

# THE CYBERTRONIAN TIMES

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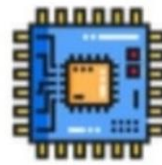
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## INTRODUCTION

Has it really been a couple of months since the last issue of The Cybertronian Times? After such a prolonged hiatus, if I'm honest it's actually great to be back into the swing of things producing CT on a regular basis and hopefully it's something we'll be able to continue for a long time to come.

Back in our early days in the 1990s we were releasing fanzines of one form or another every couple of months and a regular newsletter for our Star Trek club every 1-2 months. While it was hectic at times, it was equally rewarding when we got feedback from readers telling us that they enjoyed the work we were creating.

Even though this is a digital publication, that's one of the reasons why we wanted to try and bring our "letters" section back. Your feedback means a lot to us, and helps us shape the future of this and our other projects.

On a different note, one thing I've found fascinating while editing this and previous issues, is the different takes that our writers have had on all the different eras of Transformers. It's clear that while many writers try to integrate their stories into Transformers canon as best as they can, others experiment with their work and take

their fiction in a completely new direction. Some take a more whimsical approach to the franchise, while others treat familiar characters and situations in a novel and totally unexpected way.

This is very much evident right from the start with The Cybertronian Times. From the very first issue Sven Harvey kicked off with *Alternative Transformers* and *Transformers Unlimited*, his own take on the Transformers universe where shows crossed over and merged frequently. As many early issues of The Cybertronian Times are now out of print and don't exist digitally we'll be reprinting most of these early tales in future issues starting in this issue.

But when it comes to fan fiction, there's no "right" or "wrong" way to creating content. It's this original approach that makes fan fiction so wonderful. You truly never know what to expect and seeing characters in unfamiliar situations and surroundings can be just as fun as tales that could have come straight from our television screens.

In a way that's probably why our script readings at our past conventions worked so well. Mixing cast members together from different shows, along with a completely absurd plot played strictly for laughs delighted audiences for years. If you weren't lucky enough to join us, you can see them on our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/c/infinitefrontiers>

Well that's it for this time but as always we'd love to hear from you and maybe see some of YOUR work in the next issue!

'Til All Are One...

Simon Plumbe  
Editor

[contact@autoassembly.org.uk](mailto:contact@autoassembly.org.uk)  
[www.autoassembly.org.uk](http://www.autoassembly.org.uk)

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## **"APOPTOSIS AND IMMORTALITY"**

**by David Bishop**

I get the call in the middle of the night, or at least, during the arbitrary period where Cybertron, with its washed-out sun, goes into a kind of stasis.

He's asleep when I arrive at the hospital, the cyber-steel lung hissing up and down. I grab the attending, a fembot with green and white markings, shorter than me but otherwise a similar chassis.

"I'm sorry Doctor," I say, "I was told there was an emergency."

She remains professional but can't hide a downcast look. "There's no one thing, but we don't think he has very long left."

I look over at the bed, with its nano-weave blankets and tangle of tubes and fibre-optics. He looks peaceful but shrunken, diminished.

"Would a human doctor be able to...?"

"To be honest, no, not at this point. Daniel is two-hundred years old."

"But they might..."

"I'm sorry Arcee. Most of his internal organs are mechanical now. They respire for him, filter his blood, he has been on Cybertron for over a century."

I know she's right so I take a seat by the bedside. The medic maintains a respectful silence as I reach out my hand to touch him, realise he's too fragile, and leave it awkwardly on the bedclothes, each of my fingers the length of his forearm.

"We're going to bring him round. He requested that we do that when you got here."

A machine clicks and beeps. The shrunken figure in the bed coughs and slowly opens rheumy eyes.

"Arcee." His voice is so much weaker than when I last heard it.

"Don't speak." I say in an awkward rush. I don't want to tire him, to be the reason he has fewer hours left in the universe.

"Not much... point, if I don't." he rasps out a chuckle.

He must see me flinch slightly, because he smiles and moves his hand out from under the blanket. His arm is almost fully mechanical, a squared-off arrangement of metal parts, ironically less human-shaped than my own. He grips the tip of my finger with as much strength as he can manage.

"What's new?" he grins, all pinched gums and yellowed teeth.

Small talk seems insignificant but I can't think of anything more profound so I tell him, "I'm going on a mission."

"Decepticons who don't know the war's over?"

"Exploration. We're going back to Animatros. Remember Animatros?"

He brightens. He looks like he wants to sit up, but the machinery won't let him. "I remember."

And just like that, we're away. One-hundred and fifty cycles ago. I talk and talk, and he nods and smiles, and we both already know it all but it doesn't matter:

Animatros: Daniel and I were part of a team despatched to pick up a downed Energon freighter. We hoped it was a malfunction, but no-one was really buying it. The Predacons had been active in the sector and everyone was oiling blasters and charging energo-machetes.

The jungle burned, the sky was an orange and grey smear. Blaster fire whipped



through trees and creepers. Fastlane went down straight away, a rocket tearing a ragged hole where his faceplate should be. A lucky shot, it put Cloudraker out of the battle too. He knelt, catatonic, over his brother, his processor glitching and rebooting trying to cope with the loss. The rest of us formed a ring around him. Attacks came from all sides - the perfect trap - visibility was close to zero and burning tropical jungle scrambled my infra-red.

Daniel fought like a veteran, using his small stature to his advantage. He took cover none of us could, ducking fire meant for combatants four times his height. The weaponry on his exo-suit was based on Targetmaster tech. It drew power straight from the wearer, turning Daniel into a human battery.

He wasted no time in long shots. Using the jungle he sped towards the enemy battle-line as we provided suppressing fire. They never saw him coming. I watched the video from his helmet later. He outflanked the Decepticons, taking one down after another, point-blank. I'll never forget the look on Tantrum's face as the tiny human scaled his chest-plate and blasted him into stasis lock.

With Tantrum down, Razorclaw must have realised that the trap had failed. Unable to form Predaking he ordered a retreat. The jungle went quiet and a few minutes later we saw their ship take off.

Daniel laughs when I remind him of the helmet-cam. "I remember that. I was at least sixty but I still insisted on running straight to Dad and showing him. I'll never forget the look on his face. You could tell he was proud that I could do these things after... you know."

*Nebulos: Daniel in Snapdragon's jaws, a wet snapping sound, unfamiliar yet wrong – painfully organic. A twelve year-old boy crumpled on the floor of a cave, his life changed forever. Because of me.*

"Yes, I know."

"Yes, he was proud but there was a flicker of something else. Just for a moment it looked like he was going to throw up."

*Could you blame him?* "He was worried about you, that's all."

"I know Arcee, and I think he was thinking about Mom."

My memory circuits flare before I can bypass them: *An explosion. No, hundreds. Decepticon shock and awe. One of their last, desperate gambits, an all out attack on Daniel's home planet. Racing through debris and falling ash, Daniel and Spike in my front seats, screaming at me to go faster, FASTER. A pile of rubble that had been a house. A wet stain that might have been a dog. Spike jumping out before I'd finished pulling up. An arm sticking out from the rubble, grey with ash and dust, fingernails broken. A scrap of blonde hair, stained metallic red. I transform and start to dig. Daniel is forty years old but his father still pulls him away. Stops him from looking...*

I say nothing. Daniel says nothing. It's enough just to remember. The attack was important. The loss of San Francisco was the turning point. The Earth Defence Command went on the attack. Nearly every battle before the Pax Cybertronia was fought with joint assets. After millions of years it was the beginning of the end for the Decepticons. Daniel always maintained that Carly would have been satisfied with that outcome. Spike never said anything much.

The effort of recall is taking its toll on Daniel. He is more noticeably slumped, his eyelids are heavier. I have to force myself to remember that through our technology and sheer determination he has lived twice the natural span for a human.

This is not a natural process for me. Cybertronian death is violent and sudden or it just doesn't happen. A Transformer body can live forever providing nothing goes catastrophically wrong. Even major

wounds can be repaired if a spark of life remains. One of the reasons the war dragged on for so long was the inability of both sides to win decisive victories.

Looking at Daniel, though, I wonder if his mortality is more natural, more fulfilling. He certainly seems at peace, whereas I can barely keep from fragmenting. Look at what humans, spurred on by the challenge of their own brevity, have achieved in just the time I have been online:

Four million years ago, the Ark crashed onto planet Earth, effectively ending our first war. Human beings were living in caves and rubbing sticks together to keep warm. As the second war ends, humans are capable of space-flight and are our trusted allies. I have fought in both wars and in that time we have achieved no significant advances besides finding more efficient ways of dismantling one another.

During the second battle of Nebulos, Cerebros told me that he thought the war inevitable – the result of an immortal society with delusions of grandeur and no fresh sensory input. I can see his point of view. They call us Transformers but Daniel has seen more transformation in his eye-blink existence than I have in millenia.

I become aware that he is talking again. “What’re you thinking?” He says.

I can’t tell him the truth so I say “The mission. I’m reporting to reformatting after this.”

“Reformatting? So this is officially the end of my first car? Hot pink, but still great for picking up girls – mostly because you *were* a girl and could give me tips...”

“I’ll be back to normal before you know it.” I reassure him.

He laughs, “What’s normal for you guys? You walk through a format-beam and come out with a whole new body.” He raises his arm, the servos whirr, “I guess I’m not so different. Let’s have a look.”

I pull up a holographic display of my new schematics. This is not cosmetic. This is a full replacement body – different size, shape, only my memory banks and spark will remain. It’s a natural part of our evolution but I still feel conflicted, as though circuits that know they’re going to be discarded are starting to rebel.

Daniel attempts a whistle. “Wow Arcee that’s... beautiful.”

“It’s a spider.” Humans, my memory banks tell me, do not traditionally enjoy the company of arachnids.

“It’s amazing. This is stunning technology. Smaller, more energy efficient...” Excited now, he breaks off to cough, but barely seems to notice. “You know what this is? Progress – could be the golden age we were promised! The war finally ended and now you guys are finding ways to avoid another one. Try it. You might find you like it. I’m not going to need a car any more.”

He smiles again. *Damn it! How can he be so comfortable when it feels like someone is ripping my spark out?*

“Of course you are.” I try to be reassuring, pat the blankets feebly.

“No, I’m not. You know why I wanted to see you.”

“No.” I lie.

“Yes you do. I want to say goodbye.”

“Don’t.”

“I have to.”

“Please...” I’m desperate now. I feel like someone has turned off my equilibrium circuit. My optics fill with static. I’ve seen comrades, friends, go offline, thousands by now and I’ve felt every loss, but Daniel was a part of me and, worse than that, it feels like I barely knew him. I met him as a young boy, blinked, and now he’s an old man, with more dignity than I know how to muster.

He grips my forefinger again and looks me in the optic. "Arcee," he says, "Listen. I'm going away now. It's natural. It has to be this way, but it's okay. You'll carry on. You won't age. This won't be your last reformat. Each will be more beautiful than the last. Cybertron will remain at peace and because you'll still be here, I will be too."

He reaches up and touches my faceplate. I finally pluck up the courage to gather him in an awkward hug. He barely triggers my temperature sensors.

"Daniel," I say, "I wish..." but I can tell he won't be able to hear me. The medic appears, summoned wirelessly. I lay Daniel down and leave without saying anything.

Outside, the daytime sun is no brighter than the night but the neons are lit and the streets bustle. The reformatting station is several mega-miles away and I'm already late. I should take the shuttle but I don't feel like giving up being Daniel's first car

just yet. I shift into vehicle mode and open up my throttle. The future stretches out, infinite, before me, but for the first time it feels like a gift. Somewhere in my memory circuits, Daniel laughs.

*"Now you get it. Transform and live for us both."*

# THE CYBERTRONIAN TIMES

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# TRANSFORMERS: MOSAIC

"Inheritance" Written by Fox and Jasmine Smith <http://jazzfox.deviantart.com/>  
Art by Malunis <http://malunis.deviantart.com/>



Even after hearing it I still scarcely believe it. Skyfall, a traitor to his fellow Autobot?



His inventions stolen from others and crimes more heinous, I'm left a truth I must follow upon.

The journey itself is the worst part, being alone with my thoughts.



In my time as leader I have made this journey all too many times, never once has it been a pleasant experience.

This time will be no exception.

We have all lost many friends, here in remembrance we honor them.



The memories are often painful, but to forget them would be far worse.



All around myself, I see far more names I do not know, but whether bound by duty, pushed on by honor, or coupled by friendship, we are all parts of the Autobot machine.

Whether we recognise these bonds ourself or not, we are all connected.

What do I say to my fellow Autobot? How I wish I could have known him before it was too late?



Apologise for mistaking him for Skyfall on Cybertron so long ago?

Ask him why he let Skyfall take credit for his work all this time?

Yet the simple truth is the fallen have no say in the matters in the living.



All we can do for them is to honor their memories and kindly remember them for the way they touched our lives.

Hello, Ironfist... I came to thank you for your gift.



## "PREDATORY INSTINCT!"

by Nick Snowden

"NO, dammit to the pit, NO!" I bellowed, as the enemy charged in to the city of Tarn, obliterating everything in sight. The towers, fortifications, amphitheatres, as well as my...comrades, disintegrated in to little more than piles of war-torn slag on the frontline. "*This* isn't happening, it can't be, all our...all *my* plans." Divebomb glanced at me, signalling an escape route in the distance, off to our far right. Tantrum burst out from a pile of debris, with Headstrong, as the unrelenting missile fire inundated the infernal smoking crater that the city was fast becoming. Rampage was covered in the vital fluids of a shredded Autobot corpse. I hesitated and fired up, trying to reconvene the little force we had left.

"Tarn is lost, withdraw." This order heard from on high as a recognisable general, his magnetic impulse defuser shooting at the utter hostility around him. However, it was not to last, a sniper bullet whistled through the air, too abrupt for me to react. It pierced his chassis, he fell to his knees. Sprinting to him, what I regarded with my own optics could only be described as a quiet fear, knowing that he had not been able to complete his Decepticon vision, and also anger, at being scrapped in such a debased and unworthy way. The result of this, eternally planted in my memory banks, as I looked upon his cold facial plates, his singular yellow optic sensor fading too scarcely even a flicker, the round appeared fatal. To my dismay, he looked up.

"Logic designates" a pause of pain in his vocal processor "you become commander of the Decepticons Ra...", his speech stopped abruptly as a second round struck, straight through his optics, quickly followed by a third to his spark chamber, which finally ended the great General Shockwave's existence, not a fitting conclusion, so his body will be taken for what did the humans of Earth call a "Viking Funeral".

I turned, an unrestrained inferno in my core ignited; a feeling my patience doesn't often take in to account, fury. The wrath of a savage wild beast within me extruded out as a primal force. Quick to respond, my four comrades arrived, each in their ferocious beast modes, Tiger, Eagle, Bull and Rhino. My neck joints clicked and my optics burned with the furore I was undergoing from being in such cataclysm. I spoke two words from my vocals, enough to strike fear into the pathetic Autobots.... "*Predacons Unite!*"

I awoke suddenly in my personal chambers, in the dilapidated underground base. A frosty, oily sweat on my forehead, it had been fifteen lengthy stellar cycles since those dreadful final moments of the Great War, there were not many of us left now, The Autobots made sure of that. All that was left were my team, a small amount of unkempt pirate bands and anecdotes of a few survivors in hiding. The rest, war criminals sent for spark extraction in the so called "work camps."

This is unacceptable, abhorrent, my pride was strewn to the storms like shattered glass "To be reduced to meagre dregs of our former glory, It sickens me to my very circuits. Beaten by the indecent weaklings, a cluster of lower dishonourable cowards... Those who are meant to rule... Those who are not even worthy to wipe the dirt from my paws. *This will not stand* ...not as long as *my* spark still pulses. We now cling, like Petro-rabbits, to the old ways, rejecting to take our RIGHTFUL place and the true masters of Cybertron. I curse the Autobots a thousand times over for the totalitarian spawns of glitches they have become, and, though I cannot negate what they have already done, I may just yet mitigate it."

Shockwave had named me the new commander, I was to make certain an uprising was to commence and nothing short of the chaos bringer himself would

dare to interfere with achieving our goals. At five, we stood at too few... we needed recruits and the unwise Autobots have been so kind to gather them all in one place.

Little steps first though, my ideal candidate is on the inside, quite thoughtful of the enemy to gather them all in one place. I needed to get him to get out a few high ranking survivors, and conspirators are in order.

It was a dark night as I knocked on the door of what seemed to be any shadowy, foreboding back ally in the depths of Cybertron underbelly, the kind of place where degenerates would go to particular seedy oil bars. I tapped on the door, which opened with a slow, mechanical hiss. I stepped through, and, in the main atrium of the building, up on high, sat in an austere throne, an imposing figure coloured a chilling ice blue, the crime lord of Cybertropolis... Cyrotek.

"Commander, to what do I owe the privilege of you paying a...derisory like myself visitations?" his voice raspy and icy as his finish. I hear the click of a plasma weapon against my back. "Minion!!" Cyrotek raised his vocals "stand down, he is our guest." A much younger bot appeared from the bleak shadows. "This is my protégé, a fast learner I will say...wouldn't you agree?" his response was delayed with but a single prolonged word "Yesssss"

"I have come for a certain upgrade package that you possess, I hear it is somewhat similar to this Maximal upgrade the Autobots have designed", I quickly got to the point.

"I might have stumbled upon a variety I may have, shall we say, modified slightly"

*I could definitely use this new data to my advantage*, I thought. Looking up, our optics met, "are you interested?" Cyrotek asked as his long sharp fingers tapped on the side of his throne, "You could say that I have a proposition for you", I replied.

Cyrotek's lip plates curled at one side, his eyes, though wise, seemed to think he saw something in me which we later discussed back at the base..." I think accordance has been attained"

Now everyone has a price, Cyrotek certainly named his; the upgrades would soon happen thanks to his personal medic, Manterror who arrived at the lair escorted by the young runt who seemed to be more of a servant than a ward.

It was rather late, bordering on early, I had requisitioned Divebomb to enlist a couple of flyers that were still clinging on to an existence, although if the unconfirmed reports of them scavenging are true, a feeble one at that. It was then I heard the clatter of thin, delicate mechanical feet, not a sole member my team sounded like that. I hid back in the shadows, the interloper passing a few moments later. I remained motionless until the cretin came up to within grabbing distance, then I pounced, pinned him... all too easy.

"What in the pit, are you doing here scraplet?"

His voice was more of a raspy chuckle, the kind that aggravated the audio receptors if exposed to long enough.

"Answer now" I growled, unsheathing my claws, which glistened in the low light.

"I have been sent here to join you as a covert operative, I know who you seek, The Decepticon Rav..."

I pressed my grip tighter "an Autobot spy perhaps?", I said in an accusing tone, condemning the interloper. "There's only way to deal with them... execution", my claws lunged forward.

"STOP!!!"

*Who dares to issue me, the Decepticon High Command orders?*



Out of the shadows stepped three frames, frames of Cybertronians that I long thought had perished many eons ago.

"*This* one of yours?" I gesture to the thing, as I toss him to the feet of the Ghennix assassins.

The middle one spoke

"Reports of our demise were greatly exaggerated my Lord, this is our apprentice", he said, gesturing at the whelp I had hurled back at them.

"We have business to discuss my Lord" the third spoke.

The one at the far right nodded "Yes, dealings we need to discuss"

"Interesting..." I said as I activated a frequency jammer, so that no Autobot could listen in to the conversation.

A few cycles later Divebomb returned with the condor brothers, the crimson and black Laserbeak, and the gold accented Buzzsaw. I was surprised to see the two, as supposedly they perished along with Soundwave when he was slaughtered at the hands of the tormenter Hardhead. I was also surprised to see, perched on top of a pile of scrap metal, the long missed bat form of Mindwipe. No one had seen him since his headmaster companion had been banished back to Nebulos.

Mindwipe descended to the floor, transforming as he did so, and walked over to the technical data array, an upgraded version of the Nemesis' former master control console, he scowled and turned,

"The powers of shadows are more powerful than all the inadequate toys your technology can marshal. I have sensed, commander, that all over Cybertron are brothers, and I have located the ones that can be of use to the cause brother Divebomb mentioned."

"Ah I see you have already been briefed of the state of affairs"

"Affirmative" Divebomb declared "I briefed them on the way over, we had jammers so no one could hear us"

"Magnificent Divebomb" I replied, very pleased with his performance.

"Permission to return to Mecha-nest 1, to resume lookout duties"

"You may leave us, oh, and send Rampage in, I have a need for him to enrol a particular Decepticon I have in mind"

I put an arm on Mindwipe's shoulder "tell me how good you are at locating Cybertronians, like a Pretender?"

"Which one?" he said in his eerie tone.

"An old squadron leader of the Mayhem Attack Force, Carnivac"

The mysterious Decepticon's optics flashed an iridescent orange, even now, thinking about it, seeing Mindwipe's abilities in action certainly are spark-chilling moments.

"I see the lycan, his fangs bare, eking out a meagre existence in the ruins of Darkmount"

The Tiger marched in to the room, "Commander, you sent for me?"

"The wolf has been located; twenty clicks west of here, take Cryotek's youngling with you"

They head off into the distance out of the base to locate the next member of my insurrection...however the best laid plans of Gestalts and Micromasters can always come up with a few glitches.

A few cycles later they both returned, with well what was left of him. I was debriefed in private by Rampage who had seen and fought the once great Carnivac, who was now nothing but a deranged travesty of his former self. He was found talking to the severed heads of Flywheels and Battletrap

in the bottom of a decommissioned smelting pit. He was now in rehabilitation. The physical scars will heal, however the mental disorder might prove a lot more perplexing.

Rampage also brought back a warrior that called himself 'Dynamo', he arrived in the midst of battle and rescued my battle brother from the disturbed Decepticon. He brandished a very distinctive sword that looked like it was at one point a creature's spine, sharpened and galvanized, by his own dexterity and expertise. Given with what my esteemed team mate declared, he was in all honesty nothing short of remarkable, his face a majestic dark blue in colour and he spoke with a particular snarl, a deep growl in his vocal processors.

Sometime later the upgrades had started, all of us receiving our new physiques, I was now sporting a rather magnificent mane in my exceptional sleeker beast mode. Dynamo and the condors had been scouting out the area around the main Autobot prison in what was left of the ruins of Tarn, rather ironic all things considered.

A figure stood behind me "Everything is ready Grandmaster"

I turned my orange optics shimmered  
"Outstanding, Line"

"With my new form Grandmaster I prefer the name Ramhorn"

"Ramhorn it is then" I replied as I watched the forms of Laserbeak, Buzzsaw and their new spider-like associate vanish into the distance from the balcony of my command centre.

The door hissed open, and two hooded figures entered and made their way to the triangular table in the centre of the room. Ramhorn, pulled up his hood and joined us.

"Brothers, we find ourselves at the final crossroads. Once the commando team completes their mission, and liberates

Ravage from the executioner, our preparations will be absolute. Soon, the Decepticons will be all but forgotten, but, just as they begin to feel complacent, they will sample the cold revenge... of the *Predacons! ...*"



# **"ROBOT WAR - A SHORT HISTORY OF TRANSFORMERS: UNLIMITED"**

**by Sven Harvey**

Contentment. He had destroyed all and with his work finished he slept. The Chaos Bringer was surrounded by nothingness. For aeons there was nothing, but he had not been thorough and though the old realm had been vanquished there were still particles of matter and over time two of these particles drifted together, were attracted to each other, collided and reacted.

The Big Bang...

A new universe began to form from the explosion, matter streaming out, stars formed, dust clouds collated and formed planets then star systems, then galaxies. Matter continued to react with each other and life began to stain the cosmos. From the life-force the light gods came into being... Creatures of living energy with the goal of guiding and protecting the life stain slowly growing through the universe.

HE awoke. Seeing a new universe around him the evil one just set about his work once again in his energy form. The Chaos Bringer brought fear and despair to the universe which would know him by many names. The Lord of the Light Gods knew he had to be stopped and alone stood against the Destroyer. They fought energy against energy but their battle was destroying the very life that the Lord, Primus sought to protect. Primus carried the battle to the astral plane fighting the Chaos Bringer at thought level but the Light God did not fare well. Realising defeat was imminent Primus tricked his opponent into following him back into reality and into a tomb. Sacrificing himself, Primus has rematerialised them both in the real universe not as energy beings but as barren lumps of metallic rock, doomed to drift through the universe for eternity.

Millennia passed and both of the entities learned to psyonically reshape their prisons. Though they shared a psychic link

to each other the Chaos Bringer created a new planetary form capable of self-propulsion and then with several more millennia of work, a second, robotic, form and the ability to convert from one to the other at a thought. The first Transformer. Destroying planets as he travelled to find Primus the planet-killer earned the name that would strike fear and dread into the living creatures of this universe, UNICRON.

Meanwhile Primus had also been busy creating a planet which became known as Cybertron. He populated the planet with metal-based life-forms that mimicked Unicron's transformation ability... The Autobots were born. Using a form of cloning Primus instilled himself into every Autobot created from the fabric of Cybertron totalling around 24. The Autobots then reproduced using a form of Mitosis - or splitting creating 48, then 96, then 192, then 384, then 768 and so on doubling in number with each generation. However the essence of Primus was watered down in the process and Unicron's influence though the psychic link began to introduce elements of evil into the process. In response Primus denied the Autobots their reproductive capability.

The Autobots, however, though long lived, were not immortal and to continue the species, to form the last line of defence for the universe against Unicron, Primus furnished the first Autobot leader, Prima, with the knowledge to create new Autobot bodies from the raw materials of the planet surface and the power to give them life from his own essence... In short Primus created the legendary Creation Matrix. Primus had done the best job he could to get the Autobots up and running, he hoped they would develop into a force to stop Unicron. But they needed time and while he was conscious thought the link he shared with Unicron, the Chaos Bringer could track down and destroy Cybertron

and its surrounding populated star systems. SO Primus once again sacrificed... And put himself into the deepest of sleeps to give the universe that which it most needed... Time.

Unicron, however, returned the compliment of imitation and cloned himself and created more bodies for himself and a legion of the Unicron monsters were sent out to search for Primus and his Autobots.

Time passed...

### ***Timeline: Around 5 million years ago...***

Cybertron was teeming with Autobots. The planet had developed a unique culture - the Capital was the city state of Iacon with the other major states of Tarn, Vos, Kalis and Polyhex. Cybertron was ruled by a council with the head, the Overlord, being the current leader, now Sentinel Prime, following the death of Prima and his successor Prime Nova. On the council were the heads of state - Emirate Xaaron, Tomaandi, Traachon and the other elders all were worried about the overpopulation of the planet and lack of fuel resources. The Iaconians, though still rich in fuel, were rationing out the life sustenance of the Autobots to the other states to try and conserve the stocks. Autobot explorers had gone out into space to try and find further sources of fuel and had either returned empty handed or not returned at all, like Wreck-Gars team of explorers. Tension between the city states was rife and to try and calm things down, Sentinel Prime used his considerable influence to organise a gladiatorial games between the states to try and get the frustration and antagonism out of the populace.

As the state games progresses the ancient form of Sentinel Prime became more fragile and less capable of processing fuel efficiently. In the final of the State Games the Golden Warrior Sunstreaker was to be pitched against the awesome power of Tarn's champion, Megatron. Sentinel Prime was more than worried about Megatron's oil-lust. He actually seemed to enjoy maiming his fellow Autobots in combat.

The battle commenced and Sunstreaker soon fell to the mighty power of Megatron. As the gladiator moved in for the death blow a voice rang out from the crowd and a tall crimson figure stepped forward and physically threw Megatron out of the way. Tending Sunstreaker's wounds the Overlord recognised the form of Optimus, a local medical student studying under head Iaconian surgeon Ratchet. Megatron in a mix of shock that anyone could actually throw him and rage that someone would dare to throw him ran at Optimus his energy weapon poised to cleft Optimus' Blue head-module. Thooooom... Megatron's arm fell limply to his side as the gladiator stared silently down Optimus' photon pistol. Optimus was disciplined for his actions by the Overlord.

The following few years were some of the worst in Cybertron's history as the City States went to war. Missiles flew and fate threw Optimus, The Overlord and Megatron together again. Optimus was charged with returning the Overlord to Iacon after visiting the battered state of Tarn. The Overlord and his two bodyguards, Ravage and Nightstalker, were to travel across the battlefield as Tarn and Vos battled for resources, helped by Optimus (who had now joined Iacon's army) and Tarn's Megatron. The entourage was attacked by a band of soldiers from Vos, The Overlord was badly injured and in protecting Sentinel Prime Nightstalker had detonated himself taking the attackers with him. Optimus ran to get help entrusting the Overlord to Megatron and Ravage. The dying Prime asked Megatron for an energy infusion to keep him going. The warrior refused and Prime's last visual record was that of Megatron strapping a fusion cannon found amongst the fallen warriors of Vos onto his arm and Ravage crossing to stand at Megatron's side.

Megatron started a movement. He and Ravage began to collect weapons and recruit the angered warriors from the all-but destroyed city states. The Decepticons were formed and Megatron led them to victory after victory in his quest for Global domination until only Iacon remained. The



Decepticon forces were pressing the last Autobot city and the new Autobot Army commander, Optimus, was doing his best to hold his forces together but had no real power to fight back thanks to the council. Emirate Xaaron fought to have Optimus made the new Autobot leader and during the last council meeting he convinced the remaining members, Tomaandi and Traachon to allow Optimus to fight back properly. Megatron was pushed back from Iacon's boundaries and in a secret ritual Optimus became Optimus Prime as the Creation Matrix was passed to him. The Autobots had a new leader and a new purpose... To win back their planet from Megatron's Decepticons.

Cybertron however had a new problem. The ferocity of the civil wars between the city states had shaken Cybertron from its orbit and the planet was spinning throughout the universe, further depleting its energy reserves as it went. Autobot scientists discovered that Cybertron would soon be destroyed by a meteor field that the planet was heading for. The Autobots quickly built a spacecraft to blast a path through the field so that Cybertron could go unhindered. Optimus Prime hand picked a crew to man "The Ark" which would carry hope through to the future. However the spy Soundwave had informed Megatron of this plan and the Decepticon's own space vessel was readied. Once Cybertron was safe the Decepticons attacked the Ark and the exhausted Autobots aboard were no match for Megatron's warriors. As the Transformers battled on board the Ark, Optimus Prime, realising that defeat was imminent crashed the Ark into a nearby unpopulated planet denying Megatron his victory. As the Ark crashed, all of the Transformers aboard were rendered non-functional. However Megatron had a contingency plan. The Decepticon operations officer, Shockwave had stayed aboard the Decepticon starship. He followed the Ark down in his space-gun mode and landed in an area that would come to be known as "The Savage Land" in Antarctica. The Ark's main computer, Auntie, using its last power reactivated 5 Autobots to deal with

Shockwave and modelled them on what its faulty sensors thought were the dominant metal-based lifeforms - Dinosaurs. The Dinobots; Grimlock, Slag, Swoop, Sludge and Snarl were sent by Autobot shuttle to destroy Shockwave. In the process of battle Shockwave became buried under thousands of tonnes of rock and the Dinobots fell into a tar pit.

The Ark and all its inhabitants lay embedded in the side of a volcano for over 4 million years.

During the intervening years The Decepticons led by Trannis took control of the planet and realising that Cybertron had become no more than a husk, they decided to leave and create a new Cybertronian Empire would be created through the colonisation and cyberforming of other worlds. Though Trannis was thought to have been killed by the Autobot shock troops known as The Wreckers, the Decepticons left leaving only Lord Straxus and a token administration to rule over Cybertron and destroy what was left of the Autobot resistance.

Around 3000 years ago the Autobot Resistance still led by Emirate Xaaron sent a rescue ship after Optimus Prime but it was never heard from.

Around 10 years ago a force of Autobots led by Fortress Maximus left Cybertron to find peace on a planet known as Nebulos (though it would take several years to get to the planet). Unfortunately a Decepticon force led by Scorponok followed and through a chain of events some of the Autobots and Decepticons became Headmasters and Targetmasters. The battle between the Autobots and Decepticons was damaging Nebulos and The Autobots discovered a computer signal from Optimus Prime's team coming from a far off planet called Earth. They left for Earth and the Decepticons followed.

**1984...**

The Ark's resting place, the volcano known by the locals as Mount St. Hillary, became

active after centuries of dormancy. The energy sent coursing through the Ark from the volcanic eruption reactivated Auntie, the Arks computer. Auntie, damaged by the eruption could no longer distinguish between Autobot and Decepticon and the Ark's systems set about repairing all of the Cybertronians on board. Not recognising the organic life around it, Auntie repaired the damaged Transformers with the ability to transform into the metallic forms it discovered in the locality, instead of the now conspicuous Cybertronian vehicular and battle modes. Recognising his chance Megatron and his small Decepticon strike force escaped realising that the planet they were on could furnish Cybertron with power for millenia.

During the following months both sides became aware of the intelligent life of the planet they had landed on. The humans were an organic lifeform, and according to the Cybertronian doctrine only metallic life could be intelligent. Yet these organic people of the planet "Earth" have government, organisation, and construction capabilities that could eventually rival even that of the Cybertronians! Through many skirmishes between the sides many humans became involved including Spiderman, Buster and Sparkplug Witwicky. The fighting cumulated in a final battle between the Autobots and Decepticons which the Autobots appeared to have won. Unfortunately it was this moment that Shockwave returned to the fray, deactivating all but one of the Autobots.

Fortunate to be away from the Ark when Shockwave deactivated the vessels Autobot crew, the Autobot Chief Medical Officer, Ratchet, returned to find Decepticons had taken the vessel. With the help of Buster Witwicky it became clear that even Optimus Prime had been captured and Shockwave was probing his mind for the Creation Matrix to give life to a new generation of Decepticons, after he found the Matrix holder in Prime's chest empty. The Matrix was temporarily housed in Buster's mind to hide it from Shockwave. Ratchet revived the Autobots with the help

of the Dinobots after he had freed them from their tar tombs and dealt with the deposed Megatron. Optimus Prime was finally liberated from the Decepticons and Shockwave himself fell foul of a pit of tar and chemicals. The small vestige of the Matrix that remained in Prime's mind gave life however to the Constructicons, who could combine into Devastator and who would provide a major obstacle to the Autobots in the future.

In the following years the battle continued with further humans including GB Blackrock, Circuit Breaker and Robot Master entering the eternal fight. Further combining teams were created and Megatron & Optimus Prime also found themselves on Cybertron for a short time. On their return to Earth Optimus Prime and Megatron once again found themselves locked in combat, but this time they plus the Combaticons and Protectobots fought in virtual reality. Unfortunately Megatron cheated in the game and this led to Optimus Prime being destroyed in the real world. Though a copy of Prime's character was saved on a computer disk, the Autobots thinking their leader dead and the Matrix along with him blasted his body into space in a traditional Cybertronian funeral ceremony. Little did they know that Prime's stasis lock had clicked in and his spark was yet to grow dim.

With Grimlock in command of the Autobots many battles were fought until Fortress Maximus and his group of Autobots arrived giving Grimlock more to think about than he would realise. The combined forces of the Decepticons under Shockwave (following Megatron's apparent death at his own hands on the space bridge) and Scorponok made the Autobots realise that they needed Prime. Discovering that a copy of Prime's character had been saved Fortress Maximus ordered that the disk be taken to Nebulous where the technology existed to reconstruct Optimus Prime.

Optimus did indeed return in a more powerful form thanks to the copy of his character but he seemed different and more interested in defeating the

Decepticons than caring for the people of Earth that he had inadvertently put in danger all those years ago.

Soon though it became clear that Unicron was on the way after the accidental awakening of Primus in the heart of Cybertron. Prime sent out teams to find the Matrix still lost in his old body.

Unfortunately the finders, a very run down and low energy team consisting of Jazz, Bumblebee and Grimlock proved easy prey for Decepticon Cybertronian Commander Thunderwing. However none of the Cybertronians had seen Optimus Prime's body....

Following the loss of the Creation Matrix to the Decepticon Cybertronian Commander, Thunderwing (and Thunderwing's apparent death), Prime decided that a truce and working relationship with the Decepticons, now commanded by Scorponok would be more effective creating a unified Cybertronian force to combat Unicron. Primus transported all of the Earth based active Transformers to Cybertron to face Unicron. Meanwhile Grimlock had found a new energy source called Nucleon which brought all of his deactivated Dinobots back to life. During the ensuing battle on Cybertron, Grimlock suddenly turned up in Cybertronian space aboard the Ark.

Having revived all of the deactivated Autobots on board they entered the battle. Prime however, following the attempt by the Matrix/Thunderwing creature to stop Unicron failed, reclaimed the Matrix and dealt with Unicron... or what they thought was Unicron. Prime died in the process and apparently passed the Matrix and indeed the essence of himself to his binary bonded Nebulan Powermaster partner HiQ. The combined Autobot/Decepticon force attempted to live together but the new Decepticon leader, Bludgeon craved conquest and betraying the Autobots fled what seemed to be a self-destructing Cybertron to conquer and pillage. Grimlock, having been passed the mantle of leadership once again by Prime, had an ace up his sleeve in the form of some starcruisers that their Decepticon 'allies'

had not sabotaged. The Autobots followed determined to stop the Decepticon aggressors. However in their haste the Autobots had left behind HiQ and the human superteam known as the Neo-Knights. HiQ was babbling on about "The Last Autobot" and led the humans down into the core of Cybertron. They discovered the guardian of Cybertron - The Last Autobot. The guardian reformed HiQ into a form more capable of giving The Last Autobot the information he needed - the form of Optimus Prime.

The Autobots had not fared well against the Decepticons under Bludgeon's command and only a handful remained. The Last Autobot arrived and dropped off its passenger. Optimus Prime was back and the Decepticons couldn't believe it. As Prime kept the Decepticons busy The Last Autobot regenerated the fallen Autobots and slowly the Decepticons became outnumbered and soon retreated, vowing never to return.

Meanwhile on Earth Fortress Maximus had dealt with the alternative universe Galvatron that Unicron had sent from a possible future after Ratchet, Megatron, Shockwave and Starscream had been deactivated after the Ark had crash landed once again on Earth.

After Prime had returned the Neo-Knights to Earth the Autobots returned to a regenerated Cybertron to rebuild...

The Autobots rested but some of Prime's troops had formed strike groups and found that Decepticons were attacking many worlds and had even turned them into replications of Cybertron. However these were not created by Bludgeon's Decepticons. It's seemed that the Decepticons that left Cybertron during Prime and Megatron's deactivation on Earth had formed an enormous empire of thousands of Cyberformed worlds. Millions of Decepticons throughout the Universe, without conscious, thinking that all organic life was without intelligence.



Following many battles between these second generation Decepticons, the Autobots and a rejuvenated Megatron's Decepticons, the destruction of a whole section of the Cybertronian Empire and the inadvertent notification to Unicron by the Matrix of the Cybertronian Empires "Hub" HQ. The Liege Maximo, leader of the second generation Decepticons invaded Cybertron and joined with Primus. Recruiting Optimus Prime and Megatron they seemingly prepared to deal with Unicron....

Soon though it was clear that the Liege Maximo didn't have the best for the Universe and the Transformers at his heart and Optimus Prime cast aside his Decepticon brand and alongside Megatron returned to Cybertron to deal with the Liege Maximo....

## **"REVENGE OF A MEDIC"**

**by Nicola Piazza**

Ratchet straightened and wiped his hands briefly on small cloth, giving his patients a last critical once-over. He nodded, satisfied, and waved a wrench at his two most frequent visitors as he started putting his tools away.

"Primus damn it all, you two, if you come back with any more ridiculous injuries like that I'll reformat you in your recharge into something unpleasant."

"You've been threatening us with that for vorns, Ratch, and you still haven't made good on it despite the number of times we've been back here," rebutted Sideswipe, grinning in a way that was both mischievous and innocent. Sunstreaker slid silently off his own berth, stretching his limbs and making sure they all functioned as they should. Ratchet huffed and turned away from them.

"Out. Both of you. I've got better things to do than waste my time fixing you glitch-heads and throwing wrenches every time I see you," he said. He heard a quiet snicker from them both and the medbay doors hiss open, then creak closed as the twin terrors left. Wheeljack popped his head round the corner, earfins flashing in amusement.

"Dare I ask?"

"No." Ratchet settled himself in front of his terminal to start writing up and filing his long list of waiting reports. Wheeljack raised an optic ridge.

"I'm surprised; usually you spend the next few breems ranting about how stupid those two are," he said, dimly flashing earfins and the crinkling of his optics giving away his teasing grin. Ratchet shook his head and a smirk played at the white lips.

"Yeah, well, I've got to get these done or Prime'll rip me a new one. Besides," he added, "they're in for a bit of a surprise. Call it some payback."

Wheeljack cocked his head to one side, waiting for an explanation that never came. He shrugged and decided to go back to his lab and work on his current project some more; he'd find out sooner or later just what Ratchet had up his proverbial sleeve.

\* \* \*

"D'you know, I think this is only the second time we've been out on patrol together" remarked Sideswipe to his twin as they clocked themselves out of the Ark. Sunstreaker sent him a look.

"That's because Prowl knows I get enough of you outside of duty. Primus knows I don't need to deal with you inside it too."

"Oh that's just harsh, bro." Sideswipe feigned a hurt expression, splaying his fingers exaggeratedly over his windshield. "I thought you loved me!"

"Keep dreaming, aft-head," was his reply, but he could feel Sunny's amusement filtering through their bond. He snickered and transformed in tandem with his brother, before roaring out of the base in an attempt to coax the yellow warrior into a race. Only to slam on his brakes in horror and cause Sunny to transform back almost immediately, raucous laughter making his frame vibrate.

"What the slag was that?" The red Lamborghini yelled as soon as he finished unfolding back to bipedal form, looking very much like a petulant child.

"I don't know," gasped Sunstreaker between fits of giggles, "but your expression...!"

Sideswipe glowered at the other half of his Spark and cautiously revved his engine again. The resulting unnatural squeal made Sunstreaker near helpless in his mirth, while his twin frantically checked his systems for anything that was wrong. The scans all came back clear.

"You try *your* engine then, slagger!" he snapped at Sunny, who pulled himself together enough to rev his engine as hard as he could.

As soon as he did, though, all the laughter left him. Instead of the heady thrum of the powerful motor hidden underneath his chassis, it was accompanied by a sound that could only be described as a 'whee'. Something in his engine was 'whee'ing at him! His optics narrowed and a dark frown graced his handsome features. This time, it was Sideswipe who was doubled over guffawing.

"Dude, yours is way worse than mine!"

"Oh mute it," was the sour reply. "What the frag is going on?"

"I'll be damned if I know." Sideswipe's sniggers eased, and he straightened to look his twin in the optics. "Seems someone's pulled one over on us."

"The pranksters have been pranked, huh?" Mused the golden twin out loud. "But where in the Pit is it coming from?"

"I dunno, but we got patrol to do."

\* \* \*

"Oh, that's it!" Sunny finally snarled, transforming and skidding to a halt. He watched his brother do the same a ways away, and come back with a questioning look. "This is humiliating," the yellow twin growled. "People have been staring and laughing at us for the past joor and a half. I refuse to drive any longer while my engine 'whee's at me!"

Sideswipe didn't say anything to that, just put a hand on the yellow twin's shoulder and squeezed lightly. Sunstreaker's expression went from murderous to an annoyed frown in a couple of minutes, and then he forcefully batted Sideswipe's hand away. The red twin took that point to sigh.

"I know. It is humiliating." He patted Sunny's helm and dodged the punch thrown as a result with a cackle of glee. "Let's try this. Rev your engine again, and I'll see if I can pin-point it." Sunny did, and Sideswipe let loose another snicker before he reigned back his amusement and walked around the sulking mech, prodding every so often. Sunny cut the protesting whine of his not-in-gear engine pretty soon, letting it fall back to its idle purring and stopping the 'whee'ing that was really beginning to frag him off. "It doesn't sound like it's coming from the engine itself," commented the red warrior. He placed a hand on Sunny's back plate, letting it rest there for a brief moment to let the other know what he was doing before it was unclashed and lifted up, and Sunstreaker shivered at the cool air suddenly hitting internal wires and machinery.

There was silence, and then a growl.  
"Looks like repairs weren't the only thing Ratch gave us." Sunny felt a sharp tug at the exhaust port of his engine, and a grunt of protest escaped him before he could silence it. His back plate was lowered and secured into place, before a small piece of gray and black metal appeared before his face. He took it off Sideswipe as more a surprised reaction to something being shoved in his vision than curiosity, but a quick examination of the object made him realize fairly quickly what Sideswipe meant. He raised an optic ridge.

"An autowhistle? Seriously?"

"Seriously. Now, couldja get mine out so we can go ream Hatchet for this?"

"Only if I get first shot."

\* \* \*

Wheeljack jumped a mile when two highly irritated and in-sync voices roared out, "RATCHET!" from the hallway outside the medbay. He glanced nervously the CMO sitting opposite him, but was surprised to see a smug expression and raised optic ridge adorning his friend's faceplates.

"It took them slagging long enough," was all he lightly said. "I do hope Red recorded it like I requested."

Brown • Goodenough • Griffiee

# DECEPTICON REHAB







SCORPONOK



SKULLCRUNCHER



RUMBLE

HELLO, MY NAME IS  
**RUMBLE**



GRAPPLE

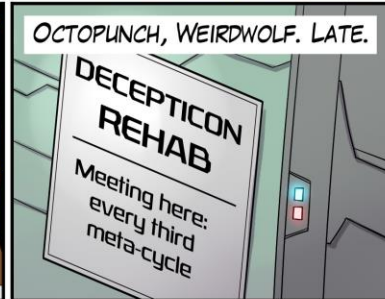
OK. WELL, WE  
MIGHT AS WELL-



RUNABOUT



RUNAMUCK



OCTOPUNCH, WEIRDWOLF. LATE.

**DECEPTICON  
REHAB**

Meeting here:  
every third  
meta-cycle



RIGHT. COME ON THEN.  
LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.



WHO YOU THINK YOU ARE? HUH?  
I OUTTA POP YOU, BRAH.

AUTOBOT FOOL



COME ON RUMBLE. IT'S THAT SORT OF  
LANGUAGE THAT'S GOT YOU SENT HERE IN  
THE FIRST PLACE.

YOU GUYS DO ACTUALLY WANT TO  
FORM A USEFUL PART OF SOCIETY  
RIGHT?

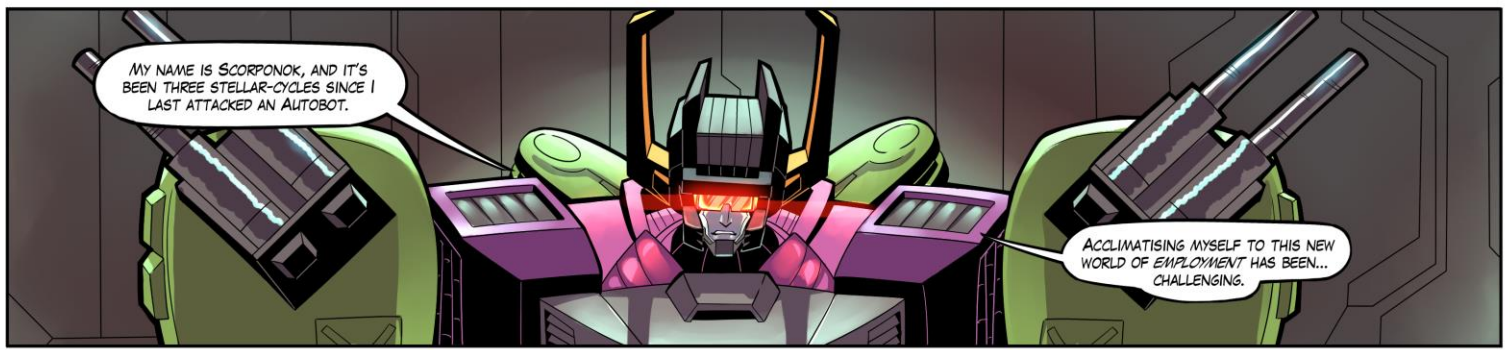


WELL, THIS IS WHAT YOU  
GOTTA DO. WE GOTTA GET  
ALONG. TALK IT OUT.

SO, SCORPONOK. YOU  
WANT GET US STARTED?

**DECEPTICON REHAB**  
WRITTEN BY PAUL GOODENOUGH AND TIM BROWN  
EVERYTHING ELSE BY PAULA GRIFFEE.





MY NAME IS SCORPONOK, AND IT'S BEEN THREE STELLAR-CYCLES SINCE I LAST ATTACKED AN AUTOBOT.

ACCLIMATISING MYSELF TO THIS NEW WORLD OF EMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN... CHALLENGING.



"BUT I FACE EVERY CHALLENGE FACE ON. I DON'T GIVE IN. NO MATTER WHAT."

COME ON SCORPONOK! HAVEN'T YOU FINISHED YET?

JUST... WAIT! IT'S-

SET UP THE BANNERS, CLEAN THE FLOORS... SO MUCH TO DO, BEFORE WE OPEN OUR DOORS.

WHA-

CRASH!!

KRAASH!!



YEP. THOSE CONS WERE THE REAL DEAL.

A SCARY SIGHT TO BEHOLD IT'S TRUE. EVEN BAD TO THE SPARK, RESPECT IS DUE.

DECEPTICON LEGENDS

"BUT I WON'T BE DEFEATED. NOTHING DEFEATS SCORPONOK!"

"WELL... EXCEPT YOU KNOW, OPTIMUS, FORT MAX, RODIMUS... MEGATRON... GALVA--"

"SHUT UP RUMBLE!"

"THANK YOU SCORPONOK. PLEASE, HAVE A SEAT. SKULLCRUNCHER, YOU'RE NEXT."

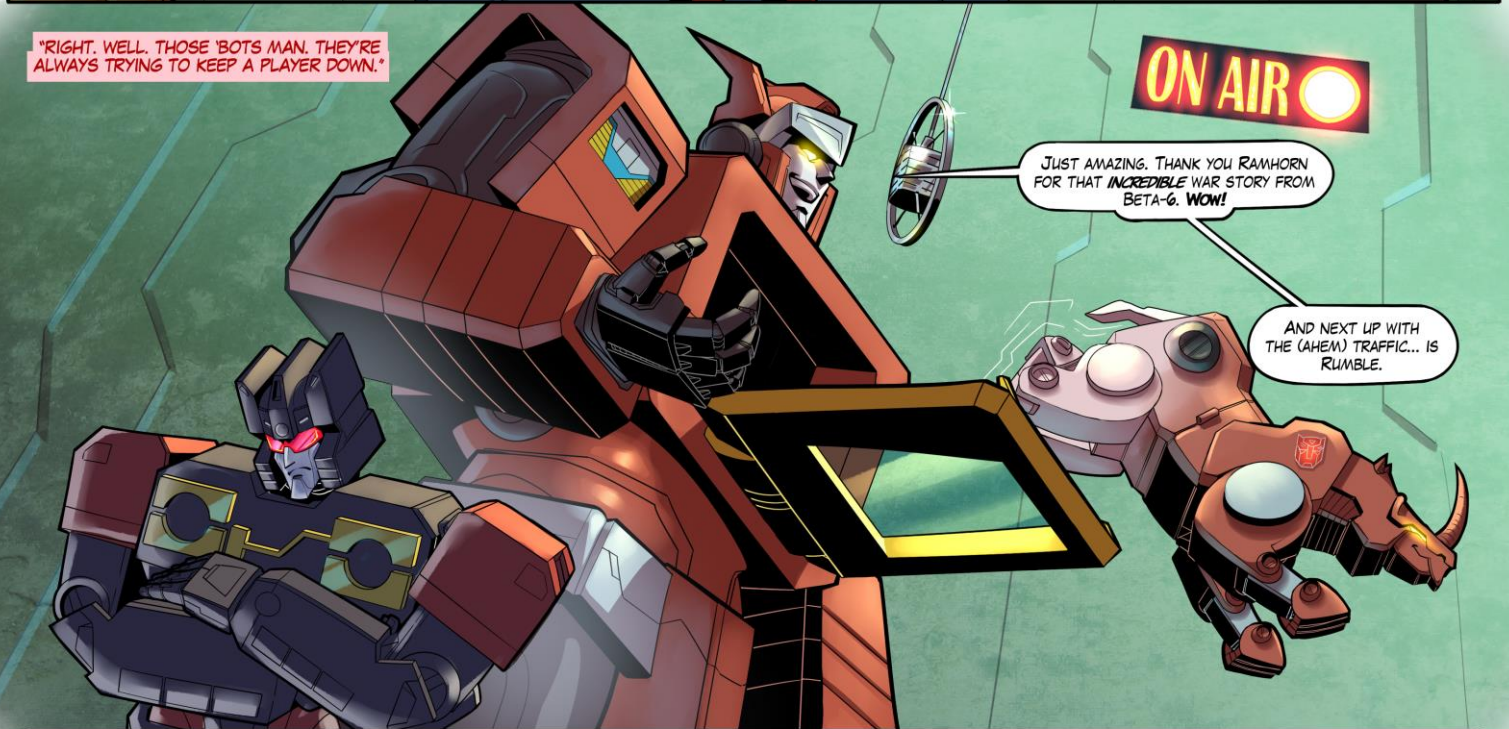








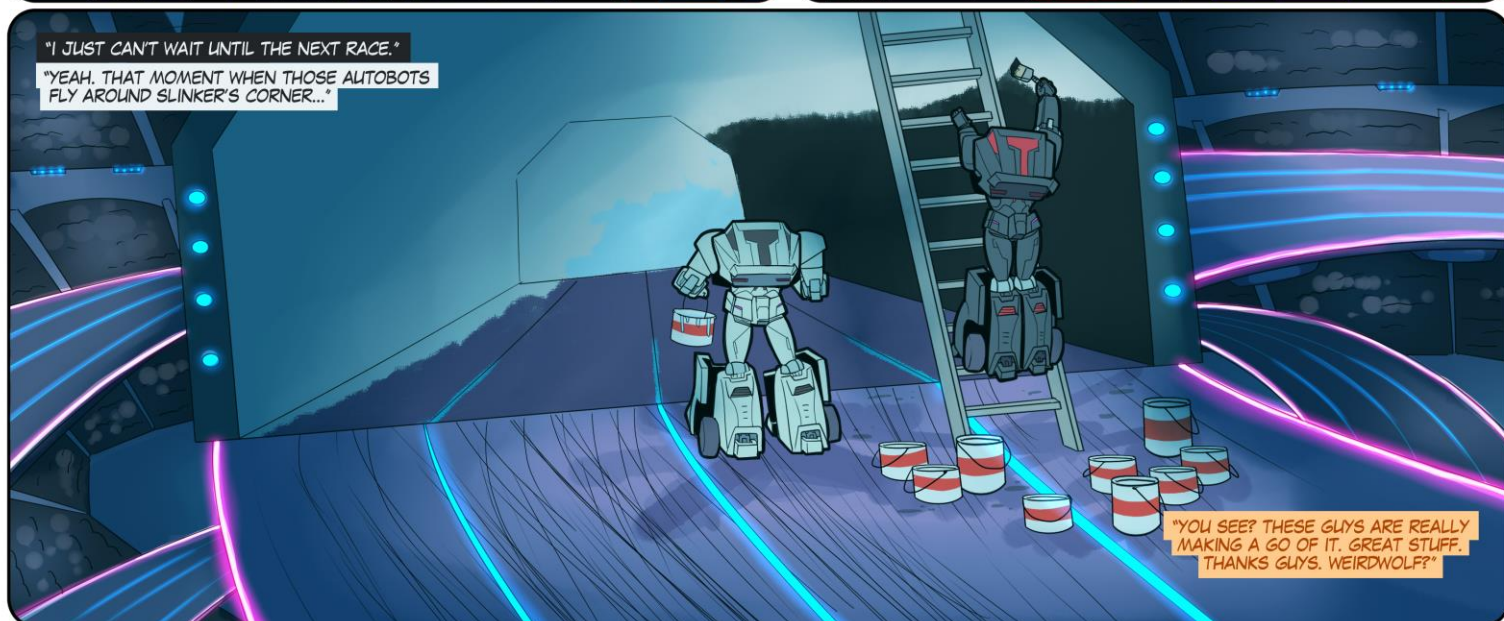
"RIGHT. WELL. THOSE 'BOTS MAN. THEY'RE ALWAYS TRYING TO KEEP A PLAYER DOWN."



"IT AIN'T RIGHT MAN. BEING INSIDE AN AUTOBOT... I WAS SOMEONE Y'KNOW! I AIN'T NO PUNK."



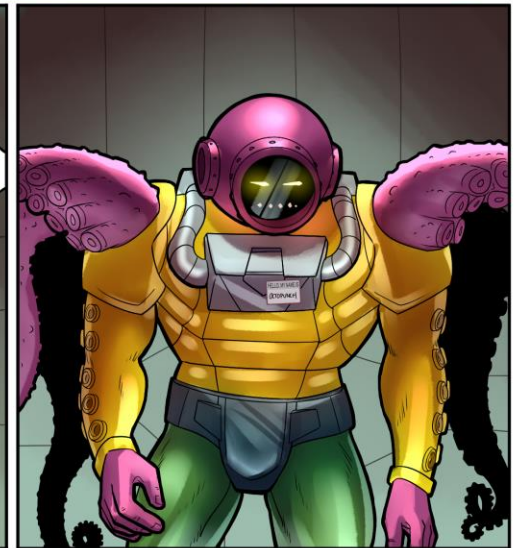
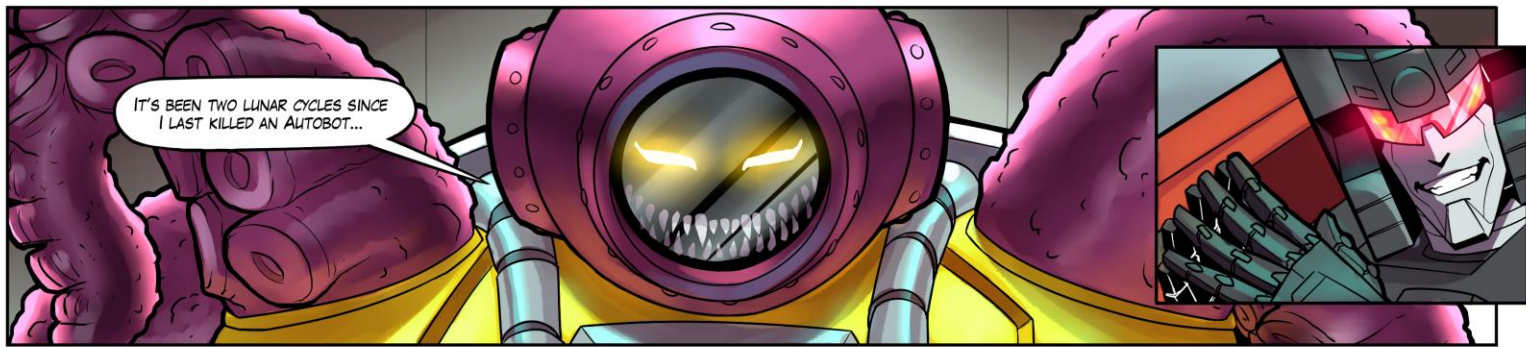




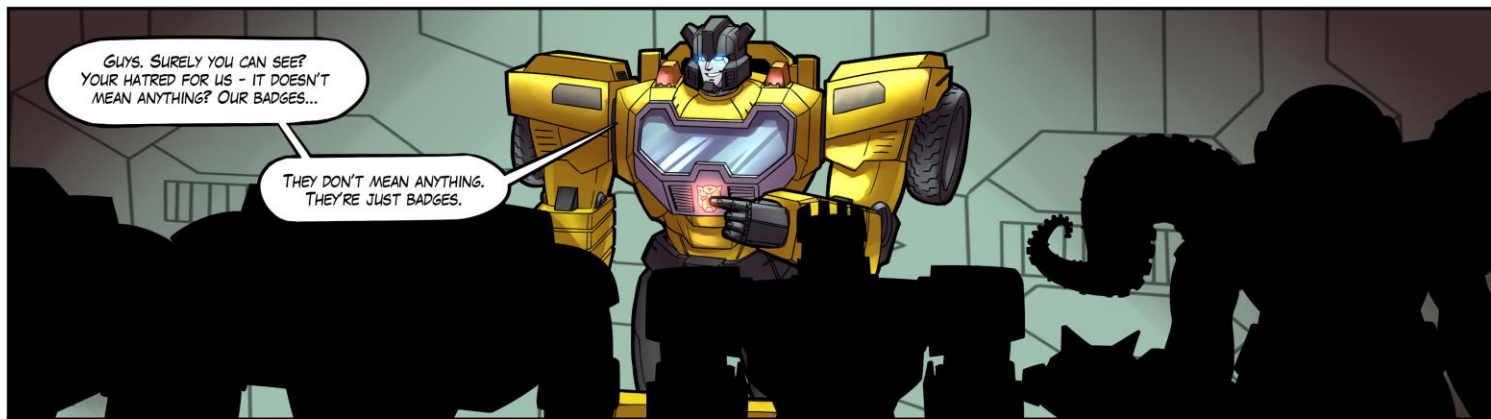










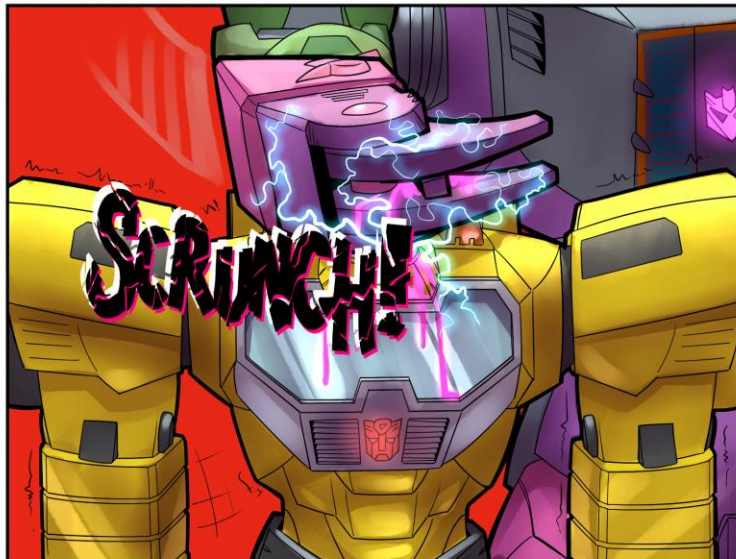


GUYS, SURELY YOU CAN SEE?  
YOUR HATRED FOR US - IT DOESN'T  
MEAN ANYTHING? OUR BADGES...

THEY DON'T MEAN ANYTHING.  
THEY'RE JUST BADGES.



NOW YOU CAN'T SEE IT...  
DO YOU HATE ME NOW?



YES!  
AND WE ALWAYS  
WILL.



WE AREN'T BUILT TO SERVE.  
WE'RE NOT MADE TO BE CHEFS, TRAFFIC  
REPORTERS, SALESMEN... WE ARE,  
ALL OF US, WARRIORS TO THE CORE.

WE.

ARE.

DECEPTICONS!



AS THE NEW MAYHEM  
ATTACK SQUAD, WE'LL REMIND  
THE GALAXY WHY THEY NEVER SHOULD  
HAVE STOPPED FEARING US.

NEVER THE END.



## **"AUTOBOT NO MORE"**

**by Andrea Tang**

*Author's note: This story is set after the "Robots in Disguise" series.*

\* \* \*

Before him were the shut doors to one of the highest security holding chambers on Asteroid Prison Colony-1. As Optimus Prime stood staring at them, the words of the Autobot High Council came back to him...

*'The prisoner is beyond saving.'*

Behind these doors was a prisoner that the Council had abandoned hope for. But not Optimus Prime, not just yet. He needed to speak to the prisoner one last time. He had to try to reach him one last time.

The Autobot commander paused, preparing himself. Then he brought his hand up and laid it upon an identification scanner on the doors. His signature was recognised. The doors parted. Optimus entered.

It was eerily quiet in the chamber. Suspended at the heart of it was a dark figure, statuesquely still. His arms and legs were bolted to the ceiling and floor by cylindrical restraints. His head was completely encompassed in a metal casing. His body both resembled and contrasted Optimus Prime's, taking a similar shape and design with the squares of his chest but differentiated from the Autobot leader's red and blue colours by black and grey with teal lines instead.

Optimus Prime looked up to the prisoner's covered face. A remote-controlled mechanism triggered the latches around the head casing to unlock and it cracked open at the sides. From behind the prisoner's encapsulated head, a mechanical arm reached forward from the wall and slowly lifted the case off.

Optimus Prime stared now into the face of a dark twin. In the grey face that was half-masked like Prime's, a pair of blood red optics flared online, glaring malevolently down at Optimus.

They were the optics of the

Decepticon commander, Scourge.

Seconds passed before Optimus Prime broke an intense silence.

'Scourge...'

For another few moments, the dark half-clone of Prime watched the Autobot leader that he shared the face of with an unreadable expression.

Then he spoke, in slow, drawn-out words, as if tasting the sound of his own dark voice, or savouring the presence of his company. 'After deca-cycles of darkness, how... 'gratifying' it is to online my optics again to see my most despised enemy.'

Optimus Prime's composure remained unaffected. 'What about Galvatron? Do you not despise him as much if not more than me? Don't you remember how he tried to kill you and your Commandos by trapping you all in our Space Bridge network underneath the Earth's surface? Don't you remember how he tampered with your very spark before you even came online out of your stasis pod? He reprogrammed you to be his servant. He corrupted your original Autobot programming. And even as a Decepticon, you grew to resent working for him. So you rebelled and tried to overthrow him. And he punished you and your soldiers by wiping your memories and reprogramming you once again. If there is any bot out there that you should hate, surely it's Galvatron, for everything that he has done to you and your team.'

Scourge's shadowed optic ridges hardened. His red optics seemed to burn a more vivid crimson. 'Yes. I **do** loathe Galvatron for all that. For controlling me, for using me.' He paused. "But I am also grateful to him...'

Optimus' gold optics scrutinised his dark counterpart, mystified at his last sentence. 'Grateful? For what?'

Scourge inclined his head slightly to one side, his intense red optics never moving from Optimus Prime's face. 'For freeing me. From the Autobot code of honour that would have inhibited me

before landing on Earth, a code that I am familiar with from your scanning contribution to my creation. Albeit what Galvatron did to me and my Commandos was for his own ends and goals of megalomania. Nevertheless, it is thanks to him that I am free of all Autobot burdens. I am free to be what I wish without guilt or care.'

From his suspended height, Scourge lowered his head, bringing his masked face inches from Optimus Prime's. His blood red optics burned into Optimus' gold ones, seeming to grow in intensity. 'You see, Optimus Prime, I am you. I am what you would be if you were unrestricted by weaknesses. I am you without morality, compassion and mercy. I am your intelligence, strength and skill unrestrained. I am you freed of all inhibitions.'

'That's not freedom, Scourge,' Optimus replied, shaking his head slowly. 'That's barbarism and chaos.'

Scourge chuckled darkly. 'The things you reject, I embrace, Optimus Prime.'

'Scourge, you may not think so, but I firmly believe that there is still an Autobot spark trapped within you.' Optimus' tone had become sympathetic. 'I've done research on your background. I am now fairly certain I know who you were before you and your team crash-landed on Earth stellar cycles ago. You were N-'

'Stop!' Scourge suddenly interrupted.

Optimus looked at him puzzled.

'I don't want to know,' Scourge stated firmly. 'I don't need to remember.' There was a pause. 'The past is gone.' Scourge's red optics descended to the floor of his prison. 'Why dwell on it now? All it could possibly do is give me more reasons to resent and grieve. Look at what I am now. Forget what I used to be. Judge me on what you **know** of me, not on what you foolishly **wish** to believe. Take away my past. What is left?' Scourge's red gaze rose again. 'Scourge is all that remains and exists now.'

'Scourge, listen to me.' Optimus looked imploringly into his dark twin's red optics. 'You don't have much time left

before the Council passes your sentence. They're leaning towards...cryogenic stasis.'

Scourge's red gaze dimmed as he turned it sideways to the wall. 'They would do better extinguishing my spark,' he commented coldly.

'I came here to offer you a final chance, one last opportunity to accept our help,' Optimus pressed. 'I would rather give you a chance at redemption than send you straight to an indefinite frozen prison. Wouldn't you rather have that as well?'

Scourge turned back to face the Autobot leader. His red optics narrowed dangerously. 'There is **no** going back.'

Optimus' voice quietened. 'You have a better chance at rehabilitation than the rest of your Decepticons, Scourge. You had the strength of spark to regain most of your memories of Earth eventually after Galvatron's last reprogramming. Mega-Octane and the others still retain only short memories of the final solar cycles of their time on Earth. They remember nothing from before Galvatron's last reprogramming.'

Scourge's head dropped to his chest. He looked down expressionlessly at the floor. Optimus drew closer to him, raising his hands in appeal. 'You were an Autobot once, Scourge. You could be again. It's not impossible. We can help you overcome Megatron's corruptive influence. Restore you to the Autobot you once were. But you need to be willing. We can't help you if you won't let us.'

Suddenly, Scourge snapped his head up at Optimus. His crimson optics flared manically. His arms shook violently in their ceiling-attached restraints. Optimus took a step back in surprise.

**'I DON'T WANT YOUR HELP!'**

Scourge roared.

Optimus had fallen into stunned silence.

'Don't you get it yet, Prime?!'

Scourge snarled, 'I **never** wanted to be helped! I would rather remain in this physical prison than be moulded back into my former mental one. I will not be bound by the chains of Autobot values again! I am an Autobot no more and never again!'

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'If you could just remember who you were before crashing on Earth...', Optimus pleaded. It was in futility.

'It no longer matters,' Scourge stated coldly. 'Memories change nothing. They do not change what I have done. They do not change what I have become. I have made my choice.'

Optimus fell silent for several moments. 'Then you regretfully leave me none,' he quietly responded. "We will lose a good and valuable Autobot in you."

'Correction. You have **already** lost

an Autobot in me,' Scourge uttered darkly.

Optimus Prime turned away from his dark lookalike and headed for the chamber doors. He stopped short of them and glanced back at Scourge with a solemn expression. 'You were one of our best...' His gold gaze dropped to the floor beside him. 'Goodbye, Scourge.'

The doors parted. And after a final searching look back at him, Optimus Prime walked out, leaving Scourge alone once again in his isolated prison chamber. As the doors of his prison closed, Scourge's

head descended and his red optics darkened. From behind, he heard the approach of his head casing seeking to confine his face again. The darkness began to enshroud his sight once more. And as the blackness closed in, the hazy images of an old memory echoed in his mind...

*A shooting star descended over the night sky of Earth. But it was not a shooting star. It was a falling Cybertronian vessel. Within it, a crew of six Autobots were attempting frantically to regain control of their falling ship, but it was in vain. The leader of the crew, black, white and blue in colouration, his lower face masked, was at the steering controls as the monitor screen in front of him flashed a warning red. Sirens were ringing around the ship. The other five crew members were shouting to one another.*

*Then the crew leader issued a desperate command to his crew. 'The Epsilon's going down! Get to the stasis pods! All of you! Now!'*

*The five crew members looked at their leader for a moment before obeying. They jumped up from their seats and quickly exited the control room. The last of the departing crew, the tallest of them, stopped at the doorway of the control room and glanced back at his leader. He was still manning the steering controls.*

*'Sir, what about you?! You need to get to a pod too!'*

*'I'll join you in a moment! I just need to steer the ship to somewhere clear,' the Autobot leader shouted back. 'Go now! Don't worry about me!'*

*The tallest Autobot of the crew hesitated. Then he called back to his leader. 'Sir, if we don't survive this crash, then I just want to say that it's been an honour serving with you!'*

*The ship was tilting down. The tall Autobot saluted to his leader whilst holding on to the frame of the doorway.*

*The black, white and blue Autobot leader glanced back briefly over his shoulder at his saluting crew member. 'The honour has been mine, soldier!' he replied hastily. 'But I promise the mission will not end here! These are not our final moments*

*online! We will reactivate again!'*

*The tall Autobot crew member nodded to his leader. 'Good luck, Nova Prime sir!' He then turned and proceeded out of the control room.*

*The Autobot leader Nova Prime was left alone at the steering controls. The sirens blared and the red lights still flashed around him. But his concentration remained on the monitor screen in front of him. Pulling as hard as he could on the steering handles, he directed the ship towards a barren rock valley. When the ship plunged sharply to its intended rocky landing site, Nova rose from his seat and ran to join his crew in the stasis pods. As he exited the control room, on the monitor screen behind him, the side of a rock mountain rapidly approached.*

*Entering the stasis pod chamber, Nova Prime took his place with his crew in the last of the open pods. He lay himself down into the pod.*

*As the lid of his pod closed over him, the Autobot leader Nova Prime breathed his final words. 'Til all are one.'*

*Darkness swallowed him.*

Darkness swallowed him. The claustrophobic confines of the metal case closed tightly around his head. The remnants of his old memory echoed away. The intense red light of his optics faded into shadow.

Into the enshrouding hush of darkness, the Decepticon leader Scourge breathed his final words. 'They're all dead...'





# FIRE STARTER

pyromaniac n; someone who suffers from pyromania

If it were not for his loose association with his fellow Dinobots, it's likely Slag would be considered a menace, not just to society, but to material property as well. His fiery breath is matched only by his raging temper.

## CREDITS

The Cybertronian Times Issue 19,  
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### Editor

Simon Plumbe

### Artwork

"Twisted Fire Starter" - Simon Chiddington

### Comic Strips

"Inheritance"

Story and Art: Fox and Jasmine Smith

"Decepticon Rehab"

Story: Tim Brown, Paul Goodenough

Art: Paula Griffiee

### Fiction

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Bishop

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"Robot War - A Short History Of  
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### Cover Art

Paula Griffiee

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Alpha.

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