

X-MARK
METROID

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MISSION ZEBES LV1: WELCOME HOME

EMERGENCY ORDER _

Samus shifted the thrusters of her gunship, bringing it in through the stratosphere.

EXTERMINATE ALL METROID ORGANISMS ON PLANET ZEBES... _

The cockpit heated up as the gunship's exterior caught fire.

AND DEFEAT THE MECHANICAL LIFE-FORM, MOTHER BRAIN. _

Samus looked at the data screen to the side of the control panel, seeing the image of the hideous monster that was Mother Brain. A giant, cybernetic brain, sitting in a tank. She flicked off the screen and focused on landing.

Planet Zebes was coming up fast.

Planet Zebes... I called this place home once, in peaceful times, long before evil haunted the caverns below. Now, I shall finally tell the tale of my first battle here... My so called Zero Mission.

-Samus Aran-

The gunship touched down on the rocky surface of the planet, dirt kicking up into the low gravity air. Samus reset the ship's settings to Low-Power and proceeded towards the docking port.

She placed her helmet on her head as she stepped onto the circular platform, clasp the cords from her helmet to her suit. The platform raised and the hatch opened up at the top of the ship, and Samus looked out over her old home.

It looked decayed now, eaten away, but she still knew it well enough.

Samus jumped down from her ship's hull, landing on solid ground. The entrance to the ruins was no further than a few paces, and she dropped down into the hole. She closed her eyes as she fell, knowing that with the low gravity, impact wouldn't matter.

When she did land, she took a deep breath and opened her eyes, taking in how broken the place looked now. The pillars around her were cracked, the etchings on them all but faded. The path to her left was where she needed to go, but she had to grab something first from the other way, and ducked behind the pillar to the right.

"Oh, hello," Samus muttered, seeing the Geemer crawl out from under a broken part of the wall that had partially blocked the path. She stepped aside and let the little yellow creature walk passed her.

They were harmless so long as you didn't step on the spikes on their back.

Continuing, Samus climbed over the broken wall and dropped down into a chamber with a few short pillars. On the center pillar was what she was looking for; a small glass container.

Samus picked up the container and flipped a lens up from the compartment in her arm device. Its main function was to be used as a canon, but it had other uses as well.

Like for instance, scanning Chozo tech like this and finding a way to implement it into her armor.

This specific piece of Chozo tech was a nano-machine design that could transform her standard suit of armor into a tiny ball with her inside. This would allow her to maneuver easier through tight spaces.

The nano-machines integrated themselves into her armor and she tested the compatibility. Morphing into ball form then morphing back she decided it worked just fine, then started back for the entrance to continue down the other path.

As she made it back she thought about why she hadn't taken the morph ball ability years ago, when she'd first left this place. Then she remembered of course, the Chozo hadn't let her.

She'd gotten so used to them being dead, she'd actually forgotten there was a time when they were alive...

Samus shook her head, dropping back down between the pillars at the start of the ruins. She started down the other path, blasting open the energy door that blocked her way.

As soon as she passed through however, a Skree dropped from above.

She'd known these creatures to inhabit the planet, and knew as well to dodge their sharp fangs. She rolled out of the way, ducking the shrapnel the creature sent out upon killing itself in its suicide bomb.

Not exactly harmless, Samus thought, proceeding through the cavern. *But still not very threatening*. She remembered them from her childhood, the Skree and the Geemer, but they seemed particularly less menacing now that she had ways to defend herself.

Then she rounded a corner and saw something that sent a shiver down her spine.

At the end of the hall, was a tall skeletal being,

reaching out in front of it.

As Samus stepped closer however, she sighed, almost in disappointment. It wasn't a skeleton, but a mechanical recreation of the species she knew best. The Chozo.

Placing her hand in the hand of the Chozo, its eyes reacted to her suit's engineering, turning bright red. The Chozo moved aside, revealing the rest of the path leading to another door, and sat down beside the wall, going back to sleep.

Her helmet beeped, and at the bottom of the visor's screen a map appeared. *Not that I need it*, Samus thought as she opened the door. *I know this place well enough.*

She stepped out into a chamber leading directly upwards, a door on the other side and pieces of the wall jutting out enough that she could climb to the top of the cavern.

Once upon a time those rocks might've been stairs, but that was a long time ago. Now the remains of this part of the building were nothing but rubble, blocking the door she'd been planning to go through.

Settling on the long route, Samus headed up, using the low gravity to her advantage. She jumped from rock cliff to rock cliff, making her way to the upper hallway. From there she knew she could still find her way. She just hoped what she need was still there.

Considering the morph ball integration had remained intact, she was hopeful this next upgrade would be as well. And considering the Chozo were always so protective of their advancements, she had a feeling it would be protective. Especially considering this next upgrade wasn't just a suit modifier, but a weapon.

Samus lifted herself up into the crumbling hallway, holes in the floor leading back down to the chambers below, and Geemers still chipping away at the rock. Across

the way though the door was still unblocked, luckily, and she was able to continue. On the other side she was finally back in the main building, the underground bunker.

The steel walls were in good condition, but electricity had long since stopped running through them. Rust rotted away some of the edges of the floor and ceiling, but it would hold. She only needed to grab something, and then head back out.

For a moment though, she almost took off her helmet, like you would take off your hat when you step into your home. But of course, here the air was different. Inside, long ago, the air used to have been conditioned for her, but with the machines broken it was natural Zebes air inside.

So she continued through the castle turned dungeon, watching through her visor at the shadows that moved along the walls, the metal floor clanking with every step. Skree chittered in the cracks in the ceiling, warning her not to come too close or they'd drop on her. The room was basically just a wide hallway though, so just staying to the side she avoided them. And at the other end was the door she was looking for.

She shot the energy door and stepped inside, ducking around the fallen pillars. Most of the pillars were stone, and that's what was broken, but the steel base at the top and bottom of each pillar remained intact. As did the podium in the center of the small room.

Another canister sat in front of her, still safe and protected. Samus scanned the contents, using the nano-machines to recreate the tech inside. The installation beeped when the pairing was completed, and Samus looked at the image on her arm device.

A small bomb, flat and round with an activation bottom in the center. A good portable size, about the size of her hand, but it was powerful, as all Chozo tech was.

She remembered what the Chozo had told her, so

long ago. How dangerous their tech was in the wrong hands, how they created these things not for acts of war, but for the defense of their people. And yet... they *couldn't* use these things to defend themselves. What attacked them was something no weapon could fight.

But for something like Mother Brain, this was exactly what Samus needed.

She turned away from the room, the energy door sealing behind her.



Deep in the heart of Zebes Mother Brain waited. She could feel the intruders closing in, but her defenses were impenetrable. It was only a matter of time before these space pirates destroyed themselves trying to get in.

Suddenly Mother Brain felt someone trip a sensor. Checking the cameras, she saw a lone armored figure riding an elevator down from the ancient Chozo ruins. That entry way was so old Mother Brain had almost completely forgotten about it, there were just too many to keep track of sometimes.

But again, it was of little consequence. The closer they got to Mother Brain, the easier it was to follow them. And the easier it was to pick them off one by one.

Mission Zebes- LV1: Welcome Home



MISSION CRATERIA LV2: THE LONG DETOUR

Lights rushed passed Samus as she took the elevator down into Norfair, the caves rumbling around her. It was long drop, nearing the planet's core, but these caves were the only way into the bunker she needed to get to.

Deep inside Zebes Mother Brain had taken control of the facilities. To make matters worse, Space Pirates had infiltrated these bunkers and were going after the discarded remains of the old Chozo tech. Even if they couldn't use it themselves, on the black markets Chozo tech could be sold for pretty high prices, and would be extremely dangerous should it fall into the wrong hands.

But, these facilities spanned the majority of the planet's underground. Samus hoped that if she made it to the center she could shut down Mother Brain and take control of the Chozo's defenses. From there, the Space Pirates would have nowhere to run.

Should she run into the Space Pirates first? Well...

Samus checked her suit's status: Full power.

That's why the Galactic Federation called me.

The elevator slowed to a stop and the blast shield opened to let her out. The section of the planet known as Norfair was much hotter than most, since the whole thing was basically a straight shot down to the center of the planet. All the heat from the planet's core, as well as the exhaust from the facilities many generators, were all funneled through Norfair. Norfair was also known for it's earthquakes, the heat expanding the metal structures and

weakening the rock.

But this high up, her suit could take it. It just meant she had to move through Norfair's top layer, and find another way down to the facility control room.

That being said, it didn't seem she had a choice. Over time, many of the caverns had fallen apart, large stone columns blocked most of the ways down and the side tunnels were mostly victims of cave ins. At least the steel corridors were stable, the energy doors still operational, but most of the doors were locked.

So with her options limited, Samus took one of the few paths still unblocked. Soon however, it was clear the path was leading her in the wrong direction. It was almost leading around Norfair, which she wanted, but soon the path climbed upward.

Samus stopped at another elevator, glaring at it. After a moment of frustration at the waste of time, she turned back around. But she only made it a short ways before the ground shifted beneath her. A moment later, and rocks were falling from above, and the ground cracked.

She jumped back, out of the way enough of the fissure that had formed. Then the rocks almost immediately blocked the fissure, reforming the path she'd walked through. And then another moment later more rocks fell, blocking her way again.

Great, she huffed, turning back around. *Let's see where this goes then.*

Samus stepped back up to the elevator. It only went one way, up, and directly above this section was the section known as Crateria.

Hopefully I won't be here long, Samus thought, entering the elevator and pressing the activation button. *I hate going the wrong way.*

Crateria is a section of Zebes that had once been located near the bottom of the ocean. The facility here was meant for researching deep sea wildlife, but seeing as everything's fallen into ruins, most of the caverns here had been partially submerged.

Of course, Samus' suit being made of a high-pressure armor with a built in air tank and filtration system, water was something she never had to worry much about.

So Samus made her way through the rubble. There were warped steel tunnels all around her, walls with large gashes in them from bursting under the pressure, and caverns that had simply crumbled. Once again she found most of her paths blocked, and ended up following the few paths that remained easy to maneuver through.

Eventually, the large caverns stopped, narrowing into short crevices. Not having anywhere else to go, Samus pressed her luck. The caves still shook from the movement below, and the steel creaked ominously, but so long as she could find any way down it didn't matter.

At least that's what she thought before seeing the state of the facility.

As she entered the main part of the building-- that being the only part of the facility here still standing-- she realized she'd have to tread carefully from here. Every step she took threatened to crush the floor beneath her, and swimming through the waterlogged bunker moved too much of the loose debris around her. She moved slowly through the water, crouching as she ducked under large pieces of broken and ancient equipment.

And finally she took one wrong step.

The thin layer of steel that was barely holding on finally gave out. It ripped in half and gave way to a room that had been previously sealed. The force of the water getting sucked into the empty room drug Samus down with it, thrashing her into the floor and hitting her head on the

side of the hole.

She managed to hold on to the edges of the hole as the water poured past her, but only for so long. Eventually the pull was too much and she plummeted. Samus crashed into the water, sinking quickly.

The force knocked her out instantaneously.

Samus floated for a while, unconscious. At some point the room had been filled completely, and Samus hit the ceiling before floating back through with the currents. These currents carried her a short ways, before sending her over a dead drop, much farther than just one room.

Sadly, the gravity here wasn't as thin as the gravity on the surface. landing on the planet she could've floated down, as if on Earth's moon. Here, it was more like jumping off a cliff on Earth; deadly. But luckily, the rush of air in the fall was enough to wake her up.

Her eyes shot open and she flipped over in the air. Then she went bolt upright and hoped the suit would hold.

Nearly a perfect drop, her knees shook when she made impact, but other than that she'd made it just in time to not cause any major damage. Regardless, she wouldn't have survived without the suit.

Thanks Old Bird, Samus thought as she made her way to catwalk that was only partially submerged. She pulled herself up and knelt on the ground for a moment, catching her breath.

The waterfall she rode in on was still pouring from the room she'd broken into. Meaning, if she was lucky, there would be rooms down here relatively undamaged.

Hopefully.

Samus deactivated an energy door, standing to the side in case a blast of water came gushing through. When

nothing happened, she stepped inside. It was a large room, lots of strange devices on display. Thick wires and pipes ran the length of the floor and swung over her head as they were roped to the ceiling. A few old lights flickered, their ancient power source running low after all this time. But even then, what little she could see she couldn't recognize.

And then she saw at the back of the room another mechanical Chozo, a container in it's hands.

She walked closer, scanning it.

Unkown Item

The message disappeared from her visor and Samus picked up the container. *So there are things you kept secret from me*, she thought.

Opening the container, the nano-machines easily integrated themselves into her armor. This meant they were clearly meant to work with her suit. So, she scanned them again.

Analysis inconclusive. Item incompatible with current suit.

Current suit? Samus thought, surprised. *There's more than just mine?*

Clearly, the Chozo had more than just one secret they kept from her.

Doesn't matter, Samus told herself, turning away. *That's not why I'm here.*

As she was walking through however, something else caught her attention. A small blip popped up on her visor, pointing her in another direction. There was a small upgrade sitting on a table, this one being something her sensors could pick up.

Power Grip her visor told her.

This... might actually come in handy. Samus integrated the new ability into her suit and kept moving.

It's taken a lot of time away from my task, Samus thought, stepping out of the facility. And I'm farther away than I should be at this point. The energy door sealed behind her and she started down the path back on the surface.

The facility had been a tower, starting near the bottom of the ocean, and rising to the surface again. Three elevators, two of them broken, to get her this far and she was getting farther and farther away from the facility control center.

If it weren't for the equipment she'd gathered along the way, she was pretty much exactly where she'd started.

At the very least, the path on the surface led downwards, light markers leading the way back around to another part of the ocean research building. This elevator went back into the caves below, to Norfair. She'd circled all the way around, but hopefully the way would be easier from here on out. She hoped at least paths wouldn't be as blocked.

As she stepped into the elevator, Samus looked at her scanner/arm cannon, wondering what other tech the Chozo had kept from her.

Mission Crateria-LV2: The Long Detour



MISSION NORFAIR LV3: GETTING WARMER

The elevator shook as it made its way down to Norfair, finally rattling to a stop just before the heat became too unbearable. She had to pry the doors open though, since it apparently didn't make it all the way down. Sliding through the crack she'd managed to make, she dropped back onto the flaming ground of Norfair, wishing she was anywhere else.

The caves led back towards the funnels though, and that's not where she wanted to be. Everywhere else was still blocked off, or she could go back up the elevator to Crateria-

****Crash!****

Okay, Samus sighed. Not going back to Crateria.

She stepped away from the broken elevator and tried to find a tunnel that hadn't entirely collapsed. Of course, there weren't any, but she always had her last resort.

Didn't want to do this unless I had to, Samus thought, aiming her canon at the rubble blocking her way. If it collapsed around her, she was basically dead, but she hoped that wouldn't happen. *That would be bad.*

She charged a small shot, not wanting to do damage, just clear the way. And as soon as the shot was fired she jumped back towards the elevator.

The rubble exploded, sending shards of rock and metal in every direction. She threw up her arms, but the shot loosened everything above the rubble. The force of steel girders and large boulders suddenly crashing into the

ground kicked everything up into the air.

Samus groaned, swiping away the dust in her vision. Before she could even stand back up though, the cavern shook, and almost the entire tunnel and everything in it, sunk. The floor tilted, breaking apart, and Samus was sliding right for the hole that had formed beneath everything.

Not doing this again! She fired a few more shots at the rubble around her, letting it fall into the pit. She slowed herself down as much as she could, shooting at the steel beams so they'd start to block the way, but the floor was falling apart beneath her.

Already closer to the pit than she wanted to be, she charged her canon, and aimed it at the ground. At the last second, she spun around and fired. The ground exploded, and the force sent her flying over the pit and through the debris. But even as she landed she didn't have time to rest, as that side of the tunnel was also falling apart.

She started running, jumping over the cracks in the ground and trying to stay off the falling chunks of rock as best she could. The ceiling had started coming down around her, almost blocking her way, but she could see a cavern at the end of the tunnel. An old maintenance shaft just on the other side.

She shot at the ceiling, breaking up the rocks that were falling, and ran as fast as she could.

Just before she could reach the cavern with the maintenance shaft, the floor finally caught up to her. It completely fell apart, and she was sent tumbling into the darkness.

Then she remembered.

Samus clicked a few settings on her canon, activating the Power Grip ability. Her canon moved back on her arm, and an armored glove formed around her hand. Then both her arms locked. She dug her hands into the

rock, and slid to a stop.

The armor kept her stable, taking the force of the fall and transferring it into her grip.

As the rest of the cave fell behind her, Samus worked her way back up, eventually clawing into the cavern. She rested on her knees for a moment, looking over her shoulder at the tunnel no one would ever walk through again.

Then she headed for the maintenance shaft.

Making her way through she noticed the metal was turning bronze the deeper she went. The heat was melting the steel, turning the shaft into a furnace. Eventually, her hands started smoking every time she pulled them away from the ladder rungs. At this rate, her armor was going to melt to the shaft, or to her skin, or she was going to melt inside her armor.

Either way, she needed better protection. And as soon as she saw a door in the side of the shaft, she took it. It headed in the direction of the main funnel chambers of Norfair, but it was either that or continuing down indefinitely.

She slammed the door shut and shook her hands off, then looked around the room. The walls were lined with mechanical Chozo, all the same heated bronze color as the maintenance shaft. On the other side of the room was a door that entered the funnel, and each Chozo was holding a container.

Samus scanned them, picking one up. **Varia Suit**, the scanner read. **Prevents damage from acid and heat.**

"Well that's exactly what I'm looking for," Samus said aloud.

This container was different from the ones before

though. The rest had been something like a small tube that contained nano-machines which would integrate themselves into her suit. This container was similar in shape except it was more like an old hard drive. She plugged it into the suit's canon, downloading the upgrade.

The suit's exterior shifted, and it suddenly felt heavier. But she could also feel the cooling system already kicking in.

That's better, she thought, placing the container back in the hands of the mechanical Chozo. *Thanks.*

She still didn't like the fact that they kept so much of their advancements secret from her, but she didn't want to disrespect their memory either.

Regardless, now that she had a more advanced suit, she opened the door to the funnel and entered the bulk of Norfair.

The heat hit her like the boulders that had fallen in the tunnel, but thanks to the suit that didn't seem to matter. What bothered her, was the lack of a way up, and way down now flooded with lava. She could see the stairs in front of her that led down, but this deep into the funnel seemed to have been badly damaged a long time ago. The stairs had been melted, the walls were getting there, and the floor creaked ominously with every step, warping under her.

And what's worse was that the lava seemed to be rising.

Let's hope 'preventing damage' means 'submersible,' Samus thought.

She jumped right in.

The lava formed around her, like a pool of jello. In water she was sluggish, but this almost felt like glue. And yet... she was completely unharmed.

Samus sunk, falling down through the lava, passing the exhaust tubes that funneled all their heat into Norfair.

These have long since been inactive of course, melted shut. Now she just had to figure out where she was going.

Norfair used to be the direct line to the control center, but if it was filled with lava now, what did that mean? Was he exit melted shut as well? And what did that mean for the control room? There were still a few chambers on the way, last she checked, but she wondered what state she'd find them in.

As she sunk deep and deep though, closer to her destination, she started watching the doors and exits that were melted shut, the tunnels that were blocked, and the walls that had been stripped away. The deeper she got, the more concerned she got.

It wouldn't be good to have come all this way just to hit another dead end.

And finally, she reached bottom.

It was a large bowl shaped area, which had probably contained lava at some point before the whole funnel got flooded with it. But there were three doors leading to elevators on the platform that surrounded the bowl. Two of them were melted shut just like all the others, but this one was kept protected by some kind of energy shield.

Above the door there was electronic plate, kept safe inside the same energy shield. It read: **Kraid**

That wasn't the name of any area she remembered, but it was the name of one of the Space Pirates she was here to find. The fact that his name was on the door...

Somehow, that was more concerning then if there hadn't been a door.

Samus deactivated the energy shield, and stepped into the elevator.

Mission Norfair-LV3: Getting Warmer



MISSION KRAID-LV4: WHY THEY CHOSE HER

The elevator door shut behind her, and as it moved down the lava began draining out of it. She checked her visor for her suit's status: It was at 95% power.

I'm better than I thought, Samus chuckled, watching the lights in the elevator flash by her. *Of course, they don't call me the best bounty hunter in the galaxy for nothing.*

Somewhere out there she could almost feel an old friend of hers suddenly choking on his coffee.

Finally the elevator slowed to a stop, and the doors slid open. She stepped out and stopped dead, looking at what seemed to be... the past.

The walls were clean, not warped or damaged, or old. The floors had been kept in good condition as well, and electricity still powered these lights. For a moment, it looked just like the home she remembered growing up in.

But she forced herself out of her memories, pressing on. The sign on the elevator door had read **Kraid**, and that meant that that monster was lurking down here somewhere. But the question on her mind though wasn't why he would make his presence known like that. It was Mother Brain who controlled the control center after all. No, her question was; why would *Mother Brain*, tell her where Kraid was?

Unless you're hoping I get rid of your problem for you, Samus huffed, walking cautiously down the halls. *You think you can pit us against each other, and we'll burn ourselves out.*

Only problem in Mother Brain's plan though,

Samus had a grudge with all of them. As far as she was concerned, they were *all* her enemy, and she was going to fight all of them either way. She didn't care who picked the order, she didn't burn out easily.

Samus stopped at a fork in the path, three doors to choose from. One looked locked so she focused on the other two. Not having needed it before because she either knew her way around or she didn't have any options to choose from, Samus had almost completely forgotten about the map that had been automatically downloaded to her suit from the facility servers when she entered. Clicking a button on her scanner she pulled up the map.

Interesting, Samus thought. There was a blank spot just passed one of the doors, the other seemed to be the one she needed to take to continue though. *What were you hiding in that blank space?*

She debated for a moment, whether or not the mission was more important here... and eventually decided it wasn't. *Sorry Federation*, she thought, opening the door that led to the blank space on the map. *But who knows? Maybe this will be important anyway.*

She started down the narrow hall, opening door after door. The more doors that blocked her way though, the more interested she was in what the Chozo were keeping secret down here. But the deeper she went the more it seemed like they were trying to keep something in, and not just something like the containers she's been finding.

Soon the doors all had locks on them like the one she ignored before. They were easy enough to get through, she just hadn't cared about the one from earlier. This time though it made her more and more suspicious, and she wondered if it was really the Chozo keeping something here, or if it was Mother Brain leading her somewhere.

Was the blank space in the map where Kraid lay

waiting?

Having kept an eye on her map this whole time, she stopped at the last door. There would be a chamber just on the other side, and she had no idea what to expect.

Preparing for the worst, Samus charged her cannon, and opened the door.

As soon as there was space to enter she jumped through and...!

...

Samus looked around the room, confused. The place was mostly empty. It wasn't just a blank space on the map, it was a blank space peri-

beep

Samus eyed her scanner, a little blip flashing on her visor telling her to check something. Looking around the room she finally saw a small arrow pointing at a wall, signaling her that there was something there.

It had never been wrong before, but this wasn't usually a situation where that setting cropped up. That was for concealed targets, points of interest that were lurking just out of sight. And as she crossed the chamber to the wall on the other side, she realized what the scanner was telling her.

There was something behind the wall.

Samus took a step back and blasted the wall open, figuring this area was still up kept enough to handle it. And when the smoke cleared she moved the debris out of the way, and stepped into the tiny secret chamber within.

There, in front of her, was yet another mechanical Chozo, sitting against the wall and holding a container in its hands.

So it was just like the others, Samus thought, taking a hesitant step forward. *But, why all the security?*

She scanned it: **Unknown Item. Analysis inconclusive. Incompatible with current suit.**

What? Samus thought. Another... and the last one's info hasn't changed even though I've upgraded my suit... There's still more... She took the upgrade nano-machines, and left the canister where she found it.

There's still so much more... isn't there?

Samus made her way back to the fork in the path.

Following the other path seemed to almost lead her around in a loop. She'd entered a long hall first with a few doors on either side but none of them would open. At the end of the hall was a core chamber. Those used to be used by the Chozo to re-energize their tools, armor and equipment. Of course, it wasn't working anymore, despite its well-kept appearance.

Through the chamber however, there were a series of maintenance shafts leading up and down. As Samus' goal was to make it to the command center on the lowest level, she started downward. This ended abruptly at what Samus first thought was just a dead end, but taking a second look there was a smaller gap at the base of the tunnel. Too small to crawl through, but this was one of the reasons why she knew she needed the morph ball upgrade. The Chozo had protected some of the more important sections of their facilities with powerful reinforcements, leaving only small gaps like this to traverse through. As most of their troubles were larger entities trying to break in, this was a fairly good idea, considering they apparently have the technology to shrink themselves.

So Samus curled up and let the nano-machines do their job. The tunnels were a tight fit, but the only real problem were the Geemer. They kept crawling in her way, pushing at her. They were basically space rats, built like spiky armadillos, but still relatively harmless. Once she

finally dropped out of the tunnels though, she was glad to be able to stretch again.

But as soon as she was back on her feet she was reeling backwards.

She'd dropped into a small room, and in front of her was a door. Or at least, she assumed there was a door there, it was really hard to see passed the enormous creature that was latched onto it. It was just an eye, it's large eye lids slowly blinking, the skin made of a rough hide.

"I know what you are," Samus huffed, aiming her canon. She'd seen a few of these before, Gadoras. They were manufactured creatures, living shields that latched onto doors like a conscious lock. They were meant to deter enemies from breaking in, since most petty criminals, and even tougher foes, usually drew the line at killing a living being.

But Samus had experience with these things, and they weren't all they were built up to be. For one, they didn't feel pain, and two-

BAM!!

The creature fizzled, falling away and disintegrating.

Gadoras had a glaring weakness; their defining characteristic. One good shot to the giant eye when it was open and it would be rendered useless. *Of course they were useless to begin with*, Samus thought, stepping up to the door. *They aren't living at all anyway. Not exactly something to cry over breaking.*

She pressed her hand against the door lock, and the energy shield dissipated. Opening the door, she entered the large cavern, shrouded in darkness, three red lights watching from above.

The dragon pirate Kraid crept up out of the cavern floor, towering above her. He opened his enormous jaw and roared. Samus didn't have a lot of time to react to Kraid's

first strike, a swift slash across the platform Samus had exited out on.

The monster was massive, standing on the ground about twenty feet below her, and looking down at her from another twenty feet up. His armor was impenetrable, indestructible, and invulnerable. The large spikes that protruded from his body could be fired as projectiles, and his claws could be detached as well, sent flying wherever he flung them. Kraid was a living tank, a terrifying dragon of unbelievable proportions.

Samus stood as close to the wall as she could, crouching slightly as she charged her canon. Kraid's long thin arms crashed down in front of her as she jumped, clinging to the wall. She fired a shot at Kraid's head, blasting him in the eye, but that did little more than piss him off.

I should've moved faster, Samus huffed, jumping to the other wall as Kraid sent claws flying her direction. *I know your weakness. I've studied you for this moment. I just need you to reveal it to me again.*

As Kraid swung again Samus flipped forward off the wall, latching on to Kraid's arm. As Kraid swung her, trying to swat her away, Samus fired a few more shots, weaker than before but she didn't have enough time to charge.

At least most of her attacks hit their mark, but Kraid had finally knocked her loose. She slammed against the wall, scrambling as she fell. Kraid stomped at her, trying to trap her in a corner. But much like a human trying to squash an ant, the ant was small enough to squeeze through the cracks.

The ground shook as Kraid slammed his feet on the ground, and then came the missiles. As Samus jumped up at the wall, making her way back up, Kraid started launching the rocket spikes that protruded from his body.

The crashed into the wall, throwing her off.

Come on! Samus hissed. Then she saw where the spikes hit. *Never mind Kraid, keep doing what you're doing.*

She jumped up onto one of the spikes, but before she could go through with her plan, the spike exploded, sending her flying yet again.

Samus slid across the ground, jumping out of the way of Kraid's foot. *Fine, she grunted. New plan!*

Samus fired straight up, slamming shot after shot into Kraid's jaw. As Kraid continued stomping at her, now swiping at her with his claws as well, detaching them and throwing them at her, she started to circle him. This seemed like a great idea at the time, but he was as wide as he was tall, and with his long ridged tail in the way, she started to rethink this plan as well.

Too late! Samus leapt away as Kraid began to turn as well, glaring down at her.

Kraid swung his tail at her, swatting her back into the wall, but she held on. She continued aiming for Kraid's head, but this time as Kraid tried to shake her loose again she jumped off his tail and grabbed onto his arm. Kraid only growled, scratching at her.

She climbed up, finally reaching his shoulder. *Try this then,* she growled, jumping up and grabbing onto Kraid's horns.

Kraid fought furiously to throw her off again, at risk of clawing himself in the face. But once again she held on, this time taking a moment to charge her next shot. She aimed right for Kraid's center eye, and fired.

Kraid roared in pain. In that moment, Samus swung down his head, placing her feet firmly at the front of his jaw, and used her hand to keep Kraid's mouth open. Then she fired shot after shot after shot, straight through the Kraid's head.

He hadn't had time to react, and in an instant, the second Kraid opened his mouth again, Samus had won. Even as Kraid's arms went slack, and the monster fell to his knees, Samus kept firing, drilling a hole through Kraid's skull.

Finally, as Kraid crashed to the ground, she jumped out of his mouth, rolling across the cavern floor and skidding to a stop. "This was a long time coming," Samus hissed, glaring at the dead gaze of the space pirate Kraid. "You earned, *everything*, you got."

She looked up at the door up on the remains of the platform. "Now, for your captain."

Samus could almost picture the look on Ridley's face when he realizes his right hand man was dead. That would be a victory all on it's own.

Mission Kraid-LV4: Why They Chose Her



MISSION BRINSTAR-LV5: A MEMORY

Samus was getting closer and closer to the control center, and the closer she got the more active Mother Brain seemed to become. Locked doors seemed to be shielded completely, to prevent Samus from deviating from the path any more, and other doors were open before she even made it to them.

She was also being led through the caves more than the facility, Samus noticed. The natural caves of Zebes, also referred to as Brinstar, were all over the planet. While most of the planet had been divided into categorized sections, like Crateria and Norfair, Brinstar was the biggest 'territory' of all, since it was basically the entire rest of the planet. Eighty percent of the planet Zebes consisted of Brinstar. Some parts of it were flooded from Crateria, other parts boiling from Norfair's heat, and the rest of it just dark caves.

Luckily, enough of the caves had already been excavated by the Chozo, so there were still lights and electrical doors like in the facility, it was just always darker and quieter in the caves. That didn't mean Mother Brain wasn't watching from here though, she was still leading Samus wherever she wanted her to go.

And Samus quietly hoped, as she walked through those dark caverns, that Mother Brain was leading her to Ridley next.

Her mission was to stop Mother Brain, and take back control. Defeating the Space Pirates was on the

agenda but according to the mission Kraid and Ridley were lower priorities. But not to Samus. She was glad to be rid of Kraid, the living tank, but with Ridley... it was personal.

As Samus walked through the silence, having nothing else to occupy her mind, she allowed her thoughts to drift to the past... To that moment in time she hated thinking about the most.

Samus thought back to being a child, and remembered her parents.

Cosmic Year 2000, the Milky Way was moving into an age of prosperity.

The planets came together to form the 'Galactic Federation', and were charged with protecting the peace of the galaxy--

A caravan was formed to connect the planets, and the energy required to power this caravan... was a mineral mined here, at Star Colony K-2L.

Afloralite. This mineral was used as the ignition module in all space-fairing vessels.

And this is where Samus' family lived and worked; that mining colony.

Her father's ship touched down in the colony docking area, returning from another adventurous trip to the mines.

"Yo, Chief Aran!" Called the dock attendant. "It's been a while, good to have you back!"

"Yeah!" Rodney Aran, Samus' father, stepped off the ship's ramp and patted the dock attendant's shoulder.

"Good job on the run," the attendant said. "Go ahead and take a load off inside."

"Ok," Rod nodded. He looked at the crew. "Sector 6 and 7, get that load of Afloralite in, come on!" He stepped

away, heading back to the barracks.

"Rod!" a woman yelled, jogging towards him across a vacant landing strip.

Rod looked up. "O-Oh, Virginia... what's up? What're you doing out of the house?"

"I brought you lunch," Virginia said happily.

"Wh-what!?" Rod chuckled. "You didn't have to do that..."

"Don't give me that, you need to eat," Virginia told him. "You've been so busy you haven't slept in weeks!!"

"Haha..." Rod shook his head. "I suppose... But the caravans need this Afloralite as soon as possible." He patted a shipping container as crew members brought it past him. "I want to see the Milky Way thrive! I'm prepared to make a sacrifice or two!!"

Virginia lowered her head a little, her face giving a more solemn expression. "But you need to keep our family happy, too," she told him. "Promise that you'll stay healthy."

Rod looked back at her, seeing the hopeful look in her eyes. "Yeah, I guess, I promise. For my family." He took her into his arms. "For you."

On the edge of the forests of Star Colony K-2L, a young girl argued with a furry little squirrel. It had taken a small pack of hers, and refused to give it back.

"AAAAHN!" she cried. "Not here! Give it back, that's mine! Geez, what a bad boy!!"

"Hey, Samus!!" another child called.

Samus looked away from the animal that had climbed into the tree branches above her and turned to face the children running up to her.

"What're you doing out here!?" one said.

"Everyone's going to the docks!" said the other.

"A new ship came," said the first. "It looks kinda weird. They called it a 'Chozo Ship'."

"Eh?" Samus asked, excited. "Where, where?"

The children led Samus back to the docking area, where the adults were already in conversation with the newcomers who called themselves 'Chozo'.

"You just want us to give it to you!?" the manager scoffed.

"We would like to borrow a large amount," said an old voice that came from under the hood of one of the robed figures. "... But, we found no other place to procure it."

Rod started shoving through the crowd. "Ah, sorry, coming though," he grunted. "Hey, what's going on?"

"Ah, Chief Aran, That's..."

"If you're in observance with the Galactic Pact," Rod said, watching the robed figures. "Then you should be aware that all Afloraltite has been reserved for the caravans! I can't just... Why? Why are the Chozo so eager for it all of a sudden...?"

"AHAAHAH!" screamed one of the children, chasing after Samus to get to the docks first. "I'm not about to lose to you!"

Samus laughed, rushing ahead. But as she was watching behind her, she wasn't paying attention to her feet or what was in front of her, and stumbled right into one of the Chozo. She tugged at the Chozo's robe, just enough to pull the hood away.

She looked up at the strange bird face, half covered in feathers, half covered in hair and ridges. It was an alien, an old alien.

"Samus, no," Rod scolded. "You're not allowed here!"

"Papa!" Samus smiled.

"Oh my, what an energetic little one," the Chozo said. "... Are you hurt?"

Samus wasn't sure how to react, so she just stammered an answer. "Ah... no...?"

"Is this your first time meeting a Chozo?" the Chozo asked, kneeling and opening his eyes wide.

He looked scary, Samus thought, like the kind of creature you'd expect to see watching you out your window in the dead of night.

The Chozo stood up straight again, putting on a smile. "We look different," he began. "But inside... we have the same 'heart' that you do. So be at ease. I am called Old Bird. Would you like to be friends?"

"I'm Samus Aran, 3 years old!" Samus smiled. "And sure!" Then she reached up and took the Chozo's hand, tugging at him. "Ne, ne! Come over here! I need some help!"

Rod had gone back to speaking with the other Chozo, but another of Samus' outbursts caught his attention again. "Ah! Sa-Samus, wait!"

"Ah, Old Bird...!?" said the leader of the Chozo.

"Ah, sorry, Gray Voice," Old Bird apologized, waving goodbye. "Please continue the negotiations."

"That girl'll be the death of me," Rod sighed.

Samus led Old Bird back to the edge of the forest where the squirrel had taken her bag. He still sat in the tree, watching them, refusing to move.

"Eh, you can't fly!?" Samus exclaimed. She was hoping he could fly up to the branches and get her bag back, but it seemed it was out of reach for him too.

"That's right," Old Bird sighed. "We lost our wings long ago. I'm sorry."

"Then I guess you're just like me..." Samus huffed, sitting on the ground, staring up at the squirrel. "What'll I do, I need it back, that bad boy..."

"Hmm..." Old Bird stared back at the squirrel. "Perhaps he refuses to come down because he thinks that you're angry with him. Why not make friends with him... Just as we did earlier?"

Old Bird looked down at Samus. "Let's start by giving him a name!"

"Eh, a name?" Samus asked. "Hnnn?" She thought hard, thinking up a name that would be good for a fluffy squirrel.

"Pyonchi!" Samus exclaimed.

Old Bird stared at her, blank expression. She looked so excited about the name she'd come up, and couldn't keep from laughing. After a moment Samus was laughing with him.



Eventually Samus got the squirrel to come down, and she and Old Bird returned to the docks, Pyonchi in tow. There, Rod and the Chozo were finishing their conversation.

"We have great respect for the Chozo," Rod said. "... However that has no bearing on this matter. I don't understand why you need it so badly, and I must know before I can give it to you."

"I understand that the Federation has left this very important task in your hands," Gray Voice said. "I most humbly apologize for troubling you. I ask that you please forgive our rudeness."

The Chozo turned away, starting back towards their ship. Old Bird patted Samus' head and started back as well.

"You're going already?" Samus asked. "But we just started being friends!"

"Y-... Yes, I'm afraid I have a very important job to do," Old Bird smiled.

*"*Old Bird,*" said the voice on the intercom.
"*Come back soon*"*

Old Bird and Gray Voice set out in their ship for Space Colony K-2L, blasting away from their home world of Zebes.

"We knew it wouldn't work," Gray Voice growled, checking flight controls. "... But we don't have nearly enough energy without the Afloraltite."

"Yes," Old Bird greed. "And we must rush the plan as well. We must not allow Metroid to remain awakened!! The time X has been out there alone is increasing!!"

Gray Voice nodded. "It can't be helped," he sighed. "We have to somehow get it before the Galactic Federation knows about it."

They flew their ship as fast as they could, but unknown to them, there was another ship nearby. It watched them from the shadows of a moon. They followed them, cloaked, across the galaxy. Eventually the Chozo arrived at a Federation planet, and the Space Pirates once more hid behind a far moon. Engines rumbling as the Space Pirate perched in his seat.

"Why did the Chozo go to such an out of the way planet?" the captain hissed.

"Lord Ridley!" shouted a crewmate. "We've detected a large energy surge. It's Afloraltite. We believe there is also a Galactic Federation mining team as well."

"Whhhat?! What?" Ridley laughed, almost sarcastically. "Hoho. I see, I thought there might be something. It's exactly what we were after! We found something worthwhile!"

Meanwhile, back to when the Chozo were preparing to leave, something was wrong with the radio tower.

"... Tower, Tower. Do you copy?"

"Tower, this is Beatrix III, awaiting permission to taxi... Tower, please respond..."

Chief Rodney Aran threw open the door to the control room. "Hey, what are you doing?! The ship's not taking off."

"Yeah chief," the operator scoffed. "There's something in the atmosphere blocking communications."

"What did you say?" Rod asked, leaning over the operator's desk.

"Furthermore," the operator grunted, shooing Rod to stand back. "There is something strange about the infrared readings. Even the map produced by the exterior electron beam is malfunctioning."

"The map?" Rod mumbled, staring at the readings. He was familiar with every system in the colony, so if there was a problem, he usually knew what it was. "It says the brightest spot is here... the power facility... So it's looking for the star's energy source...?"

And as soon as he did isolate the problem, he shoved the operator out of the way and jammed his finger on the intercom. **"Emergency-- Sound the emergency alarms! Dispatch a Federation Police Emergency Code!!"**

"Wh-what is it?" the operator exclaimed as Rod was walking away.

"Figure out the terrain," Rod said. "Cut off the energy! All movement is prohibited! Do as we trained!!"

The operator looked back and forth between his computer and Rod. "Eh, th-that means..."

"Contact all personnel in the vicinity!" Rod ordered. "Forget about the cargo, we're abandoning ship!" He looked over his shoulder and stared the operator dead in the eye. "They're coming. The Space Pirates."

Samus rolled around in the grass in a small clearing of the forest. It overlooked the whole of the colony, and was Samus' favorite place to be, especially when the ships took off. She wanted to wave at Old Bird as his ship left, and she wanted Pynochi to see the ships too.

Pynochi however wanted to run around and pat at Samus' arms. "Ah ha ha?" she laughed. "Pynochi, that tickles!"

Then she heard a rumbling. Samus picked up Pynochi and looked at the colony, just in time to see a massive explosion in the distance.

In an instant, the force reached her and threw her backwards.

The Space Pirates flew above them in wicked ships shaped like scaly bugs with slimy wings. They swooped over the colony, blasting at houses and the borders.

"Alright," Ridley laughed. "Their energy is cut. We're going south next. Let's kick some ass!!"

"Roger lord Ridley," a crew mate acknowledged.

"But listen up and be careful about the Afloralite," Ridley warned. "If you hit a high energy source, there's no escaping the blast." Ridley swung his fighter over a swarm of people running away, blasting them. "Priority goes to silencing everybody on this planet. Cut them to bits!!"

"We haven't seen flesh and blood in a while!" another crew mate exclaimed.

"First, enjoy the slaughter to the fullest!!" Ridley laughed. "We can take our time collecting the spoils later!!"

Ridley aimed his ship at the center of the housing district, then ejected. His wings snapped out behind him, and he watched the ship explode, sending house after house up in flames. Then Ridley lowered himself and stood on the

ground, watching the chaos, laughing.

"Papa... mama... where are you?"

Ridley turned around to see a tiny child walking towards him out of the smoke.

"What's wrong?" the child asked. "Did something happen?"

Samus looked up at Ridley, terrified. She'd never seen anything like him before, but Old Bird had been scary, and he was her friend.

"Lord Ridley," a crew mate said, a large man with crab-like features. "We've captured the facility. We've begun transporting the containers."

"Good," Ridley nodded.

He continued talking to his lacky, but Samus stepped forward. "A-are you Mr. Ridley...? I-I'm Samus... Th-three years... old... You're not scary... I'm perfectly fine... E-even if you look different... w-we, can still be friends..."

Pyonchi was shaking in her arms, wanting to run away but too scared to leave Samus' side. Samus felt paralyzed, but she was just as lost as Pyonchi.

Ridley looked down at her, disappointed, almost sad. "Mhmm- You're so cute," he chuckled softly. "I'm sorry miss, but... that's impossible." He stood above her, large wings flapping slowly, thin armored legs stretching to tower over her.

"Because... You're about to **DIE!!!**"

Samus screamed, but before Ridley could strike, another voice rang through the smoke and crackling fire.

"Samus!" Virginia yelled.

"Mama!" Samus cried.

"Now that we have the Afloralite," Ridley laughed. "There's no reason to hold back. **BURN EVERYTHING!**"

Samus could do nothing but watch as Ridley breathed fire, turning Virginia to ash in front of her. A

column of flame rose where Virginia once stood, smoke swirling in the wind.

Soon the entire colony was on fire, all the screaming silenced by flames.

Rod ducked behind a shipping container, hoping his blaster would hold a charge, but knowing this wasn't going to end well. At least the Space Pirates would suffer as well, Rod was going to make sure of that.

Damn it! Rod thought, out of breath and out of time. I've snuck onto their cargo ship, but... what now? He turned the corner, staying low and keeping his blaster pointed in front of him.

He couldn't let them leave with even the smallest amount of Afloralite... But it didn't look like the Federation Police would be coming any time soon.

What should I do? Rod thought.

"Hey bastard! What are you doing there!?"

Rod had been spotted, and in an instant he was surrounded.

"How did you get in!?"

"Damn," Rod huffed.

"FwhaHAHAHA! What the hell," one laughed.

"Isn't that a welding laser used for repairs?"

"What can you do with a toy?" another barked.

"Die!"

"Ah! Wait!" the first shouted, telling the others to hold off. "If he hits the Afloralite, it'll blow!"

"What?" the second muttered. "Oh..."

"That's right you crab assholes," Rod spat. "Looks like the soup between your ears actually is good for something."

The Space Pirates closed in on him, and his hand shook. But Rod held his gun up to the aliens.

"Ah, fool!" one shouted. "What are you doing? Cut it out!"

"If you do that, you'll die too!"

"Sorry Virginia," Rod huffed. "It seems like this is my only choice."

He pointed his laser at a shipping container, and pulled the trigger.

Samus, Virginia, Rob thought as the laser cut through and started it's chain reaction. I love you.

...

...

...

Ridley laughed, blowing up stuff left and right. But the sudden explosion caught his attention. "What?" he muttered, seeing the fire burning on the horizon. No, not just fire, a mushroom cloud of black smoke.

And that's right where he'd parked the main ship.

"Why is my ship on fire?!" Ridley complained. "Hey, hey! You've gotta be kidding me!"

The fire destroyed everything, the colony was leveled. As the ash settled, all that remained was a black sky, and a morbid feeling.

Old Bird and Gray Voice walked through the ashes, but couldn't find any survivors.

"Aah, how terrible," Old Bird sighed, staring sadly at the ashes getting blown away in the light wind.

"The emergency code to the Federation Police," Gray Voice said. "I don't think... they ever received it..."

"Everything's been destroyed," Old Bird mumbled, his voice wavering. "Complete annihilation... Not even one survivor..."

Rustle* *Rustle

Old Bird turned around, waving for Gray Voice to pay attention. Something was moving over a pile of rubble,

ash shifting.

"Ooh," Old Bird mused. "Th-that's... I... I don't believe it!"

"Old... Bird?"

A small child stood on top of the pile of rubble, overlooking the decimated colony. No building was left standing, no human left alive. All that remained...

Old Bird stepped forward. "... Samus."

—

And now, much to Samus' satisfaction, Mother Brain had led her right to the door she'd been waiting for her whole life. Above it, was a sign that simply read:
Ridley

Today, Samus thought, opening the door. You pay once and for all.

Mission Brinstar-LV5: A Memory



MISSION RIDLEY-LV6: VENGEANCE

At the end of a long corridor with walls that stretched up so high the light cast from the lava ring around the room wouldn't reach it, Samus entered a small chamber. Once again she was faced with a mechanical recreation of the Chozo, holding a canister of some unknown tech in it's claws.

Samus punched a wall. She sick of running around. Ridley was close, she could *feel* it! She wanted to tear him apart, rip his wings off, and instead she kept finding small rooms splintering off from tunnel after tunnel!

...*What are you?* Samus thought, picking up the canister.

Unknown Item, her scanner told her. **Analysis inconclusive. Item incompatible with current suit.**

Yeah, aren't they all, Samus muttered. *Couldn't be anything useful, could it.* It integrated with her armor regardless, remaining inactive like the others until she could finally get her hands on whatever suit the scanner kept referring to. *Wait what?*

Her scanner beeped. It had always contained a list of the different parts and abilities her suit was capable of, but she noticed there were blank markers showing where the incompatible upgrades would be incorporated. Beam, Suit, and Misc. were the three categories her upgrades were listed by, and there was a blank marker in each of them, the newest being in the suit category.

So it's a suit upgrade, Samus thought. *But not a new*

suit itself... What suit are you talking about?

She shut off the scanner, staring the mechanical Chozo in the eyes. "You could've said *something*," she hissed. "*Anything* would have been better than all these secrets."

She looked around. There didn't seem to be any other way through, just the door she came from. *Another dead end.*

Samus turned back, stepping back into the large chamber with the ring of lava around it. It must have been a docking area of sorts, or a cargo bay. Much like the rest of the facilities however, it had fallen into disrepair a long time ago, lava flooding in from Norfair.

Do I go up? Samus thought. She couldn't see up there, but there wasn't any way to climb up either. Finally she figured she might've missed something. Usually those 'unknown items' were in rooms out of the way, so Ridley was probably somewhere else.

She walked back to the door... only to find it locked.

Then she heard the tapping above her. She looked up, but couldn't see anything through the darkness. It sounded like someone was walking along pipes, metal scraping on hollow metal.

"You... *hehehehehe!* You're not one of the Chozo."

Just the sound of his voice brought everything back. All those memories she'd been replaying in her head for years, all the faces of the people of Colony K-2L. She remembered the face of the demon that burned them, slaughtered them!

Her mother dying in front of her. Her father never returning. The explosion that destroyed the colony. All of it. Every horrible moment all at once, raged through her.

She'd spent twenty years looking for him, and the last hour replaying his attacks in her head. And now... finally, he was right in front of her.

"*Ridley!*" Samus roared, already charging her cannon.

"You know me!?" the sharp voice cackled. "Then we can skip the introductions... and go straight to the meal!!"

The large dragon dive bombed, launching himself from the top of the chamber and falling straight towards her. He hit the ground, cracking the metal, spitting fire.

Samus jumped out of the way, rolling sideways and firing at Ridley's head.

"Knock that off!" Ridley complained, swatting at Samus. "Sit still!"

Samus didn't let up. After twenty years of waiting, she wasn't going to let this monster live another second. Shot after shot after shot she blasted at Ridley, even as she evaded his attacks.

But he was massive. Maybe not quite as towering or imposing as Kraid, but Ridley was quick, and his large wings helped block Samus' attacks. And finally he got a lucky hit.

He flung Samus across the room and she crashed into a wall, but before she could fall Ridley had already caught her, pinning her. His claws punctured the steel walls, trapping Samus.

"***DIE!!***" Samus shrieked, struggling in Ridley's grasp.

"Now see," Ridley huffed. "That just sounds personal. What did I ever do to you!?"

"You don't get to know!" Samus hissed. "You'll die here... to some nobody you don't even remember!"

She might not have been able to aim her cannon at him, but she could still activate some of her abilities. Namely, the Power Grip. The snap movement of Samus' arm forcing itself into its rigid place, broke Ridley's talons. Ridley screamed, pushing himself off the wall and standing

on the ground. Samus dropped, grabbing onto the wall and pushing off as well.

This time, Samus charged Ridley. Using the hardened reinforced armor as a weapon, Samus punched Ridley right in the face, then dug her fingers into his scales with her other hand.

Ridley continued to swat her away, his wings flapping uncontrollably. He lashed out with his tale, but Samus held on, going with the same plan as her fight with Kraid.

He might not have been big enough for her to stand his mouth, but she had a better idea. Jamming her fingers in his eyes and holding on to his skull, Samus stuck her cannon down his throat.

"Say good-!"

FWOOOSH!!

Samus was thrown back once again, fire bellowing out of Ridley's mouth.

"RAAAH!" Ridley screamed. "Did you forget I could do that? It looks like you forgot I could do that!" He slammed his foot into Samus as she tried to stand. "Why don't you just tell me who you are so it's not in my head all day? I've got more important things I need to focus on."

Samus skid to a stop, shredding the floor. "No," she hissed. "You don't get peace of mind..."

"And you don't get to win," Ridley laughed. He crushed her under his fist, slamming her into the ground. Again and again he used her body to dent the metal of the floor.

Samus curled up, bracing herself against each hit, and finally the floor broke. The steel plating had already been old and warped from the heat, and it couldn't hold out any longer. But Samus wasn't going to just fall.

She grabbed Ridley's claw and used his momentum against him.

They fell into the hole, the floor falling and crashing around them. Bits of platform kept hitting Ridley, preventing him from flying away, and Samus was shooting at him from below. Ridley shouted in anger, spitting fire in every direction, trying to dodge the platforms that kept hitting him in the head.

As the platforms finally fell too far to do any damage, Samus grabbed on to his tail, firing at his wings. He clawed at her, scraping her armor, but she reached for his wings, firing at the small space between them on his back. Then she grabbed hold of them, and activated her Power Grip.

Ridley went from screaming in rage to screaming in pain as Samus ripped his wings right out of him. But the fight wasn't over yet. She held on to his neck, deactivating the Power Grip in her cannon arm, and pressed the barrel to the back of his head.

"I said say goodbye," Samus growled, charging her cannon to as powerful a shot as it could manage.

"Nonono *wait!*"

BAM!!

Ridley went limp, a gaping hole straight through his head. But that wasn't enough.

Even as they continued falling, Samus pulled out the bomb she'd collected earlier. It was a powerful explosive, something her suit could supply her with, but she'd have to escape the blast quickly.

So she stuck through the hole in Ridley's head, activated it, and kicked off.

Samus clung to the wall with her Power Grip as Ridley's carcass continued falling.

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..
...

The bomb was far enough away that she couldn't hear the initial explosion, but as far as it was the flames it triggered spread all the way back up the shaft. They ripped her away from the wall, flinging her through the heat straight up. She almost made it all the way back to the chamber she'd fallen from... almost. But there was no longer any platform to grab onto, and she was falling down once more.

Of course, she knew she wasn't going to make it back up, but she didn't care. Instead, she rotated, and aimed straight down. Samus dove like a rock, dropping faster and faster. Then she started charging her cannon for one last shot.

Ridley's body, or what was left of it, was still down there. She figured she'd destroy the remains, and cushion her landing at the same time. So at the last second, as soon as she could see the ground, and lower body and spin of Ridley's body, she fired her cannon.

The blast was like a rocket engine, slowing her fall, and disintegrating everything it hit.

Finally she hit ground, rolling to a stop.

"Don't bother getting up," Samus growled, already walking away.

She opened an energy door and slammed the lock behind her.

Mission Ridley-LV6: Vengeance



MISSION BRINSTAR-LV7: INFESTATION

Samus stepped out of the elevator, and immediately stepped back into it. The floor was covered in what looked like... guts. Webs and thorns stretched across the walls and ooze dripped from the ceiling. It was every kind of disgusting, and she could've sworn she could hear buzzing.

What made this? Samus thought, walking through the intestine-like tunnel.

The guts-- or whatever she was stepping in-- weren't solid. She sunk to her knees in red goop, wading through it like mud as she ducked the webs above her. The thorns along the walls forced her to stay in the center of the tunnel, walking almost sideways at some points.

But as she pressed on, the buzzing got louder. To make matters worse, the buzzing was soon accompanied by other noises as well, like chewing, clicking, and the sounds of bubbling acid.

Samus didn't remember what kinds of creatures were down this far in the bowels of Zebes, so she wasn't sure if she should ready her scanner, or her cannon. When she arrived at a crossroads however, she knew she'd have to make a decision soon. Whatever it was that was making those noises was getting closer.

Scanner, she decided. *Maybe it won't see me.* She turned the corner, her scanner humming.

And there it was; a large, grotesque, overweight wasp. It's fat legs clung to some kind of pillar made of the same gooey guts Samus was walking in. It's tiny wings

fluttered furiously to carry it, and its twitchy head darted in every direction all the while tearing at something that looked like a carcass. There were Geemer shells everywhere, their insides ripped apart.

From around the corner, Samus quietly aimed her scanner at the massive bug. It scanned three life forms, two dying. It turned out the tall pillar the large bug was clinging to was actually an Acid Worm; a long armored creature which melted its prey with acid. Its armor had been stripped away, leaving only the now rotten fleshy insides. The carcass was a Baristute, another bug-like creature with a small body and two tree trunk sized legs. This one was missing its legs, and its body was in the process of being ripped to shreds.

Finally, the large wasp creature, was an Imago. This was a creature *not* to be messed with. Most likely, the Imago had been eating the Acid Worm when the Baristute interrupted. Hopefully this meant that it was preoccupied, and Samus would be allowed to continue on her way.

She crept backwards, watching the Imago. She matched her steps to the dripping sounds that echoed through the halls, and waded through the muk in the other direction. Staying low and moving cautiously, Samus made it far enough away and turned another corner, relaxing for a moment.

And after that moment passed she figured she'd never relax again.

As soon as she let her guard down, another Imago came swooping at her out of nowhere.

It crashed into the wall behind Samus as she ducked, but its stinger struck her arm. Luckily her armor took the hit, but the acid dripping from the Imago's fangs looked like it would melt even Chozo-grade armor.

But her problems didn't end there, they never do.

The other Imago had been alerted to their presence,

and it was not happy to be interrupted yet again. This meant that now Samus was trapped on both sides, with angry Imagos blocking her in.

They eyed each other for a brief moment, then returned their attention to Samus.

You don't like each other, Samus realized. But you hate me more... great.

She took a shot at the closer one, running at it as she fired her cannon. It pushed the creature back, enough for her to dart passed, but it wasn't stopped for good.

Now both of them were chasing after her, slamming into each other and ripping through the webs dangling above them. With those webs and the red gunk Samus was still fighting against, she couldn't move very fast. And besides, she had no idea where any kind of door was. It all just looked like endless halls at this point.

I figured I couldn't trust Mother Brain to lead me along forever, Samus thought, still running from the Imagos. I got rid of your enemies, so now I'm just a loose end.

But Samus wouldn't be defeated so easily.

As soon as there was a corner she threw herself to the side, turning slightly and aiming her cannon at whichever one came closer first. And the second she had the first Imago in her sights she fired several quick shots all at once, each shot hitting the Imago's soft underbelly.

Now that it was distracted and blocking the other's path, Samus lunged towards it. Using her Power Grip she grabbed onto the Imago's head, then swung around it to sit on it's back and blasted the other Imago at the same time.

But the Imago she was riding slammed backwards, throwing her into the wall. The wall broke, and before Samus could react she was falling through it.

The Imagos buzzed around the hole, neither able to fit but neither willing to give up. Of course, now Samus

was stuck. The hole only seemed to go so far before stopping, so she hadn't fallen far, but it did seem to keep going up.

The problem with that was that she couldn't make it that far up without getting jabbed by their stingers.

And I can't shoot either, Samus thought, annoyed. The Imagos were moving too fast and if she missed she'd just bring everything down around her. And this time it wouldn't be a pit she could just fall through until something conveniently saved her.

Unable to fit in the hole like this, she went into Morph Ball mode. Then she tilted backwards, rolling sideways into a tube.

I guess that works, Samus thought. *Where does it go?*

She followed the tube as it slanted downward, eventually dropping her into a room with no light. Coming out of Morph Ball, she activated a flashlight on her scanner, looking around the room.

And once again, she came face to face with a mechanical recreation of the Chozo. It sat slumped at the back of the room, arms folded in it's lap, staring blankly at the ground.

It would have looked dead if it had ever been alive in the first place.

But Samus stepped closer. So far each Chozo had been holding something, but this one seemed to be different. Instead of it's hands being out, they were tucked close.

She pried apart it's arms, then pulled apart it's fingers. And in it's palm was an item, though it was unlike anything she'd ever seen.

It was round and flat, like a disk, but had a lightning bolt welded onto the surface.

As soon as she touched it, it clung to her, attaching

itself to her waist like some kind of sentient belt buckle. But it felt super charged, like it was *made* of energy.

A quick electric shock ran through armor, as if it was powering everything all at once.

"But this isn't just a battery, is it?" Samus mumbled, holding up her hand and watching the sparks jump across her armor up to her fingers. "Yet another weapon you hid away... You kept it close... but like everything else instead of using it you kept it tucked in the darkest corners of Zebes, hating yourselves for making it, and making more anyway..."

She stared down at the mechanical Chozo, at the sad look on it's face. It wasn't even a real Chozo, none of them ever were. These were less than corpses, just unmarked tombstones in empty graves.

"Well I know what they're good for," Samus huffed, turning back. "I defeated Kraid... I even defeated Ridley... Next is Mother Brain, but it's more than that. You could have saved the galaxy with the tools you've created... But look where it got you."

Samus went back into Morph Ball mode and exited through the tube, working her way back up to the pit where the Imagos were still trying to get to her.

Give it a rest, Samus growled, staring up at the giant bugs. She charged her jump, energy surging through her suit, powering the mechanics in her legs.

Then she jumped, electricity flying off of her in every direction. She tore straight through the Imagos, frying them, and landed right back in the red guts that still covered the floor.

Samus stood, wiping intestines off her suit. When she looked up, she noticed she'd caught the attention of every other bug in the area.

They crawled along the floor, the walls, the ceiling, all moving slowly. They saw her rip through the large wasp

like creatures, and were hesitating.

They always hesitate, Samus thought, feeling a brief tightness in her chest.

She darted forward, her new source of energy propelling her faster and faster, lightning shooting off of her. As she ran she charged her cannon, staring down another Imago that blocked her path. The other bugs were getting squashed beneath her, or fried around her, but for some reason Samus didn't think that was good enough for this one.

"Get out of my way!" she roared, blasting it into pieces.

She slammed through it, crashing into the door behind it.

Sludge dripped from the ceiling, guts clung to the burnt webbing, and spikes lay broken across the corpse covered floor.

I have to be getting closer, Samus thought, opening the door. *Mother Brain can't hide much longer*.

Mission Brinstar-LV7: Infestation



MISSION TOURIAN-LV8: METROID

It was dark, all the lights either off or barely flickering in the distance. It was enough to let Samus know she'd entered a chamber of some kind. There didn't seem to be hallways, but large machines stopped from seeing very far.

The machines hummed, like a constant white noise. If she was being honest with herself, she hadn't expected things to be running this smoothly for so long. Mother Brain had been doing her job well, keeping the facilities in check even when all hell broke loose so long ago.

She walked through the chamber, knowing that she had to be getting close now. The map in her visor told her she was nearing the central control room located at the planet's core, so Mother Brain couldn't have been far.

"Hhhhh..."

Samus froze, pulling up her scanner. *What was that?*

She scanned the immediate area, checking for signs of life. There was one, but it was faint... No, there were more... Tiny little blips that kept blinking in and out.

I'll worry about that later, Samus decided. Probably just Geemer.

She followed her scanner, rounding a corner, and stopping dead. On the floor in front of her, was a dying space pirate. One of Ridley's goons.

"Hhhhh..." It tried to reach up to her.

Another manufactured creep, Samus scowled,

thinking of the Gadora that had guarded Kraid's door. *Just shut up and die already.*

She fired a hole through the space pirate's head. His arm went slack and he stared up at the twinkling lights above.

Lucky, Samus thought. Almost looks like stars.

She stepped over the dead body, continuing on her way. Making it to the end of the chamber she found a door. It led into a corridor, where she found yet more dead space pirates. She almost moved passed them as well, but curiosity got the better of her.

Samus knelt down beside one of them and scanned the body, determining what killed them. *It's probably just Mother Brain's defenses, she thought. But I don't see any scorch marks... just bite marks... the Geemer couldn't have done this, could-?*

Her scanner beeped, finishing it's analysis.

Samus' eyes went wide and she was already switching out her scanner for her cannon. *Those blips on the scanner, they weren't Geemer, she realized as she started watching the area. They were Metroids!*

What could Mother Brain be doing!?! Releasing Metroids, here!?!?

I'm running out of time then, Samus hissed, running down the corridor. She knew it, she'd expected it. As soon as both Kraid and Ridley were gone all that was left was Samus.

But why release them now? Samus wondered, opening an energy door. Why not use the Metroids to kill us all?

The door opened, and Samus jumped back, blasting the Metroid that was floating in front of her. *Too close!*

It darted back and forth, her attacks absorbing into it's energy draining skin. It was like a living self-recharging battery. Metroids would latch onto power sources, or living

creatures, and drain them of everything.

There's only one way to eliminate them, Samus growled.

She jumped at it. It bared its teeth, ready to grab her, but she ducked and rolled under it, then grabbed its head from behind. Holding tight to it with both hands, she put her foot through the Metroid's squishy surface, squashing its brain.

They were like super jellyfish. Energy attacks wouldn't work, but ripping them apart was their weakness, so long as you were faster than them. If they got to you before you got them, there's no way out. In a matter of seconds, it's you or them.

So it's a good thing I'm fast, Samus huffed.

She stepped through the door and into a stairwell. The metal stairs spiraled downward, but she wouldn't get a break yet. There were more Metroids coming up at her, and she stared down into the pit, laser cannons started coming out of the walls.

You're not going to make this easy, are you?

The cannons fired at her, and the Metroids were getting closer, but from everything she'd gone through so far, the answer was obvious.

She jumped into the pit, ignoring the spiral staircase that wound around her. She either crashed through the Metroids, or avoided them altogether. But the cannons were firing in every direction, creating almost a laser grid. Not only that, but the lasers that hit the Metroids, only made the Metroids stronger.

She almost hoped that if the Metroids latched onto her she could use the cannons to get them off, but that wouldn't work. So her only choice was to keep falling, crushing the Metroids beneath her and dodging the laser fire.

But the farther she went the harder it got.

There were too many Metroids, all absorbing energy more and more. They slowed her down, swarming her. She wasn't moving faster enough to crush them by falling, and there were too many to punch or kick through. They started blocking out the cannons, like a sea of Metroids.

And finally it was too much, and one got a hold of her.

It latched on to her back, and she couldn't shake it off. Then another got her arm, then her cannon. She kicked out at them, trying to force them off her arms, but nothing worked. She could feel her suit powering down, and if that happened...

"*GET OFF!*" Samus roared. "*GET OFF!!*"

Her visor showed her system's power levels dropping rapidly. Any minute now and-

Wait! Samus realized. *Batteries!*

She remembered the upgrade she'd just found, the external energy source. *Let's hope you kept it safe for a reason.*

Forcing her arm to move, she brought her scanner down towards her leg, then with her knee she activated the new ability. The instant electric shock momentarily stunned the Metroids, like a power surge. So she pushed it further.

The heat started scorching their fangs, forcing them to let go. And as soon as she was free she was falling again, this time keeping the energy going. Once again she kicked, punched and dropped through Metroid after Metroid, frying them as she went. They backed off, getting out of her way, but still being plenty enough to continue blocking the cannons that kept trying to shoot her through the Metroids.

And finally she was through.

Samus shot through the shield door and slammed it closed behind her.

Seeing the empty hallway in front of her, she finally

sat down to take a rest.

Down that hall, was a door. And on the other side of that door, was Mother Brain.

This is almost over, Samus sighed. All that's left is you and me, Mother Brain.

Mission Tourian-LV8: Metroid



MISSION ZEBES CORE- **LV9:** **MOTHER BRAIN**

Samus' visor beeped, warning her of the danger ahead and the low battery in her suit. The external electricity device seemed to have it's own endless supply of power though, but if her suit's energy was depleted, she wasn't sure if the external device would continue to function. If that happened, she'd have to rely on her last resort.

One bomb for Ridley, one for Mother Brain. That was her plan going in, and she'd most likely stick to it.

And now she stood in front of the door to the central command facility. Inside was Mother Brain, protected by god knows what. Metroids, lasers, and whatever else Mother Brain decided would be necessary to defeat Samus.

At least you're not underestimating me, Samus thought, raising her hand to the door's lock. *But I'm ready for you too.*

The door opened, and the air went still. Every laser in the room was aimed directly at her. In her way was energy shield after energy shield, and behind each shield were more and more Metroids. But Mother Brain's defenses didn't stop there; the floors were electrified, standard issue gun turrets were mounted alongside the laser cannons, magnetic engines hummed and the air felt supercharged with electricity. Her scanner read signs of a toxic gas leak,

and other unseen creatures lurking just out of sight. Mother Brain had every kind of defense in place, but she waited.

Samus stood outside the door, and through the several energy shields she could see Mother Brain looking back at her, waiting for Samus to make a move.

She was giving Samus a choice. Turn back, or fight. She was letting Samus leave if she wanted to. But all of this told Samus everything she needed to know.

Mother Brain was afraid. She knew she couldn't beat Samus. Even hiding behind her walls and her toys, she was no match for Samus Aran, and she knew that. Every turret, every cannon, every Metroid in her way was just another piece of evidence to prove how utterly *terrified* Mother Brain was of Samus.

Samus moved her right foot back, and felt the already supercharged air get heavier. The turrets and lasers charged, ready to fire.

Samus activated her external device.

She rocketed through the room, fires exploding all around her. She skated across the floor, hovering above the electrical panels below her. And in mere moments she had blasted through the first two energy shields, spinning and kicking the Metroids out of her way, tearing down cannons as she went.

Lasers and bullets shot at her in solid lines of rapid fire, but her suit had already tracked their movements, predicting their patterns. She danced from energy shield to energy shield, ripping apart Metroids, blasting through the barriers, and leaping over the Geemer Mother Brain had sent in to distract her.

You think it's that easy? Samus thought as she forced her way through. After everything you did? You think my only grudge was with Ridley? You think I'd let you get away!? Did you really think I'd just walk away from you!?

The electricity in their air mixed with the electricity in her suit, sending lightning bolts firing in random directions. With every step she took she left a trail of fire behind her, and the fires in front of her were nothing, just walls of hot air.

And when she crashed through the final barrier, she wasted no time making the final leap. Charging her cannon, she fired off a power shot that shattered the glass jar Mother Brain sat inside.

And in that moment, everything went silent.

All the guns stopped firing, all the Metroids backed away, all the lasers went offline, and fans began sucking all the toxins out of the air. Now that Mother Brain was defenseless, she couldn't risk hurting herself with her own weapons.

Samus stood in front of her, panting, ready to end it all once and for all. She gripped the bomb tightly in her hand.

"This is it," she hissed. "Any last words? That's more than the others got."

Mother Brain looked down at her, eye twitching. It darted around, like a scared fly looking for a way out. Of course, Mother Brain was trapped. Mostly mechanical, she herself was built into the platform she stood on. She really was, *just* a brain. A great big evil brain in a jar, now weakened because she made one person just mad enough to fight back.

But she wouldn't speak, she couldn't. The Chozo might have given her an eye to see with, but they never gave her a mouth.

"Why did they make you?" Samus huffed. "Why make any of this? All these weapons... these monsters... the tools they hid away."

Mother Brain looked down at Samus, eye finally remaining still.

"They locked you away," Samus sighed. "They built you, and abandoned you..."

"Un... Like... You."

Samus' eyes went wide. "You... You *can* speak!"

It was a monotone, computerized voice, something just as mechanical as the rest of her, but it was not something Samus had expected her to be able to do at all.

"Im-pris-oned... Trapped... But... know-ledge-able... in... ways... they... did... not... see... com-ing."

"They might have been cowards," Samus hissed. "Fools, yes. I'll grant you that much, but they did not deserve to die."

"They... did... The... Cho-zo... were... in-tell-i-gent... but... weak... willed... just... like... ev-er-y-thing... else... in... this... galaxy... Life... is... flawed... You... are... flawed... And... so... you... all... must... be... e-rad-i-cat-ed..."

"I know," Samus said, walking up to Mother Brain. "We're not perfect, but we can't learn if we're dead."

"You... will... not... learn... You... will... not... change... You... will... on-ly... a-ban-don... what... you... have... built."

Samus kept her hand behind her back as she stepped no more than a foot away from Mother Brain's eye. "You are a danger to everyone. And you've had your chance, and you failed. You are flawed, Mother Brain."

"No."

"Yes," Samus said. She patted the side of Mother Brain's eye. "I'm sorry, I am."

There was a reason why Samus was often chosen for missions like this. Her love of living creatures, and her active role in protecting them at all costs. Endangered species, children in peril, even politicians, she would accept any mission that meant protecting innocents.

...But if the mission was to kill?

If she was given a target, she would eliminate it, without a doubt. But only if she knew, only if she was absolutely certain, there was no coming back from where that monster had gone.

If her target was a danger as great as the Space Pirate Ridley, or the living beast Kraid, then rest assured Samus would take care of it.

As for Mother Brain, it was different.

Samus knew the details of this mission before it was even offered to her. She knew more about this mission than the people who gave it to her. She knew, that even though Mother Brain was a living creature, she was mostly machine, and that machine part of her was what dictated her actions.

Samus believed that Mother Brain believed she was innocent, but her actions would say differently.

And in this situation, where if Samus let Mother Brain free it would only cause trouble, there was only one real answer.

After everything Mother Brain had done, Samus stepped back, and walked away. She turned her back to Mother Brain, and returned down the hall the way she came.

And as soon as she was far enough away, she activated the bomb she left behind. The explosion killed Mother Brain instantly.

I am sorry, Samus told herself. It was not a decision I took lightly... but you hurt too many people.

Mission Zebes Core-LV9: Mother Brain



MISSION CHOZODIA-LV10: STARTING FROM ZERO

EMERGENCY ORDER _

Kraid's screams were silenced as Samus fired shot after shot, drilling through the back of his head. "You earned, everything, you got."

...

"I said say goodbye." Samus fired a supercharged blast through Ridley's head.

"... Don't bother getting up."

EXTERMINATE ALL METROID ORGANISMS ON PLANET ZEBES... _

Samus fell through the pit, crushing and electrocuting the Metroids in her way.

AND DEFEAT THE MECHANICAL LIFE-FORM, MOTHER BRAIN. _

As soon as she was far enough away, Samus activated the bomb she left behind. The explosion killed Mother Brain instantly.

I am sorry... It was not a decision I took lightly... But you hurt too many people.

...

You... will... not... learn... You... will... not... change... You... will... on-ly... a-ban-don... what... you... have... built.

...

I've completed my mission, Samus thought. Kraid, Ridley, and Mother Brain... but not the Metroids.

Samus walked to the end of the room, to a station built into the wall. She pressed a button and the screen powered on. It asked her to input her command, and she gave her order.

*"*Are you sure you want to proceed?*" the computer asked.*

Samus looked down the hall to her exit. There was an emergency elevator shaft nearby that she could use for her escape. Then she looked at her visor's readout. She was dangerously low on power, but she wouldn't need much just to get to the elevator.

"Yeah," Samus whispered. "I'm sure." She activated the command.

**SELF-DESTRUCT MECHANISM ACTIVATED
EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY**

Samus turned away and walked to the elevator. Red lights flashed and sirens blared, but there was no one left but Samus. No one left to warn, to one left to run, but it was the only way to make sure the Metroids didn't escape.

I would've liked to know more, Samus thought, stepping into the elevator. All the secrets you left behind. But I guess it's for the best...

The elevator moved up, and the timer counted down on Samus' visor. It took her through Norfair, Crateria, and Brinstar, finally opening up at the surface. The elevator had been sealed behind rock, and as soon as Samus stepped out it closed, becoming like the cliff side once again.

She'd known where it was, when she landed on the planet, and had landed her ship nearby. She didn't have a way to enter the emergency elevator, not could she have ridden it as it only went one way, but she was prepared

nonetheless.

And as Samus stepped back into her ship, the countdown hit zero.

As Samus flew away the facility detonated. The explosions would start in the planet's control center, but it wouldn't destroy the planet. It would funnel through, blowing up every connected facility throughout the planet in a great chain reaction. Every living thing inside would be decimated, even the Metroids.

And from her view screens, Samus watched as explosion after explosion broke the surface.

Finally, Samus thought, sitting back in her seat. *Game over... Mission complete.*

BWEEP!!* *BWEEP!!* *BWEEP!!

The heck!? Samus checked her onboard scanner. Several hostile ships just closed in on her. *No! I was done!*

They fired at her, and Samus recognized them. They were part of Ridley's crew. These were the same ships that fired on her colony so long ago.

Fine, you wanna play? She fired back, easily out maneuvering them. There may have been plenty of them, fourteen in total, and they may have had a lot more weapons on them than she had, but Samus had had a bad day.

And after everything, she wasn't about to get taken down by some lowly grunts!

She spun backwards, blasting ships into pieces and watching the pilots eject. And then she'd blast the ejected ones too.

They swarmed, and broke apart, trying to divert her attention. But while she was dodging some she was shooting at the others. The enemy might as well have been standing still.

And then one got lucky.

She didn't even know where the shot came from,

but her engines stalled, and suddenly she was falling back to Zebes. Her weapons locked, the other ships started firing at her, and she could do nothing but watch.

The ship heated up, burning in the planet's atmosphere.

It was everything she could do keep from killing herself in the crash.

She crashed through a mountaintop, skidding down the side of it and spinning out of control. Her system's computer shut down, and Samus locked herself in her armor, bracing herself as the ship flipped over.

And then everything went dark.

When Samus finally came to, all the lights were off. Her ship was dead, and so was her suit. Her power suit had been drained of its battery, which meant if she'd have to recharge it to make use of anything she'd obtained in the facilities.

But this also meant she needed a way of this planet, and her's was currently fried.

Samus kicked open the footlocker beneath her chair and pulled out a breathing apparatus. Unable to even summon her suit anymore, she wouldn't be able to survive the surface of Zebes without something to help her.

Luckily it was undamaged. Now she just had to get out of the ship.

Considering the ship was upside down, this was harder than it needed to be. She squeezed through the hatch at the top of the ship, which was-- at the moment-- pressed firmly against the ground.

Brushing herself off, she strapped her emergency pistol to her leg and started looking around. This wasn't any area she'd been to before, and she didn't have her power

suit to tell her where she was.

What she could see however, was the top of something large and mechanical. It didn't look like any of the facilities built on Zebes, and she'd blown all of them up anyway. So... what was this?

Samus trekked around the mountain's edge, keeping an eye on the spire that rose above the mountains around her. And as she drew closer, it became more and more obvious that it was a space ship, and a large one at that.

But it was more than just any ship.

This... was Ridley's Mother Ship.

Samus grinned. *Shoot me down*, she thought, working towards the Mother Ship. *I'll pick myself up, and use your own weapons against me. I mean, it's not like Ridley needs it anymore.*

Mission Zebes-LV10: Starting From Zero



MISSION MOTHERSHIP-

LV11:

RESURRECTION

Space Pirates moved in and out of the cargo ramp, carrying crates full of something heavy but Samus didn't know what it could be. The only things around for miles out here were rocks, but there was nothing special about them. Of course, they had always been stupid, and with their captain dead it's not like they'd have any idea what they were doing.

Regardless, the insectoid blockheads were in her way. Too many to stun, Samus hid from view, creeping her way along the side of the ship. Luckily all the crates shielded her, and she was able to focus on finding another way in.

Point of entry: ventilation.

Braking open a panel, Samus crawled inside, hoping the squeaky metal wasn't going to alert the space pirates. She sealed the panel behind her, and began making her way into the ship.

It was a lot hotter in the ventilation shafts than she would've liked, but not as hot as Norfair. That being said, having a temperature regulating suit right now would've been great. Hopefully she could find a place to recharge her suit inside but in the meantime she'd have to deal with only having a stun pistol.

Until then, she had to remain quiet. It wasn't necessarily hard exactly, but it *was* annoying. These

yellow-blooded shell-backs weren't that strong, and if she'd had her cannon she could've made quick work of them. She hated having to resort to hiding, ducking through shadows and creeping along walls. It made her feel like a coward. She could've turned these bug-brains into butter by now!

She slowed her breathing, calming herself as she stepped out of the vents. The first thing she needed to find was either a map or the control room.

"Hey!" an angry voice hissed.

Crap, Samus thought.

"Get her!" the space pirates yelled.

And then she was running.

Samus blasted the locks on the door with her pistol as every space pirate in the cargo hold came running after her. She would've stayed in the vents longer, but they had sealed grates on them to *prevent* things like sneaking around.

I guess space pirates know better than anyone else how protect their things from intruders, Samus huffed, running around a corner.

She slammed right into more space pirates.

But you'd think I would know how to watch where I'm going! Samus stunned the one closest to her then jumped and kicked off his face, reaching upwards for the ceiling. Tearing off a panel she threw the petal grate at another's head and climbed into the hole.

The space pirates blasted acid at her, burning more holes in the ceiling. Too slow to outrun them this time, the ceiling fell apart and Samus crashed back down. But the acid was dripping from the ceiling and burning through the floor, so when Samus crashed she didn't *stop* crashing.

She and the pirates fell through the melting floor, crashing down to the next level. Samus stunned a few more of them, leaping out of the pile of bickering hard heads and continuing her sprint down the hall.

Making sure to look around each corner before turning this time, she managed to get completely lost because she still hadn't found the map room. But, at least for the time being she'd escaped the pirates, now all she had to do was figure out where she was.

She crouched down into a corner, keeping to the shadows. It was a large, mostly empty room she'd stepped into, one or two space pirates walking around dealing with the cargo boxes. But what stood out to her was the large tunnel they were bringing the crates out of.

So you're filling the crates in the tunnel, Samus thought. And then bringing them outside? Or, are you seriously collecting rocks from outside as well?

Whatever the pirates were doing, it was at least obvious to Samus now what they were doing *here*. Those tunnels led into the planet, and that meant most likely they were scavenging for Chozo tech. Given the fact that just about every piece of Chozo tech Samus had found so far was incredibly deadly or could at least be used as a weapon, she didn't like the idea of the space pirates getting away with this.

Which, of course, meant her job wasn't done yet. Now she had to stop these guys from getting out. But first, she needed to know what they were digging for. If it was anything that could help her then she had to get it first, otherwise she was defenseless.

So she cowered her way into the tunnel, making sure the creeps couldn't see her. There wasn't much lighting as she went deeper, only small planted lamps the pirates placed so they could see their way through. They were dim though, and there were plenty of places for her to hide if she needed to.

At least, until she made it *through* the tunnels, then there were lights on all over the place. Large steel rigs were set up all over the central chamber, but there were plenty of

tunnels leading off in every direction. The walls were covered in engravings as well, painted sculptures and statues built into the columns that held the place up.

It was an old Chozo ruin, but besides that... Samus recognized this place. She remembered all these images from when Old Bird showed her this place as a child.

But, once again she had to force the feeling of nostalgia away. Now that she knew where she was, there was something she needed to see. Old Bird had led her down a very specific tunnel from here, and the chamber he led her to had something she needed... at least, that's what Old Bird had told her.

Samus made her way along the side of the chamber, working towards the tunnel. The few pirates that continued walking through didn't notice her, as most of them were busy chipping everything away. It pained her to ignore them, but she told herself she'd rip them apart the first chance she had and kept going.

When at last she arrived at the chamber Old Bird had taken her to, she took a moment to finally rest. The pirates wouldn't care for this room, since the only things in here were more paintings and a single mirror built into the wall.

"One day you'll come back here," Old Bird had told her. *"I'm sure you won't know why, and I doubt you'll mean to... but you will. And here, you'll find everything you need."*

Samus stepped towards the mirror. "I remember this place," she said softly. "I hope you were telling the truth, Old Bird."

She tapped her finger on the mirror's surface.

Then her suit reacted.

She wasn't sure what she'd been expecting, but as her suit began to rematerialize around her, she smiled. Like a hologram, the armor formed around her in small lights,

solidifying into the nearly indestructible power suit she had become accustomed to wearing. She removed the breathing apparatus and let her helmet encase her head.

The visor flickered on, the HUD giving her a quick readout of her surroundings and condition. But it told her something she hadn't been expecting.

This wasn't the suit she'd gotten used to; it was an upgraded version, a newer model. Looking at her upgrades list, it read as the **Gravity Suit**. It was thinner, stronger, and much... *much* more powerful. It crackled with energy, and the external battery powered on as well, electrifying every movement.

And there were other things on the list as well; those locked icons were finally readable. One of them had been the Gravity Suit, but there was also a **Plasma** feature for her cannon, and something called **Space Jump** in the Misc. section.

Samus looked at herself in the mirror. The armor was the same red and gold as always, but now it had purple decal. "Thanks, Old Bird," she smiled. She turned away, ready to make good on her promise to rip apart the space pirates.

I know there were things you had to keep secret, Samus thought. I know a lot of what you made could be used as weapons if they fell into the wrong hands. And I know that even though you took me in, the others didn't trust me as you did. So thank you, for telling me exactly where to go, because I couldn't have done this without you.

She grabbed a space pirate from behind, alerting all the others. As she removed the pirate's head from his body, the rest started running away.

And now, I'll test out that Plasma setting.

The pirates never stood a chance.

Now that she was back in her armor, there was nothing to stop her from taking over the ship. She figured she'd kill two birds with one stone, and just kill all the pirates *and* take their ship full of Chozo loot. At least with her it would be protected, or tucked away in **The Locker** until she had use for it or could study it.

The Space Pirates tried to fight back, but their exoskeletons were no match for her plasma cannon. They were blasted into pieces, yellow blood and guts splattering the walls. Walls which Samus tore through just as easily as she tore through the ship's inhabitants. In this manor, she forced her way up through the ship, making her way to the cockpit.

Her plan was to take off, get the ship off the ground and into space, then depressurize the ship. Then with all the space pirates effectively liquefied, all she'd have to do is make a sweep through the halls to remove the bodies. After that, the mission would finally be over, and she could report back to the Federation with a job well-

Clank Clank Clang

Samus' visor gave her a warning as the lights flickered off, and she turned around in the pilot's seat.

*"*Brzzzt* That's funnyyyyyy... Kekehehehe... zzzzZZT!"*

Samus' eyes widened. The figure lurked just beyond the little bit of light that was left, but she recognized that voice.

"I-I-I don't remember-remember invvzzzzz-inviting you here... kekehezzzzehehe..."

Samus stood, charging her cannon as the large mechanical head entered the light.

"Ridley."

Ridley looked down at Samus, twisted mechanical smile crackling. *"And whoooo... are you?"*



ZERO MISSION-LV12: SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Samus threw her arm up, pointing her cannon at Ridley, but he was quicker. He grabbed her, slamming her into the ground.

"*I remember you,*" Ridley laughed, teeth grating as he smiled. "**BZZZT* You put mee-me in this MISERABLE state!*"

"And you deserved *every, painful* second of whatever misery you've gone through!" Samus screamed in pain as Ridley crushed her. Her cannon arm was trapped, but luckily Ridley didn't seem to be aware of the new ability she'd obtained after his death. "And you deserve everything else I'm about to put you through!"

Using her other hand she slammed the external battery, supercharging her suit. The electrical output blasted Ridley and as soon as she was free Samus kicked off the ground.

And then she didn't come back down.

Samus hovered in the air. *So this is Gravity Jump,* she smiled. She aimed her cannon at Ridley's head. "*Fry you bastard!*"

Ridley lunged at her as she fired a supercharged Plasma round directly at his face.

He roared in anger, but grabbed Samus out of the air. The attack seemed to brush right off his metal exterior.

"No!" Samus barked. "Stop living!"

Ridley was done with bantering. He slammed Samus into a wall, then repeatedly slammed her over and over. The wall cracked, and he dropped her. Then he stood back, and fired missile after missile at her from point blank.

As the room filled with smoke, Ridley swatted it away with his large mechanical hands. He didn't want to give Samus a chance to run away.

And yet, even as the missiles exploded on contact, Samus still fought to stand. Ridley pressed harder, stopping Samus on her knees. But it was enough, she threw her arm up and fired her cannon. This time she didn't stop. She let out one continuous blast as Ridley kept firing missiles.

The plasma beam stopped the missiles from reaching Samus, and soon she was able to stand. But she didn't stop then either. She kept it up, pushing Ridley back.

"You wretched child!" Ridley screeched. *"You think-think yooooou can out last ME!?"*

Neither of their attacks seemed to effect the other, at this point it was just a battle of stamina. But Ridley was a machine. He could keep going indefinitely, or at the very least he could keep going longer than Samus.

But Samus didn't care. Even if she drained her own battery, she wasn't going to let up. Ridley wasn't supposed to come back from the dead the first time, and she was *not* going to let him come back this time!

The strength of the cannon fought against her, pushing her back, but she fought against it. Grinding her feet across the denting ground, Samus pressed forward, her plasma cannon forcing Ridley against the other wall. He tried to escape, to move out of the way, but it was too powerful, trapping him.

And as Samus came closer, the attack became more powerful, and at as she reached him she momentarily let the cannon go.

Ridley grabbed her the first chance he got, but she

grabbed onto him as well, using her power grip to cling to his metal plating. She jammed her cannon into his mechanical heart, exposed only by an unsealed hole at the base of his neck.

"Goodbye," Samus hissed.

Her plasma cannon blew him up from the inside out. She was sent flying with scraps of metal and wire. Oil slicked the floor, and Samus saw a small red blotch in the center of it all. Blood leaked from it, but only a trace amount. After a moment, the oil took it over, and the last remnant of Ridley was finally gone.

Samus slumped down in the pilot's seat, giving herself a moment to rest. *Finally... at long last...*

...

And then she heard the beeping.

No no no! Samus jumped out of her seat and located the source of the beeping. It was coming from Ridley's head, or what was left of it.

*"*Self destruct initiated*"*

Samus threw the head away and turned to blast a whole in the cockpit. If the place was going up then she didn't want to be on it.

But the shielding would break! No... it was her power. She'd nearly drained her suit in that fight. She'd given almost everything she had.

Crap! Samus kicked Ridley's head and ran out of the room. She threw open doors, shoved the last remaining space pirates out of the way and behind her the bomb kept beeping. The sound was soon lost in the alarms that started going off, warning the pirates to abandon ship.

They were all headed towards the docking bay, but Samus was going to get there first. Her external battery might not have helped power her suit, but it did fry everything around her as she ran through the halls. At some point she was flying, her Gravity Jump taking over and the

electrified air propelling her onward.

She broke into the docking bay and grabbed a space pirate. It protested but she dragged him to a nearby ship and through him in.

"Start it!" she demanded, aiming her cannon at his head.

It stopped its protesting and booted up the onboard computer. As the engines started up, Samus heard the explosion.

"Too slow," Samus growled, blasting him and kicking him out of the seat. She took over and kicked off the ground. The bay doors opened as the explosion reached her.

She crashed out of the docking bay as the ship went up in flames.

Samus looked down at the mothership, hating that Ridley had cheated death not once, but three times. He should have died that day when he attacked her colony, and he should've stayed dead when she finally killed him... but this...

All those Chozo artifacts... gone...

She'd already had to destroy her home, and what little remained of it... but seeing the ruins they were stripping... She'd hoped she could've at least saved that much.

And yet, she hadn't accounted for Ridley having a dead-man's switch. There was no way she was going to have won that fight.

But at least this way... at least this way you can't come back either.

Samus turned away. *If the remnants of my family are doomed to be forgotten... then so shall you.*

—

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

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Samus leaned on the balcony of her suite, looking over the city of Daiban. Home on Earth at last she figured she could use some down time, at least until her next mission. The Federation wanted her to fly by Tallon IV, they said they were getting some Space Pirate activity in the area.

But for now...

Samus stepped back inside, shutting the sliding door behind her.

For now, she just wanted to rest.

Samus flopped down onto her bed, giving in for the night.

Whatever came tomorrow, was tomorrow's problem.

