

# THE CYBERTRONIAN TIMES

ISSUE 20, OCTOBER 2021



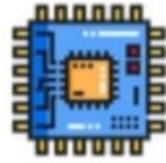
Ep12

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## INTRODUCTION

It still shocks me how much things have changed so quickly in such a short space of time for The Cybertronian Times. For 15 years it was our official convention magazine, then it took a five-year hiatus, and now we're producing issues faster than ever and it's become our most prolific fanzine ever!

I started writing this Introduction just a few days after the release of Issue 19, and within a few days this issue was almost complete, two months ahead of its scheduled release. This way of working meant that - apart from advertising, letters pages and minor tweaks - we can plan releases far in advance taking pressure off ourselves. In fact I've got templates and some content in place for a further six issues beyond this one!

In reality, this advanced work paid off, as we had to reschedule one of our other fanzines and delay it slightly so we've been able to release this a month early bringing you two issues of The Cybertronian Times in the space of two months! We'll be back to our usual schedule for the next issue, but this has given us breathing space for our other work.

But as part of this long term planning, we're also launch some new competitions and we'll mention these elsewhere in the magazine and we hope that this will

encourage some of you to get involved in future issues!

But back to the present and each issue of The Cybertronian Times is a strange beast. They're compiled from brand new material, reprinted stories from older issues of The Cybertronian Times that are long out of print or pieces from our archives that have never been published for one reason or another. Sometimes stories were too long or were submitted as competition entries and we simply had too many to publish in any given year.

And that brings me to the main story in this issue, "Cutting Loose". This was submitted to us back in 2006 by Brett Reynolds and was a rather emotional discovery. At the time this arrived with us too late to be published, and sadly we had to cancel our plans for a convention the following year but Brett passed away unexpectedly in 2007 and the story never made it into print. Brett was incredibly popular in the UK Transformers fan community, especially on the countless message boards and he's missed greatly to this day.

Finally, one of the highlights for me this time is a piece of artwork from Guido Guidi. This Beast Wars/Beast Machines piece was to be an alternative cover for Issue 2 of the Transformers Universe comic but was never used. I bought the original from him and he kindly granted us permission to use it. It first appeared on the cover of The Cybertronian Times Issue 11 coloured by Liam Shaloo. This pencil art appeared as the cover of the preview issue of our digital fanzine, CT Alpha and as one of our convention postcards but this is the first time it's ever been published in a "clean" form.

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## **"CUTTING LOOSE"** **by Brett Reynolds**

Seven and a half Vorns ago, the great Optimus Prime had taken his best warriors aboard the Ark to clear a path through an asteroid belt that threatened to smash Cybertron to space debris, he'd never returned, also missing were Megatron and a small band of his troops. All believed dead.

But a new threat had only just begun to emerge and Fire Convoy confronted the council about it.

Fire Convoy tried to remain calm as he faced the council members, and loaded up a datadisc that he and his team of Autobots had found at an abandoned Decepticon building, deep within Decepticon territory.

It took mere nano-seconds for the information on the disc to upload itself to the computer console it had been placed into... Two images appeared, one on a flat screen, and another as a three-dimensional hologram in view of those at the meeting.

"What I have here, esteemed members of the council is various plans for a new technology called Cyberforming, through which a team of technicians would be able to arrive at any planet which fall within the requirements needed for the operation." Fire Convoy paused momentarily, while the image changed on the screen, showing an image of a planet being stripped of all of its resources so that layer, upon layer of metal could be placed on the planets crust.

"While the Cyberforming takes place, Atmospheric engineers slowly begin to change the planets ecosystem, all life, sentient or otherwise is wiped out in a matter of days, leaving a barren metal world... An imperfect cousin of our own home planet." Fire Convoy finished, and awaited the council's response....

For a moment they silently spoke amongst themselves, whispering their points and disagreements, before the leader of the council, Lexiacus, stood up and stepped forwards from the other council members.

"It's the decision of the council, that there is nothing that we can do, our resources are pushed to their limits, we're low on Energon, and our own warriors tire from the conflict we are now forced to fight against the Decepticons that reside on Cybertron. It isn't cost effective to battle on two fronts, the so called Cybertronian Empire will have to wait until the conflicts here are dealt with." Lexiacus finished, and turned to sit down.

"So, while the Cybertronian Empire's out there, wiping out whole planets filled with life, and turning them into little Cybertrons, we're gonna pretend it's nothing to do with us." Fire Convoy could feel his rage getting the better of him, he couldn't believe what he was hearing from them, from the Autobot Elders themselves. "For all you know in 50, or 100 vorns time that same Cybertronian Empire could decide to revisit their home planet, and destroy us all, what then? will we run and hide like we always do?"

"It's the same story all over again, when the first Decepticons began to appear on the planet, we considered them nothing, a radical group, and look what happened there. Under their leader Megatron, they were able to near enough Conquer this entire planet, and rule it with an iron fist."

Mach Alert ran over and placed his hand on Fire Convoy's shoulder to calm him down, "This isn't the way around this boss, calm down!" Mach Alert managed to say to Fire Convoy, before he was forcefully pushed aside by him.

Convoy looked at the council, and then at Mach Alert as he pushed himself of the council meetings floor,

"No matter what the decision of the council of elders is, I will still be going out there to deal with this Cybertronian Empire, even if I can't stop them, I can slow them down, regardless of the situation it's an Autobot's duty to defend the lives of the innocent, the weak, and to stop their mass slaughter just so their planet can Cyberformed." He said, before turning from the Council members, leaving with Mach Alert, and Speed Breaker, following him.

Fire Convoy and his small band of Autobot warriors, had made their temporary quarters, deep within an unused area of the sewer network that run deep below Cybertron's surface. It was here that Fire Convoy felt the safest, while not out on a mission, for the Council of Elders.

His main Engineer, Wedge had practically created a safe zone around the area they'd based up in, with sensors, and laser trip wires in every tunnel leading to the area they were in.

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Unlike some of the sewer tunnels, that had rusted up and corroded over the vorns from lack of maintenance due to the prolonged civil war that had erupted between both the Autobots and Decepticons. The section of the sewers that was their base, had been worked on to improve it, with additional areas created for a maintenance shop for Wrecker Hook, and a work shop for Wedge and his impressive Build team, as they preferred to be called.

Fire Convoy had spent the time since the meeting to review all of the datafiles on the Cyberforming technology, and it chilled him to the endo-skeleton going over the schematics, and diagrams contained within.

He wondered what the late great Optimus Prime would do in this situation, it only felt like a Vorn ago that he had stood by the great leader in battle, pushing back the Decepticons from their final attack on Iacon. It wasn't until Prime's

disappearance that Fire Convoy had had himself upgraded into his present form, now he was stronger, and confident, and other Autobots looked up to him. There was some resemblance to Prime, but not a complete lookalike. Prime had been Fire Convoy's hero, and in looks at least he had almost become his hero.

Mach Alert, entered the chamber that Fire Convoy was reviewing the data-files. "Convoy, Hotshots team have managed to acquire the components Wedge needed. And Midnight Express, and his team are still out in the field, locating a viable fuel reserve, that we can hit and run!" Mach Alert informed Fire Convoy. Fire Convoy looked as if he hadn't heard him, and Mach Alert was about to repeat himself when Fire Convoy, turned from the Console he was working from,

"My thanks Mach Alert, I was beginning to wonder when Hotshots team were going to roll back in." Fire Convoy stood up, and stretched his tired arms up towards the ceiling. "One thing I'd like to know, do you think we're doing the right thing going against the Council like this?" Fire Convoy asked walking towards Mach Alert,

"To be honest Convoy, I feel we shouldn't disobey what the Council has to say, regardless of how wrong we might feel the decision is for us, or for those concerned. After all they're the elders of our race, they've seen more, than many of us ever will." Mach Alert replied as he moved aside allowing Fire Convoy to step past and out into the main sewer line. Mach Alert quickly followed.

"Mach Alert, I'm thankful for your honesty. Thing is I feel like we shouldn't ask permission to fight for what's right. We might be running low on resources, but that's because the Decepticons control nearly all the resources there are on Cybertron." He shook his head as he walked along, before stopping suddenly.

"I think I may have come up with a solution to this situation." He turned to Mach Alert, "Get Hotshot, R.E.V and WARS to sneak

into the Astronomy Consortium Building on the western outskirts of Polyhex, hopefully the three of them will be able to access the computer files there, get them to download every available bit of information on planets, moons, asteroids within the computer's data files, and I mean everything." Had Fire Convoy a mouth he'd have smiled.

"Yes sir, right away sir." Mach Alert almost saluted, before turning back and transforming to his vehicle mode, a pursuit hover car and disappeared down the sewer tunnel, sending sewer water up the walls of the tunnel.

As darkness crept over the city state of Polyhex, three Autobot warriors slipped silently passed a barricaded guard station which led up to the Astronomy Consortium Building. Their movements were swift and also soundless, as their footsteps hardly made a sound.

Hot Shot, peeked round the corner of a building to check for any possible Decepticon Patrols. So far he'd seen only one patrol, which they'd managed to subdue and place their static locked bodies in a derelict building. Hot Shot looked about for REV and WARS, REV had climbed up to the second floor of the building they were hiding against and doing another sweep of the area from there... WARS was nowhere in his optic sensors field of view.

Hot Shot grit his teeth, knowing how reckless WARS could be, and the possibility of him putting them in all in jeopardy. A shudder ran down his endo-skeleton spine, as he thought of the slow lingering death they'd face at the smelting pools. With a series of hand signals, he instructed REV to move ahead to the next building, and check for possible Decepticons, while he would swing around and get behind the next row of buildings.

REV nodded at his instructions, and with an unusual grace of speed and stealth jumped across to the roof of the building

across the street, and then disappeared through an opening in the roof.

Hot Shot himself, ran from his current hiding place to the same building that REV had jumped on too, popped his head out from behind the wall, before running to a broken shambles of a warehouse. From the damage, Hot Shot guessed it had been shattered by a sonic bomb. From his left he heard the sound of talking, and the sound of weapons being charged.

"I'm sure I heard something down this way, don't forget we are here guarding this Primus forgotten dumb!" Hot Shot heard as he ducked under the broken roof of the destroyed warehouse, he concentrated for a moment, and his stealth camouflage activated and he disappeared completely from view

Hot Shot watched carefully as the three Decepticon guards appeared around the corner and headed towards Hot Shot's position. As they walked by their feet crunched on the debris of glass, and rusted titanium alloy, Hot Shot glanced up at them carefully to look them over. They were twice his own size, their armour covered in dents and scratches from combat. From what he could make out they were possibly Hunters, able to transform into death dealing attack jets, more agile than Starscream and his Seekers, but not as loaded up with weapons as they were.

So far his stealth camouflage was working, for how long though was a different matter as it drained on his energon reserve. They paused for a second right in front of where he was hiding, and Hot Shot bit his lower lip for a moment, before one of them pointed and shouted.

"You Autobot freeze." The guard shouted as he raised his laser cannon, in readiness to shoot... "I said freezz..." Was all the guard managed to shout out again, as a Plasma shell ripped into his upper torso and exploding.

The other two Decepticons, gazed in surprise at their fallen comrade, as his lower torso and legs fell to the ground, thudding and kicking up glass and dust. While what remained of his upper torso, arms and head flew several feet away. Another Plasma shell whizzed by, narrowly missing one of the guards and exploding harmlessly into a wall.

WARS! At least I know where he's got too. Hot Shot thought to himself, as he watched both Decepticon guards split up and look for cover.

Blasted fool he's going to get himself killed or even worse get us killed.

Hot Shot peeked up from his hiding place, and saw WARS perform a backwards somersault as both guards opened fire on him, he landed in a crouching stance, with his weapon ready to open fire again, but no targets for him to shot. In a swift movement he got up and dashed to the left, as his camouflage activated, and he blended into his surroundings.

With a finally look around him, for possible Decepticons, Hot Shot made a break from his hiding place, to a building across the street from him. From its design he guessed he'd be able to access the second level of the building, and maybe see where the two guards had gone to ground. As he covered the distance to the building Hot Shot knew that they had to take the remaining guards out, or the entire area would be swarming with Decepticons, and more frightening was that the Decepticons would more than likely send in their ten deadliest killers, The Mayhem squad.

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*Fire Convoy's headquarters...*

Wedge stood back and admired his work, in front of him stood the next generation of Cybertronian vessels, built around the schematics of the original Ark that Prime had used to blast a path through the Asteroid belt that threatened Cybertron. He

had added some of his own additions, made the ship more streamlined, adding a couple of hull cannons, and a couple of torpedo launchers.

Around him the members of his team were busy fabricating the much need items for the ship, from the various controls that would be throughout the ship, and engine components, to the CR chamber. Heavyload, Hightower, and the recently activated Grimlock. Wedge looked over at the green bot known as Grimlock, he was grateful that unlike his namesake Grimlock had a very clever braincircuits, and no "Me Grimlock" vocabulary, that the apparently dunderheaded leader of the lightning strike coalition was well known for.

Wedge shook his head as he gazed over his creation again, he couldn't believe he'd been lucky enough to have found a partly built prototype of the Ark, he couldn't help but smile at his work, and gently ran the palm of his hand almost lovely across the hull of the ship...

Soon you'll fly through the cosmos, soon you'll protect the galaxy

\*\*\*

*Council Chambers*

Emirate Xaaron, once leader of the great Council of Elders, and holder of a great deal of power among the Autobots that made up the forces that made up the resistance movement. He replayed a sequence on a small console in front of him, the lights of the Council Chambers were dimmed and Emirate was bathed in the low light of the console screen, giving his golden chromed body a slightly blueish colour.

The replay was of the moment Fire Convoy was in front of the Council of Elders, and his rebuke of their final decision. On a smaller display screen, Emirate scanned over the data that Fire Convoy had acquired on Cyberforming technology. Emirate sighed, as he felt the weight of the very world on his metallic

shoulders, even when you think you've only got Decepticons on your backdoor to worry about, a dozen ships filled with them blast of to create tiny Cybertrons of their own.

If Fire Convoy was to go ahead with his plan, then how many warriors will the Autobot resistance movement lose? Could we carry on without them?

Emirate thought to himself, and then considered something else.

If he does go ahead with this, he'll be out there all alone with only his troops, some of whom are not tested for that type of situation.

Emirate tapped his fingers gently on the console as he considered what to do...

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REV dived under cover when he heard the sound of laser fire, and the sound of exploding Plasma bombs. A few moments later he checked the area around him, and not seeing anyone he climbed to the roof of the building he was in and crawled to the edge of the roof.

From his vantage point he could see just two Decepticons, and what remained of a third Decepticon. He watched almost transfixed as the two 'Cons split up and took up some cover of their own. He scanned the area with his optic sensors, changing to infra-red he picked up the heat signatures of both Hot Shot and WARS. Hot Shot was currently on the second floor of a disused building, and WARS was on the move, jumping and climbing his way to a better vantage point to open fire on the Decepticons.

REV had no idea how this had happened, but he guessed that WARS was the one who caused the situation to begin with. He crawled back from the edge of the roof, and made a dash for some overhanging roof to think the situation through. He knew he could go back and help his friends, but then they might not be able to complete

their mission. He gazed to the direction of the fire fight going on to his left, and the mission objective little more than a minute from his location. What were Hot Shot's orders? He thought back to their mission briefing on the way here via the access tunnels, and sewer system just metres below him....

Whatever happens, we need that information, if one of us has a chance at completing the mission, go for it. Hot Shot's words shot through his memory core, as he uploaded the mission briefing. He faced twisted with the agony of what he would have to do, but he turned from the fire fight and ran to the edge of the roof, and jumped clearing the twenty foot gap to the next building landing on his feet, and then running for another jump to the next roof top.

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Hot Shot could feel the drain on his energy reserves now as the Stealth Camo was biting away at it. From his position he could make out the back of a Decepticon but his Acid Pellet Rifle was out of range. His face contorted with anger for a mere moment, before returning to the calm, and thoughtful look he retained for his team.

He knew he could take this Decepticon and more than likely by surprise too, all he had to do was think of a way of doing it. A sly grin crossed his face, and as quickly as it appeared it disappeared. He backed away from the window he was looking out off, and shut down his stealth Camo. In a shimmer of colour his stealth system shut down, revealing him again to the world. He raised his gun and opened fire at the wall, and began running towards it. The Acid pellets hit the wall, and began to eat away at it, fizzing and melting the titanium alloy that was used to build it. In mid stride Hot Shot transformed, into a black sleek hover racer, with flames on the bonnet, and drove into the melting wall at full speed.

The wall gave way with a resounding smash, as the parts that had been eaten away flung apart like rubbish before a

strong wind. The impact with the wall, had dented and buckled Hot Shot's bonnet, but hadn't slowed him down that much and for several dozen feet he flew through the air towards his target.

The pinned down Decepticon had no idea what was happening until he turned round for a moment, and saw the flying form of Hot Shot's vehicle mode heading towards him, transform to his robot mode and open fire. In nano-seconds the Decepticon lay pinned up against his own cover, his body still convulsing from the damage the acid pellets were doing to his systems. Hot Shot opened fire one last time, hit the deception between the eyes. The Decepticon shuddered once more, before falling forwards in a heap...

"That was for what you Cons did to me!" Hot Shot whispered, before slumping to the ground himself. His energon levels had been overly depleted, and his systems were going to shut down unless he got help.

\*\*\*

### *Dark Mount, Polyhex*

Tarnalis, made his way around the communication centre of the Decepticon Empire. Around him were his subordinates, lower class Decepticons with a degree of understanding in many types of Communication. The comm centre was split into many rows of Communication units, which had a single Decepticon in front of each one. A single light hung above each unit, casting a sharp and bright white light over the Decepticon below. At that exact moment the Decepticon forces were spread out across the planet, engaged in combat with Autobot forces, protecting important fuel installations, and numerous other missions.

One of Tarnalis' subordinates came running up to him, clutching a datafeed in his left hand,

"We've got a big problem, three clicks out of Polyhex. A small group of Autobots are

currently taking out our guards around the Astronomy Consortium Building. One guard was lucky enough to send a transmission out before he was destroyed by one of the Autobots!" The subordinate informed his commander. As he listened to the Decepticon transmission in front of him, Tarnalis mouth curled into a snarl and clenched his fists behind his back.

"I've sent additional patrols into the area, and hopefully we'll be able to destroy those Aut... gaakkkkkk." The Decepticon stopped halfway through as Tarnalis hand shot out and grabbed him by the neck, and lifting him off the ground. His hand began to squeeze around the Decepticon's neck, before just as suddenly releasing his grip dropping the Decepticon to the ground.

"Now, I want you to remember that deciding what messages are sent, and what troops are called up for situations." Tarnalis growled as he kicked the Decepticon in the chest. "Get back to your comm station and send a message to the Mayhem squad, as they currently in Polyhex and I reckon they'd want to stretch their muscles." He added turning from the slumped heap on the ground and went back to walking around the Comm centre. The Decepticon pushed himself up from the ground, clutching his chest, and then his neck, before running back to his comm station and signalling the Mayhem squad. A grin returned to his face as he sent the message, wishing he could be there to see the carnage and destruction those ten Decepticons would reign on those foolish Autobots.

\*\*\*

### *Astronomy Consortium Building*

Made it REV thought to himself as he climbed through a damaged window two floors up in the Astronomy Consortium Building. He slipped over to the shadows, as he activated a small device on his right arm. A small screen appeared showing the floor plan of the building, he studied it for a few moments before he found what he was looking for, and then made a mental note

of the route he needed to take. A sudden light shone in his direction as a spy drone floated through the corridor he was in, all it saw was a plain grey wall, and carried on down the corridor.

Blasted Spy Drones REV thought to himself, as he waited for the Drone to turn down a corridor before dropping out of his stealth, and slipping into a vent cover just by his feet. Best take the back door to the room I need, can't risk being caught by those Spy Drones, Primus knows how many of them are in this place.

\*\*\*

*Somewhere in Iacon...*

"You understand what you've got to do?" Emirate Xaaron asked standing mere inches away from the elevator shaft that would take him back underground.

"Yes I do, yet I don't fully understand the enhancements you made to my body." A silhouetted figure replied, seeming to be looking over his body.

"You will in time my friend but you must hurry, time grows short and you're needed." Emirate said as he stepped back on to the elevator, and looked back once more at the Autobot before him. "Look out for them, and bring him back alive!" He added as he activated the elevator, and descended back into the planet.

\*\*\*

*Wasteland*

Hot Shot gazed upwards to the sky, it was all he was capable of doing, he had tried to move and crawl his way to cover but he was too weak... Around him he could hear the sound of gun fire, and explosions. Oh WARS, why? He thought to himself, when he suddenly felt himself being lifted up.

"If ya wanna know why good buddy, cause they deserve it for what they did to all of us." WARS answered Hot Shot's

unanswered thought, " Now what do you say we get outta here, and back to base." Hot Shot managed to shake his head, and quietly whispered,

"Complete... Mission..."

\*\*\*

Shrapnel, and Kickback flew over the wastelands, and scanned the area below them, picking up two Autobots on their scanners.

"What do you say we capture them and torture them slowly, before dropping them into the smelting pools and hearing their screams." Shrapnel asked, laughing to himself as he descended into a dive, and opened fire on the two Autobots below him...

"Sounds good to me Shrapnel." Kickback replied as he followed Shrapnel in the diving attack... Behind them Thrust, Ramjet and Dirge flew in formation, with Bombshell coming up behind...

"Let's take them out." Thrust ordered as he headed to the ground, transforming to his robot mode. The others followed him down and transformed...

"Mayhem squad take them out."

\*\*\*

*Wasteland*

WARS had hardly any time to act as the ground around him exploded from incoming fire from above, and the familiar forms of Shrapnel and Kickback flew just a few feet above his head and transformed in front of him blocking his path, their weapons raised. WARS flung Hot Shot aside into an open doorway, as both Shrapnel and Kickback opened fire on them. Both shots narrowly missed WARS feet, as he sidestepped the shots and returned fire with his Plasma Shell launcher...

Shrapnel ducked the incoming shell, and it exploded as it hit a wall behind him.

"Is that the best you got Autobot?" He asked as he threw his own weapon aside, and bringing his hands together... Sparks of electricity spiked and jumped from one hand to another, slowly creating a ball of pure electricity. Unknown to him, the damage caused by the Plasma Shell on the wall behind him had weakened it and stress fractures cracked along and up the wall... Kickback spun around and noticed the wall beginning to give way.

"Shrapnel, the wa..." Kickback said as he backed away from it.

"Not now Kickback, I'm gonna teach this Autobot a lesson" Shrapnel answered as he allowed the ball to expand to the palms of his hand, the sound of lightning cracking in the air became louder, so intent was his focus on the lightening ball in his hands he didn't hear the cracking sound of the wall finally giving way, causing it to tumble forwards and over Shrapnel...

Shrapnel released the lightening ball, just as the wall collapsed on top of him, trapping and crushing his legs under its weight, and causing him to send the lightening ball into the metallic surface of Cybertron.

WARS watched all this happening, in a matter of seconds and as the lightning ball hit the ground, he tried his best to jump clear of the electricity that now travelled on the surface of the planet.. Shrapnel shook violently as he was the first to get struck by the electricity, his systems shut down to protect his memory, and personality chips. WARS thought he'd managed to avoid it too, but a bolt of Electricity shot out from the surface and smashed into him, sending him back to the ground hard. His systems shut down too, in an effort to protect him.

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Kickback had been lucky enough to escape by transforming to his alternate mode and flying clear... The electrical

discharge released by Shrapnel into the planet's surface only covered a small area, which was unlucky for those in that area as they'd be forced into shut down...

Easy pickings now!! he thought to himself, as he descended back to the surface, once he was sure he was in no danger, and that the electrical discharge released by Shrapnel had gone.

"Thrust, bring your team over to sector Seven-Alpha-Nine, it's time to take some prisoners." Kickback radioed to the Seeker, as he transformed back to his robot mode and landed by the limp form of WARS, and picked him up by the neck, and held him up so he could see his face.

"I don't believe it, you're one of them. One of those that escaped the lab explosion, and if you survived so did the others." He said not caring if WARS was unable to hear him, or even reply to his question. WARS was in statis lock while his onboard repair systems got to work repairing the damage caused by the electrical discharge. Kickback released his grip on WARS and he dropped limply to the ground and didn't move.

Kickback walked over to Shrapnel to check over the damaged caused to him, and began to remove the rubble that had covered and crushed Shrapnel's leg. By the time Thrust and the others had arrived, he had dragged Shrapnel clear from the debris.

Shrapnel's legs had been broken, the armour of his legs had cracked and crumbled under the weight of the wall, and his left leg had almost disappeared leaving only the broken stump of an endo-skeleton, dangling wires, and a small pool of mixed oil, and other liquids had formed where he was now laying.

Kickback did his best to fuse the wires up and stop the leakage of Shrapnel's fuel supply, while he did this Thrust and Ramjet picked up the limp forms of WARS and Hot Shot and had them tied up so when they awoke, they wouldn't be able to escape.

"Thrust, I heard that there was a report of three Autobots here, and I see only two, where's the third one?" Kickback asked, as he looked up from his repair work on Shrapnel's leg.

As if almost in response to his question, the Astrology Consortium Buildings second floor exploded, sending flames and debris out of windows...

"I got a feeling, that he's over there." Ramjet responded as he ran jumped and transformed to his Cyberjet mode, and headed towards the building.

"And stating the obvious award goes to, Ramjet!" Dirge muttered amused under his breath as he took to the air. "Don't worry Kickback, I'm sure me and Ramjet will be able to handle this."

\*\*\*

#### *Somewhere close to the Wastelands*

"I repeat we've got an unidentified vehicle heading this way, and it's heavily armoured... AGHHHAAAA!!" Was all the check point guard managed to report in, before his guard station erupted into a fireball of death and destruction, as a heavily armoured vehicle carrier smashed through the checkpoint gates, and drove full speed into the wastelands.

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#### *Fire Convoy's Headquarters*

Wildride, and Speedbreaker witnessed the final systems check of the New Ark that had been created underneath the surface of the planet. Several metres above their head, was the actual surface of Cybertron, and according to Wedge's calculations they would rise up to the surface and blast off into the dark, coldness of interstellar space.

"Do you think this varmint will work?" Wildride asked Speedbreaker as they gazed over the golden ship that stood before them. The ship nose had been risen

up from the ground at a twenty degree angle, its landing supports made sure that it remained at the angle. The Autobot insignia was emblazoned on the port and starboard sides. Wildride could see that Wedge had created it to withstand the rigours of space travel, and was a degree bigger than the original Ark. He had a feeling that along the way they were going to need the extra size, and space for additional equipment they would come across on their voyage.

Wedge suddenly appeared coming out of the cargo hold of the ship, as he went over the final checks himself to make certain everything was in working order.

Wheeljack must have gone over the same worries I am now, most likely just before the Ark launched to clear a path through that Asteroid field. Wedge thought to himself, as he ticked off the last few systems. He turned to see Wildride and Speedbreaker staring in awe of the vessel he'd practically built from scratch, and smiled to himself.

All we need now are those interstellar maps, I wonder how Hot Shot, REV and WARS are doing? He thought to himself as he walked over to Wildride, and Speedbreaker to offer to show them around the ship.

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#### *Wastelands*

The limp and damaged body of REV was thrown on to the motionless forms of both WARS and Hot Shot. His arms and legs had been tied up the same way as theirs has to stop him escaping.

"Look at what we caught the little one with!" Ramjet said as he tossed the datadisc, to Kickback. Kickback caught it and did a quick scan of the data within it, and laughed quietly to himself.

"So this is what these rogues were after, this is what they risked their very lives for?"

Kickback laughed again, and kicked the limp form of REV.

"Looks like someone was planning on taking a holiday in space. Ramjet, Thrust, Dirge take these three back to headquarters, I'm sure we can make good use of them in the smelting pools." He ordered, as he and Bombshell picked up Shrapnel and prepared to take to the air.

"I don't think you'll want to be doing that!" A voice shouted out from out of nowhere, as the three Seekers picked up the statis locked Autobots. The five Decepticons spun in the direction of the voice, Bombshell, and Kickback both dropped Shrapnel to the ground as a tall Autobot stepped out from the shadows ahead of them. His armour shone, blue and grey as he stood before them.

"It's Magnus, take him." Kickback ordered as he charged the Autobot, pulling out his weapon and opening fire.

"Wrong Magnus!" The Autobot replied as he skilfully jumped Kickback's blasts, landing in front of him and grabbing the Insecticon by his neck and flinging him into the charging form of Bombshell. Ramjet, Thrust, and Dirge dropped the three Autobots and spread out, until the three of them surrounded the Autobot. "Only three of you, this isn't really a fair fight is it?" The Autobot smiled for a moment, "for you that is!"

"I make that count wrong Autobot, I make it five against one." Blitzwing said as he and Octane appeared on the roof of a building, both of them jumped clear of the roof and landing...

"Still a little outnumbered I'd say!" The Autobot replied in a rather cocky tone. "After all it'll take more than the five of you to take me down!" He added as he suddenly jumped into the air, and his backpack engaged taking him higher into the air. The five Decepticons stared in surprise, and shock, before opening fire on the Autobot.

"Autobots can't fly, that is only for those who are superior, like us Decepticons." Blitzwing shouted in a rage, as he took to the air and transformed to his attack mode. The Autobot just smiled, and prepared for the incoming attack. Blitzwing flew head on to the Autobot, opening fire with his laser cannons. The blasts just reflected of the Autobots armour, in his shock he flew to close to the Autobot.

The Autobot lunged out with a deafening punch on to Blitzwing's nose cone, before grabbing him by his wings and throwing him down to Cybertron's surface. As Blitzwing plummeted to the ground he managed to transform, but was unable to right himself and crashed painfully in to Octane, knocking him off his feet. The Autobot looked down at the other three Decepticons, and smiled.

"Oh I haven't forgotten about you three, I saved this especially for you." He said as he spread his arms out, panels moved away on his arms revealing a clusters of missile launchers along each arm, "Stun Cluster!" The Autobot shouted, activating the missiles inside, and a dozen missiles headed towards, Thrust, Ramjet and Dirge.

"And it was going so well today as well." Ramjet said as the missiles impacted around them, sending pieces of metal fragments into the legs and lower chests.

The Autobot now finished with his work, landed softly on the ground next to Kickback, and received the DataDisc that Kickback had hidden in a secret compartment, and then walked over to the three fallen Autobots, transformed to his Armour Carrier mode, and loaded them onboard with the aid of a robotic arm.

REV started to come too, during the battle and managed to crawl onboard without aid he looked at the vehicle mode and it looked familiar to him,

"Ultra Magnus??" He asked, feeling a sudden weakness sweep over him.

"No." Was the reply, and as the world faded into blackness for REV he thought he heard the Autobot say, "They call me God Magnus."

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### *Fire Convoy's Headquarters*

Fire Convoy and Mach Alert had spent the majority of the day within Fire Convoy's private quarters discussing possible strategies, and tactics they could use out in the field, only the sound of the perimeter alarm going off brought them out of their discussion and the pair of them ran out of the room, and headed towards the main command centre.

Wrecker Hook, spun around on his chair as the pair ran in.

"We got an intruder, big fella too. And he's heading this way." Mach Alert and Fire Convoy both spun on their heels and headed back out towards the incoming intruder. "And he's got Hot Shot and his team with him." Wrecker Hook added, as he opened an intercom device.

"Sorry guys looks like our down time's been cancelled, we got an intruder. Fire Convoy and Mach Alert have gone to investigate, but he's a big fella and they might need back up, we got a battle protocol." He said before cutting the intercom, jumping from his seat and following after Fire Convoy.

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### *Sewer System*

"You guys have a base down here?" God Magnus asked, as he splashed his way through the sewer tunnel, carrying the stasis locked bodies of WARS and Hot Shot, while a partly recovered REV followed shortly behind.

"We certainly do and I think we've both set the perimeter alarms off, the others should be on their way." REV answered as the pair of them passed a junction but kept

within the tunnel they were walking down. They both stopped when they saw the shadowed form of Fire Convoy blocking their way. Rev ran in front of God Magnus, and shouted down the tunnel.

"Fire Convoy, it's me REV and we managed to complete the mission with the aid of God Magnus."

Fire Convoy looked over the blue and grey Autobot. "Must have been very good timing for you to arrive just in the nick of time." Fire Convoy said straight to God Magnus.

"I just happened to be in the area Fire Convoy, and noticed these little guys in trouble. I felt it was my duty to help them the best I could, but I couldn't repair them all on the field. This guy," God Magnus pointed at REV. "Said it was for the best if I brought them all back here as you'd be able to repair them."

"That was very wise REV." Fire Convoy said looking down at the smaller yellow Autobot, and then returned his gaze to God Magnus. "I guess while you're here, you might as well get repaired as it seems you took a couple of knocks in saving my warriors." Fire Convoy offered, as he turned and allowed them both to past.

God Magnus smiled smugly as he walked past Fire Convoy.

So far so good, it's all going according to plan. He thought to himself, allowing REV to guide him to the repair bay so that Indy Heat could get down to repairing Hot Shot and WARS.

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### *Council of Elders*

A single beam of light illuminated a single Transformer that stood before the council, the gold reflected and shone, as he put himself before the council. Beyond the light behind him, he knew that Impactor, and his Wreckers were there as his own personal guard. Emirate Xaaron prepared himself, focusing on what he was going to say to

the council, and what their next move would be.

"I myself have gone over the Datadisc that Fire Convoy recovered from that Decepticon Installation." He said, wondering if the Elders would listen to him. Or if they would do to him what they had done to Fire Convoy. "I hope that you all managed to review the data yourself to see the real danger this represents to us, and to the whole galaxy. Right now at this very astro-second, there is a planet out there, having every living being on it destroyed, wiped out, so that they can Cyberform the planet."

He paused for a moment, and then activated a holographic projection. "Please take a look at this image, as you can see it's Cybertron, but not our Cybertron. This is a Cyberformed planet, this has cost countless billions of lifeforms on that single planet. To me this is too high a cost. The one main thing that separates us from the Decepticons is that we understand the value of life, whether it is sentient or not, as it is still life. If you decide not to do anything, and let this slaughter of innocents continue, you'll be just as much to blame as the Decepticons."

Emirate stopped for a moment to allow his words to sink in, he'd heard a few gasps of shock, and a few whispered words among the elders.

"The Decepticons were once a small minority of trouble makers. I, like you when I was a member of the high council, thought they were nothing more. Who could have foreseen Megatron the greatest gladiator of the three states becoming their leader, and rising them up from a mere problem to would-be conquerors. And what did we do when they attacked, we died in our millions, and we fell back, they destroyed and conquered our city states and we fell back," Emirate eyes flashed for a moment, "I say that this time we take the fight to them, and show them what Autobots are made off. It is what Optimus Prime would do. He'd give his life to ensure the safety of those who can't

defend themselves. If the ruling of this council is that we do nothing, then it is a very sorry day for the Autobots. So please look within your fuel pumps and allow Fire Convoy to do what he deems right, for the sake of the galaxy, and the very sake of your sparks."

Emirate stopped once more, and stepped out from the light to show that he had finished his speech. Emirate found himself beside the much taller form of Impactor,

"For a wily old buzzard, you did good Emirate." Impactor said as the council of Elders called a recess to make a decision. "And I think you got them, its been a long time since they really had to discuss a decision."

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Fire Convoy handed the datadisc to Wedge who inspected it for a moment before putting the disc into a nearby console.

"Its okay, I'm just checking for possible viruses within the data itself. Those Decepticons have a real nasty habit of putting them in, and one of them could cause havoc with the ships systems." Wedge informed Convoy as he took a seat in front of the console and began to check the disc, without taking his optic sensors from the console screen he asked,

"So you decided on a name for the ship? I've been calling it The New Ark while I was building her but I feel she needs a name, and as the Captain of her it would be best if you name her." Fire Convoy gazed over the ship very much deep in thought, he walked over to the ship and paced around her running a hand all along her hull, stopping at the engines and turned to ask Wedge a question.

"Before you ask, I didn't put the space folding engines in for the simple fact you said we were on a tight schedule, plus there was another factor." Wedge said as he turned from the console, and removed the datadisc from the console. "Space fold

technology is pretty much in its infancy on Cybertron, although it'll allow us to cover a much greater distance in one moment, it's still pretty much experimental and as yet cannot be fully controlled properly. A recent test made by several Autobot scientists, have stated that on each test the test vehicle has ended up several millions light years from its intended target solar system." He added as he walked over to the ship, opened an access hatch and climbed inside.

He crawled his way in until he reached the main computer core, and began to upload the information from the datadisc directly to the navigation memory core and then crawled his way back out. "I've installed an improved transwarp engine with additional transwarp cells in storage, just in case. She'll get us to where we want to go, and." He continued pressing a button on a wrist mounted control pad. The ships various weapons appeared, hull cannons popped up, and missile tubes uncovered. "We'll have the fire power to fight our way out of almost every situation, if not we've got enough shielding to protect us from an atomic blast if need be." Wedge added, pressing the same button on the wrist mounted control pad ordering the weapons to slot back into their non-active positions.

"So, we're ready to go then!" Fire Convoy simply noted, as he ran his hand down the hull again before patting Wedge on the back.

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### *Fire Convoy's quarters*

God Magnus looked around the small, and lightly decorated room that serviced as Convoy's quarters. In the centre of the room was a single desk, with a multi purpose console resting on it.

Hanging on the wall was a few pictures of a simpler times and even a picture of Fire Convoy and Prime together, before Convoy had had his body upgraded. God Magnus sighed slightly and began to pace back and forth, while he waited for Fire

Convoy to return from Wedge's modified hanger bay.

He knew why Convoy was planning to do what he was going to do. He himself didn't like the fact that Convoy had turned his back on the Council of Elders, and disregarded their commands. That was part of the reason he was here, to make sure nothing bad happened, to ensure that the Council of Elders orders were followed through.

In his pacing he found himself in front of Convoy's multi-purpose console, and could not resist looking at the data that had been currently been left playing on it. On the main screen was a video file playing, of a group of Decepticons destroying the homes and lives of a group of funny looking beings, bipedal like the Transformers themselves, but a lot smaller and seeming to be made of soft tissue.

He watched in horror as three of those beings were shot by the Decepticons, but one of those soft skins looked unharmed. God Magnus turned away from the screen, as he saw the camera carrying Decepticon pace over to that soft skin, and stamp on it. The sound of bones breaking and snapping echoed through the small room, and Magnus punched the wall as hard as he could.

"And now you see why I can't follow the Elders orders, Magnus." Fire Convoy said as he stood in the doorway. Magnus glared over at Convoy,

"You knew all along that I was here to stop you go, didn't you?" Magnus asked.

"Actually no I didn't, I was informed that you would be coming along, Emirate Xaaron let me know you were coming. What were his exact words before he left you in Iacon?" Fire Convoy asked, thinking for a moment. "Oh yes he said, make sure they come back alive. Now that doesn't mean you have to take us all in now, does it?" Fire Convoy added as he entered the room. "Ask yourself this Magnus, why would Emirate have your systems

upgraded the way he did? He knew that you would be a great asset to this mission, so even though the Elders had you sent here to stop us, and take us in if necessary. He knew that you wouldn't be able to if you saw the truth of what those Decepticons are doing right this very moment out there." He continued as he pointed skywards.

"Okay, so Emirate's got me pegged better than I thought he did. What do I do about it?" Magnus asked as he turned from the wall, and the dent he'd made with his fist and faced Convoy.

"Join us, and help us save as many lives as possible." Convoy answered, holding his hand out. Magnus stood there for a moment while he considered his options.

Sure I could take Convoy and his team in, but if I do am I condemning the lives of countless beings in the galaxy? He gazed in to Convoy's optic sensors, seeing the weariness and sorrow that filled them. I think it would be best if I did what was right, even if it makes me an exile too. Magnus took Fire Convoy's hand and shook it,

"Remember though this doesn't make you my leader you got that?" Magnus calmly said, as he took his hand away and left Convoy alone in his quarters.

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Emirate Xaaron sighed silently as he stood before the assembled members of the Wreckers, they were the best commando unit that the Autobots ever had, although through the vorns of war, members had come and gone but the core members had remained.

Before him stood Rack'n'Ruin, Whirl, Roadbuster, Topspin, Twintwist, and their commander Impactor.

"As much as this goes against the very core of my programming, I've had the council's decision and Fire Convoy and his team are to be brought before the Elders

to face charges of treason." Emirate almost choked on the words as they came out of his mouth, leaving a vile taste in his mouth, but the worst was yet to come. "And that's dead or alive!" He added wishing he didn't have to say those words. Fire Convoy was his friend, someone he believed in.

Impactor looked down the ranks of his team of Wreckers also knowing how much this situation was ripping Emirate apart inside, he grit his teeth and muttered to the Wreckers.

"You heard him, we've got our mission. Wreck and Rule!"

Today was a bad day to be an Autobot, Emirate watched as they filed out, long sad expressions covered their faces as they left.

Once they had left him, Emirate looked upwards fell to his knees and prayed, "Primus, guide us and help us find the right path."

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### *Fire Convoy's Headquarters*

"Are we ready for this?" Fire Convoy asked as he sat down in the command seat of the ship Wedge had built.

Wedge, Wildride, Indy heat, Wrecker Hook, High Tower and Rapid Run turned to look at him.

"We still need a name for the ship, Fire Convoy. We cannot go around calling it the ship can we?" Wedge said, noticing that Fire Convoy had begun to look somewhat nervous, but suddenly the nervous was gone and a green aura surrounded his body. The other members of the Bridge crew gasped in shock, and as quickly as the Aura had appeared it disappeared. "I have a name for the ship, let's call her the Primus Flame." Fire Convoy said boldly, and looked around at the others in front of him. "Why don't we take her and take her for a spin?" He added, Wedge

and the others turned back to their stations.

Wedge sat before the flight controls, with Wildride on Comms, Rapid Run and Hightower on Weapons and shields, while Wrecker Hook and Indy Heat were on Security consoles.

Wedge began to prep the engines, and activated the system that would control the lifting of the Primus Flame up to the surface of Cybertron.

Outside in the hanger bay, a platform began to lift the Primus Flame upwards, while above a section of the planet opened up revealing the night sky of Cybertron. Once the Primus Flame had been lifted to the surface of Cybertron, the engines began to engage until all seven engines glowed with an orange, and yellow glow. The platform the Primus Flame began to tilt at an angle, and slowly lifted the nose of the Primus Flame until it was at an angle of fifty degrees from the surface of Cybertron.

"Disengaging magnetic clamps!" Wedge reported in, as his fingers swept over the controls in front of him. On cue the row of magnetic clamps disengaged from the Primus Flame, suddenly a voice shouted out from the comms station. Wildride spun around from his station and reported to Convoy,

"It's Impactor, he's ordered us to stop the launch or he'll have no choice but to open fire on us."

"Wedge continue with the launch, we've no choice now the Council has made their decision and so have all of us." Fire Convoy replied nodding to Wedge.

Impactor and the Wreckers waited for a response to his transmission, but he got no reply. He shook his head and gave the Wreckers the order to open fire. Whirl took to the air, and flew towards the Primus Flame. When all of the Primus Flames engines went to full power and

launched the ship off the planet of Cybertron and on to the greater cosmos. As the Primus Flame began its slow ascent upwards the Wreckers opened fire with everything they had, but the shots were either absorbed or reflected by the shields. Road buster grunted as he aimed a multi warhead missile launcher at the Primus Flame, and opened fire. Four Smart Missiles streaked out from the launcher, leaving a trail of grey smoke and headed towards the Primus Flame.

"We got incoming missiles, and I don't think we'll be able to avoid them." Rapid Run informed the others, as a screen in front of him showed the course of the four missiles streaking up behind them.

"We'll be okay, the shields will be able to take care of them." Wedge said confidently, then his face contorted as he just realised something. "Unless they've got multi-phase shields on them, then we're screwed." He added, as he spun to face Hightower, "Pick up those missiles on the hull cannons and open fire. We can't be to careful now." High tower nodded at the command and brought up the targeting controls.

Along the hull of the Primus Flame, twelve hull cannons popped up their dual cannons pointing to the rear of the Primus Flame and began to fire down the hull towards the incoming missiles.

The four missiles moved back and forth trying to avoid the incoming fire, but three became victims of the laser fire that rained down on them. The fourth was lucky enough to avoid most of the laser fire and slowly picked up speed.

"Okay I got three of those little suckers, but the fourth one I couldn't get, and worst of all I can't find him on the targeting controls." High Tower reported in from his station. Wedge looked over at him and smiled,

"It's ok, we're clear of Cybertron's atmosphere and I can now activate the Transwarp Engines," He smiled gleefully

at how well his creation has worked, and typed commands into the navigation control in front of him. "Okay I've inputted the first heading, Sector Alpha-Zero-Seven-Nine. Engaging Transwarp engines now." He added as his finger pressed the activating switch for the Transwarp engine.

Come on girl, come on Wedge prayed, as he heard the almost silent hum of the Transwarp engine engage, and power up surrounding the Primus Flame in an energy field, and warping the very space around the ship.

The warning klaxons came on just at the moment, and Hightower turned from his station.

"That missile, it got to us, it's going to impact in..." Hightower didn't manage to finish his report as the missile slipped through the shielding and impacted with the hull, ripping through the engine room and sending the Primus Flame into a spin.

The Primus Flame spun out of control through the warp in time and space, the warp itself closing straight over the Primus Flame had passed through.

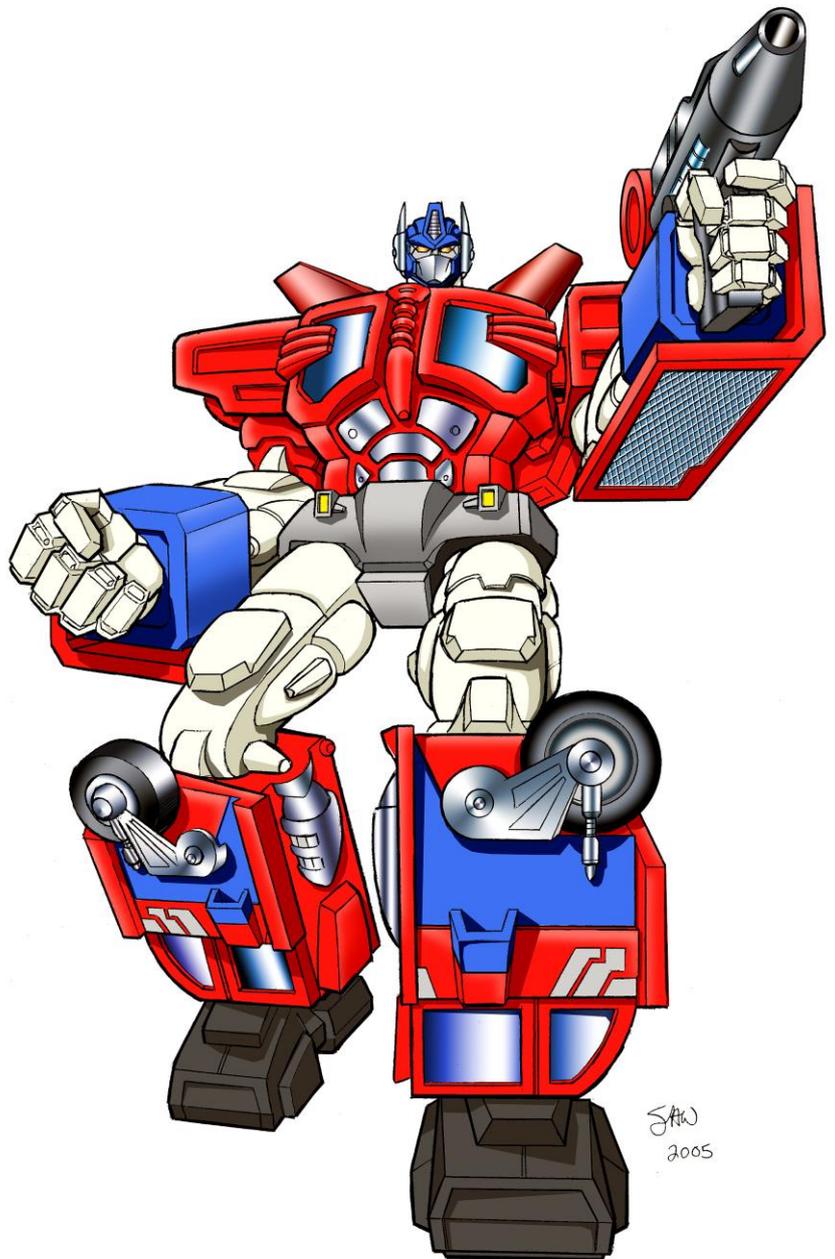
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### *Primus Flame*

As he came round, he could hear the groans of the Bridge crew, and the sound of shorting out systems. As he opened his optic sensors, he saw acrid smoke filling up the command deck, system stations that hadn't blown outwards blinked on and off.

"Is everyone okay?" Fire Convoy asked as he lifted himself up from the deck, and leaned against what remained of his Command Chair. Slowly those that had been on the bridge of the Primus Flame let

Convoy know they were still active. Ahead through the main screen a blackness stretched out before them broken only by the tinkling of faraway stars.



Wedge looked out at the blanket of stars and darkness, and calmly noted, "Well, we're not in Kansas anymore!"



## **"OUROBOROS"** **by Alta Hatcher**

Ratchet stood silently alongside the Autobot leader Optimus Prime, watching as the flurry of bots swarmed towards the Ark, some pushing and shoving their way to get to the ship first; the fastest would survive the devastation of their home, wouldn't they? He watched as their fellow Autobots tried to divert the crowds into one thin, stable line.

Ironhide was directing bots into the ships. Jazz and Prowl were breaking up any and all scuffles that broke out among the groups. Mirage and Hound were escorting the bots inside of the main ship and making sure no one fought amongst themselves.

"Ratchet." The proud Autobot finally spoke, his voice gravelly yet heavy with regret.

The old medic looked to his leader and closest confidant. "Prime?" He asked.

Optimus remained silent for a few moments before he began again. "I understand that this is a difficult decision for us to go through." He explained, weariness touching upon his words. "But it is our only hope of surviving this war. If we stay, Cybertron will fall with us upon it... I wish it could have gone another way."

Ratchet shook his head. "I understand there was very little we could do, Prime." He responded. "The Decepticons have razed this planet to the ground. This is the best means of action."

"Yet, you are angry about it."

That perception, that tiny comment caught the medic off-guard. Normally, he was a very difficult bot to sway in any way, shape, or form. He had endured several bots coming into his operation room with wounds that dangled them just above the brink of death. He has seen friends and comrades blasted, torn and burnt. But how was it that a few non-aggressive, harmless words could make it feel someone punched his spark in?

"...I'm not angry." Ratchet half-lied, watching as Bumblebee caught a limping Windcharger before he collapsed. "I'm not... never mind about this Prime."

Optimus was obviously having none of that.

He placed a hand on Ratchet's shoulder. "Ratchet." He insisted, his voice lowering. "You should not hide anything from me. I would rather you tell me what is on your mind."

"There is nothing to say." Ratchet insisted.

"Ratchet, please..."

The medic stopped at that moment, glaring at the Autobot leader. Optimus looked back, but there was no anger in his blue optics. Instead they held sympathy, concern, kindness...

Sorrow.

Ratchet tried to keep the glare, only for his resolve to crumble like rust. "...I am... worried, Prime." He finally admitted. "Our home... is being corrupted as we speak and is on the verge of death... how will we survive away from here? We have limited sources, our numbers are few and the Deceptions are only growing more tenacious with every victory. So how can we stay alive like this, Prime? HOW!?"

Optimus shut his optics, remaining quiet, the distant sound of the crowds roaring in discontent and the occasional sound of an explosion, no doubt caused by one of the Decepticons. He opened them again, his expression steely. "I am... unsure of it myself Ratchet." He confessed, tightening his hold on the old medic's shoulder. "No one could have seen these events. However, I know that with bots like you with us, there is always a chance of hope that we will prevail in such dark times. Even when it seems hope is lost, there will always be a way to come back and remain strong."

The medic was stunned silent. If Optimus' words had gripped him earlier, these words left him completely enraptured. That was one of the greatest aspects of the Autobot leader; his words were like music that could flow and sway like a waltz, command and shake like a war drum, or soothe and heighten like the greatest poetry. It was those words

weaved together that seemed to bring all those who listen a sense of peace and hope. If only if it were still possible, then the Prime's words alone could have halted the fighting, all of the oil shed and their home would still be safe and alive for all Autobots.

"Prime!" A distant voice cried. Both bots looked to the side, spotting Jazz jogging up the hill where they stood. He saluted stiffly, extremely unusual for such an exuberant character. "The Ark's ready, now we just need you Ratchet onboard then we can go."

Optimus nodded. Without another word, he marched away with Jazz, leaving the old medic behind.

Ratchet watched the two mechs as they walked away, before finally following suit. As he moved, a distant thought appeared, one that started to grow louder and louder, reaching a crescendo that made a faint smile appear on the old bot's lips.

Maybe... we'll survive... and we will all be standing amongst each other in the end...

Right?

\* \* \*

Several years later...

Ultra Magnus, Rodimus and Arcee knelt in front of the stones on the grassy ground. They were all piled and arranged into uneven cairns, glyphs scratched into the stones bearing a name. There were many cairns and many names, but they all held the same purpose.

Honour their fallen friends.

The three Autobots were silent as the contemplated each stone and each friend they had come to love in their own way, yet lost. However, it was the two cairns in front that held the most meaning for them. Decorated with small medals and a feather or flower bud (Courtesy of Daniel, of course), the names were scratched in deep, yet were taken with such an extreme care as if one mistake was an act of blasphemy.

Ratchet.

Optimus Prime.

Ultra Magnus shut his optics, thinking to the two Autobots. Soldier and medic. Fighting on the Front and healing those who came back. Such extreme opposites, yet the the closest of friends and comrades.

Rodimus cracked a weak smile. "Magnus... Arcee..." He began, the two other Autobots looking his way. "Just because they're gone... well, they're not gone, are they?"

"What do you mean?" Arcee asked with a tilt of her head.

"They're still with us in spirit... but I guess... the more important matter is..." The new leader paused, looking up at the blue sky above them. "...They started this together. And even when they died... they were still together no matter what. So we should all stick together and finish this together, just as we started it."

Arcee smiled faintly. "Yes... We should." She agreed. "It's what they would have wanted, right?"

Rodimus smiled. "Yeah... we're all in this together, even when we're apart... so let's get through this together, huh?"

The three Autobots nodded as the sun above them brightened, as if blessing their new vow of unity and camaraderie. They knew in their sparks that somewhere, their fallen friends were still smiling upon them.

THE END

# THE CYBERTRONIAN TIMES

## ONGOING CREATIVE WRITING / ART COMPETITION

Following the release of Issue 19 of The Cybertronian Times, we thought that it was time to start giving back! So, from now on we're going to be running a series of competitions with the magazine open to all our readers to win some great prizes!

### Let's Get Creative!

As a fanzine, The Cybertronian Times is all about giving fans the chance to show their love of Transformers and express their creativity at the same time. Whether it's original artwork, fiction, comic strips - we want to actively encourage our readers to be a part of the fanzine and it wouldn't exist without YOU.

Since the early days of the Auto Assembly convention, we've run art and fiction competitions for our attendees and even though the convention ended six years ago, we felt that it was time the competitions made a long-overdue return!

### The Competitions

So we're going to be running a series of competitions for all you creative types! These will be running on an ongoing basis so there will be plenty of chances to win throughout the year. Winners will be announced in each issue of The Cybertronian Times and with six issues planned each year you'll have plenty of chances to enter!

#### Artwork

If you're an artist (traditional, digital or 3D), then why not send in some of your work for our art competition? We're looking for artwork to feature in The Cybertronian Times both as internal illustrations and as cover art. It can be full colour, black and white and from any era of Transformers.

#### Fiction

We're looking for original text stories from any Transformers era. They don't need to

fit into existing canon, and can be crossover stories, but please state if they are your own fan variations on established continuity. Stories can be of any length but must be at least 1,500 words to be eligible for the competition.

#### Comic Strips

As with the fiction, they can be from any Transformers era. We are looking for single page shorts, longer stories or even longer serialised pieces. Serialised stories will be classed as multiple entries giving you more chances to win! Comic strips can be in colour or black and white but need to be illustrated and lettered. We will also accept photo stories if you feel creative with a camera!

#### Letters Page

We're also after reader's letters for our letter's page *Jazz Jives*. There will be a prize on offer for our Star Letter in each issue!

### The Prizes

We're going to be giving away some great prizes, with mystery items up for grabs for the winners of each competition including toys, autographs and much more. We don't want to spoil things too much but the first winner of the fiction competition will receive this great prize...



## Competition Rules

We want to keep things as simple as possible so there are just a few basic rules to entry for the competitions:

1. Text entries must be supplied as a Word file with just essential formatting only, using single line spacing and Arial 12 font.
2. Artwork is to be supplied as a PNG or JPG file, preferably at an image size of 2480 x 3508 pixels.
3. Comic strip entries need to have file names containing the story title then page numbers in order.
4. There is *no limit* on the number of entries you can make for any issue and you may enter multiple times in the same category.

If you submit a serialised comic strip or story, each chapter will be treated as an individual entry.

5. We reserve the right to publish all entries in The Cybertronian Times, regardless of whether or not they are competition winners
6. All entries must be received at least two weeks before the publication of the next issue of The Cybertronian Times to be considered for the competition. If entries arrive after this date, they will be considered for the next issue's competition.
7. If we receive fewer than three letters, three pieces of fiction, two pieces of artwork or two comic strips then those competitions will be suspended until the following issue. Entries may still be published and will be judged alongside the following issue's entries. Alternatively, all entries will be held back until the following issue.
8. The decision of The Cybertronian Times editorial team is final

## How To Enter

Send your entries to us via email to [contact@autoassembly.org.uk](mailto:contact@autoassembly.org.uk) with "Cybertronian Times Competition Entry" in the subject line. Make sure you detail what you are sending along with your real name and contact details. We won't need a mailing address from you unless you are chosen as one of our winners so there's no need to send it initially.

## Get The Magazine

Obviously, you're already reading this issue, but to get more issues visit [The Cybertronian Times](#) page on our website where you can download more of our FREE issues right now!

Have fun creating and good luck!!

THE IRONY WAS NEVER LOST ON ME. SOMEONE OF MY REPUTATION ASSIGNED TO THE AUTOBOT'S HIGHEST SECURITY PRISON AS A GUARD? **MAXIMUS** WAS ALWAYS BIG ON IN-JOKES.

OF COURSE, THAT DASHING SENSE OF HUMOUR WAS OF LITTLE HELP ONCE **OVERLORD** TOOK OVER. THE DECEPTICON INMATES TOOK OVER THE ASYLUM, AND THE AUTOBOT GUARDS NOW BECAME THE PRISONERS.



HOPE SEEMED GONE UNTIL JUST MOMENTS AGO, WHEN TWO SHIPS THAT COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN PILOTED BY THE **WRECKERS** CRASHED TOWARDS THE PRISON.



TO BE HONEST, HOPE IS STILL BLEAK - BUT WITH THE AUTOBOT'S MOST ELITE CADRE OF CRAZIES ON THE SCENE, THINGS WILL AT LEAST BE INTERESTING - AND MESSY.



THE ENERGEN RUNS COLD AS I HEAR **OVERLORD**'S VOICE CRACKLE OVER THE INTERCOM - AN ORDER NO DOUBT ISSUED IN RESPONSE TO THE ARRIVAL OF THE **WRECKERS**...

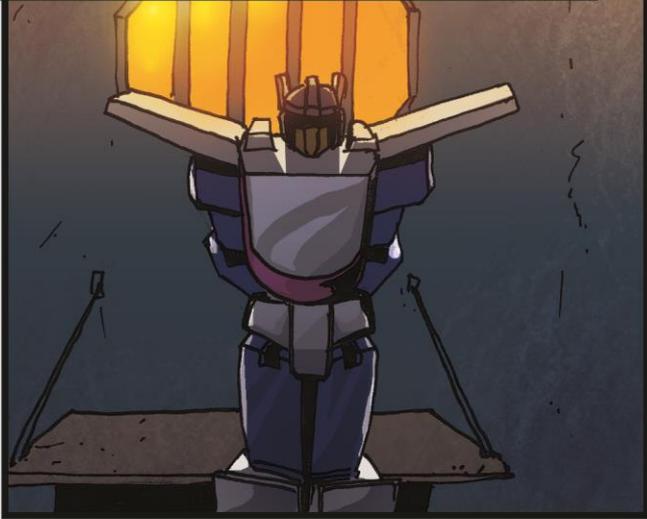


**"KILL. EVERY. PRISONER."**

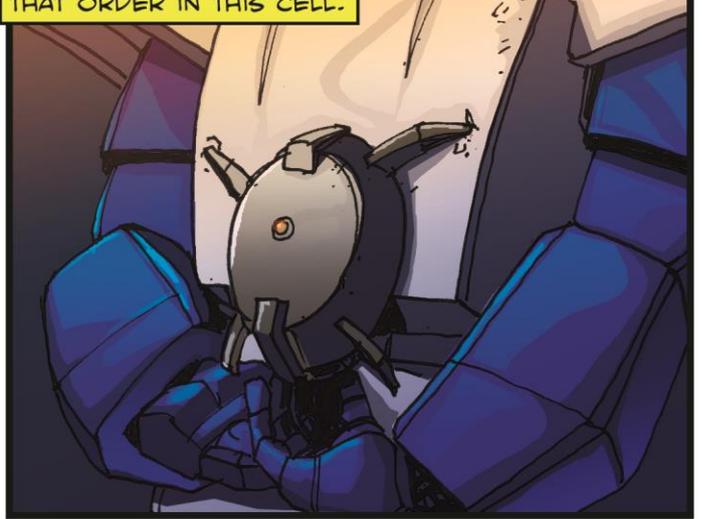
**By Kris Carter**

BASED ON "LAST STAND OF THE WRECKERS"  
BY NICK ROCHE & JAMES ROBERTS

ME BEING ME, I'D BEEN PREPARING MY OWN LITTLE BREAK-OUT FOR SOME TIME. LOOKS LIKE MY PLANS JUST GOT ACCELERATED.



I ALMOST PITY THE POOR DECEPTICON WHO TRIES TO CARRY OUT THAT ORDER IN THIS CELL.



TIME'S UP  
GETAWAY - ANY LAST  
WORDS?



THANKS.



WHAT?  
WHAT FOR?

FOR  
OPENIN' THE  
DOOR.



THE THANKS ARE SINCERE. HE JUST SAVED ME SEVERAL MINUTES OF HOTWIRING THE LOCK.

MMMF!!!

I'VE BEEN SLOWLY RECONFIGURING MY INTERNAL CIRCUITRY FOR MONTHS, CAREFULLY RE-ROUTING SYSTEMS AROUND THE INHIBITOR CLAW.

FALCON OF COURSE, HASN'T. WITH THE INHIBITOR ON HIS SKULL CASING, HE PROBABLY BARELY EVEN FELT THE ENERGY BLAST.

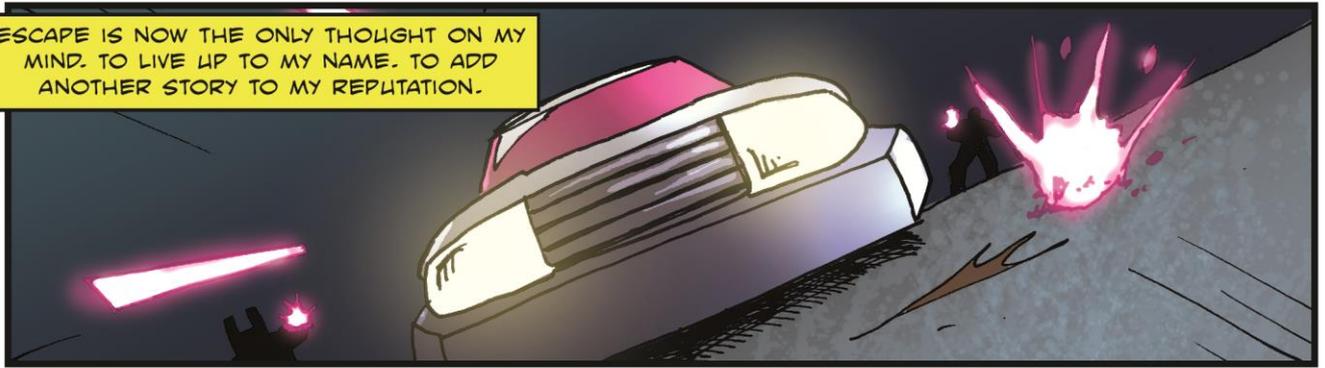
BLAM!

SHAME, THAT.

THE TRANSFORMATION HURTS BRIEFLY - IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I LAST SWITCHED FORMS, BUT THE PAIN SUBSIDES QUICKLY...

...REPLACED WITH THE JOY OF BEING MOBILE ONCE MORE.

ESCAPE IS NOW THE ONLY THOUGHT ON MY MIND. TO LIVE UP TO MY NAME. TO ADD ANOTHER STORY TO MY REPUTATION.



I HEAD AT FULL PELT TOWARD THE SHUTTLE BAYS. WITH ANY LUCK MY ACCESS CODES STILL WORK, AND SOME SHIPS ARE STILL THERE...

FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, I CONSIDER TRYING TO FIND THE WRECKERS. MAYBE I COULD HELP. MAYBE I COULD... BUT I REASON THE WRECKERS HAVE IT IN HAND.



I FOCUS ON GETTING OUT. TRY GETTING REINFORCEMENTS. YES. THAT'S THE BEST WAY. LIVE UP TO THE LEGEND.



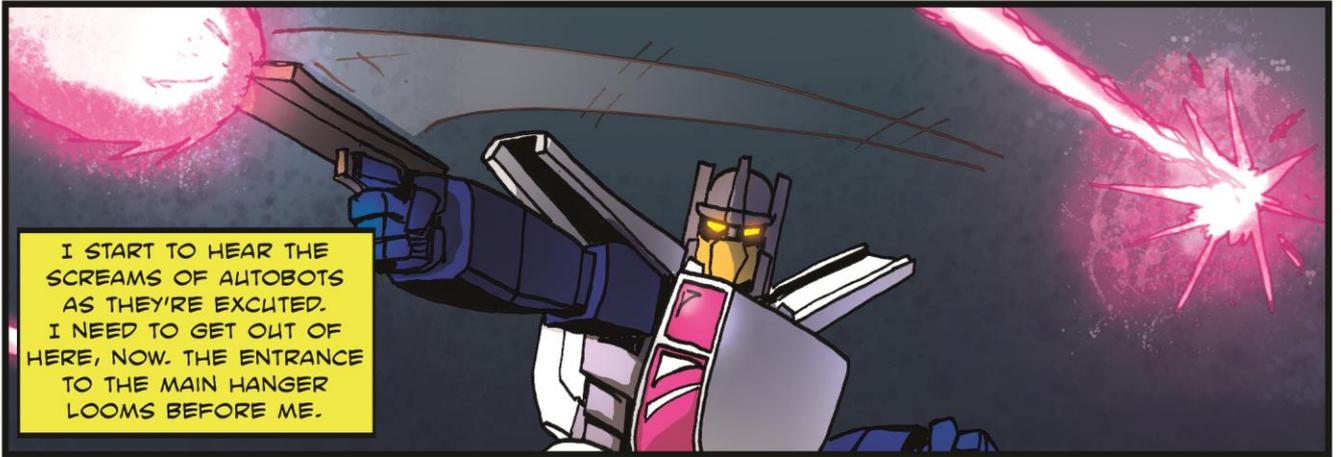
ALMOST THERE. THE SHUTTLE BAY IS JUST A FEW CORRIDORS AWAY-

GETAWAY?  
THAT YOU?

SLAPDASH?







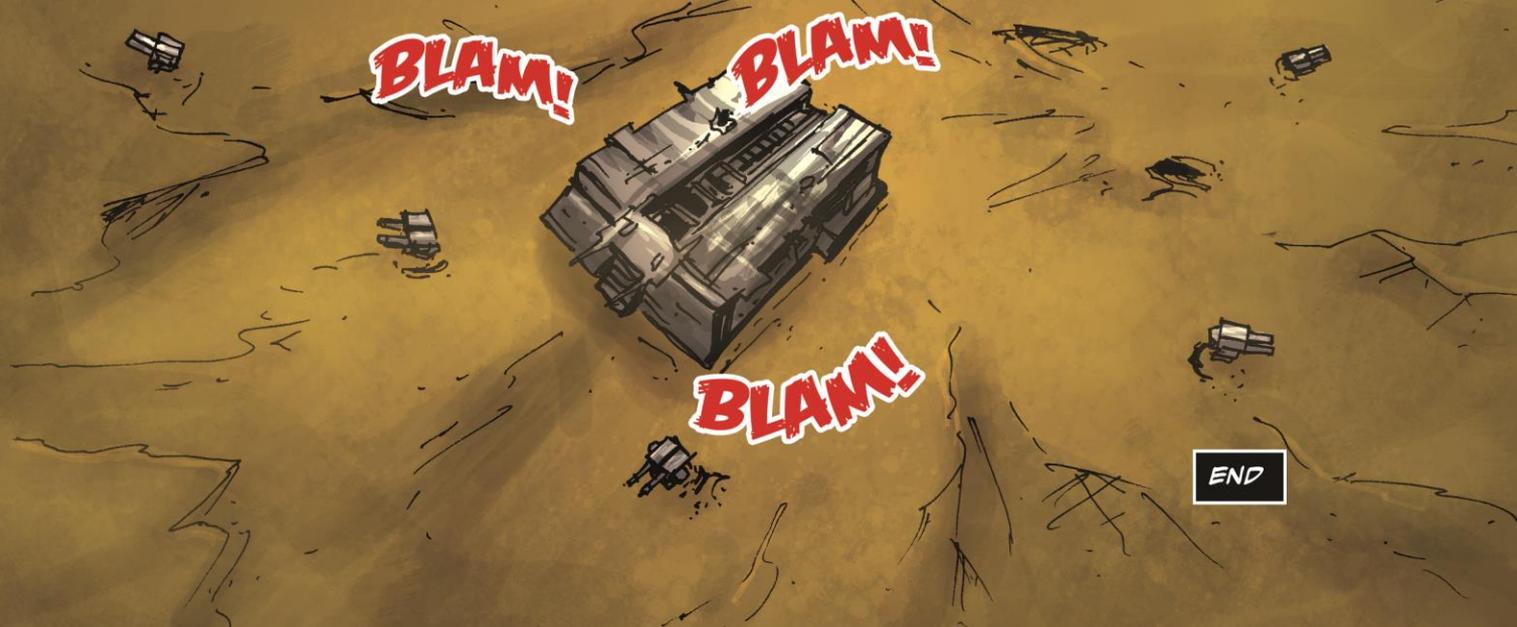
I START TO HEAR THE SCREAMS OF AUTOBOTS AS THEY'RE EXCITED. I NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE, NOW. THE ENTRANCE TO THE MAIN HANGER LOOMS BEFORE ME.



AND SUDDENLY I REMEMBER - AS PART OF THE FACILITY'S SECURITY MEASURES, ACCESS TO THE MAIN HANGERS REQUIRES TWO GUARD ACCESS CODES.



ON REFLECTION I SHOULD'VE SPRUNG SLAPDASH FROM THAT CELL.



END

## **"WHAT'S IN ANOTHER BODY?"**

**by Sven Harvey**

*Timeline - post G2 comic*

"Watch out!" cried Jazz as he pulled Bumblebee out of Megatron's line of fire, "Watch your tailgate little buddy! I don't think Ratchet wants to have to rebuild you AGAIN!" continued Jazz.

"Hah! Megatron now in trouble! Time to munch metal! CHARGE!" cried Grimlock.

"We really have to get our illustrious commander a new speech centre" mumbled Overdrive to Camshaft as he followed Grimlock and Pyro into the thick of the battle with the rest of Grimlock's Strike Team.

United again, the many ship mates who fatefully crashed on to our planet fought together in the struggle to protect the Earth, with the new Earthforce joined by the majority of the Autobot Army.

"Deal with those morons!" shouted Megatron over the heat of battle to the Decepticon, Overlord, "Leave none alive!". Megatron looked like pure evil as he seemingly signed the Autobot's death warrants, however, within, Megatron was troubled.

'This is the largest Autobot force I have witnessed in four million years and this time they are a LOT more organised! Of those warriors I do have, I can only trust Ravage and the non-functional Blackjack. Much though it burns the fibre of my very being, I think it may be time for a strategic withdrawal - before I have no Decepticons to lead!'

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! KABOOM! The Autobot air strike team led by Jetfire flew overhead catching most of the Decepticons with a stream of photon bombs. Looking round Megatron finds his force caught in a vicious pincer movement with the majority of his troops lying around him...

"RAVAGE!" Emotion overwhelmed the defeated Decepticon leader seeing his troops in disarray, an event he is not prepared for. He called the rejuvenated Ratbat to beam the remnants of his force up to the Decepticon WarWorld as Prime and Sureshot race forward guns blazing... "I'll see you in hell PRIME!".

\* \* \*

"Megatron... your new 'combat' body is ready for..."

"Damn the combat body, Hook! Get Ravage to MedBay and back on his feet. I need to know how the Autobots have become so organised and he's the perfect 'con for the job! I need every single Decepticon back on his feet!"

A series of com-system from Megatron's arm demanded his attention.

"Soundwave here, Megatron. I am picking up a Transformer life sign from a remote part of Earth. It is very weak and fading fast."

"So What?" replied Megatron.

"Commander, the signal is exhibiting the pattern of one of our old warriors... Zzaj."

"Prepare a medical and strike team for immediate beam down, were going in" Smiled the Decepticon leader.

\* \* \*

The Decepticons scanned the area as they walked across one of the Galapagos islands. Megatron was lost in thought.

'A lost strike force under the leadership of Zzaj. They were sent after some Autobots after they stole one of our fusion generators and fled by spacecraft. What are they doing here, did they run into the same problems as the Ark? In any case

the rediscovery of these Decepticons could give us the edge we need.'

"Stop right there Megagrot!" shouted Jazz as his team jumped from the hovering Earthforce shuttle.

"Hey, I told you guys that the stealth mode would work!" whispered Blaster to the team.

"It seems that you have the advantage" replied Megatron realising that his team would probably not survive a battle with the new Earthforce. "We are just following up a lead on something we have been investigating".

'I am penned in, there isn't much I can do! If we try and stop these Autobots I could end up with a deactivated medical team which wouldn't help my situation much!' thought Megatron.

"We have finished what we came for Autobots there is no need for hostilities, we are leaving" Megatron's comsys opened up "Megatron to WarWorld, beam us up Ratbat.". With that the Decepticon team dematerialised...

"What was that all about?" enquired Blaster.

"I don't know, but Megatron's up to something. Spread out team, I want this island searched and report anything out of the ordinary", said Jazz.

\* \* \*

"There isn't much I can do sir... URRK!" Hooks body was lifted off the floor as Megatron's tightening grip starts to buckle the Construction's neck.

"Then you had better think of a way, VERY QUICKLY!" Megatron's fusion cannon levelled at Hooks head.

Hook stared down the barrel of Megatron's cannon - lubricant seemingly leaking from his head module... "Wwwait mighty Megatron, there may be a way."

"Speak now or forever hold your peace!"

"Tttthe combat bbbbody. Wwe could modify it into a life support system and it would give Ravage the time to initiate his own internal repairs and give him an alternative body!"

A smile spreads over Megatron's face...  
"Excellent! EXCELLENT!"

\* \* \*

"There isn't anything here Jazz! We've tried everything and no results." reported Blaster.

"Okay, let's get back to base. Round everyone up..." ordered Jazz.

"Jazz! I have found something!" shouted Grapple.

"What is it Grapple?" replied Jazz.

"It very weak, intermittent... Cybertronian life signs, under the island!" reported Grapple.

"What?! I think we had better have a look." replied Jazz.

"There is an opening here too!"  
CRRRREEEEAAKK! a trap door to a Transformer sized staircase was revealed.

"Everyone follow me" said Jazz turning his headlights on and starting to descend.

\* \* \*

"Keep a sensor on Jazz, Soundwave. The moment that shuttle leaves the island I want to go back down." ordered Megatron.

"Commander, they have found the crashed ship!" cried Soundwave.

"Damn their sensors. Alert a full combat team. We are going to get our brethren back. I am going to change into something more suitable" Megatron replied as he left the room as Soundwave grabbed the microphone and started to speak.

"Thundercracker, Skywarp, Rage, Drench, Aquablast, Hydradread, Sizzle and Jolt, report to the shuttlebay. We have some Autobots to kill!" Meanwhile in the armoury, Megatron interfaced with his 'Cobra' armour and left for the shuttlebay.

\* \* \*

*Down IN the island...*

"Looks familiar... Inferno, see if you can get these lights operational." said Jazz.

BUZZZZzzzzzzCRACK! The lights burst on revealing the interior of a Cybertronian vessel. About the floor were many Transformer bodies. Jazz surveyed the scene.

"By the sacred spires!" cried Jazz as he saw the form of Zzaj, the evil Decepticon who shares the same face with the Autobot hero.

"There are Autobots here too!" cried Hound finding the inert body of a winged Autobot.

"Lets get these guys topside and onto the shuttle. We have some reactivating to do! Blaster - radio base and tell Wheeljack to warm up the ACU!" replied Jazz.

The Autobot shuttle took off with its cargo of deactivated Transformers, however it wasn't to be a smooth ride...

\* \* \*

*Some time later, in flight...*

THHHHOOOOOMMMMM!

"Thundercracker! - oooh my audio sensors!" cried Jazz. "Autobots - I am contacting you over inter Autobot radio. this is Jazz. We are under attack. turn and fight!"

The Decepticons forced the shuttle to crash land and render most of the Autobots temporarily non-functional. They made off with the deactivated Decepticons.

\* \* \*

*Earthforce Base*

"I'm sorry Prime but I can't raise them! It has been a few hours now maybe we should..." said Wheeljack as he sat on the Earthforce com-sys station.

"Earthforce base, this is Blaster, we have been attacked by Megatron please send help!"

"Don't worry, Wheeljack. I'll send a team in and tell the rest of Earthforce to stay put when they get back! Optimus Prime out!"

\* \* \*

A few hours later on the WarWorld, on route to Cybertron...

"...and the Replicons are not too badly damaged. They should be up and running soon. And Megatron, Ravage is looking good, he will be fine but it may take some time for him to heal completely, but using the combat body he will be on his feet within a few breems!" reported Hook.

"Excellent Hook." replied Megatron.

\* \* \*

"Jazz, Blaster, Grapple, Hound and Inferno will be okay in a couple of hours. The Autobots they found are pretty far gone but should be reanimated without too many problems. It will just take time with some of them." reported Wheeljack.

"Who are they?" replied Prime.

"A team of saboteurs sent behind Decepticon lines. They fled Cybertron, chased by Decepticons, after they stole Polyhex's main fusion reactor. The thing is they must have been active around the time we were reactivated in 1984. They already have earthen modes. According to the one who seems to be the leader, Skyfire, they are now called Thundercloud, Powerdive, Skyflash and Phaser. There

are two teams as well but I can find no record of their individual names. The teams need the most reconstruction but for some reason look familiar."

"Well it all seems a bit of a mystery. Just get them up and running and we will see where we go from there."

"Will do Prime, Wheeljack out."

\* \* \*

"Megatron?" Megatron turned to see the purple mirror-image of himself (in the Cobra armour).

"Well, you certainly wear that body well, Ravage! It suits you but while you are in that body your name doesn't suit! How about..."

"Archforce, old friend? I would like to be called Archforce."

"Very well Rav erm... Archforce. Let's test your new body out by spying on Autobase..."

\* \* \*

Autobase's command room with charts and holographic tactical displays is truly an awesome sight as Megatron and Archforce peer through the windows.

"I wish my normal body was fully functional. I could sneak in there and listen to them!"

"Doesn't matter I can see what we want to know. See that chart on the wall. It's a breakdown of their new command structure."

"I am already recording it... there got it all. They are re-animating their fallen warriors including Fortress Maximus and Omega Supreme."

"Let's get back to the WarWorld. I don't think the combined strength of the two of us could defeat that base full of Autobots!"

"We are damn close though!"

"Come on!"

\* \* \*

Back on the WarWorld, Megatron speaks to his active troops, Archforce at his side.

"The Autobots have really got organised but they are few compared with the might of us and the Cybertronian empire. We must bide our time until all our warriors are active, so that we can return the 'Cybertronians' to my control. Our target is the Liege Maximo and then the destruction of Autobot kind. ALL Transformers will be captured and given a choice - serve me or die. To gain these objectives, the complete Decepticon force will be organised into strike teams to facilitate our domination. In the meantime let's get some fuel and supplies and have some fun. Soundwave, plot a course to Kerrus."

\* \* \*

Kerrus, sometime later. The devastation was absolute as the Decepticons enjoyed themselves. Megatron and Archforce fighting together... A new era had begun for the Decepticons.

## CREDITS

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### Artwork

"RiD Optimus Prime" - Simon Williams

Beast Wars/Beast Machines - Guido Guidi

### Comics

"Kill. Every. Prisoner."  
Story and Art: Kris Carter

### Fiction

"Cutting Loose" - Brett Reynolds

"Ouroboros" - Alta Hatcher

"What's In Another Body?" - Sven Harvey

### Cover Art

Ed Pirrie  
(first used for Auto Assembly 2013)

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## NEXT ISSUE



### Combat Colin Returns!

Yes, you read that correctly! Starting in Issue 21 of The Cybertronian Times we will be bringing you *brand new* Combat Colin strips, courtesy of his creator, Lew Stringer written especially for this fanzine!

Making his debut appearance in Marvel UK's Action Force comic before being a stalwart in the long-running Marvel UK Transformers comic, Combat Colin was one of the most well-loved backup strips to appear in the comic over the years and we're delighted to be able to bring you new stories in every issue moving forward.

Issue 21 will be released in December 2021 and as always will be a FREE download from our website. If you don't want to miss the issue when it's released make sure you're following us on Twitter at [https://twitter.com/auto\\_assembly](https://twitter.com/auto_assembly) to be notified as soon as it's released.

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