

LOST BOUNTY

COMMISSION STORY

BY CHALDEACHANGE



For a bounty hunter as infamous as Samus Aran, it felt like there was *always* a new job on the horizon. She had no complaints about living a life like this. Traveling from planet to planet, exploring the universe? It was all its own reward in the end, and she legitimately enjoyed making the plentiful worlds out there a little safer for everyone. She was far from one of those bounty hunters that only did the work they did for clout and money.

Not that the money didn't help.

Even among the *many* jobs she had taken throughout the years, however, this one was certainly *unique*. Petitioned by a race of robotic lifeforms on a distant planet that had only recently been discovered, Samus had been presented with a rather strange mission. It had been requested of her that she travel *into* one of the digital structures on their planet to eliminate a virus of some sort that had infested it.

Were this virus to spread into the planet and the people proper, it would no doubt bring it all to ruin. That was what she had been told. But at first Samus hadn't really been sure how she was supposed to *combat* such a threat. The people of this planet had offered her a solution. They could digitize her and send her into the machine to eliminate the virus. She had no reason to doubt them, as they were a people that had quickly become allied with the Galactic Federation.

And so she agreed to their terms. If the planet fell, it would certainly cause a great deal of instability in the galaxy. Apparently the virus in question could seize machinery and corrupt it to do its bidding, and for now it was only isolated to a single device. A computer salvaged from

some artifacts from Earth that had been gifted to them by the Federation. That made it even more imperative that the issue be solved, so that the Federation wasn't made culpable for whatever incidents arose as a result.

And so, using a strange, pod-like device? In she went.



Samus didn't know what to expect when it came to arriving in a digital world. She had no experience with it, and despite the aliens that had asked for her help being technological beings themselves, they didn't seem to know either. The world inside of a device could apparently vary greatly depending on whatever data was stored inside, and because of the risks the virus poses, none of them had dared to sync up with the old computer.

The bounty hunter might not have known what to expect, but she certainly hadn't expected to find what she *had* found in the end. She was standing upon a grassy hill, with a vast expanse laid out beneath her. Forests, lakes, grasslands... It was all remarkably beautiful and reminiscent of the Earth itself. But there were things that distinguished it as obviously *not* Earth as well.

For example, a huge floating structure high in the sky of its center. Was that a castle? A fortress? It appeared to be *immense*, and would likely block out the sun from where she was standing if it eventually climbed high enough. **“They said that a monster representing the virus should be found at the core, but...”** Where *was* the core? Was it in that huge structure in the sky? How could she even reach it without a ship?

It wasn't as if she could just *grow a pair of wings*, right?

She didn't entertain that thought out of humor, she had honestly considered it for a second, strangely. Because something deep within

her soul seemed to believe she could somehow do *just that*. “**Perhaps the digitization process has left me confused?**” Temporarily, she hoped. She wouldn’t be much good to anyone if she had been rendered incapable of critical thinking in a pinch.

Short of growing a pair of wings, which she absolutely *couldn’t* do (or could she?), nothing else really came to mind – at least not from where she was standing. Samus acknowledged that she would have to make her way down the hill and onto the rolling fields below to get a better view of the surroundings down that way. If something existed in the sky, there *had* to be a way to reach it. Even if she had to commandeer some sort of aircraft.

Which begged another question, really. This appeared to be a fully fleshed world within the computer. Were there digital lifeforms occupying it that she could communicate with in the first place? She’d heard that there was a chance that monsters would linger, and to those ends she had been required to bring her blaster. But what she had *really* wanted to bring was her Power Suit. It was unfortunate that the machine wouldn’t transfer it.

Before she could even entertain taking the first step down the hill, however? Samus gave a hearty exhale that suggested she might be a little tired. This *was* the case, but she could not imagine *why* she felt that way. “**Did the transfer take some kind of toll on my energy level?**” The transfer process was the only thing that *could* leave feeling exhausted, as nothing else strange had happened, had it?

But the bounty hunter wasn’t entertaining a possibility that might have been obvious to someone a little more technologically savvy. The moment she had been turned into data, Samus became at risk of being influenced by the virus that had concealed itself in this place. Except... it wasn’t *actually* hiding. It had already become ingrained within this whole world. A world that *Samus* was now technically apart of. And what *that* meant was that it could affect her just as it could any monster or speck of wildlife in this place.

The fatigue she felt was not the sort of exhaustion you developed from getting ill or being short on sleep. It was much more fundamental. Much more core to the woman’s *build*, in fact. Because all of the muscles that Samus had trained, honed, and overclocked? They were steadily deflating, and that was what rendered her feeling fatigued. Her body just didn’t have the strength that she was used to in any capacity, so each and every movement – even just standing there – felt far more labored than it would for Samus in her prime.

This wasn't a change that could *only* be felt, however. Because the warrior woman was wearing her Zero Suit, a skintight bodysuit of complementary blues that hugged her body so tightly that there was little that couldn't be made out, of course the growing absence of these muscles was readily apparent to the naked eye.

Those tight and firm muscles gradually softening was clearly apparent through the bodysuit, with the most noticeable of these alterations transpiring amid her limbs. The softness that coated her arms in place of firm muscle took away the rugged definition that the muscles had once provided, and when it came to Samus' legs? Well, the bodysuit actually grew tighter around her thighs. Without the muscle to give them their firmness, the fat that they were reduced to simply made them thicker and spongier. Even the woman's tummy took on a subtle lip, although it might be better to say that it was 'normal' rather than insinuate any sort of chub.

"I'm...? Why do I feel so...?" She was tired, yes, but the woman had also begun to feel disoriented. Her brain was giving her mixed signals all of a sudden. This world was unfamiliar, but *was it*? Gazing down upon the landscape, she knew the names of some of the locations *somehow*, as well as knowing what some of the monsters that lurked there were called. It didn't really make a *lick* of sense, and the nonsensicalness of it had begun to create cracks in the woman's typically calm and composed disposition.

This disorientation was a serviceable distraction to keep her mind from honing in on just what was happening to her body, mind you. It may have begun with the softening of muscles, but the reality of the situation was that there would be much greater extremes than *that*. If you were to spare a glance at Samus' long and golden locks of hair, it would become immediately clear that this was true.

After all, streaks of a pale blue had painted themselves through her locks. Few at first, they *rapidly* multiplied until much of her head was colored by them. What was even stranger, mind you, was that every strand that found itself blued would eventually shorten in length, pulling up to the top of her neck in the back, while hanging a little longer on the sides. By the time her head was *fully* blue, the tie that held her hair in a ponytail had fallen to the floor... Because there was no hair for it to hold in the first place.

The blue coloration wasn't limited to the woman's hair alone, however. Her eyes lit up with the exact same shade, but the color also wasn't what was most peculiar about this area. Noting that her lashes seemed to thin and shorten *was* something else of note, but not even that was *the* most notable thing. It was the *shape* of the girl's eyes, which were typically

Caucasian by design. Given a moment though, their corners pinched in and her eyelids narrowed so that they appeared far less so. Instead they ultimately appeared East Asian – *Japanese*, in fact.

This bled into the rest of her facial features when all was said and done. Her face, naturally beautiful, became much fuller. While she retained her face's long design, it was clearly a little chubbier and her maturity seemed to dwindle in the form of thinner lips and a smaller nose. Samus was left looking more youthful as a result, even if that youth *was* at the expense of her fading beauty mark.

“Huh!?” A soft, yet surprisingly high-pitched squeak soon jumped from her transformed lips, as it briefly felt like she had begun to fall. This *wasn't* the case, but it was hard to fault her for thinking it because her eye level most certainly had dropped quickly *and* substantially. Samus' imposing height fell all of the way down to 5'3”, and this meant that her bodysuit was left to bunch up *dramatically* around her arms and legs.

Things only became looser still, because it wasn't merely her height that came to reflect the proposed age of fifteen or so that her age suggested. The woman's breasts thinned so that they were hardly B-cups, leaving the nylon around them to rest a little loosely. Just as they did around her thighs and ass, which similarly regressed to a size suitable for a girl of that age. Everything about her adult figure had faded, and the *girl*? She didn't look a lick like Samus.

She didn't think or react like her either. The old Samus wouldn't have let out such a girlish cry, and she hadn't had any memories about this world. Now? Confused about her outfit, the girl gave a flick of her finger to bring up an HUD as if it was the most natural thing in the world. **“Why am I wearing this? Since when did clothes not fit in ALO, anyways?”** The girl both knew *exactly* what she was talking about, and yet wasn't quite sure at the same time.

Over the span of time it took her to navigate to her character inventory (*as if this was some kind of game*), some features that would have been seen by her as alien before took form. Her ears, for example, crept up the sides of her head and were pulled into big triangles, cartilage rounding on the exterior and flattening on the interior. While their insides remained pink, a soft blue fur to match her hair found the outside. She had a pair of big, old cat ears now.

And a tail to match! Because a blue-furred appendage was now wriggling around within one of the legs of her bodysuit.

“That's better.” It didn't need to frantically wriggle for long, because the girl was able to unequip the unfamiliar gear she was wearing and

equip what she was *used* to wearing in this game. Black shorts, an open green coat, a silver armor chest piece... Sure her navel and legs were completely exposed, but she was used to exposing more in Gun Gale Online.

“**What was I...? A bounty quest?**” The teenaged girl with cat ears and an equally feline tail shook her head from side to side, almost like she had just awoken from a very unusual trance. She could not remember *what* she had just been doing or why, but when she pulled up her HUD she found that she was on a bounty quest. They were a quest-type within the game world of ALfheim Online that assigned you a specific monster to slay for extra currency. And just *above* that quest was her username.

Sinon.

That wasn't her name, but she didn't see it as *wrong* either. It was the name that she went by in this world, in this Virtual Reality Massive Multiplayer RPG world. Some people would sign up with their real names, but not her. Even if it *was* inspired by her real name of *Asada Shino*. There were no recollections of any adventures in space, not of living another life entirely. She was just a teenaged girl living in modern Japan, who enjoyed playing games.



Effectively, the virus had sent Samus' consciousness back in time to when this device had been in its prime. She had been given a new life, new memories, and as such she was no longer a threat to its conquest in the distant future. If anyone were to explain this to the Sinon that existed in her place, she undoubtedly would have waved it aside as some manner of strange science fiction game plot.

Within the game world of ALO, who she really was or really *had* been wasn't that big of a deal. She was simply a Cait Sith named Sinon. Nothing more, nothing less. When she eventually logged out for the night, she would just return to being Asada Shino until she logged in next. Because reality really *had* been bent so that she had truly been sent back into Earth's distant past.

“**Speaking of, it's getting a little late. Maybe I should put off doing this to tomorrow. Maybe Kirito or Leafa can help me...?**” This new existence came with new memories and new friends –

something that the life of a bounty hunter had never really provided Samus with. She'd be able to grow up for a second time knowing the love of a parent, the kindness of friends, and without having to face a future where she would have to fight for her life.

In a way it was ideal for her, really.

Not so much for the future she had come from.