

★ MOONLIGHT

Valkyrie ★



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Presented by ZeonicScanlations

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This novella was given away as a week one admission perk and is the second of two random offerings at the theatrical release.

Names, characters, organizations, places, events and incidents may differ slightly from official names at the time of translation. Updated versions of this will be made to reflect changes at a future date.

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"Wow! Hey, hey, Youlant, look at this!"

Vino's voice, tinged with an overexcited astonishment, rang out as he flipped through the military's public relations magazine.

Without pausing his work, Youlant replied with slight annoyance, "Hmm? I'll check it out after I finish this."

Vino and Youlant are members of the technical staff aboard the battleship *Minerva*. The *Minerva* had seen its fair share of fierce battles, resulting in significant losses to its mobile suits. Frankly speaking, they needed all hands on deck.

"No, you gotta see this!" insisted Vino, thrusting the magazine into Youlant's face, revealing a familiar face.

"Agnes?" Youlant muttered in recognition.

"Yes! The 'Moonlight Valkyrie,' how cool is that!" Vino beamed, practically buzzing with excitement. The girl smiling proudly in the magazine's glamour pages was Agnes Giebenrath, a fellow cadet from their officer academy days, known for her fiery red hair and cat-like, spirited eyes. The article, as Vino read out, touted her as a rising star for her exploits on the lunar front.

Vino, ever so simple and easily swayed, was brimming with excitement as if Agnes' achievements were his own.

"She always excelled, even back in the academy, topping the class several times."

"Uh huh," Youlant responded nonchalantly.

"Cute, hardworking... Ah, so she's still making her mark."

Yet, Youlant remained skeptical.

"Look, don't take this stuff at face value. The media loves to hype up someone with a decent face and a fair record as a 'hero' or 'heroine.' It's all for boosting morale."

His opinion of Agnes was less than favorable, finding her insincerity irritating. But Vino was too naive to see through the facade, completely disregarding his words and continuing to admire Agnes' photo.

"Hey, between us... I think Agnes had a crush on me back then," Vino mused dreamily.

"I'm gonna go with no on that," Youlant retorted bluntly.

Meanwhile, Agnes reveled in the glow of her newfound fame.

Ever since her photograph graced the military's public relations magazine, she noticed more heads turning her way and more requests for autographs. She didn't particularly think the photograph did her justice, but that seemed irrelevant now.

She emailed Lunamaria, too, but didn't get a reply back.

She must be jealous, she mused.

It was understandable, given she had swiftly become the new heroine, a title that surely didn't sit well with her peer, Lunamaria.

In her mind, her rise to fame was nothing short of well-deserved.

Initially assigned to the moon's defense line, Agnes had been discontent, especially knowing that Lunamaria and Shinn were aboard the newly commissioned battleship Minerva.

Glory was hard to come by in the backlines.

Of course, the Minerva would still be in its trial phase for a while, so there wouldn't be any real combat, but being chosen as a pilot for the new mobile suits was an honor.

Agnes could never accept why she wasn't chosen. Maybe because her parents were high-ranking government officials, they were being considerate assigning her somewhere safe?

More unnecessary meddling.

Hearing about Minerva's involvement in combat only fueled her envy. If she had been there, she was sure she would have achieved heroic feats much sooner.

Nevertheless, she, too, had made her mark as expected. She held her head high, proud of being the "Moonlight Valkyrie" — a captivating catchphrase no matter how many times she heard it.

She thought the PR copywriter who came up with that tagline deserved a bonus. But for Agnes, this was just the beginning. She aimed to rise higher in her military career, eventually leading her own team and retiring as a high-ranking officer, perhaps even venturing into politics or business.

She envisioned herself at the top, and naturally, she needed a partner who matched her stature — someone who was not just good-looking but also competent. In the military context, someone at least FAITH level.

That day, she received an email from Vino Dupre. It took her a moment to recall him. Oh right, a classmate from the technology track back at the academy. She recalled how amusing it was to interact with him, knowing he was thrilled by any attention from her. As an elite born to lead, she considered it her duty to do a favor for those in her circle. As expected, Vino's email was about seeing her in the magazine.

—Seeing you holding your own, too, makes me proud as a classmate.

The phrase "your own, too" in his message irked her slightly.

As she read on, her expression changed.

—I'm sure you already know, but Shinn and Rey became FAITH members.

Crazy right?

FAITH? Rey, sure, but Shinn?

That was unbelievable.

—Shinn has really been incredible lately...

—He even shot down the Freedom...

No freaking way. That loser Shinn did?

The email was filled with incredulous statements.

—By the way, heard from Luna that she and Shinn are dating?

She was stunned.

This was news to her.

Lunamaria and Shinn?

That meant Lunamaria had snagged a FAITH-level boyfriend before her?

She felt oh-so-betrayed.



"Seriously, you're unbelievably dense! Don't drag the entire team down!"

Agnes's scathing words made Shinn bristle, his eyes flashing a vivid red in sheer irritation.

"Shut up about it already! Im sorry, okay? I'll do better next time!" he retorted.

They had just finished a virtual combat training session in the simulator and were on their way to lunch. Vino and Youlant from the technical department were joining them, the pilots.

"What's up, Shinn? Another bad run?" Youlant teased as he slung an arm around Shinn's shoulder, rocking him playfully, only to be shrugged off with a gruff "Leave me alone."

"Bad run doesn't begin to describe it!" Agnes shrieked indignantly.

The simulator training was the closest thing to actual combat they had right now. Actual mobile suit mock battles were still a long way off.

Among their cohort of pilot candidates, Shinn was somewhat of a problem child. Not only did he lag in classroom theory, but he also fell behind Agnes and Lunamaria in physical training, his only saving graces being stamina and stubbornness. If only he could manage the simulations, there might be hope, but Shinn was KIA right at the start of the missions, always rushing in without the requisite skills.

Initially, it was individual combat, so Shinn's performance didn't matter much. But unfortunately, they ended up on the same team. Agnes, of course, had topped the individual scores. Maybe that's why the instructors paired her with the problem child, to balance the teams. Frustrating, to say the least. She wished she had held back a bit during the individual rounds.

The rest of the team, Agnes and Rey, had no issues. In fact, Agnes thought this might be a good opportunity to get closer to Rey. He had good grades and excellent piloting skills, though he was quite reserved.

But she knew the real problem was Shinn.

"Dying within ten seconds? That's just not acceptable! You've got *zero* aptitude for piloting!" Agnes fumed.

Lunamaria tried to calm her down.

"Ease up, Agnes. It's about fostering teamwork."

"Teamwork? With this dead weight? No way, no how!" she retorted.

Rey, who had been quiet, murmured, "Fourteen seconds."

"What?"

"It was actually fourteen seconds, not ten."

He was referring to the time Shinn lasted in the simulation. Lunamaria and even Shinn himself looked exasperated.



"That's hardly a consolation, Rey," Shinn muttered.

"Who cares!" Agnes exploded, pointing accusingly at Shinn. "Do you even take this academy seriously? If you're just going to hold me back, why don't you just drop out and go home?"

She wished he would just quit. It was impossible to work with someone so inept. As far as she was concerned, it was the only solution. But then Shinn glared back at her, his deep red eyes burning with an intensity that momentarily took her aback.

"I will become a pilot, *no matter what*."

"Who does he think he is talking back to me? The nerve of that loser!" Agnes was seething, frustrated that Shinn's defiance had even slightly intimidated her.

The mood had turned so sour that Shinn and Rey eventually distanced themselves, walking away from the group.

Lunamaria tried to placate Agnes, "Shinn really is useless, huh. Maybe he has no talent after all."

Just as Agnes was about to continue her tirade, Youlant, who had quietly followed, interjected softly.

"Agnes... that wasn't fair."

As Agnes whirled around, Youlant averted his eyes.

"You know... Shinn's a refugee from Orb."

Lunamaria's expression turned to one of shock at Youlant's words. The devastation of Orb, which had tried to maintain neutrality only to be invaded and ravaged by the Earth Alliance forces, was common knowledge.

Youlant's voice was tinged with bitterness.

"He has no home to return to."

It was a pointed remark at Agnes's earlier, unknowing statement - 'Why don't you just go home?'

Lunamaria, now aware of the truth, shifted uncomfortably. In contrast, Agnes's fury only intensified.

Were they trying to make her the villain here?

She lashed out at him for sticking his nose where it didn't belong.

"So what? Should we pity the poor refugee and give him passing grades? Is that it?"

"That's not what I meant..." Youlant tried to interject.

"On the battlefield, *none* of that matters! The enemy's not going to give him special treatment for being pitiful!" she retorted.

"Well... that's true, but..." Lunamaria said hesitantly.

Agnes was adamant.

"You're all too soft! If you want sob stories, go somewhere else!"

It was infuriating. Being painted as the bad guy, sympathizing with a failure.

In her mind, she was justified.

A loser is a loser, after all.

"Dammit, let's go again!" Shinn shouted as he immediately jumped back to his feet after being thrown.

"Ugghhh... again?" Lunamaria sighed in exasperation but quickly assumed her stance.

Shinn charged with vigor, only to be promptly sent flying through the air by Lunamaria's judo throw.

"Ouch! Okay, one more time!"

"You know, you really should pay more attention! It's not just about you; watch your opponent! Use their movements against them!" Lunamaria advised.

"Right!" Shinn replied reflexively, resembling a disciple under his master's guidance. Lunamaria was always helpful and patiently offered advice even to the struggling Shinn.

He listened intently to her suggestions, trying to follow them. The number of times he was thrown seemed to decrease.

After the martial arts class, Shinn collapsed on the mat, exhausted. Lunamaria, looking tired herself, headed towards the showers.

Agnes joined in, mockingly commenting, "Can't believe you seriously bother with that washout."

Lunamaria laughed it off.

"It's good, makes for training too."

Agnes, mischievously probing, asked, "What, you have a thing for him?"

Lunamaria recoiled dramatically.

"No way! As if! No, no, no, he's just a kid!"

She shook her head vigorously, waving her hands in denial.

Agnes laughed heartily at her over-the-top reaction.

"That's what I figured. For a sec, I wondered if you had weird taste. There's no way it's Shinn, right?"

Lunamaria nodded in agreement.

"He's silly and simple."

"Really, it's embarrassing getting thrown by a girl. He seems totally fine with it, though!" Agnes scoffed.

However, Lunamaria suddenly became serious.

"But you know... I actually respect that side of him."

"Huh?" Agnes was exasperated.

"No matter how many times he gets knocked down, he gets back up to try again. Even if it looks lame."

Agnes rolled her eyes, visibly annoyed. She disliked this side of Lunamaria, always playing the perfect student, holier-than-thou attitude.

"No matter how many times he tries, a loser is a loser! He's just a fool wasting his time and effort," Agnes retorted.

The idea that effort is sacred was just a fairytale for Naturals. Everything boiled down to genetics, and no amount of effort could change that.

Wouldn't it be more efficient to pursue a path suited to one's abilities from the start? It was easier and more beneficial to society without causing inconvenience to others.

Why couldn't these fools understand such a simple concept?

Agnes sighed in frustration at the stupidity of her peers.

"I'm sorry, but I think we should break up," Hulegu suddenly announced in the cafeteria, causing Lunamaria to nearly drop her cup of coffee.

Their relationship was barely a month old. Hulegu was a top student among her classmates, and his serious, honest demeanor had appealed to Lunamaria when she initiated the relationship. She, like Agnes, believed in dating only the elite. Lunamaria herself was determined to become a top pilot, and she felt it would be unbecoming to have a less capable partner. She wanted someone she could respect and who would inspire mutual growth – a typical teenage girl's desire. Hulegu seemed to fit this criterion perfectly.

They spent breaks and after-class hours together, revising lessons and chatting. They even went to a movie during a recent break.

Did she do something wrong on that date? Did she wear the wrong clothes? Should she have listened to Meyrin's advice?

As her mind raced through these thoughts, Hulegu uttered something completely unexpected.

"The truth is... I've fallen for someone else..."

"Who?" Lunamaria asked, barely able to utter the word.

Hulegu hesitated, but eventually, his honest nature compelled him to reveal the name.

"Agnes."

Lunamaria was speechless.

She had considered Agnes a friend and never imagined that her boyfriend and her friend could develop such a relationship. Sure, there were times when Agnes seemed overly friendly with Hulegu, even flirtatious, but Lunamaria had assumed she was just trying to get along with him for her sake.

Hulegu stumbled over his apologies, expressing regret for hurting her, pleading not to think poorly of Agnes, and stating he couldn't continue their relationship now that he realized his true feelings.

Lunamaria felt anger and deep humiliation.

This guy. He thinks Agnes is more attractive than me.

The betrayal hurt as much as the realization itself. After one last apology, Hulegu left quickly, almost fleeing the scene.

Lunamaria later wished she had dumped her coffee on him.

Overcome by irritation, she abruptly rose from her seat to storm off, colliding with someone's tray behind her. Coffee spilled everywhere as a wrapped burger tumbled to the floor.

"Oh no!"

"I'm so sorry!" Lunamaria apologized quickly, picking up the wrapper. She turned to see a scowling Shinn.

"What's the big idea, Luna?" he grumbled.

"Shinn..." Noticing her odd expression, Shinn's concern grew.

"Are you okay? Did any coffee get on you?"

His chest was splattered with coffee droplets.

"Yeah, sorry..." she said, returning the hamburger wrapper.

Shinn just laughed it off.

"It's fine. I can still eat it. Thanks."

And with that, he walked away, seemingly unfazed. Lunamaria thought to herself, "He's really just a kid."

Determined to forget the incident, she quickly left the cafeteria. Hulegu was just that kind of guy, quick to be unfaithful with a little attention from her friend.

Now she knew Agnes too for what she was.

Neither was trustworthy.

Better to have realized it sooner.

Sour grapes, perhaps, but it lifted some weight off her. She couldn't think of them as friends anymore, but she would interact with Agnes as usual. It was more embarrassing to show she was affected by the ordeal.

With a resolved mind and a defiant stride, Lunamaria left.

Then it struck her – she had managed to dump coffee, albeit on the wrong person.

Poor Shinn, but the thought brought a slight smile to her face.



Ever since reading Vino's email, Agnes had been mired in utter misery.

Even the military achievements she had so proudly earned now seemed utterly diminished.

"What a traitor Lunamaria is! Claiming that Shinn was an absolute impossibility and then lying through her teeth! I never thought she'd be such a cunning woman!" Agnes raged inwardly but still couldn't shake off her discontent.

Why hadn't Lunamaria herself said anything? Some friend she is, totally unfair.

Of course, at this time, the Minerva was in the midst of fierce battles, and neither Lunamaria nor Shinn had time for such matters, but Agnes was not inclined to consider this. Every time the Minerva was glorified in the media, she would bitterly change the channel.

One day, she entered the space fortress's recreation room only to see the Minerva's heroic exploits being broadcast. She immediately turned on her heel and strode out, drink still in hand.

That's when someone spoke to her.

"All that's just propaganda. Only fools would take it seriously."

Agnes regarded the speaker with interest. A tall, handsome man in the red uniform reserved for elite pilots.

"Oh really?" she flashed a smile as if to test him.

"Of course. The Minerva is the Chairman's little darling," the man said with a suggestive undertone.

Agnes immediately took a liking to him, not just for his words, but for the man himself.



In the officer academy's recreation room, there stood a classical grand piano, seemingly out of place in a facility dedicated to the art of war. However, some senior classmates, who were accomplished musicians, occasionally showcased their skills here.

As Agnes and Lunamaria entered the room, they were greeted by the sound of someone playing the piano. To their surprise, it was Rey, usually unemotional and distant, demonstrating a masterful touch on the keys.

"Well, didn't see that coming..."

"Seriously?"

Lunamaria and Agnes whispered among themselves as they watched Rey play. Beside him, leaning casually against the piano, stood a man with long black hair, exuding an air of sophistication and charisma. His pale face was calm, sharing occasional warm smiles with Rey.

They had never seen such an expression on Rey's face before, let alone the sight of him pouring emotion into the keys with delicate sensibility. It was like he was a completely different person from the usual expressionless, icy Rey. Captivated, they watched his graceful form at the piano.

As the performance concluded, the dark-haired man placed a hand on Rey's shoulder in a fatherly gesture.

"See you around. Keep up the good work, Rey."

"Yes, Gil..." Rey responded to him with a childlike trust in his eyes and nodded.

Mesmerized by Rey's radiant smile, Agnes and Lunamaria were compelled to approach him as soon as the man, Gil, left.

"Rey, you can play the piano? We had no idea!"

"Is that man your father? Who is he? What does he do?"

Bombarded with questions, Rey reverted to his usual stoic expression. "

It's none of your business."

Realizing they might have crossed a line, Lunamaria tried to smooth things over.

"Could you play some more for us? That piece earlier was really beautiful."

Rey seemed unopposed to this request and was about to return to the piano when Shinn burst into the room.

"Rey!" Shinn called out as he rushed over to ask, "About that propulsion system you explained earlier, could you go over it with me again? I didn't quite get it."

"Alright," Rey said simply, promptly turning away from the piano and leaving the room with Shinn, who was carrying a textbook, without even a word of farewell to Agnes and Lunamaria.

Stunned by the cold dismissal, Agnes exclaimed, "What was that about!"

Lunamaria, equally perplexed, added, "Seriously, they're just kids!"

The fleeting moment of enchantment was quickly buried, leaving behind two disheartened young women in its wake.

"Sorry," Shinn mumbled as they walked down the corridor.

"Hm?"

"I'm not the brightest, you know..." Shinn's voice was laden with self-deprecation. Despite being a Coordinator, he felt ashamed. He wanted to complain to whoever had been responsible for his genetic modifications to do their job properly.

"That's not true," Rey responded.

"I can't seem to get the hang of the simulations... Maybe I'm just not cut out for this. You can do everything so easily."

"No," Rey flatly denied. "You have talent."

"Huh?" Shinn looked at his friend in surprise, accustomed to hearing the opposite from Agnes. But Rey's face was serious.

"It's true. Simulations are different from real combat. And you've been dying less often."

"Well, that's after a hell of a lot of practice..."

"People learn at different rates. Being faster doesn't always mean being better."

Rey looked directly into Shinn's eyes, offering a smile. "You have talent. Someday, you'll surpass us all – Agnes and even me."

Shinn felt an unexpected warmth in his chest.

"Thanks," he mumbled, looking down to hide the tears that threatened to spill. He didn't know what Rey saw in him, but the fact that someone believed in him gave him an extraordinary sense of strength.

He slapped his cheeks with determination.

"Alright! I'm going to give it my all!"

His earlier doubts seemed to vanish as he took the next step forward with renewed vigor. Rey looked momentarily taken aback, then let out a half-laugh, half-smile. It was different from the practiced expression he had shown earlier – this one seemed to come from deep within, a genuine smile.



"Do you like my hairstyle, Leo? It doesn't look weird, does it?" Agnes asked.

Leonard, caressing her cheek, flashed that melting smile of his.

"As always, you look flawless, Agnes," he assured.

"Oh, stop it, Leo," she playfully scolded. Leonard was simply the best. She loved that he'd never say something like, "Who cares, you'll be wearing a helmet anyway?"

Leonard Valway.

He was the one who had approached her at the space fortress, commenting, "The Minerva is the Chairman's little darling," and since then, they had hit it off.

An ace pilot in red uniform, from a good family, and incredibly handsome – he was the man worthy to stand beside her.

Agnes reveled in a sense of elation. With Chairman Durandal's demise, the post-war era brought condemnation of his actions. His audacious attempt to unleash Requiem upon Earth faced severe scrutiny, while the ambitious Destiny Plan met with outright rejection.

"Serves them right," Agnes thought smugly.

The achievements of the Minerva and Shinn's commendations all were mistakes.

"Using Requiem? Utterly moronic!" she mused, conveniently forgetting her own past thoughts of striking at the Naturals.

After the war, Lunamaria and Shinn, for some reason, joined COMPASS, an international mediation organization led by Lacus Clyne.

No doubt just a useless figurehead body though, they'd have no future there.

"Well, that's what you get as Durandal faction washouts," she thought with a sense of superiority.

"Losers will always be losers."

Now, Agnes found herself on the path to confront those 'losers' she so derided. Yzak Joule was delivering new models of Freedom and Justice to COMPASS, and Agnes and Leonard had volunteered to be the pilots or rather their transporters. Leonard's insistence that he "wanted to pilot the Freedom at least once" had led Agnes to pull some strings using her family connections. His boyish enthusiasm charmed her, one of the many facets she found endearing in him.

Yet, beneath Leonard's charm lay a painful past.

His family had been on Januarius Two when it was destroyed by LOGOS. He had been deeply shocked, his face dark with sorrow when he confided in Agnes. It took her sympathy and comfort to bring his smile back.

"A little darkness in the past only added to his appeal," she mused.

Agnes resolved to be his support from now on. Every day would be happy, especially since she, so beautiful, strong, and capable, would always be by his side. She took a wrapped jewelry pouch from her pocket.

"Leo, this is a little something from me."

"Really?"

Leonard gently unwrapped the gift, revealing a silver pendant. Opening the locket, he found a photo of them, captured in a shared moment. Agnes pulled out a matching chain from around her neck.

"We have a matching set. Will you wear it?"

A radiant smile spread across Leonard's face.

"I'm so happy, Agnes."

She put the chain around his neck and snuggled up to him, feeling an overwhelming sense of happiness.

"I'll always be here for you, to replace your lost family..."

She couldn't wait to flaunt this happiness to Lunamaria, to show her that she was always right.

"Yeah... 'replace my lost family'..." Leonard echoed softly, his words laced with an emotion Agnes couldn't detect. Behind her back, unseen to her, his face twisted into a cold, sardonic expression.

A cynical smile, incongruous with his usually composed demeanor, slowly surfaced.

He whispered, almost to himself, "Thank you, Agnes."

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM SEED FREEDOM

Week 1 Attendee Special Gift B

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