Progeny

by Tentaculiferous

Summary

Joining their sparks in eternal union, and creating another skilled soldier for the Decepticon Cause, is only logical.

For the Kinkmeme Prompt:

"Not many people know it, as the two don't make a big deal about it, but Shockwave and Soundwave are bonded. It was a bond born of logic and sensibility. It hasn't always been an easy relationship to maintain, but some how they've always manage to get through even the roughest patches, perhaps because love (romantic love) really doesn't have anything to do with it.

I'd like to see something kinda plot-y with the Waves coming to the logical conclusion that they work well together and that they would work better if they were bonded. So they bond. In a logical way. Maybe some other stuff about how their relationship works? I'm really open to whatever the author wants to do or where they want to take the story. Though, I would like for the Waves to eventually decide that their coding is so superior that it would only be logical that they create progeny."
Saw this old kmeme prompt and loved it. The original request is here: http://tfanonkink.livejournal.com/7561.html?thread=7660681#t7660681

Eternally grateful to LaEmperatrizMariana for beta-ing this fic.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

The dwarf planet Ucruna, the latest celestial body fortunate enough to join the Decepticon Empire, had four suns that shed their light down on the planet’s blistered surface. There was no true “night” here. Yet not a ray of that omnipresent light was shining in the windowless command room where the conquerors sat—where most of them sat, anyway.

Starscream was standing, his shrill voice echoing off the command center walls, his blue fingers splayed on the table as he leaned over to be better heard by their leader.

Or so Shockwave surmised, as he stared at the Seeker in his usual horrified fascination. Was the mech under the impression their audials were damaged? There was no reason to express oneself at such a volume otherwise. Shockwave’s brief foray into psychological research (he had undertook the sufficient amount to ensure he could obtain adequate cooperation between mech resources, and to reach a satisfactory level of mutual comprehensibility with other mechs) indicated that increased speech volume levels beyond the base rate, tended to create negative emotions in mechs and had high probabilities of alienating them, rather than convincing them to align them to cooperate.

Shockwave turned his one optic towards Megatron, who validated the data by reacting with his own raised voice, his fists slamming the table as he hotly negated Starscream’s statements on the usefulness of the local enslaved civilization. All indications of an anger-reaction aroused far beyond what would be logical simply based on the content of Starscream’s statements. The “snide tone” that Megatron accused the Seeker of taking, the increased volume, had to be major components.

Shockwave didn’t understand it. His leader’s logic was generally sound, if simplistic and sometimes warped by emotional whims. If Starscream so frequently created negative reactions in their leader, why did Megatron not simply rid himself of the annoying Seeker? Megatron’s arguments with Starscream almost never resulted in a favorable outcome. And Starscream’s treacherous and contradictory actions usually evenly negated his talents and expertise, in the long run. There were several candidates for the position that would produce a higher net gain in productivity and success than Starscream.

Yet Megatron had reacted with anger and suspicion when Shockwave had, early in the war, made the entirely logical suggestion that he be replaced with Acid Storm or Thundercracker. The two often baffled him. He had considered undertaking a deeper research into Cybertronian psychology to better understand them, but the opportunity cost was always too high: it would not raise his own success rates enough to make it worth taking time from other projects that would contribute more to the cause.

Across the table, Soundwave waited in patient silence for the exchange of verbal blows to end, his visor calm but alert in case the blows became physical and he might need to step in in defense of their beloved leader.

Soundwave, at least, could be counted on to increase the net productivity of these meetings—as well as nearly every other project or action he was involved in. Never irrational or emotional, steadfastly loyal to the cause without question, and competent and skilled in his area of expertise. His objectives aligned with Shockwave’s 98.2% of the time, and their mutual cooperation increased their chances of success. Their productivity rates increased exponentially the longer they worked together.

Soundwave was an extremely predictable factor in Shockwave’s life. Others might have used the more emotional term “reliable” to describe the mech, but to Shockwave they were much the same.
Predictable was good. Predictable allowed you to make plans and be certain they would reach fruition. Predictable did not baffle, or puzzle, or require extra processing power or time to understand. Soundwave was highly logical: his actions and words made sense, flowed from one another in understandable patterns that were orderly and efficient, chosen to raise probability of success and to maximize productivity in order to reach their goal.

Soundwave was a veritable rock in the stormy sea of the Decepticon Army, although Shockwave would never think of him (or anything else) in such a poetic and imprecise manner.

It was then, in the nanokliks when a null ray missed Megatron’s gray plating by half a mechanometer, and a clenching black fist decidedly did not miss the elegant wing it plunged toward, that Shockwave made up his mind. It was not an impulse triggered by the highly charged events of the command room, but rather the inevitable conclusion of the cost-benefit analysis he had been running in the background of his processor for several orns now. When you worked with a mech for a millennia of vorns, you had a lot of data to sift through.

There was no sudden jerking of Shockwave’s helm in an “A-ha!” gesture. Nor did his single yellow optic glow brighter. Yet deep inside, unnoticed by him, his calm, logical spark flared just slightly, throwing off a little more warmth. The temperature variance was less then 0.0002 degrees, and thus was within stable operating parameters, and thus, did not trigger an alert in Shockwave’s processor.

And yet it was logged.

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The door to Soundwave’s quarters slid open nanoklicks after the doorbell was pressed, the bland, neutral chime still sounding throughout the room from the mech’s initial press. Most mechs that sought him simply knocked, although very few Decepticons ever visited Soundwave in his den. Soundwave had been notified of Shockwave’s incipient approach long before the big purple mech was in sight of the door. Shockwave was not categorized as a threat, but as a member of high command he was always a person of interest, and his uncharacteristic deviation of his usual path—from laboratory to staff meetings, to laboratory and back, with few variations—was enough to catch the attention of the Cassettes’ monitoring the video feeds.

Now Soundwave stared, impassive, at Shockwave’s equally blank visage in the doorway. Polite, monotone greetings were exchanged and Shockwave was offered a seat at the small table in Soundwave’s quarters. Soundwave did not bother initiating small-talk: he did not feel the need for it and knew that Shockwave likewise did not care to waste time on empty activities.

So once they were seated, he said, with no rudeness intended and none perceived, “Shockwave: state purpose.”

“I have a proposal I wish to make to you.” Shockwave said, laying a datapad on the table and pushing it towards Soundwave.

Soundwave picked up the datapad, powering it on. His curiosity was awoken: were it any other Decepticon coming to him about a “proposal” he would suspect an invitation to join in treachery; Shockwave, however, had always been as faultlessly loyal as himself, and seemed to have little desire for power for its own sake. Soundwave’s optics scanned the documents on the datapad thoroughly, noting that they seemed to be little more than comparative analysis of production and success rates on various projects of Shockwave’s, Soundwave’s, and of one’s they collaborated together on.

“Point: taken. Shockwave and Soundwave have high rates of success when working together. What
“While my proposal may seem unexpected, given that the usual precursors to such a relationship are absent, I would like to propose...a sparkbond, between you and I.” Shockwave said.

Soundwave froze. It was not noticeable, since he wasn’t an expressive mech. He stared at Shockwave blankly. His cassette expressed his emotions perfectly however.

A loud “WHAT?” came from the berth where Frenzy had been feigning recharge.

Soundwave invented a cycle of air. “Shockwave: repeat?” he said finally.

“I would like to propose a sparkbond.” Shockwave said.

From anyone else, Soundwave might have suspected a joke. Yet his telepathy detected no hint of humor or mischief coming from the large purple mech across from him. Only serious, calm earnestness.

“There are many benefits to such a relationship,” Shockwave continued, “and virtually no negative side-effects.”

Frenzy stormed over to the table, hopping right up on the surface and placing himself between the two mechs.

“Why would the boss wanna bond to YOU, One-Eye?” Frenzy demanded, putting his hands on his tiny hips and leaning into the scientist’s personal space.

Shockwave did not seem put out by the reaction. He had anticipated it.

“Frenzy: desist.” Soundwave said.

“Hmph.” Frenzy hopped off the table. “And I thought you were s’posed to be all logical. Coming in here with a crazy marriage proposal...you’re outta your circuits.” he muttered, stalking back over to the berth. He sat on it and glared at Shockwave.

Shockwave began making his case. “The benefits, that the little one inquired of, are many. We would have an increased ability to collaborate on a larger number of projects, which would contribute to an overall greater rate of success for the Decepticon Army, and higher rates of productivity in many sectors.”

Soundwave listened, not yet convinced. Although he was not a sentimental mech, a sparkbond was a deep thing, a serious commitment, that tied a mech to another for their entire lives, with few exceptions. They could be privy to one another’s thoughts and emotions, and their fates would be seriously intertwined. Killing one would likely kill the other, and if Soundwave died, his cassettes would follow him.

Shockwave continued on. “As communications head, I am sure you can fully appreciate the benefits a sparkbond would bring. Communication between members of high command is essential. With us often being separated by vast distances of space, an unbreakable line of communication between two distant members of high command would be invaluable.”

Soundwave tilted his head, listening. Shockwave wasn’t wrong. He was also due to ship out in two weeks, back to Cybertron to serve as governor while the rest of the Decepticon military continued to expand Decepticon interstellar control. Breakdowns in the lines of communication, even temporary ones, could have devastating effects on logistical and military coordination. That was part of why
Soundwave was so valuable an officer.

“Proposition: dangerous. Death of one sparkmate: mutually fatal. Damage to Cause if both extinguish, irreparable.”

Shockwave’s single yellow optic gleamed at him. Soundwave suspected he’d anticipated Soundwave’s objection, and was pleased the conversation was following the course he’d formulated. It was not going to go the way he’d planned though, and Soundwave was glad at least, that Shockwave disdained emotional reactions and would not react badly to being rejected, or hold a grudge.

“It’s true that one sparkmate’s death often follows another. There are many factors that outweigh that risk however.

The risk of one dying along with their sparkmate can be mitigated greatly by an action that is known both in popular wisdom and proven in case studies: the openness of the bond at the time of death and the synchronicity of the sparks both increase the chances of mutual fatality. We could greatly reduce the possibility of mutual death simply by keeping the bond closed in times of great personal danger, and by not synchronizing our sparks frequently through sparkmerging.”

“Soundwave: would like to see data.” he said.

“Of course. I am sending you my complete data packet on it now, with a summation of the most relevant studies.” Shockwave said.

Soundwave was immediately greeted by the ping of a data packet to his HUD, and initiated download and decryption of it.

“In regards to the Cause, my estimations show that the death of either one of us, singular, would cause equally irreparable damage to the Decepticon Cause as a plural, mutual death would cause. We are both literally irreplaceable; the chances of the Cause surviving the absence of either of us for long are terrifyingly low.”

Now that was worrying to hear.

“However, my calculations indicate that a sparkbond between us, and the increased cooperation and communication it would allow, would serve to increase our chances of each of us surviving the war. A sparkbond between us would increase chances of preserving and advancing the Cause, not destroy it.” Shockwave paused. “I will send you a packet of the data and algorithms used to calculate the risk, so that you may assess its validity. Do you have any further questions?”

Soundwave couldn’t believe he was actually considering it. But no dishonesty was detected from Shockwave, and Soundwave knew the scientist was skilled and logical enough to have decided on such a course of action only if it really were a good, mutually beneficial decision. He would still assess the data. And get input from his cassettes.

“Shockwave: aware of symbiote bonds?” Soundwave asked. His cassettes were part of the package. He had many would-be suitors and even past lovers who had been unable to accept that the cassettes were part of the family, and had to be just as accepted and cared for as Soundwave was.

“I am fully aware of the nature of symbiote bonds and of the relationship between a host and their cassettes. Your cassettes’ safety and well-being would be as much of a concern to me as you yourself would be.” Shockwave said.

That was a relief. Soundwave had one other concern. It was not a deal breaker, but was certainly a
factor.

“Shockwave: would expect interfacing?”

“We could engage in interfacing if you desired it. I have no need for interfacing myself.”

“Soundwave: similarly inclined.”

Soundwave could feel a soft wave of approval from Shockwave. The other mech’s emotions were always muted, low-intensity things, but they were there.

“I would expect our relationship to change very little, the exception being the aforementioned benefits like the increased ability to collaborate, and a greater investment in each other’s survival.”

Soundwave nodded, showing his understanding. “Shockwave: should expect answer within the orn.” Soundwave said.

Shockwave rose from his seat. “Thank you for hearing me out, Soundwave. I hope that you will come to the only logical conclusion.” with that, he walked out the door.

Before the door swooshed close behind him, he heard an aggrieved cassette wailing,

“You can’t possibility be considering it, boss!”.
Chapter 2

Deep in the bowels of Decepticon flagship, in a cramped, dark room far away from prying eyes, yet containing the most prying of all eyes, was Soundwave. He sat hunched over the terminal, the bright screen light casting a glare on his visor and faceplate. He was not alone in his lonely work. Ravage lay coiled at his feet, half in a doze, enjoying her off shift.

Her calm, contented mood soothed Soundwave’s unsettled one. He was still working over the positives and negatives of Shockwave’s offer as he worked. No matter how often he tore his mind off it to better focus on the routine tasks he was performing, his mind would inevitably drift back to it, probing it like a glossa would a sore, loose denta. Even though he had already decided to turn the mech down.

The math might check out. The decision might be the best on paper. But it was still tying himself to another mech for eternity. One might think that Soundwave, a mech who had always been bonded to several mechs, would be unmoved by the commitment of adding another, but if anything, it made him more wary. His decision would impact all of them. And Shockwave, unlike his cassettes, had been a full, independent mech for many vorns, existing without bond or family.

How adding such a mech would affect the careful balance that existed in his little family, Soundwave could not predict. Soundwave was the leader of his little group, but he could not lead Shockwave, who would be in an equal.

No, he decided firmly, as his hands danced over the console keys, he would have to invite Shockwave into his quarters later. For a firm rejection. At his feet, Ravage cracked one optic open, the red light cast on Soundwave’s metal showing her a distorted reflection of her own amused faceplates.

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The invitation to his quarters, short but polite, had been sent out. But when Shockwave knocked at the Communication Officer’s door, no one answered. The purple mech cast his one optic around the ship’s hallway, searching for any evidence that would explain why he was getting no response. Of all the probabilities he had formulated for how this encounter would go, a complete absence of any mech in Soundwave’s quarters had not even made the list of real possibilities. Soundwave was on time for his appointments 98.6% of the time.

He waited a suitable amount of time (two minutes, which might seem short, but he was a very busy mech) and then turned around and, in a rare state of perplexity, began walking back to the labs on the lower deck.

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It seemed to have been pure bad luck that put the Autobot guerrillas on a path through the same village where Rumble and Frenzy had been laying communications cable. There had been a small contingent of Decepticon grunts with them, but the only trouble anyone had expected was from the still restive native population. There was no evidence yet that the local population had collaborated with the guerrillas to have them sabotage the communication team’s efforts.

Soundwave hadn’t interrogated the natives personally though. Yet. He had been en route to the scene as soon as word got to him—and it had came to him first. The local flora and atmosphere served to dampen signals and that area, not yet upgraded, kept calls for backup from getting out through the Decepticon’s comm units.
Rumble and Frenzy, however, had something far more reliable and unbreakable than a comm suite. They had the symbiont bond, which they used to alert Soundwave as soon as it became clear that there would be no response through traditional channels.

Soundwave had wasted no time in getting to his imperiled cassettes, yet by the time he arrived on the scene with backup, the battle had already been won—at great cost. The Autobot guerrillas had been decimated, only a few bloody survivors fleeing back into the shelter of the strange mossy woods to bother the Decepticons again one day. The rest had been slaughtered. Yet no few Decepticon bodies lay bleeding out and lifeless among them.

For such a small action, the aftermath was extremely gory, puddles of energon drying in the harsh overhead sunlight, severed and crushed limbs laying not far from their original owners. They had fought bitterly. But Soundwave had no time to reflect on the atrocities of war, wouldn’t even waste precious nanokliks stepping around sticky puddles or grayed out corpses. He strode on, pink splashing at the bottom of his pedes now and then, droplets splattering his legs, until he came to where his very spark was calling him, singing with emotion through the symbiote bond.

It wasn’t Rumble’s emotion though, Rumble’s panic and terror and rush of whirled thoughts. It was Frenzy, who looked up as Soundwave rounded a corner, half-hidden by fallen bodies. His panic-filled visor lit up on seeing his Host, but his hands didn’t so much as twitch. They remained rock steady, buried in Rumble’s chest, pressed against his mercifully unconscious twin’s spark chamber.

Soundwave could see the light of a spark glowing on Frenzy’s small arms, reflecting off his metal, and his own spark trembled.

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The hours passed glacially slow. Soundwave stood outside the medbay doors, his face and body arranged in his usual stoic, self-controlled manner. Not a hint of the inner turmoil that roiled within him could be seen. His symbionts better revealed the little group’s mood: downcast faceplates, drooping beaks, and downturned tails were apparent.

Soundwave ruthlessly went over the details of the mission and the known facts about the area in an attempt to discern where he could have done better, what he could have done to have prevented his symbiont from being so endangered.

There was nothing, but that soothed Soundwave not at all. The fact that they were at war and that Soundwave could only minimize risks so much, take so many steps to protect his symbionts, did nothing to stop the waves of guilt pouring from his spark at the sight of Rumble, tiny and nearly lifeless.

If he were a religious mech, he would have prayed. But he was not. Primus, if he existed, did not step forward to perform miracles or save his creations from peril. And so he might as well not exist. Soundwave did not miss the uncomfortable parallel with his own situation. He was powerless to step in and save Rumble. That power lay in Hook’s impersonal, perfectionist hands.

The medbay doors swished open, and Hook stepped out. His vaguely annoyed expression told Soundwave nothing. He could be irritated because of the Host-Cassette family crowding the medbay entrance, or because he’d just nicked the weakened laser core of the high-risk patient on the operating table. Soundwave knew Rumble could not have passed yet, because the pain that would have torn through the bond network could not be blocked, but that didn’t mean Rumble was in the clear.
His visor somehow managed to convey both hope and dread to the Constructicon across from him.

“He’s stabilized.” Hook said, his voice almost seeming to begrudge the Casseticon his recovery.

Soundwave didn’t care. At that point, Hook could have did a handstand and pledged allegiance to Optimus Prime, and he wouldn’t have noticed. His joints, locked with the tension, weakened in relief.

“You can see him now.” Hook said.

Soundwave followed him into the medbay, doors swooshing shut behind him. The cassettes stayed behind, their red eyes glinting in the gloominess of the hall at any passerby, as they guarded the entrance. They had no need to follow behind their Host; they could see all that he could see.

Rumble was weak. He lay in the berth in Soundwave’s quarters, unable to move more than a pathetic wiggle a few inches in each direction. His spark chamber was still healing, the patched section slathered in nanites to promote quickened healing. Regrowing that large a section of the chamber would take a long time to fully heal.

It would be medically advisable, under most circumstances, for Rumble to remain in the medbay, with specialized equipment and medical staff readily on hand should his condition change. But Soundwave considered the medbay far too vulnerable a location for an extended stay. Soundwave did not make needless enemies, but his position and the disloyal plans of others ensured even a solitary mech like himself had plenty of people wanting to bury an energon blade in his back—and the best way to do that would be by taking out one of his cassettes. No other wound could be so disabling.

So he had been moved, at Soundwave’s insistence, back to their own room, which was marginally less boring to the small mech than the medbay would be. Hey, at least there was TV.

And juicy conversations between members of High Command. Rumble was too weak to sit up (and boy, did that burn, although at least Frenzy was still too shocked and relieved to tease him about it.) but if he rolled his optical focus all the way to the left, he could make out the blue and purple forms of Soundwave and Shockwave sitting at the small table in the room.

What was up? Were Starscream and Shockwave in another war against each other for scientific funding, and the Cyclops was fishing for Soundwave’s support? Rumble’s audios perked up when he heard Soundwave mention a “previous offer”. Now what was that about?

“So, soundwave: has considered previous offer.” the blue Host droned out.

“Yes?” Shockwave said, leaning forward slightly.

“Soundwave: will accept.”

“So, I knew you would come to the logical conclusion.” Shockwave said. His one golden optic glowed with approving happiness.

“Hey, Boss, what’s this offer?” Rumble commed to Soundwave. Soundwave duly ignored it.

“So, suggestion: finalize arrangement in Shockwave’s quarters. Interruptions: less likely.” Soundwave said to Shockwave.
“Interruptions” meant Cassettes—they all knew it.

Rumble started comming the other cassettes, he couldn't stand being left out of the loop (none of them could). Ravage's response was a loud snarl, and a rudely abrupt closing of the comm line. Buzzsaw and Laserbeak simply sent back little pings, a sort of "acknowledged, but I can't talk right now". All of Rumble's siblings were engaged in surveillance or in maintenance of the communications equipment. Frenzy was doing the latter.

"What do you want bro? I'm trying to get this slaggin' transmitter working again." Frenzy grumbled down the line, frustration evident in his voice, but willing to put his work aside for a moment for his nearly-dead brother.

"What's this 'offer' Shockwave is making to Soundwave?" Rumble asked, still eaten up with curiosity.

Frenzy stilled. "Offer?" he asked slowly.

"Don't tell me you don't know!" Rumble wailed. Or at least tried to. He didn't really have the energy for a wail. It was more of a plaintive whine.

"What did he say about this offer?" Frenzy asked. "I thought the Boss wasn't considering it anymore."

"He said he accepted it," Rumble said impatiently, "now what is it?" he demanded.

But his curiosity was destined to go unsatisfied, as the line dropped with a click.

A half a mile from the Decepticon flag ship, a small red and gray mech dropped a pair of pliers to the ground with a curse, and began pelting towards the Decepticon headquarters at top speed.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

I actually feel like this is the weakest chapter of the story, since it's so low in action (and most people seem to dislike writing that is too heavy in introspection/thoughts).

I'd also like to warn for a very small part of the chapter possibly seeming/being dubcon/noncon. It didn't occur to me when I wrote it, so I didn't add it to the overall warnings. I thought I'd mention it so no one gets an unpleasant surprise. I can adjust the fic warnings if people feel it's warranted.

Shockwave's quarters were roughly the same size as Soundwave's, but seemed much larger. It wasn't just the absence of five lively Casseticons sharing the quarters—the sheer lack of stuff in Shockwave's room made it seem bigger. The relatively spacious room of a highly-ranked officer practically echoed with the emptiness, the only objects being a starkly bare large-sized berth and a data terminal with dust on its keys.

Soundwave was unsurprised. From past surveillance, he knew that Shockwave spent most of his time in his lab, and used his personal quarters only for sleeping. He followed Shockwave to the berth, and sat beside the mech that would soon be his partner for all eternity. The whole thing seemed so unreal that it was hard to be nervous, but Soundwave managed. He ignored the nervousness as he unlatched his spark chamber, while Shockwave did the same with his own. Neither mech needed unnecessary words, and their wordless synchronicity reassured Soundwave. They were not the same, but they were usually on the same page. As one, they leaned forward, their sparks drawing ever closer. Pale blue and white lines began to crackle across their sparks' surface as their chestplates pressed flush against each other. There was no need to demonstrate passion with excess force; their passion was reserved for advancing science and protecting their family (respectively, and now, together) and for advancing the Cause—not for fleeting bits of pleasure shared with another mech.

As their essences mingled together, everything became hazy and confusing, if pleasant. Soundwave's protectiveness towards his family became Shockwave's protectiveness towards his own creations and experiments; Shockwave's intense curiosity, bent toward the world around him, melded with Soundwave's own Host instinct to seek out information. A calmness born of a low emotional range blended with a calmness derived from a perfect control over intense emotions.

And Shockwave, what part of him he could distinguish as Shockwave, gasped in wonder at this new discovery. He had always associated strong emotions with poor self-control and illogical reactions. But Soundwave, a mech who he had always assumed was like himself, a creature of few strong feelings, was precisely the opposite. He felt so strongly, even now, but did not let his emotions rule him.

To have such logic and control in the face of such intense emotional feelings was even more impressive! Truly, he had chosen wisely in pursuing Soundwave as a life partner. His satisfaction sent tendrils of pleasure through the spark he was connected to. Soundwave let out a gentle, monotone hum at it. Shockwave's inner thoughts and feelings weren't a surprise for him the way his own had been for Shockwave, but Shockwave had a soft, low-grade warmth in his spark, in his very
being, that Soundwave hadn't expected.

Shockwave may have been a mech who eschewed pleasure and emotions in favor of cold logic and efficiency, but he was not a cold mech. He thrummed with a very intense drive, a dedication that would never—could never—die. The well of his curiosity was deep and unending, the pleasure in knowing, in finding, just in seeking (for seeking in itself gave some knowing) rang very true to Soundwave, who could never understand how mechs could be indifferent to knowledge offered. Knowledge could be the difference between your survival or your death, or that of your loved ones. It could give you power over another mech.

Shockwave felt warm, steady, intensely curious, cautious and considering. Soundwave didn't feel an iota of cruelty or brutality in the mech. Sadism was just another illogical, meaningless pleasure in Shockwave's eyes, a thing that offered no temptation in itself. Soundwave did not doubt Shockwave was capable of any number of things that would sicken even many of the more bloodthirsty and vicious of the Decepticons—images flashed before his eyes, some pulled from Shockwave's memories, some from his own, of twisted, mutilated creatures who's eyes and minds screamed out in pain, begging for a merciful end, of Autobots (and a few Decepticons) that wound up on the ends of experiments where results were all that mattered, and the suffering of a few was irrelevant (and concern for it, deemed illogical). Entire species subjugated or destroyed to obtain access to scientifically necessary rare materials.

Soundwave saw all this and accepted it. His own sins were brought to mind but Shockwave was not concerned by them. The flow of memories and emotions pushed the pleasure even higher. It seemed perverse to get heightened enjoyment from such disturbing memories but Soundwave knew it could have been memories of anything: distilling energon, cleaning waste buckets, watching a news program, and it would have sped up the data flow, pushed the energy exchange higher, deepened the merge.

Thoughts mixed together, of pleasures (approval for a new experiment, the sound of Ravage purring at his feet) of concern (disappointing data results, a severely wounded symbiont) and it was hard to tell which belonged to which, or which mech WAS which mech. Weren't they one and the same? The bond was beginning to form, a connection in one's mind and spark, someone else's thoughts, someone else's feelings, always in the corner of one's mind if not in the forefront. For Soundwave it was much like when a new Cassette was being formed, the newly developing mind and soul beginning to anchor to Soundwave's, only this was happening much more rapidly.

For Shockwave, it was a much more alarming (and exhilarating!) experience.

His mind had always been his own, his thoughts locked in isolation. He had never heard another's thoughts or felt another's emotions bleeding into his own. He had nothing to prepare him for the experience, and his vents heaved as he struggled to process the dual existence. The experience of another mind, seeing all the things he did, hearing the sounds he did, learning the facts he did, but processing, thinking, planning, feeling, in an entirely different manner, thoughts Shockwave would never have had springing to the surface of his/their mind. It was overwhelming. It could not be borne. He struggled instinctively to free himself from the disorienting experience. To bond had been a logically sound decision, but one could not risk one's sanity!

He tried to pull himself together to break apart from the merge, but he couldn't seem to become him again. Dizzingly, he could see himself, his own perpetually blank expression and steadily glowing golden optic, through Soundwave's two optics, while simultaneously looking at Soundwave from his usual vantage. He finally managed to flail himself nearly off the berth, but Soundwave's strong, steady arms wrapped around his chassis and secured him tightly against the blue mech's open chest.
A thin undercurrent of panic pulsed underneath the confused, yet coldly calculating remnants of his singular mind. Until a tingling wave of very warm, soothing energy seemed to sweep through his every atom. It was like having a thick blanket thrown around one's shoulders, and a cup of heated spiced energon thrust into one's hands. Soothing. Soundwave stared steadily at him. Thoughts seemed to accompany the wave of calm emotions. He could almost hear Soundwave. He could hear Soundwave.

"Bond: will soon be complete. Disengaging now: potentially fatal." he sounded monotone even in Shockwave's mind.

Soundwave concentrated on sending warm and pleasant, calming emotions through the growing bond to his confused and upset new bondmate. He should have realized how unprepared Shockwave would be for the bonding experience: for a solitary mech who thought in a clear, linear fashion and sought logical comprehension of everything. To lose his very ability to think as he always had, even if temporarily, would be unusually upsetting.

"Sending feelings, thoughts, memories: speeds formation of bond." Soundwave said.

He was straining his own formidable mental skills to keep memories and real-time thoughts from slipping through the bond to Shockwave and further overwhelming him.

"Suggestion: cease attempts to understand bonding process, concentrate efforts on mutual exchange of energy and data.

Shockwave could only emphasize his bafflement through the thickening bond (and how did one *do that*? It felt like pushing something, as if his mind or spark was shoving the emotion into Soundwave).

"If experience intolerable, only logical response to end it as quickly as possible." Soundwave reminded him. An appeal to logic usually worked well with Shockwave—so long as one were correct.

Shockwave could not conceive of not trying to understand, to learn more, about any unknown process he witnessed, but he could recognize that Soundwave was correct. As it stood he could barely withstand the onslaught, and his chances of reaching a significant breakthrough in understanding the bonding process during his own personal bonding experience were extremely low. Even worse, the data would be tainted by bias and fundamentally flawed.

Repeating that to himself once (any further repetitions would have diminishing returns and be pointless) he cycled his vents (core temperature had skyrocketed) and cautiously sent his sense of agreement through to Soundwave (he would not try to understand it; he would not.)

Soundwave sent warm encouragement pulsing back, and Shockwave tried to ignore that he could simultaneously both feel the action of sending the emotion as well as that of him receiving it. Feeling a little more in control, he decided to risk stepping up the intensity by progressing to memory exchange once more. What would be the most advantageous memories to share? Since the symbionts ranked very highly in his new mate's priorities, and thus now much higher in his own, it would behoove him to collect more data on them. He focused on that sense of inquiry about them, expecting Soundwave to pick up on it. After all, Soundwave could read his thoughts even without a bond, a useful skill that Shockwave was happy to have more readily at his disposal.

Soundwave did receive the thought, and was pleased with it. His symbionts were his pride and joy after all. Details about his beloved creations were only withheld from others for their own safety. Otherwise he would have kept a strip of holovids with him, happy to show any stranger their
sparkling photos. Wasn't little Laserbeak just adorable, taking her first durillium dust bath?

He sent a memory of that washing across the bond, and the significance of it mystified Shockwave. He supposed it was an important step to independence and life stage growth? His single optic blinked in confusion. There was more that Soundwave was pressing through the bond. An odd energy passed through it, a feeling of emotions that seemed alien and independent from the mech who's spark was pressed into his. It felt like watchfulness, an alert, searching sensation. The dim, lonely room illuminated by sparkglow faded from his view and in its place he could see the bright, hot light outside, eliminating shadows on the ground far below, where only his own (???) small shadow of outstretched wings darkened the ground.

A dusty wind blew through the native fauna, and sent his feather platelets ruffling pleasantly. And then he was back in the room, the red glow of Soundwave's visor staring at him in concern. He could feel it in Soundwave's spark, worry that he had pushed too far.

Shockwave sent negation. He was pleased, no matter how disconcertingly strange the experience was. The potential there was extremely high. The possibilities!

"Shockwave: will meet all symbionts eventually." Soundwave said.

Shockwave knew what he meant: he would eventually meet all the symbionts mind-to-mind, through the bond they all shared with Soundwave.

There wasn't time now. Shockwave could feel the wet warm liquid pooling beneath his aft, lubricants leaking from his hot tingling valve, and from Soundwave's above his. Their sparks were pulsing quicker now, the "pleasure" waves more intense. Shockwave supposed that it was what mechs called pleasurable, that it was the sensations that mechs sought in interface. To him it was just an odd kind of pressure and physical changes, of different rates of intensity.

His body seemed to instinctively crave an increase an intensity, which would eventually lead to overload, but it meant nothing to Shockwave. He sensed no significant interest in the sexual arousal coursing through their bodies from Soundwave. He knew that the mech he'd chosen as his bondmate seemed to be similarly disinclined to recreational sex, but was it the same for him? Curious, he formulated his thoughts into a cohesive logical inquiry, and pushed it to Soundwave.

It was not the same. But it was very similar. Soundwave was as indifferent to sexual desire as Shockwave was, but he sent across the bond his greater affection for interfacing. It seemed he was capable of deriving enjoyment from the act in the form of appreciating the pleasure he induced in his partner. Memories of Soundwave driving his occasional rare partner to screaming overload floated across the bond. Strangely, Soundwave seemed to be enjoying himself in those memories, instead of feeling irritation at the pointless waste of time. Perhaps his bondmate's telepathy was the differentiating factor, or his higher social-emotional needs.

"Interfacing: also needed to create symbionts." Soundwave said, his voice staticky.

"Indeed. If being used for its original purpose, procreation, it is not a waste of time." Shockwave agreed.

If Soundwave responded aloud, he didn't hear it, for Shockwave was lost in a blur of shared memories as a particularly powerful wave of spark energy coursed into his own core. He tried to maintain coherency but all thought seemed to be lost as his spark thrummed too loudly to ignore. Above him he heard Soundwave cry out, as his mate seemed to be experiencing similar waves of intensity.
As his optic stuttered out and everything faded to darkness, he seemed to feel something clicking into place inside his mind, like a padlock snapping home and securing a door to its frame, forever.

~

The door panels snapped open, responding to Shockwave's own entry code. How Frenzy had gotten that, Soundwave did not know. He had thought that knowledge carefully sequestered in his own mind. He supposed it didn't matter; there were few systems that could keep his symbionts out.

"Wow, you really smoked Cyclop's circuits, didn't ya?"

Soundwave did not look up from where he was draping a cooling blanket around his bondmate's smoking chassis. He would not encourage such crassness by agreeing, but he had never had a partner overload so strongly as to literally catch on fire.

Frenzy was making gagging noises at the sight of Shockwave's still cracked open chestplates, where his spark now pulsed peacefully and evenly.

"Close that up, will ya? Ychhh."

Soundwave leveled a short, disapproving stare at his young offspring (maybe no one else could tell, but his symbionts could definitely read his expressions) and then gently and almost reverently closed his sparkmate's chestplates.

Frenzy groaned. "I can't believe this. Married...to One-Eye!"

"Frenzy: currently stationed on repair duty in quadrant four." Soundwave said.

He stood up from the berth.

"Please tell me you're not goin' to be banging sparks every day!" Frenzy begged.

"Frenzy, must return to work." Soundwave said. He knelt down to be at eye level with his symbiont. Bonding, bringing a new family member in, was a momentous occasion and some upset and irregularity in schedule could be excused. But they could not falter in their duty to Lord Megatron, in their devotion to the Cause. He laid one hand gently on Frenzy's shoulder, pulling the mech toward him and out of his rant.

"Okay, alright. But you gotta promise me one thing." Frenzy said.

"Promise: will be made if feasible." Soundwave said. He was curious what was in his symbiont's mind: he had already cemented the bond to Shockwave and it could not be undone. Frenzy's big red eyes looked up at him beseechingly.

"No, absolutely no, pet names. Please?" Frenzy begged.

Beneath his battlemask, his mouth curved up in a smile. "No pet names." Soundwave agreed. He stood up and headed towards the door, Frenzy following.

"Great!" Frenzy said. "So if I hear you calling him 'Shockykins' or 'my big purple love blaster' we're done. Rumble can take his piledrivers to your fraggin' processor if that starts--"

The door swooshed shut behind them, leaving a still-smoking Shockwave on the berth behind them, big purple aft beginning to stick to the berth from the drying lubricants.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the chapter repost, any subscribers that got double-notifications. Unfortunately, this chapter seemed to fall prey to the weird Ao3 bug wherein a chapter doesn't show up -_- hopefully it will now.

The years passed quickly, new campaigns opening and ending, battlefronts blooming on new planets while old ones were left behind, discarded as no longer tactically significant. New weapons were developed, increases in energon refining technology were made, seemingly endless communications towers built on planets across the galaxies, while old ones rusted into disrepair.

Life continued on, as if eternal. And so did the war, as if it had no beginning and no end, but had always been there, been their way of life.

But in between the mundanities and battles there was: an exchange of short nods, of professional respect and warmth, in the hallways of the flagship. A cassette lurking in the ductwork above Shockwave's lab, waiting to nail Starscream in the back of the helm with laser fire, when the enraged Seeker rose his null rays to Shockwave's turned back. Endless streams of data and information passing between distances that spanned galaxies, all without a time delay or the need to generate signals that an Autobot spy could intercept. Countless times Soundwave expressed support for funding Shockwave's proposed experiments, rather than Starscream's (why reward a traitorous commander when there were loyal ones, who could be trusted not to keep important developments secret for their own sake? It was only, as his bondmate Shockwave would say, logical.)

There was the quiet retrieval of a downed cassette during the Battle of Sherma Bridge, when almost all combatants had (illogically) ceased their fire to watch their leaders duke it out. Not Shockwave though, or Soundwave, who, although in a near panic, had forced himself to remain in place, covering their leader's back, should any sneaky Autobot decide to forgo honor and step in to help their Prime. Even though his spark and coding screamed at him to seek his wounded cassette. He had a bondmate, a sparkmate he could trust to care for his own.

It was a good thing that all optics were on the epic one-on-one battle taking place, because no one, Decepticon or Autobot, would have believed their eyes had they seen the large, purple, emotionless Decepticon scientist kneel on the energon-stained concrete and administer precise first aid to a very still, bleeding, csetticon. Had they witnessed him subspacing the small unconscious mech, they would have assumed it was an abduction, that the unlucky cassette was to star in some of Shockwave's notorious experiments. Rather than what it was: the safekeeping of a member of the bond-network he belonged to, a "family" member.

But no optics saw. Together, with their quiet bond and even quieter affection, their stars rose in the Decepticon Army, and in Megatron's optics. Two loyal, quiet, sturdy pillars that helped hold up the entire Decepticon society. They lived to satisfy Megatron's whims and aimed never to vex him, and usually succeeded.

There was no downside in the calm and seemingly blessed arrangement they had, other than the continuing existence of the Autobots, but even that did not bother them. For the Autobots would fall one day, ground down like a glacier did to the rocky continents of so many planets. Even if it took
eons, it would happen. All logic predicted it, and by their own steadfast dedication, they would make it so.

All was ease and tranquility in their little bond group. Until the day it wasn't.

~

They were leaving Cybertron: Soundwave, Rumble, Frenzy, Buzzsaw, Laserbeak, Ravage, among many other decorated Decepticons as well as Megatron himself, to pursue the fleeing Prime and his Autobots. There was nothing that marked the orn as special. The planned interstellar pursuit and troop movements were not exceptional. Even the proud honor of being left behind to guard the planet in Megatron's absence was not truly unusual: Shockwave had been entrusted with that duty in the past.

Shockwave had duly watched over the planet, managing the troops stationed there, maintaining energon production (what there was of it) and continuing his scientific experimentation, for the orns, quartexes, and stellar cycles while Megatron was away. Once it had been for an entire deci-vorn.

Once the Ark left Cybertron's atmosphere, with the Decepticons following, there wasn't much to be done. The action was out in the stars, and Shockwave was in the command center, studying a report on declining energon production levels. A few threads of his processor were as always, devoted to his bond, feeling the calm steadiness of Soundwave and the cassettes flowing from it. It weakened as they flew further away, but could never disappeared entirely.

As he went about his orn on duty, collecting reports, delegating tasks, and checking on the curled and whimpering subjects in his lab, he barely noticed the bond. Even when rushing excitement began pouring from it, as his mate and the cassettes headed into battle, his only response was to tamp down on the bond somewhat so as to not be distracted by the emotions. He had, after all, estimated a 64% likelihood that they would engage the Autobot flagship within the orn.

He had settled down to drink his mid-orn energon while reviewing some lab results, when the bond suddenly flared wide, control lost on the other end throwing it fully open. Panic and fear poured through the bond, tasting of certain cassettes, while a steadfast yet concerned feel was definitely his mate, who did not lose control no matter the circumstances. Soundwave would pull the group together, Shockwave was certain of it. He stilled himself for a moment, waiting for his bondmate to regain control of the bond and soothe everyone back down to tolerable levels.

But the stabilization he was waiting for never came. Instead, there was pain. Pain, pain, pain, blooming in Shockwave's processor and spark like nothing before. And he could only fade into the darkness, dragged down with his bondmate.

~

When he onlined again, it was to utter confusion. There was something wet dripping onto his thighs. Optic stuttering back to full power, he glanced down. The energon cube he'd been sipping lay turned on its side on the table, the energon pooling into a puddle that was running off the table's surface. Judging by the rate of flow and viscosity, he had only lost conscious for less than a breem.

What had that been? He turned his prodigious processor to understanding the strange event that had just occurred. Had the bond broken? He was still alive, but distance and a variety of other factors meant that the probability of him surviving a bond snap was not unlikely. He sent a ping to a cleaning drone to report to his office, and began wiping his legs off with a rag. It was fortunate he was alone in his office when the incident occurred—such a thing would incur no small amount of speculation among his subordinates were it witnessed.
As the drone sucked up the energon splatters, Shockwave cautiously poked at the bond. It was like poking a dead, inanimate object. For the first time in the vorns since he’d first opened his chestplates to Soundwave, he could feel no emotion on the other side. No warm, steady presence linked to him. No symbionts, precise thoughts unheard but their busy, chattering little presences always linked to him through Soundwave. Absolutely nothing.

But the bond was there—he could feel it. Like a rope tied around him and still leading outward, it was still there. What did that mean? Was that how a broken bond felt? The literature on the matter was so imprecise, steeped in superstition and sentimentality, and inherently lacking because of the death of so many who’d experienced a bond breaking. Chillingly, some were reported to linger for orns after the initial break.

Shockwave did not know, and speculation without real, hard data, was pointless. He could only keep his promise to Lord Megatron and watch over Cybertron until he knew more. He anticipated the first communications from the Decepticon flagship within the week. There was a 97% chance of it. He would know then, what had happened to Soundwave and the cassettes. Lord Megatron would inform him of it.

But despite the high probability, no communication from the far off Decepticons ever came that week. Or the next. Enough time had passed then that Shockwave was no longer at risk from dying from the broken bond, if broken bond it was. But he still found himself oddly disquieted by the high probability that Soundwave was deceased. His concern made sense, he told himself. After all, if that had happened, the Decepticons chances of defeating the Autobots within the vorn had significantly declined.

As the weeks passed into quartexes into stellar cycles into deci-vorns, all without the simplest message or ping from the Decepticon flagship, the chances that Soundwave was alive continued to slide, as did the numbers on Megatron and the other Decepticons’ survival.

But there was no returning, triumphant Autobot flagship, to lead the Cybertronian Autobots in a renewed assault, heartened by a defeat of the Decepticon leader. And so some probability of their survival remained, no matter how low.

As the decivorns slid into vorns, and the vorns began to number in the millions, the probabilities of any of the ships' Decepticons' survival slid into such low decimals that scientific notation was required. Shockwave continued on, as steady and loyal as he always had been.

If Cybertron were a little quieter, if more drones walked the empty streets than did living, sparked mechs, he did not complain. If he had to shut down more mechs into stasis as the energon stores continued to drop, he did not complain. Lord Megatron would return with energon from his mission. Shockwave was certain of it, no matter how low the numbers.

He would wait. Until the end of time, or until he offlined from no energon, whichever came first, he would wait. For their Cause was righteous, so pure in its logic and intent, that to do otherwise was not a possibility that even existed for Shockwave.

He waited, on a dying, unchanging Cybertron, for a poke through a seemingly-dead bond, for a ping hailing from deep outer space, for a flagship returning, loaded heavy with energon stores, he waited.

Finally, something changed.
Chapter 5

One orn he onlined, on his cold and sterile berth, and immediately noticed that something was different within him. Suspicious, he pushed forward a meeting with his Chief Logistics Officer by a joor, and set a full diagnostic running. The setback in his schedule was unwanted, but could not be ignored. Medical problems or evidence of processor tampering could be dealt with most efficiently by heading them off from the start; letting a problem fester from inattention had yet to yield a superior solution in Shockwave's long vorns of experience.

Soon enough, the scan came back clean. There were a few file fragments, but all were incredibly minor, nothing that would spark this seemingly illogical sense that there was something off within him. But Shockwave was a mech of logic, and he was not inclined to flights of fancy or delusion. While he would not dismiss such a possibility (no one was immune from risks of processor decay, glitches, or psychological breakdowns) he was not yet ready to mark the strange sensation down to a failing processor. There were other possibilities. There were aspects of a mech that did not readily yield useful data to be picked up on a scan. The spark, for instance. This anomalous and unpredictable aspect of Cybertronian physiology had long been a fascination of Shockwave's. He would scan it, but first, he decided to perform a quick check of his bond. He slowly, cautiously pushed his awareness at the bond, expecting (with 99.3% certainty) that it would be the same empty, unresponsive dead-end it had been for the last millennia.

And it was. There was no perpetually calm, controlled presence on the other end, exuding its inquisitiveness and warmth.

But it wasn't the same as before. It felt almost like the bond between him and Soundwave was an extremely thick wall, and there was something moving on the other side of it. He pushed harder at the bond, seeking that movement, and blinked in surprise when something pushed back. Something was happening with the bond, and he did not yet have enough data to speculate as to the probable cause.

He adjusted the probability rate that Soundwave was alive by another 12 points, and rose to begin preparing for the day. If his spark was a little lighter as he scrubbed himself clean and headed off to the command center, his processor did not make note of it. It was not just the increased likelihood of his sparkmate's survival that made his spark raise that unnoticed 0.0002 degrees in temperature; the likelihood of Lord Megatron's survival had increased with that of his most trusted subordinate.

The chances of their survival had increased to a high enough level, and the amount of stored energon to low enough levels, that it was now acceptable to expend some of it on a long-range intergalactic message, attempting to hail his leader.

Deca-cycles, each one nearly identical to the previous one, passed, with no returning answer from his leader. He onlined one day, however, to a warm and pulsing reassurance through the bond, as if it had never left. Soundwave was online, and back. Why then, did no one respond to his calls? Soundwave was too busy to talk extensively through the bond, though he did inform Shockwave that they would be collecting energon to return to Cybertron.

Shockwave accelerated development of his space-bridge technology, working nearly til collapse each night. Short on recharge, energon levels nearly depleted with little to replenish them, he finally
staggered to the communications room to inform Lord Megatron of the project's completion.

It was done. Probabilities did not need to be calculated. He, never a mech of mindless faith, was absolutely certain his lord and his sparkmate would come through for him. Energon would be delivered to Cybertron, and its revival would begin. Transportation tests still had to be conducted, details worked out and planned, but they were minor things. His creative, analytical processor was already bubbling with ideas for new projects, new ways to increase the chances of their Cause's success, new ways to ensure his own survival and that of his esteemed leader and family.

He had one idea in his processor that he just knew would make his sparkmate thrum with that hot, happy pleased energy that he supposed was the "happiness" that so many mechs sought.

~

Despite communications and transportation resuming between the two Decepticon groups, many stellar cycles passed without Shockwave and his sparkmate laying optics on each other in person. Soundwave remained on Earth, and Shockwave remained in his role as Cybertron's guardian.

There was only communication through the bond, and through vid screen. Both satisfied Shockwave's needs perfectly. There was no logical reason for him to need to share the same physical space with his sparkmate. Yet his spark would send alerts to his processor, at inconvenient times (while dealing with a troublesome Starscream, or trying to concentrate on a complicated electrical design, and once while in the midst of transformation, startling him into mis-aligning a cog). The alerts urged him to merge sparks forthwith with Soundwave, as "sparkbond alignment was necessary".

Annoying, but not surprising. His research prior to bonding had informed him that such maintenance of the bond would likely be necessary, as even the strongest bond needed occasional reaffirmation. A bonded mech going four million years without merging was probably some kind of record.

He could arrange it with Soundwave. With 4 million years of active duty in his time log, he had built up more than enough vacation time to leave for Earth to spend a small amount of time with his bondmate. He normally scorned both "vacation" (what a pointless practice) and frivolously spending time with one's bondmate. With the plans he had in his processor, he would make both purposeful and efficient uses of time.

"Greetings, Soundwave." Shockwave said to the mech facing him on the screen. Laserbeak, perched on Soundwave's shoulder, gave a caw in greeting to the one-eyed mech.

"Greetings, Shockwave." Soundwave intoned at him.

"I hope you are in peak physical and emotional condition at this time." Shockwave said.

"Soundwave: fine." Soundwave said, confusion echoing through the bond but absent from the mech's voice. Shockwave wasting time on pleasantries and well wishes? Perhaps the four million years rusting alone on Cybertron had gotten to him!

"Excellent." Shockwave said. The beam of yellow light in his optics scrunched up slightly, as if the mech were smiling. "I am in good condition as well."

"That is: ...good." Soundwave said, finally.

"You might wonder why I am focusing on such things." Shockwave offered.
"Yes." Soundwave said. He had expected his bonded to begin discussing work-related topics immediately, as he usually did.

"It has come to my attention recently that the bond is in need of stabilization, after our long vorns apart." Shockwave said.

Soundwave sat silently for a moment, taking that in. "Soundwave can accompany next energon shipment to Cybertron." he offered.

"There is no need. I will come to you." Shockwave said.

"Shockwave: needed on Cybertron." Soundwave said.

"After four million years, I am due some vacation time." Shockwave said. "I can come to you, and we can spend a deca-cycle together."

Soundwave blinked. Shockwave, leave his post willingly to spend time with his bond-mate on Earth? Had the mech been hacked and reformatted by the Autobots?

"I can see you are surprised by my proposed dereliction of duty. I assure you, I have every intention of making my vacation time 'productive'." Shockwave said.

If Soundwave's mouth hadn't been covered by a battle guard, his jaw might have dropped. There had definitely been insinuating tones over that last word. Was Shockwave coming on to him? The mech really had changed in four million years!

On Soundwave's shoulder, Laserbeak was gleefully comming her fellow cassettes to inform them of what they were missing.

"Shockwave's in here promising three weeks of fragging!" she crowed over the comms.

"Get bent Beaky, there's no way." Rumble said.

Laserbeak simply sent him an audio clip of Shockwave's proposal.

Oblivious to these proceedings, Shockwave and Soundwave continued talking.

"Query: how is Shockwave to make vacation orns 'productive'" Soundwave asked.

At this point he was half-expecting some very dirty promises to spill from his bondmate's mouth. He could only hope his bondmate's sudden temptation to indulge in unnecessary interface was a temporary one, inspired by millions of years spent apart. Soundwave might have found interfacing to be far less annoying than Shockwave had initially seemed to, but he still did not especially desire for it to be a frequent, regular part of his life.

"It's very simple, Soundwave." Shockwave said. "You know of course, that yourself and I are nearly indispensable to the Decepticon Cause."

It went beyond that; they really were indispensable. The Cause would almost certainly collapse without them. But it didn't do to say such things. Only Megatron was the heart and soul of the Decepticon Cause after all.

Soundwave nodded.

"With the many vorns apart, with myself conscious and aware, I had ample time to calculate the odds of what would ultimately happen to the Cause were you deceased, as I suspected you were. We
talked about the impacts of our deaths before we bonded.” Shockwave said.

"Soundwave: remembers." Soundwave said.

"The Cause must be strengthened where it can be, weaknesses minimized. And the overall rarity of our skillsets and abilities, is a huge weakness for the Decepticon movement." Shockwave said.

"This, not unknown." Soundwave said. His own telepathy was so rare as to be entirely unique: no other Decepticon possessed it to the degree and strength that Soundwave did. "What is Shockwave planning?"

"It's very simple, my dear mech. We can give the Cause another mech like us, potentially." he said.

Soundwave stared at the large purple mech leaning almost eagerly towards the view screen camera. Was this the day he was finally going to be pulled into one of the scientist's mad experiments? Mad, unethical, but brilliant. Prior to bonding, he had always feared for himself and his cassettes, that they would be turned over for testing due to his mental abilities. He was reasonably certain that Lord Megatron, however ruthless, would never reward his loyalty (and usefulness!) with such a fate. One of the benefits of bonding to Shockwave was that it would make keeping him out of dangerous experiments to be in the purple scientist's own best interests.

"Soundwave: will consent to nothing dangerous." Soundwave warned.

"Oh, it is perfectly safe. You have already done it many times after all." Shockwave said.

What was the mech talking about?

"But, given the overall greater safety of my location and position, I think this time it would be best if I were the one to carry." Shockwave said.

"Carry!" Soundwave vocalizer crackled with static.

"Yes." Shockwave said, his tone the one to indicate confusion this time. "Unless you wanted to? I have not done it before, but by all indications the sparkling’s survival rate will be higher if carried inside my person. If there are any variables I am overlooking, you are, of course, encouraged to share them." the mech said.

Almost not daring to hope, thinking he must have misunderstood something, Soundwave asked

"Shockwave: wants to conceive sparkling?"

"Yes." Shockwave said. "It is the safest way to produce a mech that has a significant chance of possessing your psychic abilities, or my own scientific aptitudes." he explained, arguing his case. There was a war on after all, and while his bondmate was more logical than most, perhaps the mech’s greater sentimentality prevented him from desiring to create during a period of high risk to sparklings.

"Shockwave: wants to conceive sparkling during vacation time?" Soundwave asked.

"Yes." Shockwave confirmed.

The blue mech staring at him through the screen had his faceplates, optics, and his mouth covered by a battle mask and visor, but Shockwave could almost sense his bondmate beaming at him. (Illogical; surely it was the pleasantly tingling emotions traveling through the bond that let him analyze and determine the likely facial expression of his sparkmate.)

If Shockwave were another mech, he would have smiled. There, there was the warmth and
happiness he'd been expecting.

The two mechs talked until Soundwave had to leave for his shift. They finalized plans, details, and Soundwave sent him so many packets on conceiving and raising a sparkling that the video feed began to lag from the bandwidth clog. Wholly unnecessary packets: Shockwave had all the information from the remaining Cybertronian archives at his disposal.

Still, as he turned off the vid screen, he made a memo to cross-check the data Soundwave had given him against the archive files. His clever sparkmate might have something that had been lost when certain databanks were destroyed.

He would do that after he wrote up and sent off his request to Megatron for personal time off.

~

"What is this, Shockwave?" Megatron asked the purple mech standing at attention in the view screen.

"That is my request for personal time off, Lord Megatron, as well as my permission request to travel to the planet Earth for the duration of it."

"You want a vacation, Shockwave?" Megatron asked. "Well, you've certainly earned it." the tyrant conceded. Starscream took every orn of vacation he was entitled to, and the halls would ring with his screeches if he had to postpone it for any inconvenience, like oh say, Autobots boarding their ship. His loyal guardian of Cybertron by contrast, had never used any of his personal time, and even now was only requesting to use a small fraction of it.

Megatron glanced over the paperwork. Acid Storm would act as temporary guardian of the planet. It all looked in order.

"Why Earth?" Megatron asked. He did not suspect treachery, not from one so steadfastly loyal and lacking in ambition for its own sake, but one did not lead a bloodthirsty army built on conquest without learning to watch one's back.

"I need to realign the bond between myself and my sparkmate, who is stationed on Earth." Shockwave said, voice devoid of emotion, as if he hadn't just dropped a massive bomb on Megatron.

Megatron stared at Shockwave for several kliks. Then, his mouth opened. He closed it, as if to rethink his words. Decided, he opened it again. "WHAT?!" Megatron roared.

"My Lord, I said I need to realign--"

"I heard that! What is this about you being sparkbonded?" Megatron snapped.

"I am sparkbonded to another mech, Lord Megatron." Shockwave said.

"Who?" Megatron snarled.

Shockwave's future very much depended on his answer. Megatron had left Cybertron—their entire home planet!--in the hands of a mech who had a greater loyalty to someone other than Megatron himself. If that someone was an idiot like Blitzwing, or Primus forbid, Starscream, then Acid Storm's temporary promotion might become very permanent.

"Chief of Intelligence and Communication, Commander Soundwave." Shockwave said.
Megatron's fists, which had been gripping the armrests of his chair so tightly the metal had begun to dent, relaxed a little. It was a respectable pick. If the two were as loyal as they seemed, then they were a mighty pairing to have on his side. But if they ever turned against him...it would likely be the end.

All this flashed through Megatron's mind, but he knew there was little he could do about it. He couldn't kill the both of them, they were too vital to the Decepticon Cause. Imprisoning or punishing one for the bonding would only turn the other against them. He had to simply trust his best two commanders to be as loyal as they always seemed. For now...

Shockwave, perceiving Megatron's ire, moved to assure his leader. "We are both devoted to you and the Cause, before anything, my Lord. We bonded out of a desire to aid in the Cause, only."

Megatron could almost believe it. It was hard to picture the two cold, stoic mechs falling victim to a blazing passion for the other (or for anyone!) or falling victim to a sentimental, sappy, sickening love.

"Don't make me regret giving this leave, Shockwave." Megatron said.

"I won't, my Lord. Everything I do is to serve you and the Cause." Shockwave said, placing his hand across his ample bosom, over the spark chamber that lay beneath.
The lights were dim in the room, although Shockwave's processor, never one to care for romantic gestures, did not notice it. It was a much more comfortable space than any berthroom of Shockwave's had ever been, and Soundwave was mildly relieved to be doing this in his own quarters aboard the sunken Decepticon ship, rather than Shockwave's on Cybertron. He appreciated his partner's mind, but Shockwave's stark minimalism, born of a lack of care for "pointless" concepts like aesthetics, did not agree with his own desires to build a warm and comforting home for his family. Luckily, Shockwave did not actively dislike decoration or 'pointless' objects. He was indifferent. When they had their apartment together on Cybertron after the war was over, it would be up to Soundwave to decorate it and make it a home, a challenge that Soundwave very much looked forward to.

For now he was happy to be in his lived-in little set of rooms, with his bulky, awkward bondmate sitting across from him on the berth.

"How would you like to proceed, Commander Soundwave?" Shockwave asked. Soundwave could feel nervousness, such a rare emotion in his bondmate, creeping through the bond.

"We will exchange physical material for sparkling, then spark energy through merge." Soundwave explained, thinking that some foreknowledge might reassure his bondmate. When the nervousness didn't ease, he gently let his mind lap towards the mech across from him, searching for the cause of his anxiety.

Aha. "Interface merge: will not be as intense as bond formation merge." Soundwave said.

"How intense will it be?" Shockwave asked.

"Fractional." Soundwave replied, pinging him his best statistical analysis of the difference in intensity.

"That is reassuring." Shockwave replied. Soundwave could feel the nervousness ebb down in him. Much better.

"Shockwave: ready to begin?" Soundwave inquired.

"Yes. I suppose I should open my panel." the scientist said, sending the interface cover sliding aside with a neat click. He eased himself back, spreading his legs. The valve he bared for Soundwave was a pretty one, a soft purple color, nearly white, with dark purple inner folds and a glowing anterior node.

Soundwave, kneeling between Shockwave's legs, leaned close to it, and Shockwave's thought was that he was inspecting it for health and suitability for conception. So he was completely shocked when his bondmate's face mask opened, and Soundwave pressed his lips to Shockwave's valve. His optic flared, brightening as Soundwave slowly lapped at his folds, gently sucking and teasing the anterior node before moving back down. Soundwave stroked his own spike to full pressurization as he worked, getting both himself and his mate ready for copulation.

The feeling of intensity rose in Shockwave, centered in his pelvic array, and lubrication slowly began trickling down Shockwave's walls. Soundwave tested his readiness, sliding two fingers in easily and dragging them out, rubbing lubrication throughout the opening. He flexed his fingers, pressing against Shockwave's inner walls, and was so intently focused on his task that he didn't notice his
bondmate's optic shuttered closed.

It flew open again, flaring, as Soundwave slid his spike into the waiting valve. His thrusts were slow at first, attentive to any pain or discomfort from his sparkmate. Once he was sure there was nothing but increasing sexual arousal coming from his bondmate, he increased his speed, setting a smooth, steady pace.

Shockwave lay passively, caught in the novelty of the activity he'd never experienced before. His previous intercourse with Soundwave had been all spark focused; while his valve and spike had overloaded from the intensity of his bond-forming with Soundwave, he had not actually been spiked then or buried his spike in Soundwave's valve. He listened to the noisy spin of Soundwave's fans as they worked to cool the overheating mech, and the persistent schlick noises coming from his slick valve as Soundwave's throbbing spike dragged across his walls, pounding into his opening again and again.

The fingers of his one hand did grip at Soundwave's shoulder as the mech on top of him overloaded, pumping a flood of transfluid into his waiting, virgin valve. When Soundwave had completed filling him with the blend of nanites and CNA needed to build the sparkling's body, he withdrew from Shockwave, vents heaving. They waited in mutual silence as Soundwave's temperature cooled to within normal parameters.

Finally, Soundwave asked, "Shockwave: ready to proceed to next step?"

"Affirmative." Shockwave said. His voice was cool, blank, confident, but his spark still gave a little squeeze of (illogical!) anxiety. He was not one to let emotions rule his actions though. Without hesitation, he sent the command for his chestplates to split, baring his spark once more to Soundwave.

Soundwave thought the spark was as beautiful as the processor and frame of the mech who he was proud to call bondmate. Who he was even prouder to start the process of creating new life with. He cracked his own chestplates open, and embraced his bondmate, sending warm love and assurances down the bond as they began to merge.

It was over, sparks crackling and overloading with energy that they zapped into each other, mere astro-minutes after it began. Shockwave was almost astounded. It had been much quicker and less deliriously confusing than the bond-creation merge from before. There was nothing unpleasant in it this time. Simply an increased opening of the bond, waves of pleasure rolling into him, and toward the end, a feeling of complete and utter oneness with Soundwave.

It would be several days before a new spark, if one had taken, would show up on the scans. Until then, it was only logical that they repeat copulation to ensure a greater chance of conception in their limited time period (and to provide appropriate nanite amounts for the sparkling's growth).

But that would come later. Now, although Shockwave had recharged adequately the night before, and was fully fueled, he was swept with a feeling of extreme tiredness. The urge to slip into recharge was overwhelming. And so, when his bondmate lay beside him and curled one arm around him, he did not object. He simply uttered a quiet "Thank you, Soundwave." when the mech pulled the mesh thermal blanket up over the two of them.

~

The scans were back. Shockwave looked down at the readout on the machine. The patterns of his own spark energy alongside a new, a foreign, weaker spark energy. He immediately sent a copy of
the readout, of the screen capture of the little spark blip beside his own, to his bondmate. Pleased satisfaction radiated down the bondline.

For now, Shockwave would continue his perusal of the hostile and combative Starscream's scientific records on Earth. Later, once Soundwave's shift was over, he would receive more nanites from his beloved for their growing sparkling.

~

"What are those two up to?" Starscream muttered, pacing in his own quarters. The Guardian of Cybertron's odd vacation, and the fact that he'd spent much of it sequestered in Soundwave's quarters, had not gone unnoticed by the wily mech.

It was not easy to get an optic or audio into the ever-watchful Soundwave's quarters, especially with those cassette brats always around in the ductwork or lurking unseen, the little midgets. Now, orns before Shockwave was scheduled to return to Cybertron, he'd finally worked out a plan he believed would work. A generous bribe of high-grade had ensured the cooperation of Skywarp and the Decepticon's other resident spy, Reflector. Skywarp simply had to teleport the camera mech to a duct opening past the tripwires and sensors that Soundwave had set, and then comm Skywarp for a return warp once he'd obtained evidence of the two Decepticon commanders' scheming.

Oh how he'd love evidence of those two engaging in treachery; he'd give his spark for something he could turn in to Megatron. Never again would they lord their loyalty over him, always hanging in the background as the eternally submissive tailpipe-suckers that Megatron seemed to respect so much. What was to admire in the aft-kissing of two doormats?

He alternated between fuming at memories of their past perceived slights, and gloating over what Reflector was going to bring back to him. Finally, Skywarp arrived back in, light flashing throughout the room as the mech appeared, Reflector in his arm. He dropped the smaller mech carelessly, who stumbled, and began walking towards Starscream, a sheaf of photos in his hands.

"Wait'll you see this, Starscream." Skywarp said, guffawing.

"Get out of here you oaf!" Starscream snapped.

"What about my high grade?" Skywarp whined.

Starscream thrust the cubes into his hands, and shoved him toward the door. "Out!"

Grumbling, the other seeker left.

"Now, what did you get?" Starscream said, his voice breathy with anticipatory delight. "And remember, YOUR payment isn't just for going there!"

"I think you'll be more than pleased." Reflector said, handing the stack of photos over.

Starscream's red optics eagerly scanned the photo, the hyped up gleam in them quickly fading to revulsion.

"EWWWWWW! WHAT IS THIS?!" Starscream screamed, living up to his name.

In the photo, Soundwave could clearly be seen, his thick blue spike half disappeared into Shockwave's wet, spread valve.
"That's what they call a spike, and the other is--" Reflector started to explain, snickering. Starscream kicked him hard, sending the other mech sprawling. "YOU DOCTORED THESE! I don't believe those two aft-licking sparkless drones have even fragged a cleaning drone before, let alone another mech!" Starscream screeched.

"Hey, these are all originals." Reflector complained. "I didn't have time—or resources—to do any edits in those ducts. Besides—this is really juicy stuff."

"Juicy? These are USELESS, you little turbo-rat!" Starscream howled.

"Well if you don't want them, I'll keep them." the little mech said, transforming into his three components. One ran forward and grabbed the pile of photos from the larger mech's hands, while Starscream aimed his null-rays at the other two components, who fled through the unlocked door. The third was quick to follow photos in hand, dodging blasts from the enraged Starscream.

They were lucky in that Starscream did not pursue, choosing instead to stay in his quarters, shrieking his outrage, and "why didn't that dumbaft Skywarp check the results before teleporting the little worm back?!".

Said little worm transformed back into his singular form, photos safe in his subspace. They would probably fetch a very pretty pile of Shanix if he dared to sell them back to Soundwave—but one did not blackmail the Decepticon head of intelligence lightly. It might be safer to keep them as his own private self-servicing material, until he had another use for them.

~

Oblivious to the drama happening mere mechanometers away in the adjacent officer's quarters, the two Decepticon commanders were engaged in their now-regular post-coital cuddles. Shockwave theorized that his own spark sought comfort in the proximity of his sparkling's co-creator. It was strange, but made sense from a survival standpoint. A co-creator nearby helped ensure the safety of the carrying mech, in times of danger. And when were Cybertronians not in dangerous circumstances?

Shockwave saw no need to go against the instinctive desires of his swollen spark, given that it did not impede his actions in any way or jeopardize the Cause. It was a meaningless (pointless) activity, but the amount of useful activities he could do here on Earth, in his state, were very limited. It was also an activity he and Soundwave did before falling into recharge, and thus, had they not done it, the time still would have been wasted nonproductively. The time wasted lying on the berth, attempting to get his processors to cycle down adequately for a recharge cycle, had always irritated Shockwave.

This indulgence had far more purpose than that solitary uselessness. At least this cuddling brought some happiness to Soundwave. And while happiness was a meaningless emotion, it did serve as a motivator for Soundwave, and so providing it could only help their relationship.

These were the justifications that were provided by his processor as Shockwave began to power down into sleep mode, wrapped in Soundwave's protective arms.
Chapter 7

The nights were long, cold, and empty on Cybertron, where Shockwave lay, mildly annoyed, in his berth. He found it difficult to recharge on Cybertron. It was as if his spark had gotten used to Soundwave's proximity, and now wanted him there every time. Certainly the sterile emptiness of his room had never bothered him before.

He supposed, if he were sentimental, he could tell himself that he was never alone now—the sparkling that lay growing beneath his stretched chassis plates was always there to keep him company. But he was not a sentimental mech, and did not take comfort in the presence of a mindless, developing sparkling.

Even if he were, it would be imprudent to get used to that. The sparkling was due to emerge in one orbital cycle, and, after a short post-birth recovery time that he would spend with it and his family on Earth, would be left behind while Shockwave returned to Cybertron to resume his duty as Guardian of that planet. He still remembered the heated (on Soundwave's end) and coldly annoyed (on his end) argument the two had had a few orbital cycles after the sparkling's conception.

The topic had never came up between the two of them, when they worked out the details of the sparkling, because each had thought the course of action was obvious and not in dispute. With a lower level of violent battles occurring on Cybertron, and with less risks due to treachery posing a danger to Shockwave, it had never occurred to him that the sparkling would live with Soundwave, rather than being cared for by Shockwave and the drones.

"Sparklings: need love, affectionate, touch." Soundwave had stated, his monotone voice still managing to express anger.

"I am capable of being affectionate to the sparkling, Soundwave. I am aware sparklings need a certain amount of touch and care to develop normally." he had said, his tone as frosty as he could make it.

Soundwave had fumed silently at that. What did you say to that? You couldn't exactly tell your sparkmate that they were as capable of providing normal amounts of affection as a cleaning drone was! Shockwave probably wouldn't even get the insult. He would simply pontificate that, if one were to program the cleaning drone to move in an appropriate pattern, it could provide hugs and care. Ridiculous!

He tried another tack. "Soundwave: apologizes. Did not intend to imply Shockwave could not provide for sparkling. Simply, Shockwave's time valuable, free time insufficient to waste on providing sparkling affection."

Mollified, Shockwave said "That is true."

Soundwave vented a sigh of relief.

"However--" Shockwave continued. Soundwave groaned internally.

"When I planned to carry the sparkling, I knew that I would have to allot a certain amount of time to sparkling-care tasks, being the sparkling's primary caregiver. I am willing to make that sacrifice."

Shockwave said.

Soundwave gritted his denta. It irritated him to hear of tasks that were dear to him, like feeding a sparkling, cooing at it and developing its language centers, playing games with it, socializing it,
building up the caretaker bond—all described as if they were chores, unfortunate "sacrifices" to be put up with, by Shockwave.

"How much time is Shockwave willing to allot to sparkling?" Soundwave asked.

"Well, the drones should be capable of feeding it, cleaning it, providing basic communication and movement patterns to it, so by my estimates, a mere half a joor each orn should be sufficient to maintain the caretaker bond and provide close-spark affection—" Shockwave said.

"Drones can not care for sparkling!" Soundwave said, his vocalizer emitting static from his outrage.

"It's a sparkling." Shockwave said, baffled. "It's unlikely it can distinguish between a parent and a drone at that developmental stage."

And that was exactly why the sparkling needed to be in Soundwave's care, and not Shockwave's.

"Drones cannot care for sparkling." Soundwave repeated, obstinate. "Also: sparklings: need much more caretaker contact than half a joor."

"You are being completely illogical." Shockwave said.

"Soundwave: doesn't care." Soundwave said stiffly. "Sparkling: should be in Soundwave's care on Earth."

There might be a greater risk to the sparkling's life if on Earth, but Soundwave saw zero chance of it developing normally and healthily under Shockwave's care. Not that he'd ever say that, since it would just spawn yet another long, pedantic argument from Shockwave about what a sparkling needed to develop normally. He was pulled from his thoughts when Shockwave responded.

"You have yet to make a case for that." Shockwave said.

"Case: Soundwave will enjoy sparkling's care more than Shockwave. Soundwave: will devote more time to sparkling care. Soundwave: asking Shockwave to proceed with plan with lower success numbers, out of trust for bondmate." Soundwave said.

"So you know you are being illogical but ask me to concede anyway?" Shockwave muttered, not expecting an answer.

"Very well. I have no idea why you are so opposed to the sparkling being raised on Cybertron, but I will allow you to have your way on this. I will have higher productivity numbers if not distracted by a sparkling anyway." Shockwave said.

"Soundwave: very grateful to his bondmate." Soundwave said, his visor glowing.

"Don't look at me like that." Shockwave muttered. "Shockwave: out." he said, cutting the transmission signal.

~

One decacycle before the sparkling was due to emerge, Shockwave arrived on Earth via the spacebridge. The two seekers on guard made no opposition to his use of the spacebridge. Shockwave had not anticipated any, since his trip was cleared ahead of time. Still, they deviated from the standard pattern. Instead of stepping aside and greeting him in the customary manner, they just
stood there gawking. Skywarp's mouth actually hung open. When he finally seemed to gather himself enough to speak, the blue seeker next to him, Thundercracker, wrapped one arm around his companion and covered his mouth.

"Welcome to Earth, Commander Shockwave." Thundercracker said, snapping a sharp salute.

Shockwave nodded. "Carry on." he said, continuing past the two fliers. Astrotrain was waiting for him yards away, in alt mode, to take him to the Decepticon headquarters on earth. Given his advanced state of carrying, he could not have driven or flown himself even if he had had an appropriate mobile Earth mode.

The trip to the ocean passed in silence. It did not take long for Astrotrain to arrive back at the base. Before long, Shockwave was walking through the floodable airlock of the Decepticon undersea headquarters, droplets of seawater running in rivulets down his expanded purple form. He would have liked to clean himself up in the washracks before presenting himself to Lord Megatron, but his leader had honored him by coming to greet him on his arrival.

"Greetings, Lord Megatron." Shockwave said, saluting readily.

Strangely, his leader did not immediately return his greeting. Instead Megatron's red optics seemed fixated on Shockwave's chassis rather than his face. Concerned by the strange twitching going on on his dear leader's faceplates, he almost said something, but considered that it would be better to ask his bondmate privately about their leader's health, rather than draw public attention to any weakness. Finally though, Megatron schooled his features and responded warmly to Shockwave.

"Shockwave, my dearest Commander." he said. "I am so...pleased...that you are about to add to our growing numbers."

The numbers could only be considered "growing" because of the soon-to-be addition of Shockwave's sparkling. Stagnating recruiting rates and high casualties technically meant the Decepticon numbers were in decline, and had been for a very long time. The only upside to that unfortunate fact was that the Autobots numbers were declining as well. Shockwave chose to look past Megatron's incorrectness, since he estimated that the chances of a positive outcome from him issuing a correction were almost nil.

"Soundwave and I are both more than happy to contribute to the Cause in any way we can, Lord Megatron." Shockwave said.

Soundwave, at Megatron's left, nodded.

A noise that sounded suspiciously like gagging erupted from the mech to Megatron's right, but when Shockwave's lone yellow optic swiveled to Starscream, the mech was simply clearing his vocal intakes.

Megatron shot Starscream a harsh glare. "If only more mechs were willing to make the sacrifices you do," he said, his voice pointed.

"Not all of us can afford to spend months lolling around on the safety of Cybertron." Starscream snapped, his tone acidic. "Some of his have to be combat-ready."

Megatron turned aside from the noisy Air Commander, ignoring his quips. He had already taunted the volatile mech plenty, about how truly loyal Decepticons put increasing the Army's numbers over their figures. The fits and explosions of temper he'd provoked were delicious, and they alone made it worth tolerating this excursion into sentimentality and weakness from his other two subordinates.
"But you must be tired from your trip. I'm sure you would like to retire to your quarters. I hope that after you have rested, you and Soundwave will have energon with me later?" Megatron asked.

As if an invite from the Supreme Commander of the Decepticon forces could be declined. As if Soundwave or Shockwave would ever want to decline. Their voices were one as they answered, "Yes, Lord Megatron."

"Good."

~

When they arrived back at Soundwave's quarters, Shockwave was not greeted with the peaceful, restful area he'd expected. Sure, the cassettes usually moved about quite a lot and made noise, but it was predictable background noise that was easily tuned out, the previous times he'd visited Soundwave.

He had expected the cassettes to welcome him, and while, perhaps, not respectfully (last time it had been "What's up, One-Eye?" and "Good to see ya Shockky") but this was new. They seemed downright shocked to see him. Had Soundwave not informed them of his impending visit? Preposterous; several had been in the video frame when he'd planned the trip with Soundwave.

Some of the odd treatment became clear.

"Holy jumpin' Primus!" Frenzy finally said, his optics riveted to Shockwave's chestplates.

Buzzsaw cawed in agreement.

"Surely you have seen a carrying mech before." Shockwave said.

"Yeah but none—none--" Rumble doubled over laughing.

"None what?" Shockwave asked, irritated.

"None like that." Frenzy answered. He held his arm way out in front of him, bending his backplates as if straining under the weight of a truly massive armful, presumably of chestplates.

"Expansion of chestplates occurs in 99.5% of expectant Cybertronians." Shockwave said frostily.

"True, mine have expanded a bit more than the average..." He was drowned out by the screaming laughter of a roomful of cassettes.

Not one to leave his bondmate hanging, Soundwave came to the rescue.

"Cassettes: be respectful." Soundwave chided.

The laughter died down to quiet snickers and the occasional giggle. Truth be told, Soundwave's bondmate did look pretty funny. Shockwave's chest really hadn't expanded much more than average, but with the already exceptionally large bust size of the mech, it made for a comical sight. Luckily, Soundwave had long experience in concealing his emotions, and none of his mirth escaped to further wound his bondmate's dignity.

Soundwave could sense the pain and discomfort his poor bondmate was, the excess weight straining his backstruts til they ached. If Soundwave had experienced that when he carried, then his poor busty bondmate, carrying a full-size sparkling rather than a minicon, had to be in far greater pain.
"Shockwave: would like backplate rub?" he offered.

"Oh, I suppose that would be acceptable." Shockwave said. "You can fill me in on the situation on Earth while you do so."

Soundwave led his bondmate over to the berth, and began putting his magic fingers to work. When you could telepathically sense when you were hitting a good spot and applying enough pressure, it made backrubs a cinch. By the time it was time for dinner with Lord Megatron, he'd turned Shockwave into a melting puddle of goo.

~

As much as Shockwave enjoyed the intelligent company of his bondmate, the orns still dragged on for him. He had no lab and thus no projects to work on. He had no direct subordinates here to oversee. He was not combat-ready (the thought of engaging in a blaster fight, let alone hand-to-hand, in his current bloated, weighted down form was ludicrous) and so he could not travel outside the base or take up positions within in that were dangerous.

He did sit in on strategy meetings (as futile as many of them were, with Lord Megatron using his presence to needle Starscream). He also collaborated with the local scientists and engineers on their projects, giving valuable insight where he could, trouble-shooting and giving advice. He tutored the cassettes, the few that would listen anyway, trying to expand them beyond their current (very useful, and very deep, but very specific) knowledge of scientific matters.

It wasn't the worse way to spend a deca-cycle, but Shockwave was still glad that he didn't have to spend an entire deca-cycle so occupied. Three orns before his emergence due date, he awoke in the middle of their recharge cycle, a cycling pain in chestplates. The emergence had begun.

Since it was late in the night cycle, he onlined a datapad and began reading calmly. No reason to disturb his mate's recharge cycle when the sparkling would not be ready to be extracted for a while. Several hours later, when Shockwave began experiencing the symptomatic frequency of pain that indicated incipient emergence was soon, he awoke his sparkmate.

"Sparkling: soon to arrive?" Soundwave asked, excitement lashing through the bond. It was an excitement that Shockwave did not share, although he did not envy the other mech his joy in the sparkling. At this point Shockwave just looked forward to taking the strain off his spinal struts, as well as not needing to consume greater amounts of energon, perform waste maintenance more frequently, and recharge more hours.

He was privately glad that Soundwave had stepped up and demanded custody of the sparkling; he had not anticipated how much he disliked having his schedule thrown off and his work efficiency decreased.

"Yes, I believe it will be soon now." Shockwave said.

With an exceptional calmness, and as much dignity as the greatly weighed down mech could summon, he took his bondmate's hand and they headed to the medbay.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

In the ship's medbay, Shockwave was no less calm, lying against the repair berth and watching as a grouchy, recharge-deprived Hook scuttered around, sterilizing tools and cursing under his breath. Shockwave didn't mind. He had no use for a "berthside manner" in a medic. It was pointless to him, who needed no comfort or rapport with a doctor.

A Cybertronian emergence/extraction was less risky than many species' methods of birth—at least when done in a properly equipped medbay. There were a variety of problems that could happen, some of them fatal to the sparkling or the carrier. One complication was when a sparkling fully developed its T-cog while it was still being carried; that was common for some alt modes, but virtually unheard of for sparklings that inherited gun-type alt modes. The evolutionary reasons behind that were obvious; any gun-form sparkling that developed its T-cog could transform, and fire, badly injuring or even killing the carrier and itself.

If the sparkling had Soundwave's alt mode, or another alt mode altogether, then that might occur. It could result in lines being torn early during emergence, which could cause a sparkling to bleed out or experience spark failure.

During a normal emergence, the carrier's chestplates were opened, certain systems were manually shut down by the medic for safety purposes, and the process of slowly detaching and sealing off the sparkling's attachment lines began, with the spark line being last to be cut.

That was the process Hook began now, as Shockwave opened his chest. Soundwave did not hover anxiously nearby, rather, he loomed. A surgery such as this one, where scalpels would be going perilously close to main energon lines and Shockwave's spark, would be a convenient time for an "accident" to happen. Soundwave would tolerate no interference with his bondmate or his sparkling's health. He watched Hook's movements like a cybercat eyeing a robo-rat it was planning on having for dinner. But whether it was because of Soundwave's presence or because of any real lack of ill-will towards Shockwave, the surgeon's movements were deft, clean, and precise, with nothing to criticize as they detached lines and clamped them off.

Finally, there was only one line left to sever—the spark line, the thin line of spark energy threading the sparkling's spark to its carrier's. This had to be cut and tied off quickly. The sparkling lay with its spark chamber pressed to its carrier's spark chamber, its face turned inward. All Soundwave could see was the back of it, and its small body blocked his view of the sparkline. So he watched, frozen still, as Hook reached his scalpel between the two spark chambers. His weapons were primed, he was ready to put a laser blast into the medic's helm should something happen, the value of Devastator be damned.

But no shriek of monitor alarms went off as Hook moved away. The surgeon's face twisted in distaste as he picked the small, wet sparkling up and closed Shockwave's plates. Soundwave rushed forward as Hook sat the sparkling on Shockwave's chest. The tired carrier supported the burbling sparkling with his one hand. Now that it was clear of his mate's chassis, he could see the little mechlet was a lovely pale lilac color (perfect for the sparkling of two loyal Decepticons—surely it showed their sparkling would make a fine a Decepticon as they did).

Soundwave's spark felt like it would burst with joy as Shockwave offered the sparkling to him to examine.
"Take him. Your eagerness to hold him is overwhelming through the bond." Shockwave said.

Soundwave didn't have to be told twice. He held the sparkling up, checking it over for any cuts, dents, or mars. The sparkling seemed in perfect health, and responded normally. He could feel the sire-bond forming, weak now but sure to grow stronger in the coming cycles. Even now he could feel the sparkling’s curiosity and happiness. It blinked its one little optic, shining a pale gold in a face more like Soundwave's than Shockwave's, as its vision drifted around the room, eagerly taking in the sights of the medbay. It had definitely inherited its parents' inquisitiveness.

"Sparkling: is perfect." Soundwave said.

"I think it's missing something, Boss. Like oh, an optic?" Rumble said, from his position at the medbay doors. The rest of the cassettes followed behind.

"I apologize." Shockwave said. "I did not mention, when I proposed procreation, that that CNA abnormality is hereditary."

"One optic: as good as two." Soundwave assured him.
A "Pfft. Yeah right." from a nearby Frenzy was ignored.

"Whatcha going to name him?" Rumble asked.

Soundwave looked to Shockwave. They had discussed naming the sparkling before, but the sum total of Shockwave's input had been "I don't care what the sparkling is named, so long as its designation is not silly or inappropriate."

"Pulsewave." Soundwave said.
A feeling that was very much "Awww" echoed through the bond from Laserbeak. Rumble rolled his optics and Frenzy made gagging motions. Ravage snorted.

Soundwave glanced around the medbay. Who would have dreamed that in the middle of wartime, fighting for their very survival and freedom, that he could be surrounded by his cassette creations, safe, happy, and loved, with a devoted bondmate next to him and a brand new sparkling in his arms?

He vowed to fight til his last to make the universe a place his sparkling could grow strong and happy in, with the freedom to be whatever he wanted, with no fear of want or obsoletion. He would keep his family safe until they could create that reality. And he knew Shockwave would be right alongside him, fighting for the same thing.

~

Starscream paced across the floors of his quarters, glaring daggers at the photos (from Reflector, actually paid for this time) of Soundwave cooing over a smiling Pulsewave.

"That Soundwave thinks his little freak sparkling is so cute. Just wait til they see MY sparkling!" Starscream ranted.

Skywarp, dragged out of recharge by Starscream's bitching, grumpily started considering plans to go AWOL for a while, at least until some other poor slugger had been tricked, seduced, or coerced into siring Starscream's sparkling—or Primus forbid, carrying it. Maybe he and Thundercracker could stage a fake attack from the Autobots and disappear during a patrol. Leave Megatron or—ha!
Reflector—to be Starscream’s baby daddy. He was having none of it.

Chapter End Notes

I hope this chapter/end is satisfying enough. The reason it took me so long to post is that I originally wanted to make it longer and add more. It was supposed to go up very quickly after the last chapter, but I got sicker and haven't had the energy to do pretty much anything):

I also wanted to have some of the spin-off one-shots written by now. I did make this a series so if anyone would like to read the one-shots once they’re posted, they can subscribe to it so they won’t miss them.

Thank you very much to everyone who has read this work through to the end, and to all the lovely commenters who helped inspire me to keep posting ^____^ you all are the best!

End Notes

Any/all feedback is appreciated, from the most scathing criticism to the simplest "I liked it". Thank you for reading ^^

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!