

**The Last Unicorn**  
A Robotech fanfiction  
by Stanley Bundy

*"When the last eagle flies  
over the last, crumbling mountain  
And the last lion roars  
at the last dusty fountain  
In the shadow of the forest  
though she may be old and worn  
They will stare, unbelieving,  
at the last unicorn..."*

- America, "The Last Unicorn" (from the movie of the same name)

**May 2031**

Staff Sgt. Olivia Anderson (ASC-CDU, Colombia sector) stared out over her charges - a rag-tag group of refugees, whose intended refuge had disappeared while they were en route. This was not how she thought her military career would end - then again, she'd hardly asked for a full career, anyway, only reservist status that drew her permanently into service as a result of the arrival of the Robotech Masters over two years earlier.

They would have to make a decision, soon - the truck that was being worked on had broken down three times in the last two days - not counting the fact that two tires had leaks, and had to be reinflated every three hours or so. It would have to be left behind, eventually, but how far would they need to nurse it along, to keep from overloading the other vehicles?

"How did I get myself into this mess?" she asked herself, for perhaps the thousandth time since the mission had gone sour. As always, the answer wasn't great - but in an odd sort of way, it had also been her salvation.

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**April 2031**

"Anderson, you've got special detail this week. Meet me in my office after PT," Captain Jimenez announced that morning - the last time she'd seen the rest of her squad alive. They'd given her the usual ribbing about special detail work, from rude comments to comments of "You're in for it now, Liv..."

"Special Detail" was a euphemism that could be applied to almost anything. One company CO used to use it to extort (or arrange, if consensual) sex, until one victim introduced him to her holdout weapon. In other groups, it could be anything from trash collection to EOD. More often, though, it meant duty that was either punishment, extra-legal, or hip-deep in the bureaucracy that had sprung up in the reborn independent Colombia, after Monument had fallen,

and the other two regional capitals were too busy trying to force each other to recognize the other's superiority to give a damn about the Southlands. Sometimes, the duty fell under two, or even all three of these. There really wasn't much difference, in a land where power always depended on the gun, and the age old struggle between the locals & those who'd rule from afar.

The Southern Cross was born in these lands, and even if the regional civilian commands were playing suck-up to the governments in Japan and Norway, the local commanders remembered when the ASC was the upstart. It had birthed itself from the chaos that had been Dolza's Rain, and unified the northern half of the continent while the RDF had concentrated on relief work in North America. Had the RDF given the ASC the respect it deserved back then, maybe they'd have heeded the warnings about a ship rising from the jungle, and speeding north on a course for Macross City, and this war not have happened at all.

After PT, and a shower where the jokes kept on going at her expense, she packed a couple travel bags, to handle just about any contingency. A week's work of field BDUs, in one bag, her class A's in another, and her backpack, as if getting set for an endurance/survival march. Once done, she went to Jimenez's office in the command block.

"Staff Sergeant Anderson reporting for Special Detail, sir."

"At ease, Sergeant. Come in, and close the door. You can leave your gear outside, until your briefing's through."

"Yes, sir." She dropped the bags on the old ottoman in the outer office, stepped in, and closed the door behind her.

"Have a seat. What we're going to discuss will take a while. Do you have any idea why I asked you here?"

"No, sir."

"Good; if you'd known, I'd had to have scrubbed the mission."

"Pardon?"

"What I'm asking you to do is completely unauthorized. It's not authorized by civilian command, but they'll gladly take credit for it, if it succeeds. If it fails, then it's the end of my career. It's about a debt that I have to repay; a life debt, if you will."

"A life debt?"

"Your family moved here from up north, Liv. Mine, well.... My father was a miner, one of the ones who moved into the mountains to the south to work the mines, after the rain. Being a native Spanish speaker, he was able to blend in better with the locals. My mother and I were brought along for the ride. When I was twelve, there was an explosion in the mines. Father died, and Mother fell apart, and died from grief about a year later. By that time, the ASC had built a home

for those who were orphaned by the war or the explosion. I moved in there, and the sisters who volunteered to run it for the Southern Cross help us gain a much better education, than if we'd grown up normally. I always kept in touch with the sisters, but during the war, the mail almost stopped. I only recently found out why."

"Which was?"

"That large, abnormal hurricane that hit late in '29, during the height of the war, and washed out several bridges. The war kept everything distracted, and they'd been forgotten by this time last year, having to take on the burden of shipping supplies past the breaks on foot. It's been a slowly diminishing return, and they won't make it till next harvest. I need you, to help reconnect them, and bring as many of them down to the city as will come."

"Them? The orphanage?"

"The whole town, if they'll come. It's a mining town, so far up in the mountains that between the climate and contamination from the mines, hardly anything grows there. You should have no shortage of people wanting to make the trip - they just need the means to make it out. The reason I want to send you is because of you were a post-graduate engineering student before the war put you on full-time active duty. As such, you're the most qualified to make it there, and help them get back."

"One Battloid can't build bridges - not easily, at least. And, don't they have engineers?"

"I know, but the town and the mine have plenty of manpower, and probably just about anything you'll need for the repairs, except a crane. You'll serve in that role, and help design the temporary bridges. Their engineers have the know-how you'll need if blasting and excavating work is needed, but when it comes to load-bearing structures, they're too specialized in mine support to be able to design something that isn't dependent on having a constant downforce on it to stay stable. The last bridge the town tried to design themselves was when I was about to enlist, and it was lost because some logs got underneath it, and floated it off its foundations until it finally fell over and was washed downstream."

"That's hardly inspiring, I admit - where did they get their degrees, a raffle?"

"No, the idiot mining company trained them, and only taught them what they needed to know for mine engineering - they were too afraid, with all the construction going on after the Zentraedi took out most of civilization, that their mining engineers would be too easily hired or drafted away by construction companies if they gave them the broad training you received as an undergraduate. So, they set up their own trade school and trained them in that one specific specialty."

"I'm surprised they were able to get away with that."

"I'm not - the company was one of the major suppliers of raw gold for the Defense Forces, up until the war's start. When the company tried to profiteer, its assets were seized and nationalized,

but a lot of the smaller operations fell between the cracks, and were only affected by the change in the letterhead, and who paid the checks. The government never even bothered to send someone to see why the mine's output had fell so much after the storm took out the only means of moving the partially refined metals to market."

"If they've been forgotten, as you say, are you sure I won't get in trouble for this?"

"I'm certain, as long as you pretend you weren't told all this beforehand. If punishment is handed out, I'll take full blame. You'll be a hero, when you get those people here, and as such they won't touch you - your gender, combined with public sentiment, will insure that. Most likely, I'll get busted, privately, and they'll take credit for it, as if the order came from them. But, when it comes down to it, the whole reason why I'm doing this isn't the rank or for accolades - its for the people I grew up with. I'm willing to make that sacrifice, but I can't do it without you. Will you do it?"

"I'll do my best, sir. Now, show me on the topos where I'm heading, and the locations of the bridges that are already known to be out..."

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The trip out passed rather uneventfully. It only took two days of marching on auto-cruise to make it to the first break in the pavement, and the locals were more than happy to provide her with hot meals in exchange for news and an amount less than what she'd tip at a restaurant in town. The third day was the most difficult, as it was the stretch that was the reason for her mission. She counted six washout and two broken bridges as she picked he way up the mountainside, but they were not very difficult for her to get around, and she was already making plans in her head on how to overcome each - provided the town still had the gear Captain Jiminez said they possessed.

It was as dusk was fading into night that she walked into the town square. Probably every weapon in town was trained on her, not that they could have done more than scratched the paint, unless they had a .50 caliber or rocket launcher left over from the wars with the Zentraedi. She activated the external speakers of the battloid, and announced herself, hoping that she was right in assuming the town was lightly armed.

"I'm Staff Sergeant Anderson, of the New Bogota Civil Defense Unit, Southern Cross." She paused for a second, then resumed her introduction. "Captain Jiminez sent me, to check on the orphanage, and to evacuate any of you that desire to relocate to the city."

The last part got the response she was hoping for, as several lights came on in the square. Three people, two men and a nun, came out into her field of vision, and in response, she dropped the Battloid to one knee, popped the hatch, and climbed out to meet them.

"Welcome, Sergeant," one of the men spoke, as she approached. From his garb, he was probably the mayor, as his suit included various badges and insignia that were reminscent of the style of mayoral offices of old Europe. "We were beginning to think we'd been forgotten by the regional government."

"You probably were. The person you need to thank is Captain Jiminez. He's risking his own career sending me here to aid you. Things have been confused since the end of the war, with the Tokyo and Lillehammer governments arguing which of their sector governments is the rightful successor to the one destroyed in Monument City."

"Monument's gone?"

"Yes. the city was the center of the final battle of the war. None of the government or military command made it out. There were rumors that some of the space forces based in the city managed to seize an enemy vessel, and used it to stop the enemy moments before total victory, but it's unconfirmed. All that's certain is that the survivors refused to turn over several hundred enemy survivors to either government, and left with them for Tyrol aboard one of the REF vessels that arrived a few months ago. After that snub, the entire hemisphere's been neglected by both governments, even though we had nothing to do with the actions of those in the north."

"Is it really that bad?" the nun asked.

"It's probably worse than what I can easily describe. The roads probably won't be permanently repaired unless you send a representative back to plead your case, and even with that, it could be months. The Captain said for me not to force any of you to leave, but he also said to point out that any additional aid for the town would probably not arrive until near year's end."

"I feared as much," the mayor replied. "Tomorrow, I will call a town meeting so that you can tell everyone of the offer. Until then, you can stay in the inn. It's empty, except for two families that are rebuilding the homes they lost last year. Miguel, here, will show you to your room."

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From her room, she looked out into the town's few lights. Miguel had explained a few things, while helping her to her room. Except for food, the town was near self-sufficient. They had a small dam and hydroelectric plant for water and power, though light bulbs were to the point of being rationed, and the water plant was used only so often, to conserve the chemicals. Indeed, the town's treated water now only came to their small clinic and a communal tap, while the rest of the system was reconfigured to allow use of untreated water from a mountain spring. Other than being a little hard, the untreated water was relatively safe, anyway.

With the madness overtaking the rest of the world, it would take a very good reason for anyone to even consider leaving here - but starvation was more than good enough in any book. This far up in the mountains, so near the equator, the seasons depended more on the solar distance, than axial tilt, and even being marginally in the Northern Hemisphere was not enough to counter the "summer" months being the time of furthest distance from the sun, combined with the altitude and the damage done to the environment by Dolza's attack 20 years before.

The Mayor would stay, of course, as would all who take the towns' combined stores and make them stretch until the return trip, Miguel predicted. Everyone else would go with her, and it would be Miguel who would plead the town's case for assistance. with or without official

assistance, many of those who left would return here in a few month, with as much food and greenhouse technology they could put together. Liv wished she could return with them, as a civilian, but the truth of the matter was simply that the state of emergency declared in the last war would probably keep her in uniform, willing or not, until something was done about the bickering factions of the north.

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With morning came the town meeting, and the recruitment of the team of miners that would work on the first temporary bridge and the nearest road washouts, starting that afternoon. While the work began, the rest of those that would be making the trip out would be packing up their belongings. Liv went with them, and supervised the project. Mostly, she wanted to make sure they followed the design she sketched out the night before, as this first bridge wouldn't require the Battloid's help. The second bridge, on the other hand, would, but the first needed to be up, to get the supplies to the second.

It actually felt good to get out into the field, doing the kind of work she'd gone to school for, as opposed to the work she'd been drafted for by the military. Well, not exactly drafted, as she had volunteered to be a reservist - but her MOS description was supposed to have been civil engineering, the ASC equivalent of the Corps of Engineers of the old US military, pre-Zentraedi. Instead, she'd been put into a civil defense combat unit on activation, and had seen only combat and garrison duties for the two years of her active duty.

The finale for the day's work was her testing the repairs by walking over the bridge several times, before allowing the load of steel for the next bridge to cross, on its way to be parked at the next day's construction site. Had they been in the city, it would be time to go for a round of beer for a job well done - but the last beer in town was over a year ago, and the moonshine they'd distilled to replace it (at least, its quality) scared her too much to try it.

The next day began with the rumble of storms in the distance. The last bridge repairs were made with a person upstream, watching in case a storm unleashed a flash flood down the wash. But, the water never rose; indeed, it didn't even start to rain, though the skies were overcast, and what few breaks revealed storm clouds gathering in the north. By the time the second bridge was done, the convoy of refugees had already begun to move, and they brought dinner and a few extra pairs of hands to the project's final stages. After dinner was over, those who were returning to town with the heavy equipment said their goodbyes, and the convoy continued on.

It was almost midnight when they finally found a wide enough area to stop the convoy, that wouldn't put people too close to the river banks, if a flood did come.

"Excuse me, ma'am;" one of the miners asked, as they were setting up camp. "How close are we to a city?"

"Still a long way. If we can average thirty kilometers an hour on the roads through the rural areas downstream, we might make it by tomorrow night."

"Are you sure? That glow to the north reminds me of my younger days in America, when you could see the glow of a city's lights from far off, sometimes as much as a hundred kilometers for the really big ones, like old Chicago."

"Glow? There shouldn't be anything like that; power's been rationed for the last six months." But, looking north herself, she could see it herself, now. "There's something strange about that glow."

"Strange? How so?"

"It's not constant; like it's flickering. I think it might be a big forest fire, or something else big, burning. Let me saddle up and go a few miles out to see. Keep this to yourself, for now."

"Will do. The last thing we need is a panic."

Liv climbed into the Battloid, and walked a couple clicks down the road, to where she had marginally better line of sight. What she saw made her turn on her radio receiver; what she heard, frightened her. Everything was garbled, as would be expected from the interference from the metallic content of the mountains around her. But what did come through was the sound of conflict - a conflict her side was losing. It was the same horrible sounds she and the others had heard in the downlinks from orbit months before, when the enemy destroyed the last of the Earth fleet, before somehow being destroyed itself. The only difference was that, being on Earth, one wasn't mercifully killed by decompression, when a cockpit took a hit, and sometimes you could hear someone burning to death for several seconds, before their systems cut out.

She made her way back to camp, and the look on her face made several people come to her, to find out what was going on.

"There's a war going on; and it's going badly."

"A war? How? Who??"

"I don't know. From what little I could make out, it's not the Zentraedi, or their Masters we fought last year. It's a whole new enemy, one we weren't expecting. I'm going to scout out a bit further this time. I'll be back by morning, but I don't think it would be a good idea for us to be moving tomorrow, so make sure everyone's ready to spend a few days here."

Liv closed the Battloid's hatch, and headed out, engaging the Battloid's autopilot and terrain-following sensors, to allow her to fully concentrate on monitoring the situation. The extra-legal nature of her mission had made her observe radio silence since departing New Bogota, even turning off the receiver, so that if the captain's mission was revealed, and scrubbed by his superiors, she could complete it, and be able to deny receiving orders to abort. However, it also meant that she didn't hear of the invasion, until it was well underway. Now, she was using the receiver, but leaving the transmitter, the upstream data link and her transponder off, to protect the civilians, in the off chance the aliens could home in on them. Bits of conversations drifted in and out on the CDU channels, giving a grim outlook.

"...They hit Bogota an hour ago - the bugs left less than the orbital attack did of Rio..."

"Port Uraba's evacuating... the aliens seem to be swarming the industrial sector... they're blowing the harbor extension area built on the Zent derelict all to hell... Contact's was lost with the 9<sup>th</sup> ATAC and 21<sup>st</sup> CD thirty minutes ago- they were setting up a line of defense at the sector, to buy more time for the civilians to evacuate..."

"...What's that? The REF advance group in Venezuela's gone off-line? Damn! Wolfe had the last VTs left on the continent! This isn't good..."

"Mayday, Mayday! This the 21<sup>st</sup> CDU, Uraba!! The aliens are attacking the refugee groups! We can't hold them off much longer - the 9<sup>th</sup> ATAC's down to two tanks, and we are down to two Gladiators and a Unicorn! Any units within thirty kilometers of Uraba, please assis-"

The transmission was cut off, in a way obviously from a combat casualty - most of the broadcasts she was picking up ended similarly. Less and less was heard, then an incredibly strong signal drowned out all others, on all assigned frequencies at once.

"This is Lieutenant Colonel Dennis Brown of the RDF unified space fleet, formally of the TASC. I'm broadcasting this via satellite, at such a signal strength that I hope it blasts through whatever effect the aliens seem to be using to isolate the planet.

"The REF elements that had returned to Earth over the last two years have positively identified the aliens as the Invid, a race they had fought, and thought destroyed over the last decade. However, they arrived in a method the REF had not seen before, and using attacks not used during that previous war. It wasn't until they started deploying mecha, that they were identified. By that time, not only were communications to the ground jammed, but even stronger interference has cut off all communications to Tyrol and the out-system colony missions. We're still working on that, but it may take having to fold out-system to get reinforcements.

"Ten hours ago, we attempted to break through the perimeter with the combined Lunar and Martian fleets, to help fight the invaders. The attempt failed - less than five percent of our forces made it through, and without any real organization. Rather than send the remainder of the forces into useless deaths, we had no choice but to retreat. I served under Anatole Leonard - I refuse to follow in his footsteps by ordering an attack I know will fail, just from sheer enemy numbers.

"All remaining local governmental and RDF forces, be they Southern Cross or REF, are hereby given these final release orders, until such time as the colonies and REF can send reinforcements. You are to disengage from combat as soon as you can safely do so, and go to ground. You are to lie low for a minimum of six months, as it will take that long, from REF experience, for the Invid to start standing down. After that period, you are to begin guerilla operations against the enemy, abstaining from mecha use, when possible. Large mecha are much easier for them to track than power armors and vehicles.

"At some point in the future, the REF forces will begin to arrive. The SDF-3 command acknowledged receipt of our attack alert, but liberty station was destroyed before the positive

identification was made, and direct communications are being jammed. Help is on its way, but the trip will take at least a couple months for the incoming forces, and even then, it may take a year or two to put together enough forces to send in the next spearhead. Be patient, and bide your time until you know for certain that enough forces have broken through to fully rise up against the invaders. Going overt too soon will only get a lot of people killed.

"I'm being told that the Invid are starting to track in on the satellites we're using to relay this, so we're about to be cut off. I don't want to have to say this, but the situation is pretty bleak. Until the REF fleet returns in force, you're on your own. Good luck, and may God be with you."

With that, the signal cut out, but none of the earlier radio chatter resumed. The only signals she could pick up were no less than twenty different distress beacons from disabled mecha within a radius of one hundred kilometers, ranging from an old RDF Gladiator (presumably one of the CD reservists), to REF Alpha Veritechs, to several reentry-capable craft of types only recently adopted, in the attempt to rebuild Earth's defenses with new designs from Gallant Base on Mars.

This was NOT the job she signed up for...

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### **Late June 2031**

Between deaths, loss of vehicles, and people falling to the wayside to return to the mining town or try to eke out a survival, her convoy had dropped to a half-dozen trucks and two old autos that looked like they predated the War on Drugs, let alone the Global War or the Zentraedi. Thirty-two people were still with her, usually packing the cars and two of the trucks. A third truck held a methanol still, whose production fueled their vehicles - but to do so meant spending two days parked for every one on the road. She'd been going over maps every day, looking for some place to make for. So far, every attempt was a dead end. If it hadn't been for her thirty-third caravan member, she'd have ordered a permanent encampment by week's end.

The new addition was a civilian engineer, whom she'd found half-drowned and hypothermic in a river, after he'd smashed his kayak in rapids. When he'd recovered well enough to get around on his own, he told of his narrow escape from the Invid, when they destroyed the work camp he'd been left as caretaker for, when the manpower and supplies for it were diverted to military projects due to the 2029 war.

The project, he said, was 40 percent complete when it was closed down - two tunnels through a mountain, bypassing a marginal pass that rarely stayed open a quarter of the year to traffic. One tunnel, while rough, had made its breakthrough only weeks before the Tyrolean War, and would be large enough to allow the trucks through, though the cars sat too low to the ground to clear the unfinished surface. On the other side was a road that, eventually, would lead east, and into Venezuela and the Amazon basin. It was their last hope.

It took them several days to make their way up the roads toward the project, trading the cars in a small town for additional food. One of the three cargo trucks had to be abandoned a day from the

tunnel, when a wheel hub developed a stress fracture, but by that time, its contents were easily transferred to the other trucks. Their last camp before the tunnel was only a couple kilometers out.

Liv scouted ahead, as usual. She found the tunnel - and something else. The engineer had failed to mention something important in his tale - the project to which his workers had been relocated.

"Why didn't you mention that fortress before?"

"I thought the aliens would have destroyed it, like everything else. I never dreamed they'd actually move into it!"

"Well, they have, and they send regular patrols out."

"What directions?"

"Not this way, thankfully. This location seems odd for them to pick - all the other sites we've heard about were much warmer. The others patrol a lot more, too."

"Could be they wanted the fortified position, in a remote area, for something special - a communications station, or maybe part of their planetary defenses."

"What were the 'goats' building it for?"

"Never did say, other than a small training and rescue unit that would have only needed a place a hundred times smaller - then again, it was only starting to be equipped when supplies and personnel stopped arriving. Its defensive weapons were one of the few things installed. However, not all the trucks going in were from the Mountain Division - some were from the GMP's scientific intel branch. Even when they tried to hide it, that emblem's pretty distinctive, compared to the rest of the Southern Cross heraldry. My guess is that they were setting it up to monitor the continent's transmissions, especially if there were any Zent cells still out there trying to contact their former masters."

"So, the Invid reasons for moving in are probably similar to the Southern Cross ones for building it in the first place, I'd guess."

"I agree. We still going to try to make it?"

"I'll ask the others, but probably."

The decision, surprisingly, was unanimous. The trucks would break for the tunnel, with the Battloid coming in last. If the Invid noticed the commotion, Liv was to act as a diversion, to allow the trucks to make it through.

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## June 2046:

"Our truck was the last in line, going for the tunnel. We were about thirty seconds away when the Invid came, over a dozen of them," the speaker, a young man of about thirty, related to the crowd. "She yelled at us to speed up, and began running back down the road, firing at them with the laser rifle she'd salvaged from a hovertank wreck the week before we found Mr. Alvarez. She brought down four of them, as we watched. A fifth came for us, but it fell only meters short, shot in the back by Liv.

"However, in doing so, she allowed the others to converge on her, and it was certain she was going to eventually succumb to the aliens' sheer numbers. I can still remember her mech standing in the sunlight, rifle blazing, with the CDU Unicorn standard that gave the mech its name, sparkling in the sun. The Invid left were all of the types with no distance weapons, just claws, but more were on the way. I saw her running, toward the tunnel it seemed at first, but in actuality, she was heading for the storage shed, where the supplies for the other tunnel's work were stored. I heard one last gunshot, then the tunnel collapsed behind us, from a massive explosion. She'd lured the Invid in, then blew up the shed, which had hundreds of kilos of explosives in it.

"When we cleared the other side, we could see the cloud of smoke and dust from the other side of the mountain, but no Invid. We kept expecting them to show back up, but they never did. We made it down to Deguello without incident, where we traded the trucks to Mr. Maxwell in exchange for food and a couple of horse-drawn wagons. We continued down to the Orinoco valley, where we founded the village of Anderson, named in her honor.

"We didn't find out until after the war that our trip's story had gotten muddled over the next three years, so that people actually went looking for the collapsed tunnel, thinking it was still there, as an escape from the Invid's actions on the south side of the pass. It wasn't until 2034 that the pass was cleared, thanks to a band of freedom fighters, two of whom came back here for this dedication." He motioned over to a auburn-haired man and a blonde woman, only slightly older than himself, who were trying to remain stoic while keeping their two young daughters from fidgeting in their seats.

"A year later, the war was over, and some of the residents of our village made the trek back here, to see what was left. Working with the communities on both sides of the tunnel, Mr. Alvarez reopened the tunnel project, and in the process recovered some of the Battloid parts. We never found her remains, but given what happened, that was understandable. We did, however, have some of her personal effects, that she'd left in one of the trucks. It was one of the pictures of her, in those effects, that we used to recreate her image for the monument.

"With the unveiling of this monument, I declare the Olivia Anderson Memorial Tunnel officially open for traffic." He tugged the rope, pulling the sheet off a bronze sculpture set next to the tunnel entrance. It was of a CDU Unicorn Battloid, from the shoulders up, with Liv standing on it, leaning on the head in her dress uniform, binoculars in hand as if ready to look back down the valley. The entire sculpture was life-size, the shoulders being the base.

As the crowd cheered, a cloaked figure watched from a distance, standing with the aid of a cane.

The years hadn't been kind to her, but then, neither had the Invid. Part of one leg, and most of one arm, were artificial - not prosthetics, but Invid cyberware. After being pulled from the shattered remains of her Battloid, the Invid had experimented on her, as part of her interrogation. But, she had nothing to tell them. Eventually, to see what would happen when she was released back into human society, they let her escape. She defied their plans, and hid out in the mountains. From there, she watched the fortress explode, freeing her, but she had come to enjoy her solitary life.

By the time of her liberation, she no longer resembled the woman she once was, from the scars resulting from her last battle, as well as the experiments. After the war, she'd found a plastic surgeon willing to help with her face, while maintaining confidentiality, but there was little that could be done for the limbs. However, a magazine in his office caught her off guard, as the cover picture was of a person that looked like a much slimmer, younger version of herself - though her hair was never THAT out of control.

She was torn, now the opportunity presented itself with this dedication. Should she stay "dead", or should she approach the two freedom fighters, and ask them to arrange a meeting with her doppelganger, their former foe? She decided not to, but before she could leave, one of the young girls (now turned loose by her mother) saw her, and walked up to her.

"You look like my aunt Sera."

"I do, don't I?" she smiled.

"Daddy said Sera was born here, though she didn't grow up into a woman until later. Are you an Invid?"

"No, just a ghost from a time long ago."

"Mommy says there's no such things as ghosts."

"Mommies are usually right. Though, maybe she'll change her mind, sometime. Let me give you something, for you to show to her tonight at dinner. Tell her a ghost gave it to you."

Liv dug into her pocket, and pulled out the full-color CDU service pin that had originally been on her dress uniform. She'd found it in the remains of the Battloid, where it had apparently fallen off her uniform that night 15 years before, in the mining town.

"That's pretty. Can I keep it?"

"Yes; it's yours, now."

"Maria, come back over here and stop bothering that woman."

"Yes, Mother..."

As the girl ran back to her parents, Liv walked over to the bus to Deguello. It was 15 years late, but she'd finally get to see the other end of the tunnel. Better late than never....

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Finis....