

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION ANIMA

4



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Table of Contents

[Color Inserts](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyrights and Credits](#)

[Table of Contents Page](#)

[Part 1: Stormy Weather](#)

[Chapter 1: Watermelon Patch in the Morning Mist](#)

[Chapter 2: Urgent](#)

[Chapter 3: The Throes of a New World](#)

[Chapter 4: Lost Compass](#)

[Chapter 5: Super Eva Lifts Off](#)

[Chapter 6: Uninvited Guest](#)

[Chapter 7: Reactivating Eva-0.0](#)

[Chapter 8: Second Joker in a Deck](#)

[Part 2: Wander the Earth](#)

[Chapter 9: Stray Beast](#)

[Chapter 10: Where Memories Lie](#)

[Chapter 11: Observer Kaji](#)

[Chapter 12: Black Fragment](#)

[Chapter 13: Interference](#)

[Chapter 14: Summons](#)

[Part 3: New World Border](#)

[Chapter 15: Aftereffects](#)

[Chapter 16: Shadow Puppets](#)

[Chapter 17: Shadow Puppets](#)

[Chapter 18: Christening](#)

[Chapter 19: The Sunlit Path of Yomotsu Hirasaka](#)

[Chapter 20: Underground Experiments](#)

[Chapter 21: Beyond the Reticule](#)

[Part 4: Mass Hysteria](#)

[Chapter 22: Airborne Theater](#)

[Chapter 23: Solarside Struggles](#)

[Chapter 24: Visitors](#)

[Chapter 25: Mari](#)

[Chapter 26: Riot Red](#)

[Chapter 27: Phase Shift](#)

[Chapter 28: Shifting Blue](#)

[Part 5: Lens](#)

[Chapter 29: Black Armor](#)

[Chapter 30: Hikari Redux](#)

[Chapter 31: The Thick of the Swarm](#)

[Chapter 32: Cloud of Witnesses](#)

[Chapter 33: Confined Space](#)

[Chapter 34: Rotating Rock](#)

[Part 6: Point of Convergence](#)

[Chapter 35: The Old Longinus Curtain](#)

[Chapter 36: Landfall](#)

[Chapter 37: The Old Central Dogma](#)

[Chapter 38: Shinji](#)

[Chapter 39: Mutant Eva](#)

[Chapter 40: Apostate's Bow](#)

[Chapter 41: Mari](#)

[Chapter 42: Armaros](#)

[Chapter 43: Moving Anomaly](#)

[Chapter 44: Convergence](#)

[Part 7: Collision Course](#)

[Chapter 45: Nerv Japan Hakone](#)

[Chapter 46: Yomotsu Hirasaka](#)

[Chapter 47: Shinji's Impact](#)

[Chapter 48: Rumble in the Pacific](#)

[Part 8: New Land](#)

[Chapter 49: Noise](#)

[Chapter 50: A Dawn Without Shinji](#)

[Chapter 51: Ordinary Classroom](#)

[Chapter 52: Ritterschaft](#)

[Chapter 53: Sleeping Shinji](#)

[Chapter 54: Yomotsu Hirasaka Island](#)

[Part 9: Many Roads to Home](#)

[Chapter 55: White Coat Party](#)

[Chapter 56: Midnight Raid](#)

[Chapter 57: Instinct](#)

[Chapter 58: Many Roads to Home](#)

[Omake: Concept Gallery](#)

[Postscript](#)

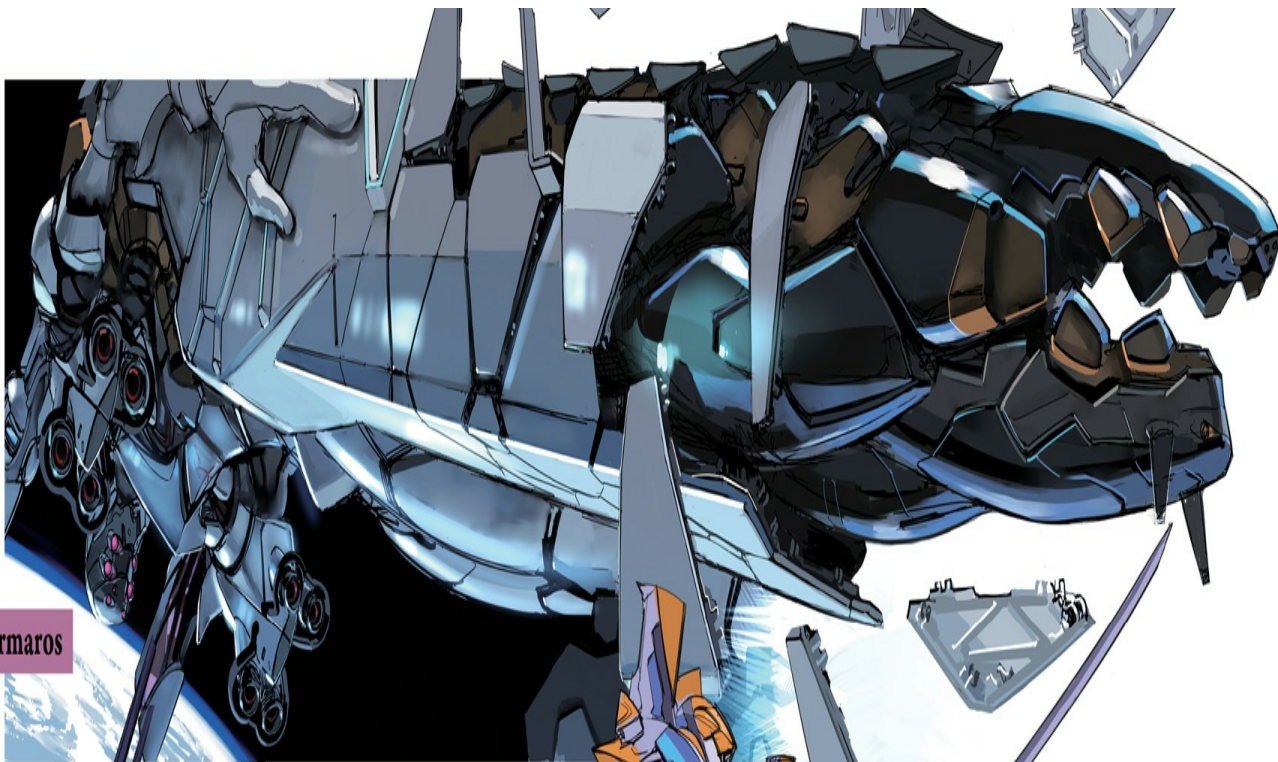
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The seven-colored bolt
fired from the great bow
Azumaterasu obliterates
over half of the
430-kilometer-wide
detached lunar
landmass as it is
100,000 kilometers
away from the Earth.

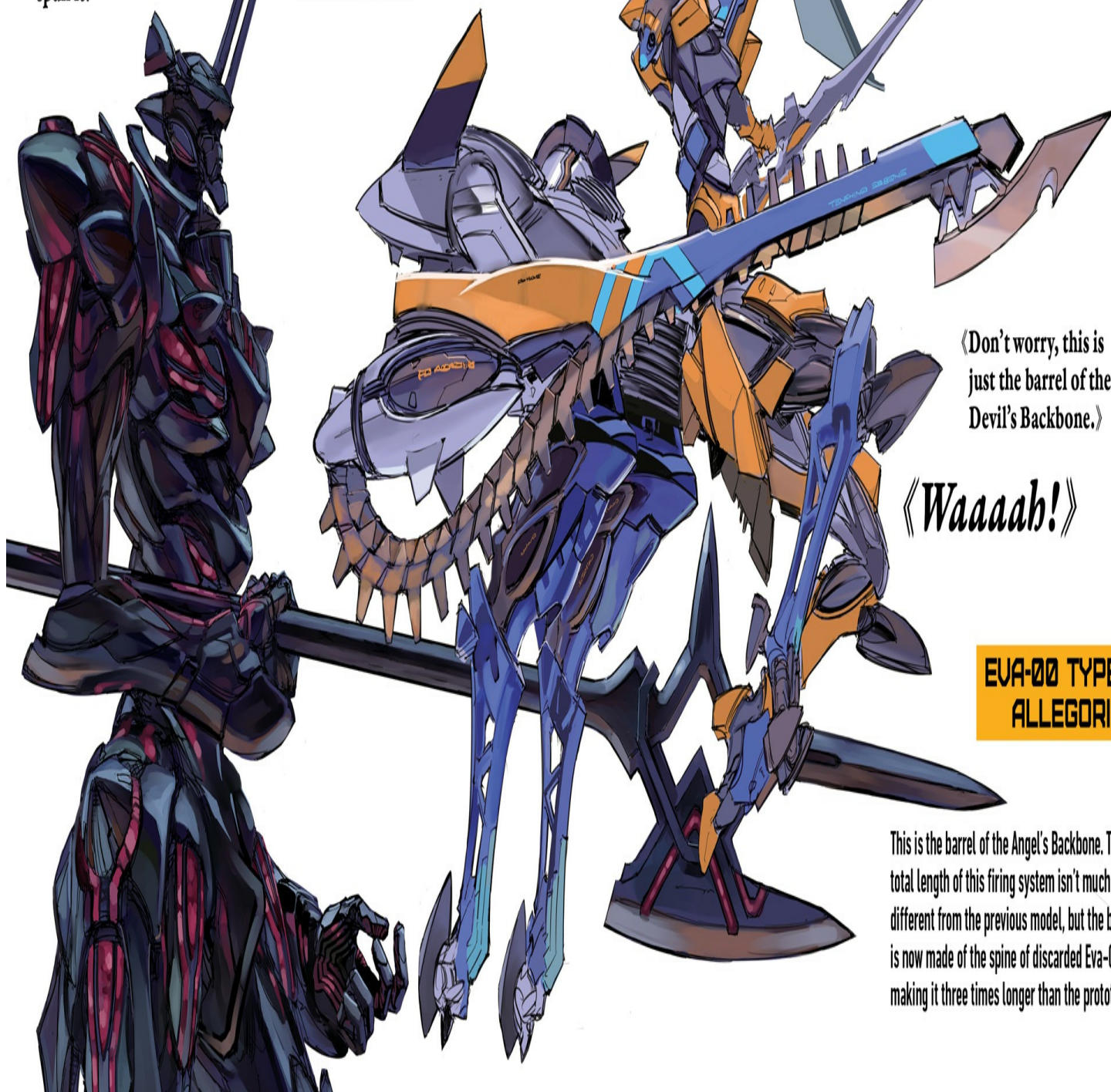
Trois activates
Eva-0.0's physical
shield and A.T.
Field to survive
the gamma-ray
storm.





The black giant Armaros
lifted his halberd
overhead and
spun it.

Eva Euro-II Heurtebise



《Don't worry, this is
just the barrel of the
Devil's Backbone.》

《Waaaah!》

**EVA-00 TYPE-F
ALLEGORICA**

This is the barrel of the Angel's Backbone. The
total length of this firing system isn't much
different from the previous model, but the barrel
is now made of the spine of discarded Eva-00s,
making it three times longer than the prototype.



“You mean Asuka’s here? Asukaaaaaa!”

Six was unaware that the Asuka/Eva synthesis had turned Victor.

In fact, Torwächter A1 was *also* unaware that she was working for the enemy now, and she waved to Six.

NEON GENESIS
EVANGELION
ANIMA
VOLUME 4

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CONCEPT

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Seven Seas Entertainment

EVANGELION ANIMA VOL. 4

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SHE'S UNCONSCIOUS BUT WARM. HER JOURNEY IS OVER.

HER DATA WAS ABLE TO RECONSTITUTE ITSELF IN UNIT ZERO'S PLUG, THANKS TO THE LENS'S POWER.

ASUKA IS HUMAN AGAIN.

I SEE...

TRY SPEAKING WITH MY VOICE AGAIN!

I DARE YOU!





| PART 7 |

NEON GENESIS
COLLISION COURSE
EVANGELION: ANIMA

Chapter 45:

Nerv Japan Hakone

MISATO FORCED HER WAY through the pandemonium to get to the balcony. She grabbed a pair of binoculars from a sentry posted there and looked through them.

The dark shadow of Yomotsu Hirasaka was peeking through the clouds beyond the mountain range in the distance. Beneath it, a giant being of light held the landmass on his back. Neither had breached the atmosphere so far.

The mere sight of it was enough to throw anyone into a panic.

“It’s huge...but...”

Even amid the confusion, the scene sparked dread in the sole survivor of the Second Impact. Aside from its Eva-like silhouette, the being she observed was only vaguely humanoid. But what was it, *really*? She couldn’t tell whether it was Super Eva as Shinji’s other body or that Shinji had become the giant himself.

Shinji-kun, are you still in there somehow...?

“W-we’re done for!” one of the younger security personnel was running around madly. They didn’t know whether to fear the being of light or to trust it.

In any case, it was clear that humanity was out of options. Neither the Aten’s Hammer or the ballistically propelled N₂ warhead Iphiclus Javelin could stop the descent of the lunar landmass.

The wind was strong. A strange tide moved in from the southeast. There was a rumbling in the air as fighter jets cut across the sky from Mount Daikan Airport. They were headed south, where the object was supposed to have fallen.

“Attention, citizens of Tokyo-3. Evacuate to the shelter areas immediately. We are looking into appropriate anti-Angel measures for the occasion. Please

await further orders. All personnel, to your stations.”

Aoba broadcast Misato’s orders through the intercom. In all honesty, if Yomotsu Hirasaka crashed into the Earth at its current speed, no underground shelter would be safe. The landmass would rupture the Earth’s mantle and turn it inside out.

Still, evacuation was the best Misato could do for the citizens of Tokyo-3. She bit her lip and continued staring at the screen as memories of the giant of light who’d taken everything she held dear played in her head. That giant had been faceless, but this one...

You’re in there, Shinji-kun. Give me that much, at least.

Chapter 46:

Yomotsu Hirasaka

SHINJI WAS BARELY holding on to his thoughts, which seemed to expand as much as his body.

Oooorgh!

He roared as he braced against Yomotsu Hirasaka. The two-hundred-kilometer-wide basalt and feldspar formation was on his back. Super Eva had become a giant of light after triggering the Third Impact. He spread his wings to support the whole of the detached lunar landmass in an attempt to slow its descent to Earth.

<<Kzzt...Ikari-kun...I'm beginning my approach.>> Ayanami Rei Trois spoke through the harsh feedback. Yet he heard her voice as clearly as if with his physical ears.

<<Yomotsu Hirasaka is still acting on the moon's orbit, so you have to push it east against the equator. That's where it's headed. If it accelerates any further...>> He tried changing the position of his wings, but this failed to affect the rock in any significant manner. There was too much mass for him to stop, let alone move.

Yomotsu Hirasaka had appeared on the far side of the moon from where the spatial lens was positioned. Now it was closing in on the Earth's crust at twenty kilometers per second.

Shinji attempted to slow the rock's descent by cutting away chunks of it with well-placed A.T. Fields. He growled. There seemed to be no end of Yomotsu Hirasaka, no matter how many fields he produced.

Just stop!

He couldn't let it land there. The Eurasian continent was wrapped in the darkness of night, while the Japanese archipelago was tinted orange to the east. His homeland was witnessing a beautiful sunset at this very moment. He imagined the bedrock attached to his back growing a mind of its own, and it felt as if it was specifically targeting everything he held dear.

Don't come any closer, Trois! Asuka's still with you...and I don't have much time left!

During the Second Impact, records stated that when the giant of light had appeared, the mere pressure had engulfed everything within a four-thousand-kilometer radius, annihilating over half of the Earth.

Now Shinji was waiting to *initiate* the third rendition, instead of preventing it. The event was inevitable, so he thought he might as well take advantage of the power.

The heart of Super Eva, the giant of light, continued pouring out blazing particles as it drew closer to its breaking point.

If Yomotsu Hirasaka fell upon the Earth, and the Third Impact followed, it would truly be the end of the world. Given how small the Earth had gotten, it might actually split in two. Shinji's plan was to use the force of the Impact to destroy the lunar landmass, or at least change its trajectory.

He continued chipping away at Yomotsu Hirasaka with his powerful A.T. Fields. He felt the violent feedback in his arms every time one of his fields broke. The loss of energy slammed into him like a brick wall.

The spatial lens had spectralized Yomotsu Hirasaka, which had been on the other side of the moon, and converged it right over the Earth. The lunar landmass was originally only supposed to graze the planet, but now it was on a collision course with it.

The spatial lens wasn't all bad, however. It spectralized and converged everything on Yomotsu Hirasaka, including Asuka, who was falling apart on a particle level, and Mari, who had literally bitten off more data than she could chew.

Trois said Asuka is human again, and I believed her without a second thought...

No... If anything, I'm using Asuka's return as an excuse to do what I'm doing now.

He made up his mind and stopped worrying about his plans.

Yomotsu Hirasaka was supported by the giant of light, Shinji, and the wings that had sprouted from his back. He extended his A.T. Field at an angle toward the Earth in an attempt to change the course of the two-hundred-kilometer-wide mass of rock.

The giant of light had suppressed the Armaros under the fringes of his field. Now the fields were falling apart, and Shinji could only focus on repairing the ones in front of him. In the chaos of light and tremors, the black giant revealed that he was still alive.

Armaros appeared, looking for his great bow. The weapon, excavated by Maya's team from the bottom of Lake Ashi, had originally belonged to him.

Stay still, Brother! I'll be done with this soon enough!

"Brother" was what Shinji called the giant who shared his voice. Although, now that Super Eva had become a giant of light, Armaros looked like a toy in comparison. Super Eva flapped one of his gargantuan wings and held down Armaros' left arm as it reached for his bow.

But no one could have foreseen what happened next.

<<Shinji, behind you!>> *Six?! I thought I told you to get the lance out of here!*

Behind me...?

Two dark shadows flew out of Yomotsu Hirasaka, their tails attached to the ground.

New Torwächters?!

Their broken back plates were as good as new, and each held a black spear in its hand. The black messengers raised their weapons, producing a bolt of black lightning in the space between them.

What is that?!

Shinji tried to bat the Torwächters away with his wings, but they nimbly dodged.

Gaaah!

The black lightning cut off one of Super Eva's wings, which spanned over a hundred kilometers. Stored energy exploded all the way from the stump to the tip of his wing.

Damn it!

The Torwächters were closing in for another attack when a blinding flash of light suddenly incinerated one of the their feet. Trois had fired her gamma-ray laser cannon.

"Six! Provide backup for Ikari-kun on Yomotsu Hirasaka!"

<<You got it!>> <<I'll help,>> Hikari said.

Heurtebise initiated its N₂ reactor-powered graviton wings and left Trois behind. Trois set a new course to approach Yomotsu Hirasaka. She was about to initiate her thrusters when alarms started ringing in Eva-0.0. Her screen was flooded with red COMMAND ERROR windows to the point that it caused her Eva to grow sluggish. A new mind had been recognized by the system, one that didn't belong to Ayanami Rei Trois.

"Ungh..."

The eyelids of the blonde girl fluttered in the LCL-filled plug of Trois' Eva. The system immediately shut down all fine controls of the unit and switched to the clumsy manual controls. The output of the external S² Engine, as well as its FCS, was now locked.

The Second Child took a slow and grumpy look at her surroundings and noticed Rei Trois' lack of plugsuit. The first words out of Asuka's mouth were, "Why are you naked?"

"Because I gave you my plugsuit."

"Did you...? Nice hair, by the way." Asuka played with the ends of Trois' hair, which now reached to the nape of her neck. Her hair transitioned beautifully from aqua to black.

"Thank you. I'm quite proud of it. We'll have to make today an anniversary."

Asuka was still half-dazed, having just recovered her human form, but she looked at Trois with surprise. “I’ve never heard you say anything so cocky in my life. I don’t hate it.”

“The girl. Why is she here?” Trois asked while fiddling with the manual controls. Asuka looked down into her arms and finally noticed the sleeping girl. She raised her eyebrows as if to say, “Oh, right. Her.”

When Asuka had been reconstituted out of thin air by converging light particles, she’d brought Mari along with her.

“She was really annoying, saying how she wanted to be part of my team. She pissed me off so much I thought I’d drag her here so she could see what being around me is *really* like.”

<<Trois! Stay on course!>> Six called from the Pegasus that was the Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica. <<I’m sending something your way. Make sure you get it! Counting down from ten.>> “Two... One... Mark!”

There was a bang, and suddenly Trois’ Eva-0.0 was holding a red spear.

“What, is that the Longinus...?!” Asuka cringed. The uniquely ominous vibrations of the lance reached even the inside of the plug.

<<Was that Asuka just now? You really did turn back into a human... Ugh.>> “You wanna try congratulating me this time, kid?!”

<<What? Crimson A1 was so much cuter than you are.>> Eva-0.0 looked at the spear she’d received from Six’s unit.

“Six, the me who is childish and selfish, this is...!”

The replica Lance of Longinus. The very same lance that Armaros had taken and stowed away on the Apple’s Core. The same lance that Shinji and Rei Quatre had flung toward Earth from the other side of the sun.

“Ikari-kun needs this right now!”

The more technologically advanced Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica was already using its compact graviton floaters to change direction.

<<Trois, the me who unifies—no. ‘The me who is in love’ is more like it.>> Six was now returning to the battlefield. <<Shinji told me to bring the lance back to

Earth. He said it might be the key to deciding the world's fate and that we couldn't afford to lose it with him.>> The spear was the final method of stopping an Impact. It was an instrument that appealed to an invisible logic higher than that of the tree of life. The lance was an instrument of intervention that could prevent the completion of the Human Instrumentality Project by its ability to destroy energy itself.

Lose Ikari-kun...? Is that what he's planning to do with himself?

Asuka looked at the error messages, blinking her long eyelashes and trying to figure out what was going on. She finally realized that her consciousness was interfering with Eva-0.0's systems.

"Should I go back to sleep?"

Asuka fiddled with the LCD screen embedded in the wrist of her orichalcum plugsuit. She was looking for the manual administration of anesthetics.

"What is... Look, I appreciate the new features and everything, but now I can't find the one I want!"

Trois saw her contours blur into particles again for a moment before regaining solidity. New alarms rang, indicating a near miss. The lens had reproduced chunks of Yomotsu Hirasaka, which were now on a course to Earth.

"Just stay as you are, Asuka. Trois to Hakone command. Requesting permission for the release of the FCS lock and permission to shoot freely."

Asuka's human form isn't stable yet.

Trois could still operate her gamma-ray laser even with Asuka in the plug. Hakone unlocked her FCS, and although her external N₂ reactor remained in lockdown, she began charging her cannon.

I know why Ikari-kun doesn't want to lose the spear, but I don't want to run away from this. There has to be something I can do.

"You just gotta put your mind to it."

Asuka's words startled Trois. She turned away from the giant of light Super Eva had become to face her.

"Don't see why he's trying so hard when he's that damn big..."

“Shinji’s not gonna die. Not before he does something flashy.” Asuka closed her eyes. She propped Mari up, still asleep, and reclined into her plug seat. “But I can almost guarantee you that he’s going to mess up.” Asuka relaxed, taking slow, deep breaths of the LCL. The more nervous she was, the faster her thoughts would contaminate the Eva.

“He’s cute when he’s like this, but don’t tell him that. I like listening to all the excuses he makes when I poke him about it.”

Eva-0.0 maintained its firing posture and changed its position with its thrusters. The gamma-ray laser cannon fired silently in the darkness of space. The blast consumed a large chunk of falling debris, ionizing it instantly.

The red spear glowed in the illumination from by Trois’ gun. She realized then that Armaros might call upon the original Lance of Longinus, like he had in North Africa. She looked up to see the Longinus Ring, a spider web spun around the world by the original lance, growing longer and longer.

Have our circumstances changed since then? The lance is still shrinking the Earth. Then again, it might have to do with spatial lens that transported Asuka and Yomotsu Hirasaka here...

“Is there something else the lens must do?”

Chapter 47: Shinji's Impact

THE COORDINATED MANEUVERS of Torwächters A and B were finally broken with Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica's return to the battlefield. A's left shoulder took a hit from the Angel's Backbone, forcing it to retreat.

"What are you doing back here?!" Shinji grunted painfully.

<<I'm here because you look half dead!>> Six snapped at him as she charged through Torwächter A. The black messenger kicked off Yomotsu Hirasaka to regain its balance, but Six chased it to the ground.

"Whoa."

As she jumped off Yomotsu Hirasaka, Six was startled by the rumbling of the entire structure. The beating of Super Eva's palpitating heart was sending shock waves throughout the entire rock formation.

What's going to happen to this thing...?

<<Ikari-kun, this is Horaki in the Euro Eva.>>

Horaki-san's here, too? I told you to go... Toji can see...

<<Hikari? Are you there?>>

<<Toji?>>

How was she hearing him? Hikari felt the Field Piercer Devil's Backbone, along with the Q.R. Signum attached to Heurtebise, resonate.

It's the Q.R. Signum you gave me... It's still connected... At the bottom of Tokyo-3... That's where Toji is.

<<Shinji, Maya thinks you deserve a medal for not losing your personality despite turning into a giant of light. She says it's because the Q.R. Signum that tried to eat you is anchoring your existence. I agree with her—>>

The sound of breaking glass echoed in the lab set up in the old Central Dogma.

“What just happened?!”

Toji turned around and looked at the aquarium. A large crack now ran down Shinji’s Q.R. Signum as it glowed menacingly.

“But that was at maximum output!”

A’s tightly woven shield dispersed the Angel’s Backbone’s shot into stray energy. B came in from behind it, and together they formed a black bolt that almost sliced through the Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica’s waist.

“Six! Stop being reckless and listen!”

The battle on Yomotsu Hirasaka was observable by telescope from the Hakone command center. The image on the main screen was distorted, however, mainly by the A.T. Fields Super Eva was continuously putting out.

“These Torwächters form a lightning bolt between them that they use to cut down their enemies. Take care that the other one doesn’t come at you from behind, even when you’re just dealing with one.”

Six finally listened to Misato after almost falling victim to the Torwächters’ attack. “So, what should I do?”

<<Kzzt...pincer formation. Give them a taste of their own medicine. You should have the communication protocol from the Novaya Zemlya operation, so contact the Euro Eva for help.>>

“Uhhh... This one?”

Six’s virtual display was now transmitted to Heurtebise’s plug. Hikari was taken aback when she saw the scribbles—Six’s battle plans—drawn in crayon all over her screen, “Wh-what is this?”

Hikari was seeing the 3D map drawn inside Rei Six’s head. Heurtebise’s assistant A.I. struggled with the uniquely individual diagram, taking four entire seconds to process it into a map that was up to Euro Sixth standards.

“This is the child version of Ayanami-san...the Eva who was supposed to be part of the Novaya Zemlya operation. Heurtebise to Kommandobrücke. Awaiting confirmation.”

<<Hikari...it’s probably too late to do anything now, but you do have

permission to fire the Devil's Backbone. We wouldn't want anyone to think Europe has abandoned Asia to the falling landmass. But make sure you come out of this alive after suppressing the Torwächters.>>

"I know you too well to think that you would abandon us, Herr Clausewitz. Thank you, and I love you. Reactor output stable. Taking Devil's Backbone out of sleep mode. Beginning activation sequence."

The Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica had a wealth of terrain data, since it had been the first Eva on Yomotsu Hirasaka. It attracted the two Torwächters' attention and began weaving through the hills and crevices. The Torwächters attacked, and the Eva-0.0 was seemingly affected as its flight became inconsistent. It played its role as bait perfectly.

Heurtebise, the firing half of the pincer formation, drifted to Yomotsu Hirasaka on pure inertia. To avoid detection, it didn't use its graviton floaters.

Hikari didn't have time to analyze the entirety of Six's mental map. "Okay, I get it," she said to her A.I. "Cut the conversion process!" Rei's drawings were reminiscent of her little sister's. There was a happy flower on the map to indicate that the Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica would be just out of firing range when the Torwächter showed its back during their next maneuver.

"Activating Devil's Backbone!"



“Activating Devil’s Backbone!”

An ominous chill ran down Six's spine. "What was that...?"

<<Have you ever cursed the day you were born?>>

Six and the other Ayanami clones had often received this question from researchers and civilians if they knew about her condition. People asked it out of good intentions as well as malice. She'd never resented her existence, though, even after she'd gained self-awareness.

But the chill that ran down her spine cursed its existence. Understandable. A spine was supposed to have hands and feet, not a rifle barrel. Perhaps it was the Q.R. Signum's power, or perhaps Euro Eva amplified whatever emotions the objects around it felt.

Either way, Six said, "Your output's too strong!"

The Torwächters had taken notice and turned around. But the Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica's Angel's Backbone was now fully charged.

"Over here!" Six aimed at Torwächter A and fired. A flash of baryons shot out of the barrel at near light speed and hit her target. They failed to pierce its field, however. Torwächter A thrust its spear at Six, but she wrapped the spine's barrel in an A.T. Field and cracked it like a whip to deflect the attack.

Torwächter B was still a threat behind her, but Six moved out of the way after she felt something invisible tap her chest. If she'd remained in the same position, that invisible something would have gone right through her A.T. Field.

This was the Devil's Backbone's firing line, and Heurtebise had aimed it straight at Torwächter A. It was the same kind of weapon as Six's Angel's Backbone, but the difference in degree was unbelievable.

"Your phase contrast barrel can reach all the way here?!"

Six was shocked. Heurtebise fired. Torwächter A's body spasmed as something pierced its chest and began squirming inside its armor.

"Urgh!"

The next moment, an event horizon ripped open in Torwächter A's chest, producing a micro black hole that devoured it, blowing a powerful jet of air in the direction of the firing line, which grazed Six's head.

“Hey, watch it! You almost killed me!”

<<Six, neutralize the remaining one with your cannon!>> Trois said.

Six’s gamma-ray laser sparked as it shot through Torwächter B’s shield, causing the black messenger to waver.

“I was going to!”

But B wasn’t going down so easily. It rushed closer to Hikari, forcing her to engage in melee combat. She readied her halberd, realizing she’d let her guard down slightly upon seeing how badly damaged her opponent was.

B extended its spear, stabbing the white Euro Eva in its thigh.

“Aaaah!”

She fired a second shot of the Devil’s Backbone as pain racked her body, but it only ended up taking off B’s left arm. The Torwächter tackled Hikari. Her consciousness was growing dim.

She was knocked all the way to the front of Super Eva.

Horaki-san! Six!

Six cracked the barrel of her Angel’s Backbone like a whip and latched it around Heurtebise’s foot. She yanked Hikari to safety just before B could deal the killing blow with its spear. Super Eva hid Heurtebise and the Eva-0.0 under the plumes of his wing. The Torwächter B extended its remaining hand toward Armaros, who was still under Super Eva’s bonds.

<<Become one with me...>>

“Huh?” Six was startled to hear a Torwächter speak.

“That’s Trois’ voice! No. Our voice...? It sounds like a really old recording...”

Suddenly, Armaros pushed back against Super Eva with a force greater than the giant of light’s. Super Eva was many times larger than Armaros and yet...

And yet the black giant grew.

And grew.

Armaros grew to the point of breaking through the Super Eva’s field, and his

hand, which had been suppressed by the Magorox, brandished Azumaterasu against him.

FWUMP!

Six squealed as her Eva was blown away by a powerful wind that ripped across Yomotsu Hirasaka—powerful enough to level mountains.

The giant of light reeled as the landmass on his back shook and swayed. The black giant had broken free of his A.T. Field prison and was now running amok on the lunar landmass.

Shinji felt a great aura spread above him.

Such power!

They'd reached the thermosphere now and had twenty seconds left before they made contact with the Earth's surface.

There's no time. All this energy, and the Third Impact still isn't triggering!

The giants of light and dark fought upside down on the falling landmass, one armed with a sword and the other a great bow. *What am I missing?!*

Shinji clumsily swung his blade.

But the black giant didn't bother evading. He'd already lost one of his legs, and Super Eva's sword sliced harmlessly through empty space. Armaros maintained his posture and readied his bow.

Crap!

Azumaterasu left a trail of seven-colored light when it fired. Seele had referred to it as Sacrilegus, the Relic Thief, and this was its most powerful attack. The force that had vaporized a large portion of Yomotsu Hirasaka now pierced Shinji's heart.

It felt as if lightning had punched him in the chest. An overwhelming force wracked his body, adding to the already violent outflow of energy and incinerating his organs with a loud crackle.

Gaaaaaah!

The arrow shot through Yomotsu Hirasaka, its vast energy rocking the stage

where the Human Instrumentality Project was supposed to begin. All of it poured into Super Eva.

Wait...I know what this is...

The outline maintaining Super Eva's form melted away into photons.

The Impact had begun.

Super Eva's body spread wide. His sword had followed his transformation and was now an arc of light lacking any outline. He realized that, in the distant past, the completion of the Human Instrumentality Project had probably been expedited by manipulating warp technology. Perhaps the great bow Sacrilegus had been a creation of their version of Dr. Akagi. The arc of light fell upon the great bow and split it in two, cracking Armaros' hardened field like ice.

THRUM!

The giant of light took a powerful step forward. The photon longsword ran through the black giant—the Eva-01 of the past, perhaps even the Shinji of the past.

<<Take... Eat... This is my body...>> Armaros said.

Ah...

<<Now I remember... This is what I needed...>> He spoke in Shinji's voice for the last time. Shinji felt his heart burn within him as the fire coiled around it consumed all.

I see... Of course.

He'd been fruitlessly trying to trigger the Third Impact through his own will. What he'd needed in the end was a loud voice that could overwhelm everything.

Let's do this. I can't stop the descent, but I can at least slow it down... Where should I drop it?

The people of Earth watched with bated breath as Yomotsu Hirasaka came to a stop. The three wings of light suddenly split into six, spreading and covering

the entire sky.

<<Kzzzt...Kommandobrücke...Heurtebise. Hikari, get out of... Kzzzt.>>

Heurtebise was the last Eva left on Yomotsu Hirasaka as Super Eva's shock waves buffeted it. Alarms blared in the plug warned Hikari about her injuries and the extreme surface temperatures. Clausewitz's voice roused her from her daze.

"Eegh...!"

In the wave of brilliant light, the black giant unleashed his arrow, even while pierced with a sword. Alarms continued to ring. Hikari could barely make out anything in the storm of brightness, but through the confusion she saw the giant of light fighting an enlarged Armaros.

It sent her into a panic.

Compared to them, Heurtebise looked like a child's plaything.

The warning colors in Heurtebise's entry plug shifted. The telemetry readings transmitted to the Euro control center shocked Clausewitz.

<<Kzzzt... Dial it back! She's going too deep with the dummy plug's parallel consciousness! She can't...>>

Heurtebise reached for the Devil's Backbone in its left shoulder and opened its armored louver. Rainbow-colored phase light leaked out of it.

"I'm sorry...but I'm not strong enough. I said I never wanted to go under the parallel consciousness again! But I'm just so weak...!"

In the storm of light, the white Eva had finished charging its black dragon.

"Activate!" Hikari yelled, and the cannon obeyed by opening its mouth.

She felt the recoil through her entire body, an ominous rumble.

The Field Piercer. The Devil's Backbone.

Unlike the Angel's Backbone, which used parts originally belonging to the Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica, the Devil's Backbone could have become a new Eva by itself. The spine had had its four limbs amputated, and it was now cursed to

shoot powerful, consuming fields out of its mouth.

Hrgh... Huff...

New warning windows appeared. Hikari's heart rate and breathing were slowly going haywire. Her emotions exploded to the point of no longer being restrained by the dummy plug's fail-safe.

"You took her away from me...! Kodama...! Kodama!!!"

She remembered that Armaros was the reason her sister had turned into a pillar of salt.

Vengeance—was that what she wanted? Or justice? She suffered a brief moment of clarity in all that confusion, and in it she saw the thing that was actually driving her.

Fear.

The coils that had generated the field looked like teeth at the end of the barrel. They produced a micro black hole, which moved at a blindingly fast speed.

Horaki-san... Didn't make it out?

Shinji noticed Heurtebise at his feet, which seemed so far away from him. His comment reached the old Central Dogma in Hakone.

"Shinji, please! Hikari...!" Toji yelled.

And then the cracked Q.R. Signum finally shattered into a thousand pieces.

I'll try... Just take care of the—

Shinji's voice echoed like a dream.

The giant's tidal wave of explosive light engulfed everything around it. Armaros stood his ground and maintained his aim. It looked as if he noticed Hikari for a moment, perhaps even smiling. It was an odd thing to do to someone firing a micro black hole directly at your head.

<<Hikari-chan...?>>

The next moment, Armaros' entire body was consumed, leaving only his feet. The nearly invisible black hole forced out boiling jets of light as it flew. But this was soon outshined by the light surrounding it, making it impossible to see.

An intense light focused at the center of the six wings, which grew in size, absorbing the force of Yomotsu Hirasaka. But now the heart of the giant of light was shining like a miniature sun. Despite losing its Eva form, he still seemed to be standing upside down on Yomotsu Hirasaka, and his circle of light expanded to engulf the whole mass.

A softer light enveloped the Pacific Ocean as dusk fell. People who were fleeing for their lives suddenly stopped and looked at the oncoming apocalypse from between their fingers.

The detached lunar landmass was slowly breaking into the stratosphere after a long delay. As slow as it was now, its sheer size still caused ripples visible to the naked eye as it entered the atmosphere.

The amount of water displaced in the sky generated myriad basin-like clouds in the troposphere, and the vast potential difference in the air formed thunderclouds, which lit up the sky like nests of lightning. The compressed atmosphere billowed out in a wide shock wave that broke the speed of sound.

Meanwhile, the six-winged figure at its center continued to absorb energy, even as it rapidly began losing its glow.

The shining giant had lost its human form. It barely even looked like an Eva. It was brought to its knees in the middle of all that light.

Trois had used the full power of her FSB to launch herself upward and watched the whole procession from above.

"Ikari-kun...!"

"He'll be back..." Asuka sighed. "He hates being around people, but he hates being alone even more. Auf Wiedersehen, Shinji. See you soon. I'll leave the lights on for you. I'll get you home this time."

Asuka finished her goodbye, and the smile disappeared from her face. If it weren't for the LCL, light would have trickled down her cheeks.

Chapter 48:

Rumble in the Pacific

SHINJI HAD SUCCEEDED in shifting the impact point. The landmass landed 1,200 kilometers southeast from where the Izu Peninsula had once been, the former location of the Ogasawara Islands. Due to the Longinus Ring's shrinking of the Earth, the islands were now located somewhere near the South China Sea.

There was a flash of light over the ocean, as intense as the birth of a new sun. The shock waves it produced burned the molecules in the air, painting the sky bright red. A pandemonium of heat, light, wind, waves, and electricity propagated outward from its center.

Hakone and Tokyo-3 were a thousand kilometers from the epicenter, and they were still hit with three earthquakes that day. Even if the aforementioned phenomenon had not produced any shock waves, Yomotsu Hirasaka hitting the water would definitely have shifted some tectonic plates. The settling of the landmass alone was probably responsible for the third quake.

Back in old Central Dogma, the linear rails set up for the experiment had fallen apart. The Carrier's mace was out of alignment, and its power field had disappeared.

"Maya-san, we have to get out of here!"

"Agreed! All personnel, clear out! What's happening on the outside...?"

The rumbling over the Pacific Ocean didn't stop. In fact, it lasted for several hours.

Night had fallen by the time Toji reached the surface, and the wind blew like a typhoon over the outer rim of the Hakone caldera. The clouds protecting Tokyo-3 had been chased away by the lightning bolts snaking through the sky. The bolts were colorful, possibly due to electric anomalies producing something like an aurora borealis. Sometimes, the clouds themselves even flashed, perhaps as

small fragments of the moon fell through them.

“It’s like natural disasters are having a party, and everyone’s invited,” Misato said, although one guest was suspiciously absent.

No matter how slowly it moved, a two-hundred-kilometer landmass like Yomotsu Hirasaka would produce tsunamis upon landing in the Pacific Ocean. There was no avoiding the water that thing would displace. And yet, no tidal waves had been observed thus far.

Six’s Eva flew over the caldera like it had been blown there by the violent air currents. The Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica stopped outside the dome of the sarcophagus, scraping the hard tektite concrete to break its landing. In the end, its damaged hind legs gave out, and it tumbled to a stop.

Meanwhile, Trois’ Eva had gone missing. Contacting her was out of the question, since all the communication lines were in a state of chaos. The newly installed satellites and stratospheric aircraft had either been knocked off course or had their lasers damaged. The guide beacons couldn’t be retrieved to be reset. There was no way of looking for Trois, even if she were still alive.

The next morning, Hakone command received an emergency transmission amid the communications chaos. It turned out that Eva-0.0 had been shooting down larger pieces of debris that were falling to the Earth. But Trois had decided it was time for her to land. She was running low on fuel, and Mari had awakened.

Toji had stayed awake all night in the command center and was thinking a little bit of sun would do his mind some good. He was about to step outside when security stopped him. They told him it was dangerous to leave because parts of the ozone layer had been blown away.

“Those clouds are moving fast,” Toji said. They were as black as they were thick, but from the breaks between them, he could see they were covering a clear blue sky. In fact, the clouds ended abruptly to the southeast.

Toji watched as a vertical line seemed to split the heavens.

“What the hell is that?!”

Above the point of Yomotsu Hirasaka's impact, which was still covered in thick clouds, he noticed a pillar extending into the sky. He couldn't see its apex.

Toji stumbled back to the command center. He ordered Trois to do a spectral analysis on the phenomenon before she made her landing.

Asuka's voice shot through his ear. <<We were staring at the thing last night, genius! It goes up and up, and the top just disappears, like an optical illusion! Now let us land, damn it! I'm hungry!>>

<<Waaaah!>>

Asuka's angry complaints were accompanied by the sound of a little girl crying. Mari's wailing echoed throughout the command center, and the people there who knew about her past would never have believed that she was now clinging to Asuka like a frightened child.

Mari had shared her consciousness with the countless animals whose DNA had been spliced into her. Now they were gone, and she was alone. Her researchers would one day learn that this was the first time she'd ever felt loneliness and anxiety. The spatial lens had ripped her "family" out of her DNA, much like how it had ripped the organic data out of Asuka.

<<Waaaaaah!>>

"Someone's cranky... Can you share your findings with us, Trois?"

Rei Trois began reading their observation data. <<Makeup is mostly water... Sodium chloride, magnesium chloride, magnesium sulphate...>>

"It's seawater..." Hyuga muttered from the middle deck.

It's a pillar of seawater stretching into space? That's just great. But what's causing it? Could be that spatial lens again, I suppose. It already did some weird things with the tide.

Toji furled his eyebrows, his expression growing more grim.

"Trois, Asuka. Sorry about this, but you're going to have to head to the spatial lens to see if anything's happened to it. That might be the cause of the pillar."

<<Oh, come on!>>

“You might get the same spectrometer readings on the moon side of the lens. Command out.”

“Toji-kun...?” Misato put down the receiver in her commander’s chair.

“Various countries have sent drones to that area, and they’ve all lost visuals of the object,” Toji said. “I don’t know what Shinji made, but I think we owe it to him to get a good look at it ourselves. That pillar might be the tsunami that should have hit us last night.”

Toji’s speculation was so outrageous that he had to pause and take a breath.

“The moon’s 110,000 kilometers wide now. That’s about the size of the Earth. I’m guessing it’s gonna want to steal our waters, too.”

| PART 8 |

NEON GENESIS

NEW LAND

EVANGELION: ANIMA

Chapter 49:

Noise

THE SOUND OF WAVES could be heard in the science and engineering division of Nerv Japan, crashing loudly then receding softly. The science floor was known as the place where a mob of mad scientists did their work. Maintenance crew rarely ventured there if they didn't have to, and the rest of the personnel went through pains to avoid that floor entirely. The head of the division was notorious for her inflexibility, to the extent of refusing to implement something as innocent as a movie night.

“...”

These were the things that Ibuki Maya, chief of the science and engineering division, had heard spoken about her in the past as she walked this darkened hallway lined with airtight doors.

But now she heard the crashing of waves. She stopped and looked back. Perhaps it was only nerves. She sighed and was about to resume her course when she heard something else.

<<Even for Unit One this is...>> *A human voice!*

<<The pilot is synchronizing too much. We can't get a reading!>> <<We don't know how the battle with the mass-production Evas is developing outside, and some of our own special forces are still inside. There's no reason to activate an unknown Eva in these circumstances.>> <<We've been transported into Lilith's Egg from God knows where. In any case, we're already drowning in the stream, and a reed is as good as a log if it can get us out.>> The unseen speakers carried out a strange conversation. She didn't recognize the voices, but she faintly remembered their styles of speech. Maya followed the voices and stopped in front of the room they were coming from.

Wait, this is my room!

<<Second Impact-level energy output frozen like ice within a closed system... Impossible.>> Maya recognized *that* voice. She banged on the door wheel before throwing it open. The voice had disoriented her to the point where she'd

actually forgotten to call for backup.

“Who’s there?!”

The noise instantly disappeared. The host A.I. of Maya’s room greeted her, turning on the lights as she entered.

No one’s here...

But Maya noticed the flickering of her LCD drawing board and dashed toward it.

“What is this...?” A rough schematic had been drawn on it. Blueprints of some kind. The four fairings lined up next to each other hinted that it might be an Evangelion’s shoulder pylons. Words and diagrams had been scribbled on it from at least two sides, but there were no new entries on her usage log. There was a circle made up of many overlapping lines, as if drawn by an indecisive artist. On top of the circle were two Λ ’s, which looked as if they’d been put there by mere force of habit. They looked like cat ears.

Maya drew a deep breath. She would get some sleep and then pursue the hard questions. Yes... Perhaps Toji knew who’d pulled this prank on her. This was her initial reaction.

She stepped back from the drawing board to look again at the diagram on the side when suddenly her files fell all over the floor. She finally addressed *that person* in the room.

“What do you expect me to do, Dr. Akagi?”

It was like observing the Second Impact. All energy would be unleashed during the final phases of the apocalypse and put an end to everything.

Most of the energy would be made up of photons, followed by a tidal wave of particles of every imaginable wavelength. Maya followed the diagram to its conclusion—a straight line to a black gate where everything converged.

“It’s as if time has stopped. The final second of the end. No...I doubt we would get even a second in the end.”

Chapter 50:

A Dawn Without Shinji

SENTRY DRONES dispatched near Marcus Island in the Pacific Ocean had gone silent. There was no way of knowing what was happening 1,200 kilometers southeast of the former Izu Peninsula where Yomotsu Hirasaka had fallen.

The entire area was full of dark clouds and electromagnetic surges. A pillar of seawater cut through the clouds, disappearing into nothing just before it touched the sky.

Super Eva had turned into a giant of light to capture the two-hundred-kilometer-wide detached lunar landmass. In the end, Shinji had willingly triggered the Third Impact and used its force to dampen Yomotsu Hirasaka's damage.

His cloud of witnesses could only stare as they watched the mythical procession play out before them. None of them wanted to say it was the right thing for him to do, but then again none of them tried to talk him out of it. They went to bed, and upon waking from their dreams, they realized they had placed the fate of the world on the shoulders of a lone seventeen-year-old. It was a hard truth to admit.

"The latest weather chart."

They'd received news about the disasters going on in Hakone and its surroundings, but they still quietly advanced their observation plans. Toji had received data about the seawater pillar from Trois' Eva-0.0, but even he wasn't sure how to talk about it with the rest of the personnel.

The communications booth was still putting out calls to Shinji. Everyone was in silent agreement that it would be a few days before they stopped trying.

"I'm going to school," Ayanami Rei Six said from the open door of the command center. She was wearing a white uniform. The personnel inside were

all startled by her sudden statement. They could only stare.

“Have fun!”

Misato was the only one who said anything. All eyes were on the commander now.

“Look,” Misato started, fully aware of the state Rei Six’s Eva was in. The Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica had been heavily damaged. Resupply was already underway, but its hind legs still needed to be fixed and its systems tuned. “It’s not like she can go on a mission, right?”

“Hang on,” a representative from Maya’s division said. Even though they could refer to the Eva’s black box to learn what had happened in the stratosphere, they had some questions they wanted to ask Six as well. Misato knew that, of course.

“Employees belong in the office and students belong in school. That’s a decent way of maintaining normalcy, isn’t it? We can’t have the black giant take us for a spin every time he shows up.”

The black giant is gone, but the moon is still expanding, and disasters are still happening all over the planet. It doesn’t look like there’s a future for us. Even worse, that crazy myth the black giants were talking about might just come to pass.

So Misato thought.

“Is the high school open today?”

“Let me check...” Aoba tapped some quick queries into his keyboard. “Yep, looks like it.”

“Very good.”

As the person in charge of Tokyo-3 and the Hakone caldera, Katsuragi Misato wanted to maintain as much normalcy as possible for its citizens. Going to school was a big part of that, and as long as there were no disasters that prevented them from commuting, the schools should remain open.

Aoba tilted his head. “They only have classes up to second period...though they do have extracurricular activities. That all right with you?”

“I think Toji’s dying to go, too. But we can’t afford to not have you around for the moment. Sorry, Acting Deputy Commander.”

“Uhh, sure...”

But it didn’t take long before Toji had to go, too. Thirty minutes after Six left, with a slice of toast in her mouth, she sent an emergency signal to the command center. Misato looked up from the map display on her table while gnawing on her stylus. She glanced at the small window with Six’s image and wondered, “Did she forget her notebook?” before returning to the map.

There was something strange about Six’s window, however, and she looked at it again.

A strange shadow filled the screen.

<<Shinji’s at school!>>

“What?” Misato’s brain couldn’t process this outrageous statement, because it was too busy processing the other outrageous things on the screen.

Why is everyone wearing black? And those long sleeves... What’s with the winter uniforms?

Winter hadn’t visited Japan since the Second Impact.

Chapter 51:

Ordinary Classroom

THE CLASSROOM was noisy. Students were overjoyed at seeing their classmates alive. They talked about all the strange things that had happened to them and the strange things that were continuing to happen. Some even used the communication terminals to contact the outside world.

“Well, I tried it!” said one student, corroborating others who’d seen it for themselves. “My clothes go back to normal when I go outside.”

“What’s going on?”

Rei Six was only about as tall as the waistlines of her classmates. She stepped inside the classroom and walked through their gossip. Shinji was in his seat, taking a textbook out of his backpack. Six kept her distance but moved to get a better look at him. That’s when she noticed...

What...?! And I thought Shinji being here was weird...

She called out to the quiet figure standing alone by the lockers. “Hello, Quatre, the me who is angry.”

“Hello, Six...the me who knows no fear.”

Ayanami Rei Quatre had gone rogue when her mutant Eva was contaminated by the Q.R. Signum. She was supposed to be on the run with Seele/Kaji, and her formerly blue hair was now gray from the scale’s influence. She was wearing a black sailor uniform with a long skirt, just like all the other girls in class. She’d chosen this corner of the classroom because she knew no one would bother her here.

Quatre played with the light blue ribbon on her chest. “Do you recognize this uniform?”

Six felt like she did, but somehow she couldn’t pull up the corresponding memory. She joined Rei Quatre next to the lockers, thoughts running through her head.

Why is Quatre here? I thought she went rogue. Did she sneak her mutant Eva-

0.0 into Tokyo-3 somehow? I should really go see Misato about this...

“What are you doing here, and what do you want?”

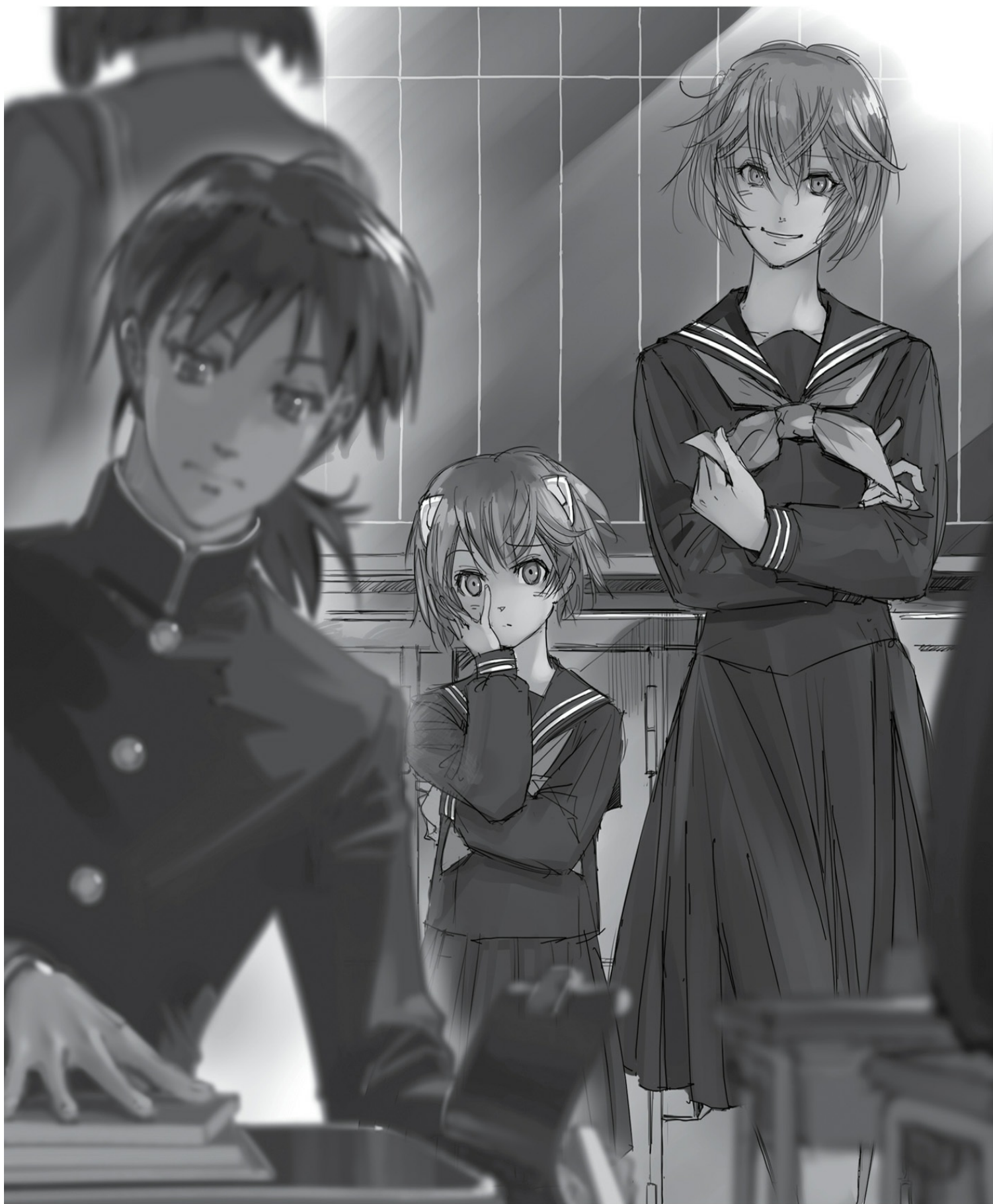
“Have you ever dreamed? I’ve had them from time to time. Ever since our mental mirroring was broken. Ever since ‘we’ became ‘you’...”

What was Quatre talking about?

“What’s that about?” she asked, lifting her chin at the figure across the room.

The two Ayanamis watched as Shinji put his textbooks on his desk.

“Shinji’s at school!”



Quatre ignored the question. “Well, have you? Have you ever dreamed?”

A loud voice interrupted their conversation. “How could you?”

Six turned to look for the source and found two more people who shouldn’t have been there. They were trying to come up with a solution for an impossible problem.

“That’s the only thing I did.” Kensuke folded his hands over his lap. Next to him stood Hikari, looking down on him with hostility.

“I don’t know... I don’t know how I want you to make it up to us...” Hikari closed her eyes and shook her head. She looked troubled.

The intelligence division had a policy of doing anything and everything in the name of achieving its goals. Nerv Japan had severed its ties with the other Nerv organizations, so they’d taken to selling leaks in exchange for information.

Kensuke had traded their Child data to Nerv Germany for information about the relics. As a result, the Horakis had been relocated to Europe without ever suspecting that they were being kidnapped. Furthermore, Hikari’s sister Kodama was turned into a pillar of salt after seeing the light of the Lance of Longinus over the skies of Europe. The intelligence division had stripped Kensuke of his office and put out a warrant for his immediate arrest.

“You should’ve killed me when you had the chance. Now you’re making me feel something like remorse.” Kensuke grabbed his desk and slowly leaned back in his chair, making the front legs hover over the floor tiles.

“This is an awful dream.”

“A dream? I see... I’m dreaming. This is what I’ve always wanted, but now that I’m here, I have nothing to say to you.”

“Hang on, this is *my* dream!” Kensuke shouted, attracting the classroom’s attention. Everyone had been talking in their own little cliques, because they knew how absurd the whole thing was.

This...is what a dream feels like.

The classroom was quiet now, and it felt as if that awful silence should never be broken.

“Teacher’s here!” Ayanami Rei Cinq said as she opened the door. The Ayanami who’d passed away wore a white coat over her uniform.

Shinji reacted to her voice and said, “Class Rep!”

Hikari complied and quickly returned to her seat. “All stand!”

But Ikari-kun’s the class rep now.

Her consciousness began to fade. Rather, she began to awaken from the dream.

You’re the class rep now, remember? How long do you plan on staying in junior high? We’re high school juniors now.

“Bow!”

That was the last thing Hikari said. By the time her classmates raised their heads, she was gone.

Chapter 52: Ritterschaft

“**M**_{M...}”

“Hikari? Are you awake? Can you talk?” Clausewitz asked.

What a weird dream. Everyone was at school, and...

Hikari awoke in a dimly lit room with white walls that looked to be made of glossy resin. Clausewitz’s voice came from outside the pilot adjustment tank.

“Yes...”

“The speaker for the European council wishes to talk with you. Politics, mostly nonsense, you know how it is... Sorry to trouble you, but are you well enough to go to the communications room?”

Hands helped her out of the capsule. Her arms were still limp, and she had to hold on to their coats for support. They led Hikari to a chair and sat her down. She was half-conscious, and it was doubtful she noticed when her makeup and hair were being done. Her weary eyes and pale skin were livened up with shadow and rouge.

“There you are, pretty lady.”

Ikari-kun, I saw you stop Yomotsu Hirasaka by turning into a giant of light. I know just as well as anyone that that was your final act as an Eva.

It was your final act as a person...

So why were you in my dream?

Hikari remembered the battle of the giants. She remembered overloading her dummy plug with her emotions. But she had no memory of how she’d gotten away from Yomotsu Hirasaka.

Her legs wobbled underneath her in the narrow corridor, and she leaned against the wall for support. *No, the problem isn’t my legs.*

She opened the hatch and was greeted by a light drizzle against her face.

Salty. Like the tide had been mixed into the rain.

Applause followed and then the bright flash of cameras. She flinched from the sudden exposure as she realized she was on board a U.S. aircraft carrier. The Euro Eva, Heurtebise, was kneeling on the deck. Its face was scarred, and there were burns all over its restraint armor. Wires kept the giant in place to compensate for the reduction in gravity. She felt like a Lilliputian standing at the feet of Gulliver.

“Huh...? What’s going on?”

Heurtebise had vanquished humanity’s greatest enemy, the black giant, Armaros. The media had gotten ahold of footage from the Euro Eva’s visual sensors. The world had seen the moment when the Devil’s Backbone fired a black hole that annihilated the monster’s torso. They’d been dying for some good news.

In fact, it was Shinji’s Super Eva, the giant of light, that had done most of the heavy lifting in the fight against Armaros, though Hikari had dealt the killing blow.

Heurtebise the Armaros Slayer.

That title dominated the headlines of all remaining media outlets in Europe. The Europeans had finally got revenge on the monster who’d turned 180,000 of their own into pillars of salt. Now, they hailed the warrior who’d vanquished him.

For one night, Hikari was the hero who’d destroyed the world’s greatest enemy.

Chapter 53:

Sleeping Shinji

THE STUDENTS BOWED as the teacher entered the classroom. When they raised their heads, they saw that “Self-Study” had been written in bold on the blackboard, along with some assignments so they wouldn’t get too rowdy. A video recording of the lesson was playing.

But none of the students could remember whether they were in homeroom or some other class.

No one’s surprised that Hikari’s gone.

Little Rei Six continued observing the classroom from her seat—front row next to the windows. What surprised her most was how little she was actually surprised.

My thoughts aren’t slowing down or anything... It’s like there’s some strange power at work...

Still, she continued inspecting the hallway, the classroom, and everyone inside it.

Why is Cinq here? That’s not even funny.

Ayanami Rei Cinq was one of the four remaining Ayanami clones. She was the most physically developed among them. Ayanami Rei Trois was the oldest, having survived even the Battle at Nerv HQ three years ago. But Cinq had had a longer incubation time. After they pulled her out of the artificial womb, her growth had quickly surpassed Trois’. She was killed on the first lunar reconnaissance mission.

So what was she doing here now?

Six pondered as the class quieted down. Soon, the recording was the only source of sound.

In the back of the class, Quatre propped her elbows on the desk and whispered to Kensuke in front of her. “This absurdity seems nostalgic to you,

Aida Kensuke. I think you're quite right in calling it a dream."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence." Kensuke sighed as he continued to observe his surroundings. He knew he couldn't let his guard down. "I wouldn't pick something this stupid for some kind of deception. This place is probably here to throw me off. So let's assume it's a dream... I couldn't care less about the physical implications. But whose dream is it?"

"You've got a hunch, don't you?"

"Yeah. It's the one who seems most at home here..."

Rei Quatre and Kensuke fixed their eyes on Shinji.

"This being a dream would explain why Rei Cinq's here when she's supposed to be dead. But..." He felt a strange presence as he watched Cinq's back. "I don't know..."

"What is it?"

"Could be nothing. Anyway, can I borrow you for a sec?"

The two of them got out of their chairs without a sound and opened the door in the back of the class. The hallways were strangely silent.

"Ten bets we're the only class in attendance..."

Kensuke went down the stairs, holding his hands out the whole time like he was feeling for something. Quatre followed suit. They finally reached the entrance where the shoe lockers were.

Kensuke's hand disappeared after it passed a certain point in space. "Looks like this is the border between dream and reality."

"So, you're not here."

"And neither are you, fugitive Ayanami Quatre."

He pulled back his arm, and it returned to normal.

"My right hand's made of flesh instead of a prosthetic. That's how I knew this was a hallucination from the start."

Kensuke and Quatre made their way back to class.

“Say, you’re with Kaji-san, aren’t you? I mean he’s Seele now, but you know what I’m saying.”

“And what if I am?”

“Tell Kaji-san to team up with Nerv Japan.”

Quatre scoffed. “As if he would listen... What’s the point?”

“There will be a point if we can clarify what Kaji’s doing,” Kensuke said.

“Meaning?” Quatre’s curiosity was piqued.

“Seele is obsessed with the replica Longinus. I think he said they were the ones who made it. Either way, they’re worried about whether they can secure the lance for future Instrumentality Projects. I’m telling you, Kaji-san can make a deal with Nerv Japan that will satisfy everyone involved.”

Quatre was entranced, until Kensuke added...

“As for you, you can go back to Nerv. Aren’t you running out of reasons to stay in your rebellious phase?”

He’d lost her. She turned around, but her vision was growing blurry.

“Why would you...?!”

Kensuke shrugged.

Anyone can tell by the way you smile at Ikari and the rest.

“Yo, Kensuke!” A loud voice cut their conversation short.

Toji, Six’s backup, was yelling from outside the entrance.

“Oh, hey... It’s Toady Toji!” Kensuke grinned and stepped outside the dream.

“What’d you call me?!”

Toji rushed at him in his superior officer’s suit, extending his arm to form a lariat. His arm whooshed right past Kensuke like he was a ghost, and he lost his balance, plunging into a trash can next to the shoe lockers. When he got up, he discovered that he was now wearing his black school uniform.

“Acting Deputy Commander Suzuhara!”

The scientist with the observation instruments caught up with him, but an

invisible barrier denied him entry into the school. Evidently, there were conditions for entering the dream classroom. Toji stepped out, took the equipment, and walked back in. Quatre watched this with some amusement.

“Wait, Quatre?! Are you the one who warped Kensuke here?!”

Toji took up a fighting stance, and that was when he noticed the terminal on his arm. The Hakone caldera had been equipped with eight quantum flow inclinometers, which had proved their worth on the Apple’s Core, just in case any hostiles decided to teleport in unannounced. But now, those terminals weren’t giving out any warning signals.

What is going on?

Kensuke had demonstrated to Quatre that all she had to do to leave was step outside. She answered Toji calmly.

“I’ve been dragged into this space, too. It would be quite pointless to put handcuffs on me. Aida and Horaki-san were here as well. You could say we’re the ‘dream transfer students.’”

“What’s Hikari doing here?”

“Good question... Perhaps the dreamer thought she fit the scenery of his everyday life...” Rei Quatre smiled—rebelliously but not without relief.

“Stop talking in circles and give it to me straight.”

“Self-study? Where’d the teacher go?” Toji said upon entering the room.

Some students noticed him. “Yo, Suzuhara! Did you see our clothes?”

The recording had stopped playing, and the classroom was noisy again.

“Our clothes? Well, they look like something my folks would wear back in the day, but that’s about it.”

He scanned the room and thought, *Wow, everyone’s here*. He waved to Shinji, who was sitting a few rows from the windows. He fiddled with his right hand, reveling in how good it felt, when someone started pinching his ear.

“Ow, ow, ow!”

Rei Six was not pleased. “You are late! You missed Hikari.”

Kensuke disappeared, but I guess she just woke up...

The slender barrel of a camera lens had been crammed into the chest pocket of his stuffy black uniform.

Quatre returned to the classroom with a bag full of complex broadband observation equipment she’d received from the science division. She set it on top of the lockers.

Toji had arrived with science division personnel, but he was the only one who could carry things through what Kensuke called the border between dream and reality. In fact, Toji’s beat-up school bag was apparently the only object allowed to enter the dream, so they’d enlisted Quatre to stow most of their equipment inside.

In his ear was a tiny transceiver, which he’d used to receive Six’s phone call and would hopefully allow him to maintain contact with the command center, too. Toji felt that he was at the center of the phenomenon. He walked toward Shinji, who sat in the middle of the classroom.

<<You’re late, Suzuhara-kun. Get to your seat.>> “Oh, yeah, sorry...”

He felt strangely oppressed by the scolding and quietly shuffled to his desk. He’d already been informed of Cinq’s existence, but he had no idea why she would say that.

Back in the command center, the footage that was being broadcast wasn’t footage at all. Rather, it was still images that changed every two seconds.

Several students had already reported that they were being taught different subjects. It was thought to be some kind of hallucination or psychological interference that pandered to the individual’s memory. The stills were likely a product of all the filtering.

“What’s going on? We’re getting audio through the speakers, aren’t we?”

Misato stopped drafting their next plan and shrugged. To her eyes, the subject was Divisions of Ancient History.

“The A.I. can’t make out any English written on the blackboard. The image

and voice recognition engines are repeatedly saying they have no information to process. The voice coming through the broadcast is mostly noise, although it looks a lot like a sine wave, if that helps.”

For Hyuga, it was Foreign Language.

“What do you think?” Misato turned to Fuyutsuki. He looked shocked.
“Sensei...?”

Fuyutsuki saw Rei Cinq in the teacher’s position.

The old man remained quiet, and Misato couldn’t make out what had gotten him so spooked. She turned to the display and picked up her headset to give some orders.

<<Toji-kun, you might not want to stay there for too long. We think it could be messing with your emotions!>> Toji snapped out of it upon hearing her warning. He reached for the eraser on his desk and threw it really hard at Shinji.
“Ow!”

Who? Shinji turned and saw Toji give him a thumbs-up.

“What are you doing,” Shinji mouthed. Ever thin-skinned, that was the Shinji Toji knew. He smiled but then remembered what he’d come here to do.

He wrinkled his forehead and leaned forward. He banged his elbow on the desk, making a loud noise that drew the attention of all his classmates.

“Shinji can’t be here. He made sure that he couldn’t be here, so who the hell are you?”

It was a cold fact that Shinji’s Super Eva had turned into a giant of light and brought an extraterrestrial island down on the Pacific Ocean. No one knew where he was now, not even Toji. But the way this Shinji was acting, it was as if the tragedy had never occurred.

Toji regretted letting Shinji carry the burdens of heaven and earth on his shoulders all by himself. He couldn’t accept this false peace.

“Suzuhara-kun, you can talk after class.”

Cinq said this like she was the class representative. But Toji continued.

“Shinji protected everyone! This guy beat Armaros and took the weight of Yomotsu Hirasaka by himself!”

“Suzuhara-kun!”

“Arma...? Yomotsu...” Shinji muttered to himself.

“Yeah! Remember...”

“That’s enough,” Cinq said.

She sighed, and Toji’s view grew dim.

“Don’t wake him, Suzuhara-kun.”

Cinq reprimanded Toji with a glare. He was standing in the hallway with her.

What happened? He shook his head to try and make sense of things.

Cinq had finally noticed that something was going on by the way Toji had tried to get Shinji’s attention.

“That boy wanted to stop it.”

Does she know what’s going on?

“The Impact was frozen in time in its last 0.82 seconds. That’s why it didn’t do as much damage as you expected. Put another way, Shinji has 0.82 seconds left to live. So you can’t wake him up. Not yet. But I promise we’ll do something about it.”

Toji didn’t know where all of this was coming from, so he could only stare at Rei Cinq as she wrinkled her forehead.

“Oh... Do you think me wearing a high school uniform is too much? I’m sorry, but I felt nostalgic for it, that’s all.”

Fuyutsuki gasped as he saw the image from Toji’s pocket camera. He finally recognized the outline of her figure. He uttered the name that he’d buried deep in his memories.

“Yui...? Isn’t that Shinji’s...”

The woman bearing Cinq’s likeness opened the door. She turned to Toji and

smiled.

“Take care of Shinji for me, Suzuhara-kun.”

She closed the door behind her.

Toji’s vision blurred again, and when he came to, he was sitting on the grounds outside the school. He’d managed to get himself kicked out of an imaginary classroom.

Shinji didn’t remember what his mother looked like. Among the Ayanami’s, Cinq bore the most resemblance to Yui. Perhaps that was why she’d assumed that form, to protect the peaceful dream of her son.

“I’m not sure how I feel leaving mommy dearest to handle everything...”

Toji got up and brushed off his pants. In the end, he hadn’t been able to figure out anything about the dream classroom. His classmates were under a strange mass hypnosis. That was about the extent of his findings.

The roar of jet engines droned over Tokyo-3. They’d taken off from Mount Daikan airport, located on the southern face of the Hakone caldera, and were circling the city overhead, probably as a sensor test. After a lap, the jets zoomed away to the Yomotsu Hirasaka crash site.

Toji called the scientists over to him. “Come on, let’s get outta here.”

Meanwhile, Rei Trois’ Eva-0.0 had appeared in the western skies. By sheer luck, Trois had managed to secure the rehumanized Asuka, along with Mari, pilot of the U.S. Eva.

From afar, her unit seemed to be descending slowly, but even with all her deceleration, she was still falling fast. Her gamma-ray laser cannon and propulsion units opened like a parachute, and she took on the appearance of a bouquet floating toward Lake Ashi.

“Pretty good with the current wind speeds.”

Toji perked his ears and heard a delayed bang in the distance. Eva-0.0 had activated its A.T. Field and landed in a body of water outside the caldera. He wondered whether the classroom would still be here tomorrow. He wondered how Rei Trois and Asuka would react to it.

“How’d she set up an A.T. Field with three people in an Eva?”

Chapter 54:

Yomotsu Hirasaka Island

THICK CLOUDS HAD GATHERED over the newly formed island, although its peak was still visible, if only because the clouds didn't reach that high. The summit, which was so tall that its collapse seemed inevitable, was nineteen thousand meters above sea level and just breached the bottom of the stratosphere. You could stack two Mount Everests on top of each other, and you still wouldn't get to the top.

The stratospheric network of airships, which was now the world's only method of communication, would be forced to rethink their routes. The larger American and European observation crafts had circled the thick clouds several times, confirming that Yomotsu Hirasaka was now a new island in the Pacific Ocean.

The island had the topography of a plateau and the perimeter of a pentagon.

The energy from the fall had caused the ocean floor around it to rise up as a ring of smaller islands. Most of the sentry drones had dropped out of range, but one of the operators reported seeing a thick forest behind all that fog. The lunar origins of Yomotsu Hirasaka should've made it impossible for it to support any kind of plant life, yet there were chlorophyll reactions in the log before the drone dropped out of reach. People were skeptical but not altogether unbelieving.

The last thing the drone saw was a large-scale landslide, which unveiled a mountain range shaped like the back of a large beast.



| PART 9 |

NEON GENESIS

MANY ROADS TO HOME

EVANGELION: ANIMA

Chapter 55:

White Coat Party

“No, I’M NOT GOING,” Asuka said.

Toji thought she would’ve been interested, at least. He took out a tablet and showed her pictures of the high school he and Six had been in that afternoon, though he wasn’t entirely convinced that he hadn’t dreamed the entire episode.

“Ya sure about that? Shinji’s in there.”

The last time Asuka had seen Shinji, he was a giant of light carrying the entire weight of Yomotsu Hirasaka on his back. Now he was sitting in class as if nothing had happened.

“Now you’re interested.”

“Is he so lonely that he has to haunt our school now? Besides, you haven’t told me why Hikari was in the Euro Eva—”

Asuka stopped when she saw Hikari in Rei Six’s picture. She wasn’t supposed to be anywhere near Tokyo-3. She also noticed Kaji’s former assistant at Nerv’s intelligence division. Kensuke was there, and none of them were happy to see him.

Asuka didn’t know what had transpired on Earth after her recon mission to the moon, but she retained none of the

memories of her time as an Eva synthesis, either. All of this came as a surprise to her, but Toji had to move her along.

“Never mind that. Look at the classroom.”

Misato, Fuyutsuki, and the other commanding officers at Nerv Japan didn’t show much interest in the classroom. Apparently, this strange anomaly was using images from Shinji’s residual consciousness to produce images that other observers would be comfortable with.

But they were adults and as such were prone to giving up on lost causes.

Shinji was dead to them.

He'd escaped death so many times in the past. Even Toji had been ready to accept his fate when Super Eva had turned into a pillar of salt.

But again, Shinji had managed to return. Toji thought he had enough faith for one more run. He'd come to Asuka because he needed an accomplice.

"What are they wearing?" Asuka asked about the uniforms.

"Doesn't really matter. That's what we'll be wearing when we step into the classroom."

<<The classroom is Shinji's dream,>> Shinji's mother had said, under Cinq's likeness.

The intelligence division had discovered that the black uniform everyone wore in the classroom had originally belonged to Yui. Shinji might be the dreamer, but his mother had influenced the setting.

"This uniform's so frumpy it looks like it belongs in the last century. I wouldn't be caught dead in it. I'm not going."

"Can you please not think about fashion for a second?"

Toji jabbed at Asuka, while Little Rei Six laughed at her, lips red with tomato sauce. "Frump, frump!"

Not a trace of foreign organic data was left in Asuka's body. The newly reconstituted seventeen-year-old had regained her individuality, but her physical form was far from stable. Sometimes, the outline of her figure blurred into particles and only regained their solidity when she gasped herself back into existence.

Asuka received a welcome worthy of anyone who'd been assumed dead. Everyone was shocked to see her in one piece. Misato had hugged her for longer than she ever had.

Now she was in the Ayanami tuning room along with Trois, Six, and U.S. Eva

pilot, Mari.

Her organic data had been in a state of turbulence for a long time, and she'd been exposed to a space battle right after that. Her vitals were now being monitored in the white room filled with machines.

They had to wait a long time for the procedure to finish. The main reason was that the one conducting the tests, Ibuki Maya, chief of the science and engineering divisions, had been preoccupied with something in the cage. Even Toji didn't know what she was up to.

And so the girls enjoyed a slumber party in the sterile environment. Toji felt incredibly awkward walking in on them when all he wanted was to check up on Asuka.

Asuka, Rei Trois, Rei Six, and even Mari were all in white coats. They sat on the floor in a circle, feet bare and hair down.

Misato had warmed up several frozen pizzas as a treat for what Rei Six was calling Asuka's homecoming party.

The biggest surprise was Mari, pilot of the U.S. Eva. She was as small as Six and stayed very close to Asuka, mumbling under her breath.

She'd completely changed. The cat ears on her head were no more. Like Asuka, she'd been broken down and reconstituted by the spatial lens. When she materialized at the convergence point, what appeared wasn't a test subject with a horde of animals spliced into her DNA, but a healthy little girl.

Anyone would've clapped their hands at such a happy ending, but not everyone could enjoy happiness when it was given to them. Mari felt lost without her pack, and she clung to Asuka like a gosling to a mother goose.

Trois picked the salami off her pizza—she'd never liked it—and gave it to Mari. The little girl eyed the meat cautiously before wolfing it down.

"Woof!" she announced.

"Woof!" Trois repeated back to her and wondered if the girl was finally enjoying herself.

"I have no idea what's going on here." Toji cleared his throat.

I can't be too pushy, or I'll lose them.

"You know, the Shinji in that classroom looked like he didn't remember any of you."

That might be too obvious...

"He what?"

Nope, that was perfect! Toji kept his face like a stone to prevent himself from grinning and slapping his knee.

Easy now...

The red fish had taken the bait. While Asuka no longer wanted any special treatment, she doggedly maintained that everyone should be treated according to their merits.

Rei Trois noticed that Toji's statement was a bluff to enlist Asuka's aid.

Six, the only one who'd been present in the classroom the entire time, said, "Really? I don't think he—"

Before she could reveal the truth, Trois shoved a plastic fork loaded with pickled jalapeno into her open mouth.

"Gaah!"

Six's hair stood on end as if something had just exploded in her face. She was sensitive to spicy foods. The pulse on her monitors spiked, stirring Azuchi, who was sleeping beside her.

Trois knew she couldn't help Shinji on her own. She also knew that Asuka wouldn't sit idly by and do nothing. She debated whether burning her little sister's taste buds had been the right thing to do.

Not a mistake.

But she couldn't help feel a certain degree of frustration at letting Asuka do all the work for her.

Chapter 56:

Midnight Raid

“SWITCH OFF THE LIGHTS at hole fifteen, please. It’s too bright.”

“This is Mount Daikan command. Copy that.”

Lieutenant Colonel Kasuga’s voice came over the speakers. <<Mount Daikan command to Akashima. Endo, move into battle position.>> “Akashima. Copy that. Standing by.”

South of Lake Ashi, to the west of Mount Daikan, lay a golf course that had been repurposed by the JSSDF. Here, the mechanized giant Akashima was stripped of its equipment. Its N₂ turbines roared as power surged into its heavy limbs.

A loud whistle indicated that all personnel should watch their step as the robot was undressed. Various travel locks were released and waterproof coverings removed. The containers on its arms were unloaded and set upon three layered palettes usually reserved for heavy machinery.

“Checking gyro calibration.”

“GC check green.”

“I really wanted to catch up with *I-409*... The guys at Nerv Japan are going to laugh at our poor planning, Lieutenant Colonel,” Endo complained. The pilot of the Akashima watched as mechanics armed his mecha.

<<Let’s hope it’s a false alarm, warrant officer. We have a job to do before we can plant our flag at Yomotsu Hirasaka.>> “Copy that,” Endo said, looking at the container that stored an oversized Hinomaru. The JSSDF had devoted all their efforts to search and rescue. Meanwhile, the Air Force and Marines were currently staking out Yomotsu Hirasaka Island.

Military forces from other nations also had their eyes on the newly formed island, though they deployed their armies under the pretense of the UN’s emergency forces. They filled the waters near the Ogasawara Islands, and Japan had to show their sovereignty over the territory.

That was where Akashima Corps, JSSDF's anti-Angel unit, was supposed to come in. They were currently stationed on the southern side of the Hakone caldera, which was now a piece of land between the Izu Peninsula and Honshu. They were supposed to send Akashima plant their flag on the new island.

Akashima, the JSSDF's mechanized giant, could fly over the ocean using the ground effect. But the seas were running wild due to the reduced gravity from having the moon so close, so long-distance travel over water was out of the question.

The giant catamaran submarine, *I-409*, which usually supported Akashima and carried the giant on its back, had been sent ahead. It was the modern iteration of *I-404* and *I-405*, equipped with greatly increased reserve buoyancy and joined by a bridge wing.

They'd received reports from *I-409* about an unknown mass several hundred meters long, which couldn't be detected by their radar. Whatever it was, it was huge, and it was speeding toward the Izu Peninsula.

Japan had yet to enter a state of emergency, because the object only spread out in two dimensions. It could just be stray bits of material or oil leaks from the seabed after the fall of Yomotsu Hirasaka. Politicians and scientists agreed for once, and they refused to send people into a panic over some underwater debris.

But Kasuga had decided to send Akashima out anyway.

<<Can't we just let Nerv handle this?>> Endo was still sulky. He'd been woken up far too early in the morning for this operation.

"Nerv Japan has lost Super Eva, and the Evas they do have are all heavily damaged. They won't be leaving Mount Daikan Airport any time soon."

Lieutenant Colonel Kasuga looked over the control panels at the Mount Daikan command center. One of them blinked and changed to a different color. A recon chopper was phoning in.

"This is Spotter 3. Object has been sighted. It's moving toward Izu Peninsula."

The JSSDF recon chopper couldn't explain what it was seeing. The strange mass had been indistinguishable from the surface of the sea, but all of a sudden, its center began to squirm and rise.

"Spotter 3 to Mount Daikan command. Object is no longer two-dimensional. It looks like a snake...or some kind of fish."

The clouds were dark and heavy, and visibility was low. Even so, they could see that the specimen ramming itself against the cliffside was about seventy to eighty meters long. Its efforts were eventually rewarded, as it made it over the rock face.

"Hey...that thing has legs!"

The chopper pilot and the Mount Daikan command personnel had all seen this creature as children. They recalled the pages of their animal encyclopedias, particularly the section on gilled creatures turning into lunged creatures.

"Aquatic life's first landfall..."

The beast walked on, consuming trees as it moved.

"We have visual confirmation that two more of those things have landed on Mishima Coast, southwest of Mount Daikan!"

Siblings of the monster attacking Izu Peninsula were making their way to the Hakone caldera.

The Akashima launched without waiting for further orders. Its turbines revved up, and it started dashing, shifting into ground effect mode. The giant was still too low to the ground, however, and it scraped against the rocks. It activated its auxiliary rockets, and by the time the shift was complete, it was flying low and sliding down the slope.

<<Endo!>> "Civilians are moving back to Susono and Iwanami!"

There was a large residential area near Susono and Iwanami, which had now become a coastline. Tokyo-3 had taken in refugees whose homes might be affected by the erratic weather activity. They stayed inside the caldera on UN-leased land, but some of them had started going back home.

Nerv's greatest fears came to pass as the command center was flooded with

emergency calls from local police.

“Seventy percent of the city is now combat ready!”

Nerv Japan had issued the emergency order throughout the Hakone caldera after seeing footage from their drones and receiving a call from the JSSDF.

“Why didn’t the quantum flow inclinometers react?!” Fuyutsuki asked Maya over the monitor. He was in the command center, while she was still in the cage, looking tired but not exhausted.

<<Because they aren’t universal sensors. They only account for quantum dislocations, which means that ordinary movements don’t cause enough quantum noise for them to respond. Did you not read the report?>> Someone was in a rebellious mood.

“Maya, get up here, please,” Misato cut in.

<<I have things to attend to here. Besides, I can monitor the situation just fine—>> “We’ve got calls coming in from local municipalities!” Aoba said.

“Tell them the subject may be an Angel-class threat!” Fuyutsuki yelled at Aoba instead of Maya.

Back on the top deck, the elevator doors behind Misato opened.

“You guys can’t be here!”

“And who are you to decide?!”

Toji was at the head of the mob, though he was being pushed by Asuka, who was still in her surgical gown. In fact, Mari, Rei Trois, and Rei Six were all in surgical gowns. Six was even followed by her screening robot and Azuchi, the golden retriever.

“Girls, you’re still under observation!”

“What is this...?”

The main screen displayed the newly set up port town to the west of the mountain, near Mikuni Pass. The exposure had been cranked up so they could see better in the dark of night. A black, lizard-like creature was slithering about

the buildings.

“What’s an enemy doing here?” Asuka muttered, growing angrier with every word. “Shinji and Hikari killed Armaros...so what is that thing doing here?! I thought this was supposed to be our happy ending?! What am I supposed to do with Unit Two?!”

The city had been converted into a battlefield, but all was silent. Their guided missiles could reach outside the caldera, but people were living there.

Trois made a suggestion. “Commander Katsuragi, equip Unit Zero with terrestrial armaments. I’ll go, even if I only have one arm to work with.”

“Both units are still being repaired,” Toji said. “Eva-0.0 has had its core removed because it lost an arm.”

“Six?” Misato called out to her, still not looking back.

“Yeah?”

“Good, you’re not sleepy yet.”

“My mouth stings.”

“I know its hind legs are still damaged, but I’ll go in the Allegorica if I have to. I’ll stand by in the cage.” Trois was adamant.

“I know you’re compatible, but Six is the only one who knows how to operate the Allegorica system.”

The monster on the screen charged the convoy of refugees and began eating them. It wasn’t clear if it had planned to do this or if it had just tripped. The beast seemed confused.

“Is it a bio weapon made specifically to target humans?!” Aoba asked.

Mari, gripping Asuka’s hand, whispered, “It’s just hungry...”

Chapter 57:

Instinct

THE MONSTER WAS HUNTING DOWN citizens who'd returned to their homes.

The one that had landed on Izu Peninsula seemed to be an herbivore. But this one had landed in an urban area with little vegetation, so perhaps it had started eating humans purely out of convenience. Either way, it didn't give a second glance at the trees once it got a taste for humans.

People panicked as the monster undulated toward them. It raged through the streets, bulldozing cars and devouring anyone in its path. The black creature loomed over the terrified citizens.

"Brace for impact!" The Akashima jumped in from the side, knocking the creature away.

The black beast's skin glowed upon contact, absorbing the Akashima's kinetic energy.

"Did you see that?!" Endo asked his gunner.

"That was an A.T. Field. No doubt about it."

"Permission to speak freely, sir!" the operator said.

"Granted!"

"I didn't feel anything like bone upon impact."

"Interesting. But why has it taken the form of an invertebrate?"

"Subject losing speed. It's reeling!"

"All right. Shift into battle mode!"

The round nose of the plane became the Akashima's chest upon transforming. Just as it finished, it deliberately delayed its thrusters and wings folding in to twist its body and kick the monster away.

The momentum carried the beast through a forest, leveling the trees. It slowly

rose, noting the Akashima as an enemy, and attacked.

“Weapons live. All twenty of them.”

“Yes, sir! Do you think it’s an Angel...?”

“I don’t know. Maybe it’s just a meatbag with blood and guts that happens to be able to generate an A.T. Field. Even people have been known to have Pattern Blue, if only momentarily. Anyway. Take aim. Fire!”

BOOM!

Twenty large-caliber guns, arranged in five columns and four rows, fired continuously, creating a wall of shells. The monster hid behind its A.T. Field, but the bullets tore through it.

“Direct hit!”

“Mount Daikan command, target down. Hang on, scratch that.”

<<This is Mount Daikan command to Akashima. Nerv’s new four-legged unit is heading your way from the direction of Lake Ashi.>>

The Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica’s icon beeped on their radar.

“I guess they’re going to deal with the target at Iwanami... I thought it was still damaged.”

The Eva-00 Type-F Allegorica flew in with a cascade of N₂ reactor-powered gravitons, like a heavy VTOL. It landed on the side of a mountain and took a sniping position. It armed the Field Piercer Angel’s Backbone and took aim at the target.

Endo was contemplating whether he should provide support when an urgent transmission came in.

<<This is Spotter 1. Two new bogeys have made landfall at Yugawara.>>

Postscript

N*eon Genesis Evangelion: ANIMA*, Volume 4 contains chapters serialized in *Dengeki Hobby Magazine* from September 2011 to July 2012.

I had to be careful with Yomotsu Hirasaka because of the tragic Tohoku earthquake. I had a lot of mixed feelings about that. If a story isn't planned to be elaborate, then you should advance it as fast as you can. That way, at the very least, it won't be boring. But I have to admit that the story felt stale during the first act because the plot didn't advance until the second act. Even I got irritated at it during editing. But I had to wait until things had calmed down in the real world before I could send giants rampaging around Hakone again. My current editor chewed my ear out because they thought it was supposed to end after the manga segment.

The next volume is the last, and that is when *ANIMA* will end. I have to say, Shinji and Eva-01 warp around way too much.

—Ikuto Yamashita,
Evangelion Mecha Designer



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