

True Colours

Max gathered everyone up. The sun still hovered on the horizon to the east. The day would be cold and windy. Weather reports from Tolkeen predicted clear skies, but temperatures well below freezing even without the wind chill factor. Snow billowed about, lifted off of the hard brittle ground covering. Max was bundled up in a heavy coat with a fur-lined hood. Back to the rising sun only his bionic eye was visible within the confines of the hood. Puffs of mist, his breath crystallised, escaped the opening. He raised his voice to be heard over the wind, "We are going to provide back up for a battle that's going on right now. Rad and the new recon squad are off checking things out as we speak. They will meet us en route and appraise us of the situation. So, let's pack up quickly and get going."

Everyone broke down camp and started off into the shifting snow. The whiteouts and the harsh glare of the sun off of the sugary snow made for slow going even with the Big Boss ATV leading the way, crunching through the snow on its enormous eight foot diameter tires. The wind constantly pushed against their right side. They drove on for miles taking forever to get anywhere. Finally Max pulled to a stop and everyone followed suit and pulled into a tight group. Max and Chris hopped out of the Big Boss, R.C. stood and took his

helmet off only briefly, and Archer turned the G.B.'s back into the blowing snow and hunkered it down to pick up the conversation on the mics without getting out. Rad had found them and had the intel Max wanted.

The two of them conversed only briefly and Max slotted a disc into a PDD and looked over the data. <Shouting.> "Okay. I've seen the battlefield and the composition of the C.S. troops. We are going to target one particular squad and work from there. Rad is going to give each of you a particular target. Study it on our way there and be ready to take it out. Now let's get to the battle zone and kick some ass."

Rad handed out discs to everybody. Then the trek was back on.

The sun continued its steady rise and the morning wore on as the distance passed almost excruciatingly slow. Finally as the sun was nearing its peak the sounds of battle could be heard faintly on all external mics throughout the group. The radios were squawking like mad with encoded messages and blatant open chatter. Everyone turned to the standard scrambled frequency Max had specified first thing in the morning. Max was on it, "Okay, everybody who reads me give me a blip. Okay, our quarry is at 13niner and aghurdra2. Head out and good luck."

G'lishi watched the funny metal bird thing for a bit. He decided that the best approach was to grapple with it

if at all possible. Just like the flying Samas he fought, he suspected that once he grabbed the thing it wouldn't be very good at fighting. Sure, those guns might hurt, but he could probably wreck them.

G'lishi moved within range, and then teleported right in front of it when it slowed down and made to reverse direction. Even at that speed G'lishi scrabbled to grab onto the helicopter as it crashed into him. The railguns on the right wing roared to life spraying bullets past G'lishi's wing. G'lishi lashed out with his back leg on that side and raked the weapon with his claws. He clawed the one next to it and ignored the mini-missiles. Max had taught him missiles were bad if too close. The machine bird would not blow itself up.

The bird began to fly erratically, swaying side to side, doing loops through the air and speeding up and slowing down. G'lishi dug his claws into the belly of the bird and wrapped his tail around its tail. He clawed at the metal underside for a minute before making any headway. The bird was low to the ground dipping into the treetop of a small area of woods. The branches weren't even an annoyance to G'lishi. As G'lishi reached the second layer of skin on the bird it circled around and dipped even lower into the trees. Tree branches went every which way as the blades on top of the bird cut through the tops. Whole trees toppled over as G'lishi crashed into them with his back. It felt kind of good.

The bird was rapidly approaching the edge of the

woods when it skimmed too close to an alien tree that was all black and silver with large broad purple leaves still hanging from its branches. The blades on top of the bird shattered. A piece of one punched through G'lishi's left wing. He let out a long roar of pain as the bird careened toward the ground. G'lishi opened both of his wings and then closed the wounded one. The bird flipped upside down and G'lishi rode it down to the ground. It crashed with a tremendous explosion of dirt. G'lishi's claws ripped right out of the bird's skin and he toppled tail over snout a couple times before landing on his back.

Snow wheeled overhead as G'lishi stared at the sky a moment. He folded his wings back and rolled over to his feet. The metal bird thing lay on its back too. Its nose was buried under a pile of dirt. G'lishi circled around and approached it from the rear. Everything was still and the few lights that the bird had were dark. G'lishi examined it. The hole he had made in the underbelly was almost all of the way through. He dug it open the rest of the way. Inside G'lishi could smell blood. Holding his breath, ready to breathe fire the instant something was amiss, G'lishi stuck his head in through the hole.

It was a mess inside of the bird. Electronic pieces were everywhere and sheets of them dangled by wires in places. G'lishi eyed the men inside. They were all staring at him with sightless eyes. One of them was different. It

was a woman. Her head leaned back against her spine. G'lishi backed out of the bird's belly and got on the radio to Max for directions. After conferring with G'lishi a moment Max requested that he pull out the bodies and since they weren't wearing armour to torch them with his fire breath. G'lishi did as he was told.

Archer picked up the first of the Terror Troopers from near to maximum distance. One of the recon team was hidden somewhere lighting it with an infrared laser. Archer collated that data with his radar and took aim on the power armour. He pulled the trigger. The Boomgun cracked like thunder just after the thrusters whooshed and the Glitterboy shuddered. The Terror Trooper's right arm that was holding the missile rifle disintegrated. The rifle dropped toward the ground. Archer's second shot blew off most of the Trooper's other arm. Archer fired a third shot at the middle of the Trooper. The entire front of the robot disappeared as the remaining part blasted back through the air over fifty feet.

The other Terror Trooper turned just as the remains of its partner flew past. The Trooper immediately dove for the ground. Just as its feet left the ground Archer's fourth shot ripped the top half of the robot away. Both halves pitched backward and toppled end for end stopping almost seventy feet away. Archer looked around through the billowing smoke for the weapon's cache and the six-man back up team for the two Terror

Troopers. He checked his instruments. After a moment he received the signal from the spotter. He picked up the target point and set the Glitterboy to a jog. As he passed the remains of the Troopers he scooped up one of the missile rifles. Archer raised the Boomgun and picked up the second missile rifle as well.

Archer approached the weapon cache at full speed. The six troops stood in a line with their weapons at the ready. They spotted Archer and immediately dropped their weapons. Archer approached them carefully, keeping the missile rifles at the ready. Archer turned on the speakers. He told the troops, "Take your helmets off slowly and then put your hands on your heads."

They did as they were told. Archer lowered one of the rifles and changed radio channels and shut off the external speakers. He called his recon partner. After a moment he could tell his recon partner was close by the expression on his prisoner's faces. Archer resisted the urge to turn and see. He would see soon enough whom they had paired him with. Archer was fairly surprised to see that they had paired him with the female. Max had said she was a satyr. From the waist up she was a woman and from the waist down she was a goat. She half turned toward Archer and he nearly dropped the one missile rifle. Archer peeled his eyes away from her large naked breasts.

He waited to regain his composure before turning on the speaker. He told the prisoners, "Okay now, my

associate here is going to relieve you of your weapons and then your armour."

Archer set the one missile rifle down and grabbed the Skelebot rail gun from its holster. He flipped it to single shot as the satyr woman approached the first prisoner as if she was a tailor that the man had hired. She stepped behind him and tossed away his sidearm. Stepping back around to the front of him she reached for one of the latches on his armour. She fumbled with it and the man tried to punch her. She grabbed his wrist and twisted his arm driving him to his knees like he was a ragdoll. She leaned over and told him, "Don't struggle. The shiny man won't need to shoot you for you to die."

She turned away from the man and smiled at Archer. He could see her goat's tail wagging. She returned to her work and relieved the man of his armour. The man stood holding wrapping his arms around himself for heat while the satyr woman finished with the others. She was on the last man when the recon leader arrived with a large truck, which he turned around and backed up to the prisoners. The recon leader was a deep purple coloured d-bee with a wide oblong head and a short trunk-like nose. He got out of the truck and went to the back to it. He opened the doors and the satyr woman herded the prisoners inside. Archer approached and looked into the back of the truck. There were ten soldiers inside. They were seated on a long bench and chained to a bar just over their heads.

At the sight of the Glitterboy the ten prisoners backed up against each other as far away from the doors as possible. The recon leader looked up at the head of Glitterboy and then back at the prisoners. Meanwhile the satyr woman secured the prisoners on the other side of the truck. When she was done she hopped out of the truck and the recon leader closed the doors. The satyr woman said to Archer, "You call and we come."

Archer sputtered and started laughing inside the Glitterboy. He only hoped that they couldn't hear him outside. He half heard the recon leader say something about a new mission disc. Archer got control of himself by trying to recall the leader's rank and opened the front of the Glitterboy. "Master Sergeant can you take these missile rifles with you?"

He replied, "Certainly, Corporal. We'll have someone by to pick them up along with this grouping of mini-missiles."

Archer nodded and accepted the Master Sergeant's data disc. The front of the Glitterboy closed and Archer scanned the orders. Satisfied that he had everything he flipped on the speakers, "Orders received Master Sergeant."

On the ground, using the whipping snow for cover, R.C. surveyed the position of the Coalition Hellfire robot from as far away as he could. The approach from behind it looked terribly useless. The building it was back up

against protected it too well. "No way I can take these bastards in a fire fight, but the boss obviously wants this thing out of the way fast. Its position makes it a fairly big threat to just about everything we might put in its line of fire," R.C. thought furiously, "I have to play dirty, and fast, but what to do..."

R.C. ducked back behind cover and formulated his plan. He thought about everything Max had shown him and what he knew he could do with his own powers. "Man vs. the machine eh..." thought R.C. with a snicker, "Sucks to be you."

R.C. locked the co-ordinates into the combat computer of his Flying Titan and took to the air in the opposite direction. He circled around and put his craziest plan yet into action. The Flying Titan zipped through the sheeting snow heading straight for the Hellfire and released a volley of four high explosive mini-missiles through a gap in the blowing white. The mini-missiles tagged the Hellfire instead of the borg, which R.C. had aimed for.

The explosions rocked the Hellfire back against the wall of the collapsed building it was using as cover. R.C. circled around for another strike. He switched the selector on the mini-missile system over to the fragmentation minis. The wind died down and the battlefield resolved itself in front of R.C.

A pair of mini-missiles came out of nowhere straight for him. R.C. raised a telekinetic forcefield in front of

himself immediately. The missiles exploded in a fireball of plasma that obliterated the shield. Hot plasma splashed along the length of the Flying Titan and it went into an immediate nosedive.

R.C. struggled with the controls as the suit went wheeling down through the sky and the ground rushed up to meet it. The direction of the dive was off from where he wanted to crash.

R.C. brought the Titan under control, climbed, and re-oriented himself. He started a new controlled dive as he readied one of his smoke mini-missiles. Mentally overriding the system he released a high explosive mini-missile behind him. R.C. accelerated past the mini-missile and raised a new telekinetic field between himself and the mini.

At his insistence the H.E. mini exploded and the smoke mini went off in the launcher. R.C. cut the engine and began to hurtle toward the earth again. He was headed in the right direction now. The descent got out of R.C.'s control and the Flying Titan crashed into the earth with a neck-jarring thud. R.C. blacked out.

R.C. was out for whom knew how long. The Hellfire was still in the same location. The borg standing to the side was reloading its weapon. R.C. could see now that it was a long rail gun with a huge oval clip. R.C. shut down the bulk of the Flying Titan's systems and reached out with his mind for the Hellfire. It was too far away. He tried harder and sensed the right mini-missile

launcher on the Hellfire. Ignoring that system R.C. cast his mind along the bot to the cockpit controls. "Execute program," R.C. said to himself with a smirk as he put the plan into action.

The Hellfire evacuated all of the oxygen from the cockpit. The pilot, or somebody, tried to restart the system but R.C. shut it down entirely. Next R.C. shut down the radio and followed it up by locking down the hatches. It would not be long before the borg noticed something was going on. R.C. slipped back along the Hellfire's systems to the mini-missile launcher. He set off a pair of plasma mini-missiles for the middle of nowhere.

Inside the Hellfire, the crew was clutching at their throats and gasping for air that was now gone. The pilot tried to get the Hellfire moving. R.C.'s control slipped for a second as he tried to renew his control. The robot took one lurching step forward then R.C. shut down the motor controls. The robot grew silent.

It took the borg a moment to realise that the Hellfire was no longer running. He started to bang on the leg of the robot after he couldn't raise the crew on the radio. R.C. could hear him shouting out loud about being a sitting target. While he was distracted R.C. reached out for the borg's railgun and faked an overload condition in its power supply. The railgun powered down silently and the borg was none the wiser. It seemed about time that the crew should be unconscious. R.C. started up the robot. He made the robot take two side steps and

knocked over the borg. The borg fell and the railgun skidded away from him. Quickly R.C. moved the Hellfire into position and stomped the prone borg. The borg cracked the frozen earth underneath it. A second stomp embedded it somewhat and then R.C. stepped the Hellfire onto the borg and shut down everything.

R.C. stood up and brushed snow and dirt off of the front of his Flying Titan. He approached the robot. R.C. opened the hatches of the Hellfire and climbed up inside. The crew was breathing again by time R.C. got to them but they were unconscious. R.C. pulled the two men out of the robot and leaned them against the foot of the robot that the borg was not under. The borg would not be a problem with the entire weight of the Hellfire standing on upon him. R.C. switched to the scrambled radio frequency for the recon squad. They were supposed to be handling prisoners. He called for someone to come and take his prisoners away. "I read you R.C., this is Riley. Give me your co-ordinates and I will be there in a jiffy. Over."

R.C. radioed out his co-ordinates and waited.