

Unit CP-X01: Part One

This is Part One of what will be a two part short story about my otaku 'senshi' Unit CP-X01. Uni is a rather interesting character as she is actually an android that was built based on a sailor senshi. For more information about Unit in detail please visit her profile in the Otaku Senshi section of SSC.

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Sailor Senshi concept © 1992 Naoko Takeuchi/Kodansha, TOEI Animation. 1995 DiC Entertainment.

Caleb lifted off his welding helmet and wiped the sweat from his brow. This was the most detailed part of the work, he thought to himself as he moved the resin panel down. The back of the neck was seamless when it locked. Turning off the gas, he placed the soldering torch down on the workbench beside him. His hide gloves wrapped around an open can of flat soda and he took a long swig of it while examining the work he had just completed.

“You’re a hard shape to make, hun,” he said out loud. The five-foot-eleven nude female form was seamlessly crafted to appear human and though it was hairless, it certainly bore a strong resemblance. “Something’s *still* not right in your hips, but it will do.”

It had been one thousand one hundred and twenty-four days spent working on this Unit, and it would be another two or so weeks before he figured he would have it completed. For the most part, the wiring was in place, all the mechanics were there, and the systems seemed to be running at an optimal state. All that she needed now was a brain. Caleb dropped a glove onto the bench and lifted the wrinkled photograph from his back pocket; gray eyes smiled up at him through five long years. A familiar voice from above him broke his thoughts.

“Hey Caleb, are you going to stay down there all day today too, man? We’re going to go raid the old town tonight and see if we can find anything worth eating.” The voice was his old friend Yaz who had as of late become more and more concerned with Caleb’s growing obsession with his Unit.

“Yeah, I have a lot to do still. You guys go ahead.”

Yaz hesitated. He had prepared a speech with which to rebut that exact reply, but he could not bring himself to recall it at the expression of determination on Caleb’s face. “Why do you waste your time, dude...” was the best he could manage.

Caleb smiled at his friend and raised the soda in salute, “To our future, yeah?”

“Yeah, whatever. I’m not bringing you anymore shit. If you want food, you’re going to have to come out from under there.” With that, he left. Caleb turned back to his work and decided he would have to keep going through the night.

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Yaz kicked a chunk of dirt across the jagged, uneven pavement. He watched it bounce once then disintegrate against a section of the road that had been lodged perpendicular to the ground.

“He’s not coming *again*?”

A hopeless look was Yaz’s reply. He and Leal walked away from the setting suns for a while with no conversation. The days after the attack had turned into weeks, then months, and now years. For all that time, Caleb had never let go of that damn machine. He had never let go of her, either.

“Its like he won’t just let her be dead, you know?” Leal knew exactly what his friend meant. They were all different after the attack, but man, Caleb just about lost it when he had seen Shaina die. They did not see him for a few weeks after the attacks, and then all of sudden he was back: digging out the remains of their house and cleaning out the shop that had been in his basement. Then he began collecting materials, all kinds of random stuff that he must have stolen, begged for, or bought.

“Fucking nuts, bolts and tin foil and three years later he’s got a regular model of the girl.”

“Don’t forget the arsenal,” Leal tried not to laugh, but seriously, it was not like Shaina had been the last damn girl on the planet. Hell, since most of the guys had been killed going off to fight the aliens, the guy-to-girl ratio left all kinds of options if you weren't too fussy. But no, Caleb had his girl already.

“Where did he get all that shit anyway,” Yaz wondered out loud. Leal just shrugged. They were getting close to the outskirts of town now and if they wanted to go undetected, they would have to end the conversation here.

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The soda was gone; so were those three slices of plastic wrapped warm cheese the guys had brought him the other day. The nice part about not having much to eat was he had lost about fifty or so pounds. Of course, everything he lost after that he could have stood to have kept, but that was how it went in a post-apocalyptic world.

He double, then triple checked the wiring from the batteries to Unit. If he turned the sucker on and something was not right, he would probably blow her up. After this self-reassurance, he took a deep breath and flipped the small black switch on the makeshift eight-by-ten control panel he had constructed. The lights in the room dimmed for a moment and he heard the charge building from the reserve power components. When her eyes opened he caught a cry in his throat.

She could not speak yet. Actually, he had not programmed her to do anything at all. Still, she was on. Caleb stood up, gently placing the panel on the work stool. He approached her slowly, as one would approach a fearful child or cowardly kitten. At any moment he expected her to turn her head and smile at him, but she did not move. The restraints locked around her shoulders and ankles felt no strain for the first time as Unit supported her own weight on two perfectly cast resin feet. He looked into her gray eyes; the face was flawlessly hers, even without any hair. Peering into her pupils he could see some of her circuitry firing. Quickly, he set to work on the early stages of her programming.

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When he came out from the workshop he always looked up at the sky first. It was as if the further away from her he got, the more real the threat became. *They could come back anytime*, he would say to himself searching the sky for that fast moving, brilliant light, *they could come back and kill us all*.

The night they came the first time had been on the winter solstice. He and Shaina had been walking back to their place when the first bright shooting star came ripping into their world. With her body tensing, he knew the invader was of no natural origin. Her beauty was unsurpassed in his mind: a talented and smart girl with a giggling laughter that lightened his heart on the darkest of days. And beyond that, a powerful and magnificent secret. Shaina was someone more important than what Caleb could sometimes grasp - the guardian of the entire planet, the keeper of their star. With her pretty suited outfit of teal and magenta, and powerful golden fire at her finger tips, she was Sailor Tiane.

When the aliens came, Caleb knew Shaina alone would be the one to stop them. Like she, they were beings with powers far beyond the understanding of mortals such as Caleb. Even if he could not understand her, he still loved her devoutly. So when that blue haired demon thrust that forty-four inch slice of steel shrapnel through Shaina's chest and out her back, Caleb nearly ceased to exist. He would have if it were not for the charge she had made onto him.

After they left, he ran to her. They had taken something from her, a glittered gem that had appeared from a golden flower on her chest. Without it, it seemed she could not remain with him. In his delusion and denial, he told her he was taking her to get help. The metal protruding from her torso caused her to lie on her side, her face half in the dirt. He brushed her hair away and met her misery-filled eyes with his.

“I failed,” she chocked.

“We can get help!” he cried knowing that it was hopeless.

“My star has been taken, Cally,” she felt her body dropping away from her. She desperately wanted to express what he had meant to her. However, at that devastating moment, there was something more important to her.

He had to take her place.

“You must,” she pleaded, her body glistening in the growing light of day, “you must protect this planet, Cally.”

“How can I? Shaina! Don’t leave me! We are going to be together forever! Who am I to take your place? I can’t!” He had desperately searched for words that could stop her from fading away, but like grasping air, he reached up in vain as bubbles of teal and gold light floated lazily up and faded into nothingness.

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“We **are** forever,” Caleb had not noticed he was crying again until the tear fell onto the laptop below. He quickly smeared it away and tried to drop from his troubled mind the image of her body lifting into stardust at the onset of those morning rays of sunlight.

The screen blinked up at him: “Download Complete.” Twelve days later he had managed to program every bit of information he knew about Shaina, this planet Tiane, and the mission Shaina had been charged with. Yaz had not kept his promise to cut Caleb off from supplies. The morning after they had left, he and Leal came back with at least six days worth of canned beans. Caleb had found two cans next to his bed when he woke up that afternoon. Yaz had decided that if Unit was Caleb’s means of dealing with the loss of his girlfriend, he would at least help the guy through it by getting him some grub. On the other hand - and much to Leal’s agreement - if he started kissing the damn thing they were definitely going to have an intervention.

“So, what’s it do anyway?” Yaz said, hanging upside-down from one of the beams across the old foundation.

Caleb smiled and closed the laptop placing it down on the work table. Walking across the room he stood in front of the nude figure and placed a hand on her hip. Yaz whistled and Caleb shot him an annoyed glance, “It’s her on switch, dude.”

“Ya had to put it there?”

“Shut up, okay?” Yaz shut up but he was still laughing. When Caleb slid the panel open, he exposed a number pad. Inserting his seven digit-code, he slid the panel shut again and then released the shoulder and ankle restraints. He stepped back and Yaz flipped off the bar to go stand beside him.

A minute passed.

“So, what does it do?”

A bright smile suddenly cracked Unit’s face and a chipper voice replied, “I am UnitCP Model X01! But please, call me Unit! I am designed to protect the beautiful star Tiane and all living things that live on her precious surface!” She blinked twice and then fell into a normal pattern of human anatomic actions: her chest rose and fell to simulate breath, her eyelashes fluttered on occasion, and she shifted her weight to get a better view of the boys. When she stepped off the

holding platform, Caleb stepped back a little uncertainly and bumped into Yaz. He had been working towards this moment for so long, but to see this semblance of the girl he once loved and to hear something that so echoed her voice shook him up a bit more than he anticipated.

“Uh, all right... so it works...”

“*She* works,” Caleb corrected.

Yaz eyed the android suspiciously. He could not begin to understand how Caleb had done this, but now his curiosity overtook him. He walked up to Unit, trying to appear confident. Reaching his right hand forward, he smiled, "Nice to meet y-"

But he was interrupted.

Caleb almost did not see Unit move as he watched Yaz lift up and fly backwards into a pile of scrap wood on the opposite side of the shop.

"Unit, no!" He yelled like a mother scolding a child. Yaz was shaken but uninjured. When he got up off the ground his face was red and his fists were raised. Unit stood staring blankly from where she had been.

"What the hell? Caleb, what the hell, man?" Yaz spat.

"Dude, I don't know! She must have seen you as a threat or something!" Caleb fought the laughter but it was almost too much with all the sawdust covering Yaz's head like a light coating of snow. Yaz took a few deep breaths and shot dirty looks at the android by the restraining pad as the color drained slowly from his face. Caleb was glad his friend had not jumped up throwing punches; there's no way he could stand up to this machine.

Caleb approached Unit cautiously. He figured that she was not likely to do the same to him, but why not be safe, right? “Unit, defense mode off.” He waited. “Confirmed?”

“Confirmed - Defense Mode off.”

Yaz let out a sigh and sat down as far away from Unit as he could without leaving the basement. He wanted to ask what Caleb hoped to accomplish with this thing, but for the moment he was still in a bit of shock. Then it dawned on him what this could mean for getting some grub. He held off on that subject while he recovered from his unexpected trip across the room.

“I will have to tinker with her some more I guess,” Caleb was saying as he tapped some variables into his code. “Unit, return to your stand.”

“If you ask nicely,” she giggled.

Caleb looked up from the screen, eyebrows raised. Yaz leaned forward waiting anxiously for the attack.

Her eyes were still machine, her skin was still slightly yellowed, but that tone of voice and that coy attitude was Shaina through and through. He smiled and bowed, motioning towards the stand, "If you please, my lady." Yaz's jaw dropped.

Unit took a few dainty steps to the stand and positioned herself in alignment with the restraints. Breaking from a momentary lapse of shock, Caleb reattached the restrains and reached for the panel on Unit's hip. A light smack on the hand made him recoil his hand and yelp.

"Hey there Mister, where do you think you're going?" Unit laughed.

Caleb blushed deeply and muttered an apology while Yaz roared with laughter in the background. "I told ya you shouldn't've put it there, what with the lady you've made!"

Caleb laughed a bit and looked up at Unit's face. He had done a really good job it seems, though he had noticed her hand to be deathly cold. "If I may," he started, "I need your permission to access your control panel."

"And just what do you plan to do there?"

"Oh I only need to turn you off to make some alterations to the--"

"Turn me off?!" she wailed and for the first time her expression changed into a pitiful pout. Caleb was amazed as he saw various components of his programming coming to life through Unit: first it was a mere appearance, then the voice, the mannerisms, and now even the facial expressions. Of course, if this was Shaina's personality he would also know how to get what he wanted.

"It's okay babe, I promise it won't be for more than ten minutes. Just a short nap." He spread a wide grin and raised his arms to show how terribly trivial it was.

Biting her lip, Unit averted her eyes to Yaz, "Are you just going to stand there and let him 'turn me off'?" Yaz felt his amusement slowly fading as a growing sense of uncertainty crept up. It was almost unnerving - *Shaina is dead*.

"You, uh, you just fight your own battles..." he muttered awkwardly, "I'll see you guys, um, see you later Caleb."

Caleb waved to him and called after that he would be up in just a minute. Tonight he was planning on going into town with the guys like the old days and finally do his share in the breadwinning. But first, the matter at hand.

"Just for a little while," he pleaded, hands raised innocently.

"No way."

He turned and looked up at the ceiling, "Okay so it might be a few hours, but --"

“What are you going to do for a few hours?!”

“Honestly Shaina!” As soon as he said it he felt awkward. He whipped his head around and stared at the machine on the stand. The machine he had built with arms and legs and a face like hers. A personality, a smile, and a stubborn streak just like hers. *But this is not Shaina...*

“End UnitCP-X01 Personality Program, authorization code four-two-six-nine-tee-jay.” When her face cleared, Caleb flipped the panel and entered the shut down sequence. As he left he turned off all the utility lights and dragged the large chunk of drywall over the opening. No one had been around this area in at least three years, but it was always good to at least make the place look like an abandoned wreck.

As he walked off to catch up with the guys, he thought about the future. He wondered if those damn aliens would come back and if they would have any idea what they would be up against. *A force to be reckoned with*, he thought as he fought the brink of tears, *you can't kill a machine as easily as a woman.*

So that's Part One. More coming along sometime. ^^;; Send all comments to Sakura@sailorastera.com!