

**PILOT NAME:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**AGE:** 17

**GENDER:** Nonbinary (they/them)

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 03/01/3102

**BIRTHPLACE:** The Pale of Europa

**DATE OF DEATH:** 11/07/3119 at approximately 12:11.

**CAUSE OF DEATH:** External cockpit compression

**CURRENT STATION:** Asteroid Scout Point Delta

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

**18/01/3119. 02:30.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

Today marks my first week in the CHVLR program, and is the day of my first deployment to the field. My SCS was installed three days ago, and I've run a few training simulations, but it's the first time I've even been in the cockpit.

The Colonel says there is no other choice. The enemy is here and I have to stop them.

CHVLR Mélina initializing. Systems green. Blanc, signing off.

**18/01/3119. 11:46.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

My first contact with the enemy was as a distant point of light. Then came the signal, riding a malicious code deployment to my CHVLR. Or perhaps it was a door opened only incidentally by the attack. For a moment, I could hear another person breathing in the cockpit, as if next to my ear. I told them to go back. I don't know where. Then deployed countermeasures choked the channel closed again with a squelch.

Pilot Jennah in CHVLR Matteo covered me while I attempted to restore comms. I recovered partial functionality in time to see her on-screen, smiling, as a particle lance followed the code attack. She said something to me. I don't know what it was, as audio was out. Jennah and Matteo were enough to stop the beam from reaching me. Once the CHVLR core is retrieved, it will be rebuilt as CHVLR Jennah. I hope I do not have to fight alongside it.

I lost visual of the enemy in Jennah and Matteo's debris field. In space there are so many distant lights. I

awaited another attack from any direction. It never came.

After command determined the skirmish had concluded, surviving units were assigned to core retrieval. I expected only to see one, but more units were scrambled than I knew. We also brought back what will be rebuilt as CHVLR Colette. I should've been near to help her as Jennah helped me. But I did not even know she was there.

Two unit losses without direct unit-to-unit combat is apparently quite bad. Damage to my CHVLR's electronics is reparable, but it will be my first time attempting a fix, and I fear I will do it wrong. I cannot fight with silent comms. But I am a little grateful for it, given Jennah...

Blanc, signing off.

**26/01/3119. 07:03.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

First unit-to-unit skirmish today. I thought I would be more scared, but fighting something you can grasp is easier, I think, than dodging distant light. When I got the KNGHT unit on the asteroid's surface under us, my only trouble was striking to preserve its core. It nearly got a beam saber into my arm, but I managed the finishing blow, and cleanly enough. It will be rebuilt as a CHVLR with a number assignation until it's christened with a death. Like everyone in the barracks, I pray we retain numbers when I beseech God.

I will not linger on the collision contrived by the enemy between Europa and sub-planetary moon Eirene. More qualified people closer to the machineries which brought the doom of our home will make reports. I was ordered to take as many as could fit in CHVLR Mélina's cockpit to safety. I found a mother of six children. I could fit four children and the mother, or all the children. She told me it was okay. To take all the children, and her in the CHVLR's clasped palms. I do not know why I did it. I knew I could not make an airtight space for her. I knew she would die. But the children were quiet for the flight with Mélina's hands clasped in front of us, and I did not open them until all civilians were taken from the hangar.

I should not have looked, but I did.

Blanc, signing off.

**24/03/3119. 21:00.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

Tonight was a dinner to benefit the refugees of Europa held on Ganymede. I knew our moons were different, but I did not know how different. All pilots who registered action in the destruction of Europa or civilian evacuation received an invitation. Almost no one accepted, but I was hungry, and by some good fortune my dress uniform was with some other standard issue items in my CHVLR and thus not destroyed. I cannot begin to describe the beauty of the hosts. Everyone I met touched my hand or shoulder very gently and kindly, and no one made dark jokes the way some do in the barracks. I felt I was in the company of saints. I ate every scrap on my plate with gratitude, and they seemed glad to watch me do it, though they ate little themselves. I suppose everyone on Ganymede eats like birds. This explains to me the shortage of food available for refugees. They must not produce very much.

While most of the other benevolent hosts moved on to after dinner drinks and smoking, a man so fine-boned and pale I could mistake him for a swan took me aside. He asked if there was anything he might do for me personally. I was very touched. I explained that in the barracks, lines of communication are tightly controlled to preserve OPSEC, but I had been thinking, since the loss of Europa, about my mother. I asked if I might use a communicator to ping for her ID. I could glean location, or perhaps even a comms channel. But there was no pingback. I wondered if she, too, was somewhere, face rimed with vacuum frost. This seemed to upset the kind sir who had helped me, and he left before I could thank him for the favor.

I left the dinner early, with apologies, to return to the hangar and my repairs to CHVLR Mélina. I am doing something badly wrong, but I do not know what. I thought I had fixed it, but when I connected I was struck with terrible pain that made me insensible, I think possibly due to electrocution. I lost picture again for a long time. I wept a little, because I shouldn't need to ask for help on such simple maintenance and thought I would have to, but after a few moments visuals swam back into focus. I think I can work through the connection pain as long as the comms do not get worse.

I took my repairs to the testing range for target practice. My view was workable as I engaged a hologram KNGHT. Not so workable that I parsed the JAM IMMINENT warning in my HUD in time to prevent it. It was only a simulation, but for some reason I did not think to end it, or even pause it for a while as I cleared the jam. I dropped my weapon and leapt on it like an animal. I clasped my CHVLR's hands together and brought them down like a hammer, again and again.

Time off I think is bad for me. I need to be taking action, giving aid to my fellows. Without that purpose, I itch, and think of the cold. I will continue to work at repairs. I swore a solemn oath before God I would tend to Mélina's body as my own, and I will.

Blanc, signing off.

01/04/3119. 00:16.

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

We took the fight to them, this time, not waiting for their lances of light but seeking out a questing line of them to smash without warning. Our cloaks kept us as murky sweeps among stardust until we were close enough to draw steel. I took two: one cleanly, one not. The second one fought ferociously. I don't know why. They started this. Ending it would be as simple as command exchanging sabers, a little groveling. Is it pride?

As we crossed the distance to engage, I tried to continue minor work to the damaged electronics. A little tidying in the system files. I should not have done this. Core logs are supposed to be sealed, but either the enemy malware or my bumbling attempted fixes rendered them accessible. I should not have looked, but I did. I found Mélina. The human Mélina, the pilot, who when she died gave her name to my CHVLR. She made seventeen reports between first muster and death. Every word to me aches of her doom. I think I am in love with her, if one can be in love with ghosts. I beg the forgiveness of the Lord if it is forbidden.

Perhaps I touched something I should not have. My CHVLR has been different, since. It made short work of the KNGHTs in the initial skirmish. Then, without my direction, it oriented itself to a pinprick of light and charged. I had thought it was a satellite. It was a lancer, not yet aiming, but armed for its FTL sniping. I was trained to draw my pistole for close engagement but CVHLR Mélina, as if possessed, did not reach for the weapon. It did as we had on the training range after the charity dinner, and beat the KNGHT to death with our hands. Does this mean she loves me back?

Rumors are spreading of a mutually-agreed cease-fire. Not a victory, just an end to fighting. Why now, when we are finally going on the attack? I can hardly believe it, but I will continue listening out for news all the same.

After the skirmish we are told to patrol in the same distant area of space we caught the KNGHTs off guard. I do not know why. There seems to be little of use here, making repairs impossible, and the light-pocked blackness of space makes it hard to sleep for fear of enemy counterattack at distance. I read Mélina's reports again and again. I wonder if in that first engagement it was the enemy's breath I heard on the line, or perhaps was it hers. It was a human sound I cannot imagine coming from them.

Touching the encrypted files was a mistake. Catastrophic data corruption. I move my right hand and my left answers. I open comms and my weapon fires. I am too dangerous to be around the others until this is fixed. I cannot fix it. I write temporary code that is childish in its simplicity, attempting to reroute the misfiring impulses, making each action take twice as long. I'm sorry, Mélina. I wish it hadn't been the electronics. I am

very good at welding.

Blanc, signing off.

**10/05/3119. 09:50.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

It has taken hours, and she will never be as she was, but Mélina is better. I know this because I am better with her. When I sleep in the barracks, my heart pounds without reason, I sweat, and I find myself digging my nails into my arms. The irrational actions of my body cease when I connect to my CHVLR. As my impulses drive her, so too I think her implacable rhythms bring order to my chaos.

My CO complains I shouldn't waste resources taking guns and blades into battle with me. Inexorably, invariably, Mélina and I spring on our foes and destroy them with our hands. It has become like I can only find the enemy's weakness with Mélina's hands roving for the gaps. I have submitted a request for diamantine coating and the least useful of the scrap metal we retrieve after battle. I hold out my small hands and I can see my CHVLR's armored in jagged blades and tarry defensive coating.

I can hear her, now. The tech who helped me fix most of what was wrong with Mélina said the system was always supposed to have a voice for guidance and to convey real-time battlefield data. I don't believe him. The voice in my training sims was rigid and genderless. My CHVLR speaks with the soft and cultured voice of a lady like those I met on Ganymede. She speaks gently.

I hear her as we tear into another KNGHT. I want the armor for Mélina, the hand coating, but we make quick work of the foe even as we are. Such quick work. Our optics pick out a figure through the cockpit we've torn into. She is small, but insulated against space in a gambeson, and could live if her fellows will retrieve her instead of just her core. My CHVLR speaks. She says, *Show her what it is to be subject to our will.* I gather the pilot in our hands and clasp them. Tight.

I don't have to wait for a coroner when we get back to the barracks. An enemy, I am allowed to remove with a powerwasher.

Blanc, signing off.

**21/06/3119. 09:50.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

I was selected for a “random” psychological assessment. I did not do well. Apparently I have reached a dangerous level of affinity for my assigned unit and engaged in “unhealthy anthropomorphism” around it. I said if this was a problem, they shouldn’t name our CHVLR’s after people. So I am grounded for now. Everyone stares at me, and I am a small thing now, and I cannot stand it.

I think the “random” assessment was because of the washerwoman. I was only trying to help. Her family needed clothing and blankets, to keep warm, and she needed a boost to where things were hung before the attack. She stumbled and I steadied her. I thought I steadied her. My hand closed a little too tightly.

Despite all of this, less than two hours later I was called to sortie. Called to return to where I belong, with her, and yet... I sicced medical on my CO. Got official dispensation for 72 hours break from active duty. Is this petulance? Is there something actually wrong?

Blanc, signing off.

**22/06/3119. 03:10.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

I do not like sleeping alone. One of the pages saw me at loose ends late one night and directed me towards a cluster of abandoned holiday homes our forces use while on leave. No one else is allowed a break, though, so it is just me and six houses. They were in much the condition you would expect, so I spend many hours by the water. I do not know the names of any of the induced seas, here. This one is wine red and very still. It is bath warm, though. I like to soak my feet in it.

The first wave on the still ocean naturally caught my attention. More came, and I peered after them until eventually I made out their source: a re-entry float drifting around the remains of a KNGHT. But not aimlessly. I rode on my motorbike for two hours until our intended destinations aligned and was first on the scene. The enemy pilot was expecting violence. I pretended for many grueling minutes to be an ignorant civilian who did not see enemy livery, until eventually she relaxed, disembarked the raft of her broken machine, and began speaking of scouting. I bound her body to her machine’s core and sank both in the salt water. She wore six pewter pilgrim’s badges on her jacket, very fine things depicting saints and a dove, which I now wear on my jacket. I think Mélina will like them.

On principle, I will take the full 72 hours. But in the village everything I hear is about lack of sleep, low morale, vain hopes the ceasefire talks will move faster. When I return, I think they will not let me go again. They will have learned their lesson.

Blanc, signing off.

**03/07/3119. 16:53.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

I almost had him! Their bowmen are not so bad as their lance-bearers, but they move more quickly, and I have seen this painted KNGHT flee many lost battles unscathed, with either paniers or computer full of stolen goods. Materiel, intercepted transmissions, targeting data... This time, I was determined to give chase. I chased his ridiculous motley into asteroids. This was my mistake. It is much easier to nock and loose bolts between hazards than to evade them in my CHVLR.

We blocked three bolts with our buckler. I am proud of us for that. But one splashed across Mélina's middle in a shower of sparks and malware, and her computer is still so fragile... The archer could not make her fall on her blade or throw herself at the asteroids, but bells rang all around me, and before I knew it my seat was moving.

A human, even in full plate, is very small next to an asteroid. And very alone when everything else is at a different scale.

Residual propulsion led to a collision. Auxiliary oxygen was lost. I was so full of joy. It isn't instant, but hypoxia can be sweet. I willed it so. I wanted it so. Everyone else says you will see angels. I suppose I did see one: Mélina, as she grasped for me with the gaping net of her interlaced fingers, bringing me back into her, and the CHVLR life support umbilicus.

Blanc, signing off.

**05/07/3119. 08:00.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

Medic says I was only without oxygen for ten minutes. So all is well, except I dreamt of rain, and when I awoke, it was also raining. This is a bad omen.

I found out today the archer I chased should not have been there. Neither, too, should have been his support, a band of KNGHTs who fell on my comrades as I gave chase. The operation we undertook was kept quite secret. Someone among us is a betrayer. I struggled all through Mass to pay attention. I kept looking down the rows of pilots in our chemises, technicians in their coveralls. I found many looking at me, in turn. The bishop

exhorted us to confess if we had done this harm, to be absolved after court-martial. But no one was taken from a confessional in handcuffs. They must find themselves righteous enough. It is still raining.

Blanc, signing off.

**11/07/3119. 12:06.**

**DESIGNATION:** Simone Blanc [PERSONNEL ID: 003547]

**UNIT:** Mélina [EQUIP ID: 000856]

I do not blame you. This is not your fault. I can see both your hands floating in front of us. Pierced through the palms. The lance went through three layers to strike me and all of them were you, and I love you for that, and I am glad that I am the fourth layer, here before your core, the layer that stopped it. I am as always putting myself into your care. I imbed my records into yours.

To our new pilot: yes, of course I love you. As Mélina loves me. You should never let someone hold you like this who does not love you.

Please stop trying to plug the cockpit breach. I am with you I am with you I am with you but please don't crush me

**PILOT NAME:** Hugo Travere [PERSONNEL ID: 003609]

**AGE:** 15

**GENDER:** Male (he/him)

**DATE OF BIRTH:** 05/20/3104

**BIRTHPLACE:** The Duchy of Ganymede

**DATE OF DEATH:** TBD

**CAUSE OF DEATH:** TBD

**CURRENT STATION:** Jovian Marine Royale Flagship Flambeau

**UNIT:** Simone [EQUIP ID: 000856]