if it fails again then who knows what would happen.” One politician managed to say. Luscious didn’t even bother to turn his head around to respond. He just remained leaning back in his chair clasping his hands together.

“You worry about dealing with the media. I’ll deal with everything else.”

“Luscious I don’t think you understand the severity of the situation, we are in an armistice at the moment with the EAP. If they become aware that our military isn’t engaging the Chimera in order to create an advantageous situation then they are begin to suspect that we were responsible for the Chimera and the destruction it caused!”

“Well, aren’t you?” Luscious responded quite bitterly.

The politician was shocked at the comment. He knew that it was true that they had a hand in the Chimera's creation and they did utilize it, but Genesis was at fault too.

"Luscious, your hands are just as dirty as ours!"

"Are they? With the evidence regarding Chimera I'd say that the Government is the only one with dirt filled hands. Everything points back to you, the creation of Chimera, and the use of it in an assassination. How would the public react if they were to find out that it was their beloved government that hired European and Asian pilots to infiltrate a military exam while kidnapping Harold Caecus and his daughter? And then used their abomination against god, Chimera to kill the Foreign Affairs diplomat along with his daughter and the same soldiers they manipulated to set up the whole scene? I for one don't think it would go over that well...but then again, what do I know? I only run a business."

Luscious had already planned everything out, taken in account every variable and how it would affect the equation. He was two steps ahead of the government and four ahead of the legal system.

"Luscious you don't understand what can happen. If the EAP takes notice of Chimera's presence they will launch an attack without hesitation. And if we don't participate they will begin to put things together and then once again declare war on us and we cannot afford to let that happen!"

"Let's get one thing straight gentlemen; I don't care about your war. I am only concerned in making sure that power is given to the ignorant."

"Luscious? You're not making any sense! What are you talking about?!"

Luscious sighed, his chair slowly turned around allowing him to face every politician in the room; there was about 7. Luscious sighed once again as the politicians continued to blabber on about their concerns. He knew of only one way to completely shut them up. And in a flash it was done. His finger releasing from the trigger and smoke filling the air that was now stale, every politician collapsed forward or fell backward to the ground.

"There, much better."

It was already too late; the battle that raged on over the small facility around West Point continued to draw attention. Balls of light lighting up the sky along with thunderous explosions frightened citizens. It wasn't too long before they called the local police stations, and it wasn't long before the police realized the military was needed. Off the coast of the Long Island Sound was the primary naval fleet of the TA. Stephen and Mario weren't able to get off the carrier ship because of the engaging battle. Stephen stood in the command deck along the other officers, Mario too was present. In front of them was a 3D image of the area where Chimera and Magna Star were dueling. It was impossible for the fleets to intervene and the major divisions of the military wouldn't be able to make it in time. West Point had no offensive capabilities, they were all sent to Mars.

"I guess if there is no choice then my unit will engage." Stephen said stepping forward."

The two higher ranking Majors on his left stepped forward and shook their heads.

"I'm sorry Major Novus, but we have strict orders from the Pentagon to keep you away from this battle. You and your team are instructed to head for Alaska for immediate transportation to Mars. You are needed there."

Both Stephen and Mario weren't too shocked by the decision. After all they came to the conclusion that the government didn't want them involved when it came to Chimera.

"I'm sorry sir, but I'm going to have to disagree with the orders."

"Major Novus? Are you aware of what you are implying?"

"Yes I do...but you need to understand, my team is the only MF platoon to encounter the Chimera. We are aware of how it fights, and with all due respect, do you honestly believe that foot soldiers and tanks will be able to stop it?"

Stephen knew he was walking a very fine line at the moment. But that didn't stop him, not anymore. He had been playing according to their rules for far too long. If he didn't do something than he knew that Nick would only continue to destroy everything in sight and kill innocents lives.

"Major Novus..." The higher ranking Major's attention was quickly grabbed by an Ensign who burst through the door.

“MAJORS! The EAP! They’re advancing with an MF squadron in the direction of West Point!”  
The frantic Ensign blared.

Stephen then turned towards the Major directly staring into his eyes.

“You see! Now the EAP are preparing to engage Chimera! If they see us just sitting here doing absolutely nothing then they are going to think that something is amiss. I wouldn’t be too surprised if they blame us for Chimera and end the armistice. And to make matters worse over our country which would then lead to the public learning the truth! Charge me with treason I don’t care. I’m going to stop that monstrosity. General!”

Mario quickly stood at attention while trying not to smile.

“We’re leaving. Call Elite pilot Pertinacia, we’re heading out!” Stephen screamed.

“Yes sir.” As Mario followed Stephen towards the hanger he lifted his left arm, flicking off the other Majors in the room.

The wind was powerful and frigid; it continued to pound both Stephen and Mario in the face as they headed towards the hanger.

“I’m impressed. I didn’t think you had it in you to disobey orders.” Mario remarked. Stephen glanced over his shoulder smirking.

“It doesn’t matter now...” Stephen mentioned as he looked up into the sky. About 5 EAP MFs flew through the clouds in formation. Stephen knew this was going to be close.

“Do you really think the EAP will accuse the government for being behind Chimera?”

“Probably, the EAP hates us. You of all people should be aware of that.” Stephen replied.

Mario chuckled; it was true; the EAP hated everyone in the TA mainly because of the stereotype that they were arrogant and greedy. The only reason for the armistice was to take down Chimera. And if the EAP could link the Chimera to the TA then there wouldn’t be a problem with declaring war once again. Just as Mario raised his radio to inform Heather of the situation she appeared behind them with her arms wrapping around both of their shoulders.

“I heard. So we’re disobeying orders huh?” She mentioned.

“Yep.” Stephen replied.

“This could mean treason you know.” Heather felt she needed to reiterate this.

“Yep.” Stephen replied once again. Heather smirked.

“So then, sounds like fun. You think we’ll come back alive?”

“Probably not.” Stephen mentioned.

“I see. Well then, we’ll just have to give them one hell of a fight!” Heather broke away from both Stephen and Mario and ran towards Blue Angel. Mario slowly turned back to Stephen as they both approached their MFs.

“Do you really think we might not come back alive?”

“Heh, it’s possible. Remember, we’re going to be getting in-between both Chimeras. It should be interesting at least.”

“He says interesting hahaha.” Mario said laughing while he entered Anima’s cockpit. Stephen saluted his friend just as he closed the doors to Alpha’s cockpit. His fingers flipped the switches which engaged the generator. As the lights turned on and the generator silently hummed he took a deep breath before placing his hands on the throttles, possibly for the last time.

“Alright, you all know what to do. So there’s no point in me repeating myself. Good luck and try and come back alive. Stephen Novus, Alpha launching!”

Alpha’s booster ignited as the crimson MF shot into the sky. Mario smirked shrugging his shoulders as he looked at Heather.

“Oh well. Time to have fun I guess, Mario Liberalis, Anima launching!”

Heather sighed while Anima took off. She was ready to move away from her past and look towards the never ending future.

“Heh... Heather Pertinacia, Blue Angel launching!”

It was a surreal environment, one that invokes memories and pain; a cemetery. Adam and Sharon stood silently in front of a tombstone, both of their hair flowing through the silent eerie and at the same

time gentle breeze. Their jackets flapping through the wind were the only instance of sound aside from the whistling of the wind. Adam shut his eyes as he took a knee placing a bouquet of flowers on the still soft soil that held the tombstone in place. They were carnations, pink to be exact; Amy's favorite. He flinched as Sharon placed her fingers gently on his shoulder. She smiled back at him giving him a sense of life to balance the death before him.

"Let's go..." Adam mumbled as he slowly arose.

"Are you okay? You sure you don't want to stay longer?"

"I'm fine. Thanks for coming..." The memorial cemetery was located just outside of West Point's military academy. As Adam stood up his eyes were attracted to a massive cloud of smoke emanating just south from their location. He instantly became silent, even though he had no way of confirming it; he knew what was going on.

"Adam?"

Adam didn't seem to hear Sharon's voice; it was unable to reach him in his current state. He was too focused on the clouds that insinuated destruction, his hands trembling with anger. He was too focused to even realize the pain stirring on his right side.

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The battle raged on with no hint of a conclusion in sight. Chimera and Magna Star continued to strike at one another, neither landing any significant blows. Chimera swung the energy lance upwards trying to slice through Magna Star but the Mike easily deflected the lance with both energy sabers. Magna Star then boosted backwards while locking onto Chimera. Instantly hundreds of missiles burst out all converging onto Chimera leaving the crimson and black MF with seemingly no place to run. Nick sneered and began to fire the laser rifle along with the remaining set of wings. Every missile exploded in the air creating a continuous line of flashing orbs of fire.

*"Not bad, but your efficiency has decreased immensely since the beginning of this battle. You are weakening."*

Nick refused to admit it; there was no way he would lose to this copy. Chimera went back on the offensive. Just as he sped towards Magna Star Chimera was knocked off balance by a barrage of missiles. The missiles didn't cause any damage but managed to send Chimera flying into the ground at a tremendous velocity. Mike jerked Magna Star around to see five MFs flying in their direction.

*EAP...how dare they....DON'T GET IN MY WAY!*

Magna Star opened fire.

## Chapter Twenty-Eight: Swirling Chaos

The EAP managed to find their way to the battle sight as quickly as they could. Their best MF squadron known only as Omega started their attack. They were an elite squad consisting of a variety of pilots. One MF managed to land a good distance away from Chimera and Magna Star; the pilot tended to like the security of long distance battles and refused to get close. The four remaining MFs touched down just in between the fallen Chimera and Magna Star. Nick sighed while forcing Chimera to stand up.

"Don't interfere! You will get killed if you stay!" Nick screamed. The EAP brushed off the warning as it didn't faze them. They were all well aware of what Chimera did to their comrades at Praetor and they weren't about to let it go.

"Freya do you have a good lock on Chimera? I want to take this damn thing out as quickly as possible." Marcus yelled.



Freya nodded, her MF held onto a massive sniper rifle while the machine laid on the ground for added stability. Freya was used to this type of fighting, it was her specialty.

“Just don’t get in my way Marcus and we’ll be fine.” Freya replied, her eyes trying to focus on the small scope in front of her head. Mike would normally begin to get frustrated by being ignored, but being mainly controlled by a computer he no longer felt such trifles. The EAP weren’t aware of the C-2, they just thought the MF was registered to the TA and not a bogey. Nick sneered and quickly boosted into the sky locking onto Magna Star as if the EAP wasn’t present. Marcus’ eyes flinched; he couldn’t comprehend why the Chimera would just fly off without attacking. He then gazed to the side noticing Magna Star flying into the sky as well. It didn’t take a genius to figure out that the two MFs were in the midst of battle.

“Heh, the target is currently infatuated with the other MF. This makes our job a lot easier. We can attack the Chimera without...” Marcus was silenced by a massive explosion that took the lives of the other 3 MFs standing behind him. His MF Gunner was thrown to the ground. Marcus was tossed from side to side in the cockpit, unable to control his movement his head collided into the front display screen. Shards of glass discharged out into the cockpit tearing through his skin. Freya nearly jumped out of her seat.

“MARCUS!” Freya screamed, and then with her anger took aim on Chimera. Her finger itching to pull the trigger so they could all go home.

“I’ll get you...my family...MY FAMILY WAS STATIONED AT PRAETOR!”

The massive bullet shot out from the end of the barrel fusillading into the air. Just as the bullet approached Chimera Nick moved out of the way avoiding the attack. Freya’s healthy skin tone changed to a dull pallid color, no one had ever dodged one of her attacks before...no one.

Nick glanced over at the sniper MF that was hiding behind the junk heap that made up most of the secluded island on the Atlantic. Magna Star then fired another salvo of missiles onto Chimera; Nick with his attention already diverted didn’t see the attack coming and was bombarded by the warheads. Raging torrents of fire filled the sky along with a caliginous cloud of smoke. Mike saw his opportunity and flew towards Chimera wielding the energy sabers. Both of the adamant arms swung fiercely slicing through the clouds. The searing beams of energy managed to slash the outer layer of armor on Chimera’s core. The heavy hitting attack caused Chimera to fling out of the shadows of the smoke engulfed in raging sparks of electricity. Nick’s body was hurled all over the cockpit uncontrollably. A fulmination of fire and dust dispatched into the sky distorted everyone’s view. Magna Star continued to hover in the sky calmly. Mike was confident that everything would be over soon. Just then his radar invoked sound loudly.

*“More? This is unexpected.”*

Marcus along with Freya were the only EAP members left, they quickly turned to the air where they felt at ease. Three more MFs were descending onto the scene. Freya’s eyes lit up as she quickly recognized the lead MF; it was Alpha.

“This is Major Stephen Novus of the Trinity Alliance. Do you read? What is your status? Are you alright?”

The impaired radio signaled echoed loudly in both Marcus’ and Freya’s cockpits. Freya was quick to answer.

“This is Ensign Freya Abby of the EAP! I read you Crimson Knight!” Her voice was highly pitched and seemed to be anxious. Stephen glanced to the side; no one had called him the Crimson Knight since he first started out. She didn’t even have to mention the EAP he would have known just from her calling him that. The EAP had learned to be cautious around the crimson MF, and referred to its pilot as the Crimson Knight.

“Friend of yours?” Mario sarcastically interjected.

“How should I know? Besides, not like it matters right now. We still have to restrain both of these MFs.” Stephen replied.

“Right. You go check on the two EAP...is that...Marcus? And Freya? If it is then...”

Both Stephen and Heather stared at Mario in confusion, for a minute they had forgotten that he was once a part of the EAP so it was only natural for him to know of its high ranking skilled pilots.

“Friends of yours?” Stephen replied.

“If they’re here...then that means the EAP sent the Omega unit. Crap that means they’re serious about stopping Chimera. We better hurry up then so they don’t begin to realize that the TA is taking its sweet time to get out here.” Mario replied.

“I agree. You and Heather head down to the EAP members.”

“What?! But what about you?”

Stephen smirked, glancing back at Mario. “I have to take care of my brother.” Stephen said shortly just as he cut off the communications link. Alpha sped off heading towards Magna Star.

“Damn...” Both Mario and Heather split from Alpha and began to descend towards Freya.

Mike didn’t pay much attention to Stephen and the others, his primary objective was still moving. Chimera slowly rose out from the ashes and cinder. The front of the core was severely damaged, a massive gash in the form of a diagonal line marked Chimera. Sparks of electricity randomly flickered around the edges of the wound, but Nick didn’t seem to care. A sharp clinking sound echoed as the remaining set of wings flung open and began to glow. With a blink of an eye Chimera’s knees bent as it prepared to explode into the sky.

*“Still wish to fight?”*

“You are strong...but you cannot beat me!” Nick screamed. Just as Chimera flew into the air Magna Star too went on the offensive. The black MF’s speeds far surpassed Chimera’s at this point as the MF appeared next to Chimera with both energy sabers preparing to strike. There was no time for Chimera’s energy barrier to engage, it seemed like everything would end. Just as the beams of energy began to descend the left arm of Magna Star ruptured into flames while a thin metallic blade swiftly spun out from the smoke created and then flew back away from Magna Star and into the hands of Alpha. Mike and Nick quickly turned their heads surprised to see Alpha not too far away holding onto the energy boomerang.

“Leave him alone.” Stephen mumbled.

*“The younger brother has shown up to save the older how touching.”*

“Stephen! You idiot! What the hell are you doing?!” Nick screamed, even though he managed to learn how to control the chip he still felt as it was his destiny to die.

“Shut up Nick. You should be thanking me right now. I’ll deal with you later; first we’re going to have to get rid of this thing aren’t we?”

“Stephen...why?”

“It’s simple; I talked to Adam right after you left his apartment. He told me everything. If it’s true then there might be a way to fix this! I won’t kill you if you can be helped!” Stephen yelled as Alpha burst towards Magna Star.

“Freya you need to get out of here. This is going to be too much for even you to handle.” Mario said.

Freya just turned to the side.

“I can’t just leave the Crimson Knight to fight by himself!” She pride fully replied.

“Huh? Oh, you mean Stephen. He’ll be fine, plus we’re here.”

“Yeah, I’ve been meaning to ask about that. Why did the TA only send three MFs to engage with Chimera?” Marcus questioned. Mario had forgotten about him but for only a second.

“Because the main bulk of our forces are on Mars investigating the South Western territory, I though most of the EAP was doing the same.” Mario replied.

“They are...but the South Western territory...there’s something not right about that place. There’s a massive energy barrier keeping anyone from entering it.”

“I see.”

“That’s not all Mario...the barrier’s energy wave length is the same as the barrier that Chimera is able to produce.” This caused Mario to lean into his seat in shock.

“What do you think that could mean?” Heather interrupted.

“Well it means that whoever is responsible for Chimera might have a connection to whatever is in the South Western territory.” Marcus replied.

“OH NO! Stephen!” Freya screamed. The abrupt sound of her high pitched scream caused everyone to jerk to the side where Alpha was seen falling from the sky. Magna Star then flew past Alpha and slashed at the back of the core with the energy saber in the right arm now that its left was useless. Just as the beam came close to Alpha Chimera thrashed into the side of Magna Star knocking it away from Alpha, Stephen then quickly regained Alpha’s balance and threw the two energy boomerangs simultaneously. Magna Star then performed a back flip deflecting the energy boomerangs with its right leg and then its right energy saber. After it deflected the attacks hundreds of missiles zoomed out from the missile pods and quickly collided with both Chimera and Alpha causing an uproar of smoke to blanket out into the sky.

Freya quickly reloaded her sniper rifle and began to lock onto Magna Star that hovered in the air.

“How dare you...” She whispered as she pulled the trigger. The bullet bounced off the side of Magna Star’s thick armor. Mike then glanced over to the four MFs that stood in the distance.

*“Pests...I guess now would be an adequate time to test the energy missiles Magna Star has been equipped with.”*

Four compartments flipped open on the edge of the core. Out from them flew eight thick rectangular missiles that slowly flew towards the group of MFs. Mario’s eyes widened, he had never seen any missiles quite like those before but he wasn’t about to sit around and find out what they did.

“Heather! Freya! You two stay here! Marcus are you able to fight?”

Marcus simply nodded.

“Good, we’re going.”

“Be careful.” Freya managed to say before they left. Both Anima and Gunner flew into the sky.

As the missiles continued their death march towards Anima and Gunner Mario smirked as he quickly engaged the dual energy whips on his MF. Both arms flung outwards sending an elongated wire towards the grouping of missiles. Four of the eight missiles changed course and flew around the attack while the remaining four were struck instantly. Mario smiled as he watched the missiles explode, but his smile soon faded as thousands of thin focused energy beams shot out in all directions. There was no way to avoid the attack; Anima threw up the solid shield as Mario maneuvered in front of Gunner. Thousands of beams continued to pelt onto the solid shield making massive indentations in the shield’s structure with each hit. Anima was slowly pushed back from the onslaught that was in front of him. He cringed, it didn’t seem like the beams would stop any time soon and he knew he couldn’t risk moving.

“Damn!” Mario screamed. In his peripheral vision he saw it, the black intimidating MF was now on his side. Anima tried to move the solid shield in time but was too slow, Magna Star cut through the core of Anima along with Gunner at speeds no one could fathom. As soon as the explosion engulfed both Anima and Gunner Magna Star sped back towards the damaged Alpha and Chimera, both Heather and Freya’s eyes widened at the sights of the explosion and they thought the worst. Both of them wiped away their emotions and equipped their long range weapons all locking onto Magna Star.

“You bastard...” Heather mumbled. Both fired without hesitation, a massive beam of cerulean energy exploded onto Magna Star but was quickly knocked to the wind like it was nothing thanks to the quickly sword play of the MF. Just like before the solid shell sent from Freya’s rifle bounced off the armor plating. Magna Star seemed to be unbeatable.

A parachute slowly floated out from the smoke as Marcus continued to cough from the tainted air. Anima’s upper body remained intact as just the legs of the MF collapsed to the ground in flames. Mario’s face was covered in blood, every few seconds he found himself wiping the blood out of his

sockets so that he could see clearly. It was amazing that an MF that was just a torso with arms and boosters still remained in the air.

“Hehe, thanks. You just made me lighter....” Mario mumbled trying to make the best out of the situation. Mike paid no attention.

Alpha and Chimera soon took to the sky once again firing their energy rifles but Magna Star continued to deflect them with the energy blade. It was apparent that Mike was learning his enemies’ moves with every attack and was able to adjust his fighting style according. He became the perfect hybrid.

“Stephen he’s already adapted too much. There’s not much we can do now! Get out of here!” Nick screamed.

“And what let you have all the fun? We’re taking him down and once we do then we’re going after Genesis!” Stephen yelled back.

“Genesis? You know everything then?”

“I know enough. It was their fault that you ended up like this. And once I’m done with them I’m going after the government. They’re hiding a lot of things from the public; they were also responsible for the Chimera.”

“So you’re ready to give up your leash then...”

“I guess that’s a good way of putting it. But I still intend to find out everything from the inside. Once I have enough evidence that’s when I’ll start putting everything into fruition...NICK WATCH OUT!” Stephen screamed. Magna Star sped passed Chimera slicing off the right leg of the MF. Small spurts of fire erupted along with the flinging wires from the knee joints. Nick quickly jolted Chimera around firing the wings at Magna Star which was still able to avoid each attack. While dodging Magna Star was hit hard by the torso of Anima. Mario smirked as he pushed hard on the accelerators causing the boosters to ignite at full thrust. The cockpit hatch opened as Mario was thrown into the sky. Within a few seconds his parachute opened up causing his to float eloquently to through the wind. Mike glanced to his front screen; Anima was glowing with a fluorescent red hue it then happened. Anima exploded into millions of pieces. The explosion of the generator caused the fulmination of energy to shoot out through the sky in the form of a massive shockwave. Both Alpha and Chimera were flung to the ground yet again while a bulbous thick stream of clouds filled the sky while debris of metal poured to the ground.

“Mario...” Stephen mumbled. He then glanced out his screen noticing Mario still floating towards the ground.

“It’s not over yet!” Nick screamed. Both Stephen and Nick watched in horror as Magna Star’s MF became visible as the smoke slowly vanished.

*“That was amusing...I have properly analyzed all of your techniques and I have assessed that neither of you can challenge me much more. I shall end this...initiating Final Phase...”*

Magna Star’s limbs all extended outward as the core along with the head unit rotated inward while the shoulder joints all moved outwards. As the massive transformation continued to occur the radars in every cockpit shorted out nearly instantaneously. What now stood before everyone struck fear that etched into their very souls. Magna Star’s true form was revealed; its shoulder blades extended outwards to a sharp point and the armor around the arms was thicker than before, on the side of each arm was a metallic blade that extended outwards heading towards the back of the core. Both legs were sleek but with four extra thrusters on the sides. It was bigger than the average MF but still sleeker.

*“It has come to an end.”*

Nick's eyes widened as Magna Star loomed over Chimera. The two metallic blades shot outwards. Every missile pod on the MF opened along with the energy missile pods. The massive MF descended onto Chimera's remaining leg unit. The sheer weight of Magna Star prevented Chimera from being able to defend itself, let alone move. Stephen's eyes widened as he forced Alpha to fly towards Magna Star. Heather and Freya were too paralyzed in their own fear to fire, they figured that if their attacks weren't effective before then there was no chance for them to work now.

*"Anything you would like to say before you die?"*

"How about just do it already?" Nick wiped the blood from his face for the final time. Then everything turned pitch black, aside from a single scream there was silence. Both of the metallic blades forced themselves into the core of Chimera. Tons of wires along with pieces of armor flung out into the sky singed with flames and blood. The massive edges of the blades tore through Nick's human body crushing it instantaneously. Stephen stopped in his tracks as he watched in horror the death of his brother. As the blades retracted stained with blood Magna Star quickly turned its attention to Alpha. All six of the boosters ignited and within a flash Magna Star appeared before Alpha preparing to unleash its fury.

"STEPHEN!" Mario screamed.

*"There is no one left to help you now..."*

Just as both blades began to move Magna Star budged a few feet forward as a cerulean explosion of energy occurred on the back of the MF. Magna Star quickly turned around only to be caught with a barrage of cerulean energy beams all exploding on the core of the MF. Everyone turned to the sky as they watch a blur of blue energy surge towards Magna Star. Stephen's eyes widened while Mike just looked. Blue Dragon now stood before the remaining Chimera with its wings extending outwards, the eight orbital wings reattached to the back unit while Adam remained struggling to breathe. While holding onto his right side he cringed looking over to the mess that was Chimera.

"You...you killed him didn't you..." Adam mumbled softly.

*"Does it matter...death comes to every human, his was bound to come sooner or later...just like yours..."*

### **Final Chapter: Dreams Tainted by Destiny**

He knew he shouldn't be piloting, not in his condition. His ribs still weren't healed, but he figured that if he didn't use the Angel system that it would be a problem. But the minute he jumped into the cockpit his body began to ache. Sharon tried to talk him out of fighting but it was no use. She was fully aware that he was going to go regardless of what she said, but there was a part of her that hoped that she would be wrong; she wasn't wrong and with that he left. Sharon stared off into the horizon as her hair flowed through the wind while Blue Dragon became nothing more than a speck in the clouds. Adam stared at what Magna Star had become a monstrosity that was nothing short of a devil.

"So you're the one...you're the second project of Chimera!" Adam screamed.

*"I am...but it doesn't matter. I have already disposed of one of my main targets, and now for the other..."*

Adam's eyes widened, Magna Star took off with such ferocity it didn't seem that it could be matched. Magna Star swung the blade on the left arm but missed as Blue Dragon shot into the sky. Adam

still breathing excessively locked onto Magna Star and fired. The thigh cannons along with the dual laser rifles constantly began to produce beams of energy that pelted onto Magna Star; it didn't slow the devil down. Adam was shocked that his attacks were doing nothing and just like that Magna Star swatted down Blue Dragon like an insect. The azure MF regained its stability just before it collided with the ground. Adam glanced back at Stephen who was right beside him.

"What the hell? I can't see that thing!" Adam blurted out.

Stephen sighed, for the first time in a long time he began to doubt the outcome of a battle.

"I don't think we can defeat this thing on our own. We're best to get back up from the TA."

Stephen replied.

"I see...do you think they'll come?"

"No."

"So one way or another we're on our own then?"

"Yep."

"Good, I like those odds." Adam replied. Blue Dragon shot back into the sky once more this time unleashing the orbital wings. Stephen smirked and followed suit. The eight wings began to spiral around Magna Star constantly pounding on the behemoth with energy beams but the MF continued on like it was nothing more than a mosquito.

*"That is not enough..."*

Adam moved the throttles as Magna Star burst passed slashing through the air. Blue Dragon counted by ignited the energy saber. The beam of energy connected with the metallic blade on Magna Star. Magna Star then extended the blade on the right arm and swung, Blue Dragon's core arched backwards avoiding the attack following the evasion the thigh cannons extended and fired at close range. The powerful beams of energy blew up off the head unit of Magna Star. Mike for the first time in his existence as a hybrid screamed out in sheer agony. Magna Star reacted as the limbs fell numb and the core toppled into a free fall. Streams of smoke flowed out from the singed head unit while Blue Dragon went back on the offensive. The eight wings circled around the falling MF and continued the assault. Magna Star was tossed from side to side like a volley ball in between the orbital wings. Alpha continued flying towards Magna Star grabbing hold of the energy boomerangs but before he threw them Stephen took notice to how Magna Star was actually covering the head unit. In all the encounters with the C-2 he had never seen it look so sheltered or cornered. He then began to type on the control panel and locked onto the head unit before throwing the boomerangs. As the silver boomerangs flew towards Magna Star in a curved trajectory Mike's pale translucent eyes widened. Missiles abruptly erupted from every launch pad on the MF spreading out in all directions. The missiles destroyed the boomerangs and forced both Alpha and Blue Dragon to go into evasive maneuvers. The orbital wings continued to follow Magna Star still firing beams of energy.

Magna Star then flipped over as the blades extended outwards, the thrusters flared and the MF began to hack away at every orbital wing in sight. Taking notice Adam rushed in towards Magna Star once again, with both energy sabers in hand he began to slash at the back of the massive MF. With each lashing Magna Star was thrown forward and then met with three beams of crimson energy sent out by Alpha. The orbital wings docked back onto Blue Dragon in order to reserve energy. Adam prepared to launch another attack but found himself holding onto his ribs and breathing heavily once again. His neck swelled and his head jolted forward coughing out specks of blood that trickled down the LCD screen. Wiping off the blood that leaked from his lips he moved forward. The stall in an attack gave Magna Star more than enough to time to readjust his tactics, hundreds of missiles launched all converging onto Blue Dragon. As the azure MF flew in and out of every missile Magna Star slashed the side of Blue Dragon severely damaging the left arm. Adam was tossed inside the cockpit with his already injured body; he wasn't sure how much longer he could hold out.

"ADAM!" Stephen screamed.

*Don't worry I didn't forget about you.*

Magna Star launched 8 slow moving missiles towards Alpha's direction. Impatient Mike fired the assault rifle causing every missile to explode unleashing tens of thousands of energy beams. Stephen's eyes widened, he knew there was no possible way he could avoid them all. Alpha nimbly flew around as many beams as he could while deflecting the rest with the energy sabers. Beams of crimson energy shot out in all direction swarming the sky like a group of shooting stars. Four beams of energy pierced through the legs of Alpha causing them to bulge outwards and then tear off in a blazing sea of flames. Alpha lost its stability and was thrown into the remaining sea of beams. Thousands more energy beams shot through every joint along with the core of Alpha. Tiny explosions occurred all over the crimson MF until all the small explosions turned into one massive ball of flames. There was a short lived period of silence followed by an earth shattering boom, thousands of debris shot outwards into the sky while others just rained to the ground singed like balls of fire. Adam moved to the edge of his seat, in his stomach was a stirring of anxiety and fear. Inside the tower of smoke was his brother, he hoped...he felt it in his gut that he was alive but still there was no way to know for sure. His eyes continued to be glued to the screen as the smoke dissolved there was nothing, Adam's head jerked forward once again coughing up more blood than any human should cough up. His console was stained with his blood. His hands trembling along the edges of the throttles, he didn't believe it, he wouldn't believe it.

"NO!" Adam screamed. Heather and Freya remained in their positions; since they were snipers and their radars were unable to be used they were useless. Freya leaned on the edge of her seat nearly on the verge of a water works. Heather just glanced to the side trying to pretend that nothing had ever happened.

Blue Dragon burst towards Magna Star in a fit of rage. Just as easily as Blue Dragon went up it was shot down. Adam was being controlled by his rage; even though he knew he couldn't defeat anyone when he fought with rage it was hard to deny it when you're facing an opponent who was responsible for both of your brother's deaths.

*I am no longer amused...Die...*

Adam expected Magna Star to attack him but was surprised when he saw the titanic MF head in the direction of Heather and Freya.

"NO!" Adam screamed out. Magna Star was too fast, just as Blue Dragon rose into the air the devilish looking MF had already reached the sniper MFs. Adam knew he no longer had any choice, too many people had died.

*Angel System...engaged.*

Instantly Adam was thrown into the back of his seat, the forces being exerted nearly caused him to scream out in pain. He continued to hold onto his right side but forced himself to let it go and control his MF. The wings burst open launching the orbital wings, as each wing flew off Blue Dragon sped towards Magna Star as a constant stream of blue transparent energy emanated from the back of the wing docking station. Magna Star was then pounded on by the energy beams from the wings yet again. Like insects they annoyed Mike, given the amount of insects he was forced to turn his attention around. Just as he turned Blue Dragon slashed the core of Magna Star and then fired the thigh cannons. The force of the blow sent Magna Star flying off the island over the oceans. The power of thrust being exerted from the boosters caused the water underneath Magna Star to build up like a wall on both sides nearly rising taller than the MF itself. As the MF flew uncontrollably the water reflected its path as the water flung up on both sides like a tower. Adam smirked as he glanced over to Heather who had her head hidden underneath her arms.

"Get out of here Heather. It isn't safer here." Adam said while he would constantly look back towards the ocean waiting to see Magna Star get back up.

"And what about you?!"

"I intend to finish this..."

"What?! You can't be serious, you saw what happened!"

"Yeah...but I have to beat it. Now go! Alert the military of what happened!"

“How?!”

“I’m sending you some information that I gathered from a friend at Genesis. Give this to the officers on the naval fleet. They’ll know what to do!” Adam screamed.

Heather wanted to object but she knew that wasn’t a smart idea. They had a limited amount of time. She didn’t want to tell him that the data had transferred completely because she didn’t want to let him go. She feared that he would share the fate as the others.

“Alright it’s done. Now get the hell out of here!” Adam screamed. He didn’t even allow her to reply. Blue Dragon dashed over the flowing waves of the ocean as he noticed Magna Star was waiting for him. The data copied onto a hard disk that ejected from the console. Heather slowly picked up with tears running down her face as she stared into the ocean.

“LOOK!” Freya screamed over the communication link. Heather turned to the ground to see Mario and Marcus carrying Stephen’s injured body.

“Asshole don’t do something like that again alright. I don’t ever want to carry your ass for this long ever again.” Mario said jokingly.

Stephen barely with any energy left to move just sighed and mumbled under his breath.

Blue Dragon boosted over the water causing a soaring mess of water to burst towards the sky. The right arm arched backwards preparing to strike as it neared Magna Star. At the crucial moment Magna Star fired every missile pod on its core. Adam’s eyes widened at the salvo of missiles that converged onto his location. At the last second Blue Dragon stopped its movement allowing the orbital wings to fly outwards, then the two thigh cannons along with the dual energy rifles fired. The orbital wings followed and fired destroying as many missiles as they could. In a few seconds every missile fell into the water in pieces. Blue Dragon ruptured through the wall of smoke created from the explosion and ferociously slashed through Magna Star’s right arm. Adam smirked as he watched the right arm fall from the socket of the devilish machine in flames until it was scorched the minute it fell into the ocean.

Not too far out from the battle the TA ships floated ruggedly along the waves that were becoming increasingly violent.

“Lieutenant Procella! Two MFs are battling just outside of Manhattan and the coast of Long Island!” The Lieutenant turned around facing the young Ensign.

“Are they ours?”

“No sir. Neither is registered, however one looks strikingly similar to Blue Dragon.”

“I see...well we’re going to have to take a chance then. Target both MFs and shoot them out of the sky. We can’t afford much more panic!”

Just then another solider burst into the command room.

“Lieutenant!

The Lieutenant quickly turned around to face the energetic Ensign.

“Sir this just in from the Pentagon...What the? Information on Chimera...linked to the EAP...all TA vessels are to lock onto the EAP and watch for any irregular movement?” The Lieutenant mumbled under his breath. He couldn’t believe it; the EAP could possibly be responsible for the Chimera. He continued to read the print out that he was handed, “The black MF is a second Chimera created by the EAP in order to cover up their mistake. The blue MF is an unknown unregistered MF, take it out as well...” He then turned around to his crew, “well you heard the orders! Have every ship target those two MFs and blast them out of the sky!”

“Yes sir!” Every naval officer replied standing at attention.

Blue Dragon and Magna Star remained in a struggle. Magna Star had finally run out of ammunition and was relying solely on the metallic blade on its remaining arm. Adam didn’t know how he was still fighting, his ribs were seriously hurting and the Angel system was wearing on down his physical body. He paused to grab his ribs once again, as he did his eyes widened at the appearance of Magna Star. He tried to react but it was too late, the right blade slashed through the left arm. The blade also managed to scarp the outer side of the core, the attack sent Blue Dragon into the ocean. A massive tower of water erupted into the sky engulfing Magna Star.



*“It is finished...”*

Just then hundreds of rockets fired all exploding on the core of Magna Star. The devilish MF was thrown towards the water but right before it crashed into the ocean its boosters ignited. Magna Star recovered and quickly sped towards the battalion of naval ships that were attacking. As each gun turret of the ships began to fire Magna Star touched down onto the ships causing them to teeter. As every crewman gasped in fear the single blade struck down cutting the ship in half. Flames ruptured into the sky as the ship blew up flinging debris out into the sky. The remaining four battleships all launched volleys of missiles and shells. Magna Star flew through each attack only to slice through each ship as it passed. Explosions lit up the sea along with booming sounds that crashed through the city and the island. Thousands of people found themselves watching the battle that was occurring just outside their territory. Millions watched at home in different states through news reports that came attached with a photo of the Chimera that Nick had piloted. Along with the photo ran a scrolling bar of text that read “EAP creates monster to attack and invade Trinity Alliance countries.” It was only a matter of time before the world would face the consequences of this act.

Magna Star hovered above the fallen vessels, it lingered for a bit. The thrusters began to pulsate as it felt that everything was finished. Just then eight orbital wings burst out from the ocean causing speckles of water to pour outwards. The orbital wings took Mike by surprised and caught him off guard. The beams pounded on Magna Star forcing it to fly with its guard revealed. Suddenly Blue Dragon burst out from the water at tremendous speeds. The beams from the energy saber of Blue Dragon burned through the metallic armor covering Magna Star’s core. Suddenly sparks of electricity fired outwards like the fourth of July; flames slowly burning along the edges of the massive wound while the devilish MF twitched back and forth unable to move. Adam continued to breathe heavily as thin trails of blood ran out from between his lips dripping onto his jumpsuit. He coughed ever so often; his body was in an extreme amount of pain.

“Fina...\*cough\*...finally...” Adam mumbled while covering his mouth.

*“It isn’t over...”*

Adam’s eyes widened as he saw the metallic blade on Magna Star’s right arm extended backwards jabbing itself throwing the right side of Blue Dragon’s core and into the shoulder joint for Blue Dragon’s right arm, instantly flames burst out from the side of the cockpit causing the glass on the side display screen to shatter. Adam screamed in agony as pieces of glass etched themselves into his skin. He had already lost enough blood through his mouth; he didn’t need any more pores to open for blood to flow. Shortly after the attack Blue Dragon’s right arm dislodged and fell into the ocean. Adam struggled to get his hands on the throttles but he knew he had come too far to lose now. Just as Magna Star began to move away from Blue Dragon the two thigh cannons extended.

“Hehehe, escape from this one...rerouting all energy into the cannons...after the wings launch...hehehe...die.” Adam had no energy left, his voice cracked. The eight orbital wings launched once again and began to fire constantly at the head unit of Magna Star. Adam smirked.

“I...\*cough\*...knew it...\*cough\*, that’s your weak point...\*cough\*” Adam said as more blood shot out from his mouth. The head unit stored all the information from the A.I. as well as all the chips and drives, if it were to go then so would the unit along with its pilot. Adam remembered reading it from the reports that Sean had shown him. With a smirk covered in his own crimson blood Adam felt at ease despite all of his physical pain. It was about to end, the nightmare was finally about to end.

“No....NO!!!!” Mike’s voice screamed for an instant only to become drowned out by the thunderous booms of the explosions occurring all over his machine’s core.

Just then all the energy remaining in Blue Dragon was unleashed through the two thigh cannons. The massive cerulean beam of energy tore through the cockpit of Magna Star. Stephen, Mario, and Heather all stared in amazement. All they could see from their location was the immense beam of energy that flew through the sky. As the beam of energy dissipated Blue Dragon crashed into the ground, Adam’s

eyes were shut, he was unconscious. There were no signs of Magna Star other than the thousands of charcoal singed piece of armor that fluttered into the ocean.

As each news station in every TA nation broadcasted the event Sharon fell to the ground upon seeing Blue Dragon crash into the ocean. Her eyes budding with water while she tried to remain her composure, her hands quivering on the ground next to her thighs as she leaned forward unable to take her eyes off the television screen.

“Adam....why.....\*sniff\*” As she continued to whimper her father meekly entered the room. He sighed upon looking at his daughter in the sullen state she was in. He wanted to move closer to her, to say everything was alright but he knew he’d only make things worse. It was best for her to get it all out of her system.

“Why dad....\*sniff\*” She heard the door squeak open as he entered. Brushing the fallen strands of mahogany hair that covered her tear filled eyes she turned to face her father. “Why did he have to die?”

“Sharon....I’m not sure watching this is the best thing for you right now....” Professor Amare muttered just as he shut up the set.

“Dad....” Sharon slowly stood up from the ground, her body engulfed in a frigid chill and her knees shaking. As she began to approach her father her cell phone began to beep loudly. Her fingers slowly wrapped around the flip phone picking it up.

“A new text?” Curious as to who was texting her she flipped the phone open.

At the site of the message her eyes widened and the tears once again began to pour profusely.

“Hehe...yo he says...it’s from Adam dad...he’s alive.”

“\*cough\*....\*cough\*....took you guys long enough to get me out of that cockpit.” Adam was a mess, blood stained the seat and his cloths but he was alive. His hair was darkened with his blood and his eyes were barely opened but none of that mattered.

“Heh, you did it. Nice going kid!” Mario shouted.

“Nice job Adam.” Stephen replied.

While Adam stumbled out of the cockpit both Mario and Stephen grabbed one of his arms in order to help him move, Adam turned back looking at the raging waves of the ocean. They were safe on a TA cruiser now, unaware of the accusations made by the government as to how the EAP was behind everything.

“You’re free now brother, rest in peace....” As the birds flew over the peaceful azure sky he smiled once again, thinking about all of his friends and the sacrifices that were made to get to this point. For the first time in years his soul felt at ease, he found his destiny, and was determined to see it through. For now, he couldn’t wait to get back home and see Sharon. He laughed at the idea of her yelling at him for hurting himself again. No matter what the tone, her voice was soothing. He knew everything was going to be alright now. There would be nothing that could disturb his peace now. With a smirk his vision slowly became blurry; he fell to the ground passing out. Stephen, Mario and Heather all laughed at their fallen comrade. Times had finally changed for the better.

## Epilogue

All I could remember was blacking out after I unleashed all I had onto Magna Star. The next thing I knew in that hospital; again. It seemed that I liked that hospital as I always ended up there after a major battle. I over did it much more that time than I ever did before, my ribs were fully cracked and my right arm wasn’t of much use either after that battle. I apparently like breaking bones, almost as much as I like that hospital. I know I do stupid things from time to time but it’s comforting to know that I have

friends, past and present that care about me. I miss my friends that died this past year, but I knew they were watching me from above and in knowing that I felt much more secure whenever I stepped back into the cockpit. I could feel someone standing behind me; my vision went dark as I felt cold fingers covering my eyes.

“Guess who?” The feminine voice greeted me as I tried to act like I didn’t know who it was. Just then as the fingers removed themselves from my face I was treated to the smiling happy face that I have come to know and love. Sharon was beautiful; her face was so lively it was hard to be depressed.

“Sharon, how’s your dad?” I asked.

“He’s doing fine. He sends his best. So...umm...” She was stumbling; it wasn’t like her to stumble.

“Yeah what’s up?”

“You’re cleared to go back to the military next week aren’t you?”

I had forgotten about that. After the battle with the second Chimera I had succeeded in extending my vacation for another six months. I had enjoyed those six months as I was bed ridden for most of them. But Sharon ended up spending a lot of time with me; she took care of me the entire time. I’m not sure what I would have done without her, she was my rock.

“Yeah...”

“I’m worried. It seems that every time you enter your MF you always end up hurt and in pain.”

“Yeah, I’ve started quite the routine huh?” I meant it as a joke, and Sharon knew that, but still; she wasn’t laughing.

“That wasn’t funny.”

“I know...I’m sorry. Listen, I’m heading out to the cemetery again. You coming?”

“Oh that’s right, it’s Sunday I almost forgot. Of course.”

Ever since that fate full day I go to the memorial cemetery on Sunday to pay respects to my friends. And then I head out to the cemetery located in Queens where my other friends rest. These Sundays I devote to them, who without them I wouldn’t be alive. I began to think about everything that has happened since that fate full day; the armistice had ended due to the news about Chimera being related to the EAP, which wasn’t true. But the public will believe whatever the media says. The war has once again continued like nothing happened with Chimera, as if there was no armistice. Stephen is still a Major and has currently returned to Mars along with Mario, and Heather...no one knows where Caleb disappeared to. He was sent to Mars way back, right after I ended up on Earth. He was a part of the South Western investigation battalion I know that much. But I am also aware that all of the troops deployed to the South Western territory border EAP and TA alike disappeared. I only hope that he is alive somewhere and that we’ll be able to meet again someday. Heather and I have remained good friends and managed to settle our differences, she also calls Sharon once a week to have a girl talk. Honestly I think they bash me, but who knows. I still don’t know everything about what happened to my parents and Nick, and what part Genesis and the government played in it but I do intend to find out. I think I finally understand my brother, Stephen. He comes off as the tough cold soldier, but I believe he is just trying to use his position to gain more knowledge about what is really going on. I guess the only way to uncover the truth is to become tainted yourself. Once I head back into the military I intend to help him uncover the truth as well. I glanced back at Sharon; we were already standing outside my apartment building amongst the massive amount of people walking through the city. There was a slight breeze that cause our hair to wave in the air. She was so important to me, I love her.

“Sharon...” I mumbled.

She glanced back at me while holding thin strands of her hair in her delicate right hand. I wrapped my arms around her bringing her close, we both smiled as we kissed. I then glanced up into the sky smiling. I felt her tugging on my jacket.

“What are you looking at?”

I smiled looking back at her.

“Our future, our destiny.”