The Birds of Prey

by Moonlightdeer

Summary

Some higher being (Likely Primus) decides to throw a giant wrench in the workings of fate (Probably just for the shits and giggles) and decides to toss a group of friends into the Transformers Bayverse Universe and give them bird attributed forms. Not like they weren't busy running an underground criminal empire or anything like that! Without any way within reason of getting home, and with a few years before the beginning of the first film, the group of tight knit sisters from other misters decide to add this new world to their oyster collection.

Their new focus however, is on making sure that the fate of the Cybertronian race isn't to end on Earth, Warlords, Fallen Primes and even Unicron be damned, Hell have no fury like a woman scorned, and these four aren't women anymore. They're a whole lot worse.
This is a re-write of a story I wrote in collaboration a few years back which ran off the rails and died, so, taking a page out of Victor Frankenstien, I have created new life! Only like said mad man's creation, this new life is about as morally righteous as, oh, I don't know, a slaughterhouse? Oh well, Aria, Wren and Hera belong to me, Kia and Nibbler belong to a close friend who's like a sister to me, Ira and Keeley belong to an equally close sisterly friend. Hope you all enjoy this story! Don't let the first few chapters fool you! This story has a high chance of going to some very dark places that humanity can reach, or wherever my imagination seems to dive.
Chapter 1

London Zoo Staff room, 2017

“Bloody hell… if the heat ain’t gonna do me in, the smell is…” A man huffed, fanning his face with his hand, whilst the other pressed a chilled bottle of water to his head. “How in the name of god are you even drinking tea in this weather?” The man exclaimed, brushing his sweaty brunette bangs out of his face.

The woman sitting opposite to him just raised a delicate eyebrow at him from behind the pair of sunglasses they was wearing. “Because unlike you, I wasn’t raised in a fridge, it’s 25 degrees Celsius, really, you need to get out in the sun more Damien.” They announced, tone stoic and expression flatter than a pancake ran over by a steamroller, raising their mug to their lips again the quote ‘It’s nice to be nice, but sometimes, it’s just not appropriate’. In the pocket of their overalls, their phone was buzzing with notifications as it always was, the sound was barely noticeable and the sensation was something they were long numb to, they’d check the messages when they were at home, away from eyes they didn’t trust, at present, the music playing from the pair of headphones around their neck hid the sound of constant notifications from their co-worker.

Damien’s expression became that of irritation. “Oh… I’m sorry, I thought I was talking to Aria, why’d you have to interrupt our conversation?”

The woman’s features shifted a bit, sea green eyes promising pain from behind the black glass which hid them as a lock of black and white hair fell from it’s place tucked behind their ear. “She made this tea for me to enjoy, she hates herbal tea.” They announced, gesturing to the half drank mug of herbal tea, before taking another long, drawn out, maybe taunting, sip. “Honestly you should be used to this by now Damien, we swap around every few minutes at least.” They announced, twiddling with the necklace under their overalls with their free hand, elbows off the table and legs crossed.

If it weren’t for the worn, messy green overalls they wore, Damien would have sworn they were a visiting investor to the park who’d been given access to see the parks non-tourist areas, the fact they only ever wore grayscale clothing added to the assumption of most when they first met the women, there was also the unnerving feeling one got when gazing upon the Cruella devil reminiscent hair colours which split down the main parting, the white side streaked with black, the black side streaked with white, all currently tied back into a low ponytail, any other time outside of work and the mass would be cascading down past their rear, both of them hated getting it cut.

“Yeah I know, sorry, Wren, it’s not exactly easy to tell when you two switch places, you’re pretty discrete about it.” He tried to apologise.

“If I had to guess, Wren, you’ve got a thing for making Damien feel like he’s been kicked in the gut, and a made him feel like a bit of a douche.

He hadn’t meant to distress the women, and now, he was caught, if he said yes, Aria would be bearing down on him like a mad bull at upsetting Wren, and then Wren would refuse to talk to him for months, and if he said no, well, that meant this awkward situation would only continue to get worse, and awkward situations normally resulted in Wren starting to act up, try and break the air with facts she probably didn’t realise were disturbing, uncomfortable, or… something else.

“Errrrr…”
His saving grace came a moment later, shrill screeches erupted from the open door to the medical wing.

Wren’s chair was crashing to the floor a moment later, the women bolting inside the medical wing before he had time to even register which of the current residents had made such a racket.

It took the concerned, yet always bubbly voice of Aria talking to Hera for Damien to get out of his chair and nearly run into the doorframe. “What’s wrong with Hera?!” He exclaimed, glancing between the thrashing adolescent Harpy Eagle, and her caretaker.

Hera was currently being treated for her left wing, which had a nasty sprain on it she’d gotten a week prior.

“There’s something in her enclosure, hey, hey, hey baby, come on, easy, easy, shhh, shhh, easy.” Their arm snapped out and grabbed onto the Harpy Eagles tasselled legs, holding tight and hissing as claws raked their skin for a moment through the padded overalls, they hadn’t had the time to grab her Falconry glove on in their rush.

Thankfully, once she was out of the small pen, the thirteen month old Harpy settled, warbling and screeching at a far lower volume, which in turn eased the other creatures who’d been stirred into a frenzied panic by the cries of the young Alpha predator.

Damien was keeping his distance as Aria peered into the enclosure. “Odd, there’s something in the corner, Damien, can you go get my glove please?” Aria enquired as they knelt down, extending their occupied arm out uncomfortably behind them to keep Hera away from the object. It was abnormal to say the least, covered in markings they both had a sneaking suspicion they recognised, if this was some sick joke, Aria was handing full control over to Wren so she could hunt down the culprits. Then she’d just revel in the aftermath. Maybe buy a few white roses to toss on the body bags...

Everyone knew their second passion in life, after Falconry, was the Transformers franchise, they could talk the microphone off a computer if they wanted on the subject, it had allowed them to form countless friendships, especially that of their two closest, who’d long since become sisters to them. What people were not so aware of was what they and their ‘sisters’ really did, whilst they used their shared passion of Falconry to cover their tracks.

The Autobot insignia Earrings, the dual sided Talismen with the insignia they used to signal which of them was in control, hell, the Tattoo of their names in Cybertronian which arched along her collarbones gave their passion away, the final tattoo which ran from the top of their shoulder blades and down to her hips however, was not Transformers related, and was one they made sure to keep hidden.

But to do something like this to one of her Avian charges… Someone was gonna get a headful of lead, a light up Matrix of leadership? Where’d someone even get one?

“S-sure.” The poor man stammered, he wasn’t used to handling Carnivores, especially avian Carnivores, he worked with the Capuchin Monkeys, one of the Harpy Eagles main food sources.

The man went back into the main staff room, but his search was abruptly cut off by a startled human cry, a cacophony of animal cries, and a blinding flash of light.

Jolting the man raced back into the medical wing.

The animals were in a panic, screeching and thrashing in their pens.
But Arien, Hera, and a good chunk of the tiles on the floor, were gone, a large scorch mark in the doorway to the pen, and the object gone.

“Oh shit, oh shit, oh shit! **OH SHIT !”**

**Kenya**

A supped up camo jeep roared across the the dirt road it was on, engine thrumming and the tires sending up a cloud of dirt behind it.

High above, a Bateleur eagle let off a triumphant screech.

The driver’s expression morphed into an almost manic smirk as the jeep hit another rough patch at high speed, sending the entire high speed, off roader vehicle into the air for a moment.

Her passenger, her probably temporary co-worker and old childhood friend, Janmi, let off another terrified cry, both hands clutching the ‘oh shit’ bar to her right, her heart racing from something vastly different from her suddenly manic co-worker.

“**KIA! SLOW DOWN!!**”

“No way! I ain’t losing this bloody race!” Kia shouted right back, somehow slamming the accelerator even further into the ground, her hands, scuffed and calloused from years of exertion, tightened their grasp around the leather of the steering wheel.

Janmi, an atheist, decided to start praying to the cosmos for her continued existence.

There was no chance in hell the twenty six year old woman driving the vehicle was going to heed her wish to live to see the next day. She was just too damn competitive for her own good.

Then, in one heartstopping moment. Kia hit the brakes, pulling the jeep into a hard right, elating both a scream from Janmi, and the brakes themselves as the sudden shift in direction threatened to roll the vehicle entirely.

Thankfully, that wasn’t the case, Janmi, however, barely registered that fact, to busy trying to roll the window down fast enough to try and get air back into her suddenly empty lungs, having let out such a long sigh of relief at being alive, she’d ran out of air.

Kia, had no such need to stay alive, kicking the drivers side door open and leaping out of said new exit, hand snatching out and grabbing her falconry glove and shoving it on her left arm.

Her feet hit the ground, rushing to the finish line.

An old Elephant skull.

The cry of the Bateleur eagle sped her up.

And she finally beat the damn bird, her foot triumphantly hitting the ground right next the skull as her gloved arm snapped up expectantly, the black ink cybertronian tattoos that sprawled out across the skin not covered in the thick leather prominent against her brown skin.

The smug face she had, was not ignored by her Bateleur.

As evidenced by the fact that the irritated black, red-ish brown, cream and pink faced bird, instead landed on her head, letting off another screech as his claws sank into the brown mass of barely
contained hair that the Hispanic woman had.

“GOD DAMNIT NIBBLER!” She snarled. “On the arm! You land on my arm!” She stomped her foot with the last three words to express her point.

Janmi snorted as she finally got out of her side of the jeep, her legs still a little weak from all the blood having been pumped to her heart and head during the terrifying race. “Well Kia, given the size of that pride of yours, I’m not surprised he goes for the larger landing pad.” She snorted, her accent thick and smooth like honey.

Kia snorted right back, reaching up to take Nibbler by the tassels, the Eagle didn’t fight, hopping off her head and onto her gloved hand, which she quickly moved to start chewing the heavily padded thumb. Used to this, Kia ignored the bird to instead prop her ungloved hand on her hip, raising an irritated eyebrow at the Mocha skinned woman she now had as a co-worker whilst she was stuck in Kenya on her mother's orders. “Says the woman who literally grew an afro to personify her own over inflated ego.”

Janmi pouted, the Kenyan National striking a pose, hand to her forehead in mock exasperation. “Thou wounds me! A delicate Gloriosa Lily like myself! Marred by an ego like yours! Why it’s practically blasphemy!”

Kia huffed, wishing she had both arms free so she could cross them, instead, her free hand went down to her hip, running along handgun holstered there. “Wren’s rubbed off on you evidently.”

Janmi just smirked and sent the woman a wink. “You know it. When a woman can hold a town silent with a single word, yah gotta take notes.”

“Whatever, I can see why Ira thinks you’re the female version of Knockout, without the sadistic tendencies of course… well, most of the time.” She chuckled then, remembering times long past.

Janmi just laughed at that. “Of course I am! Look at me! I’m fabulous!” She announced, gesturing to her, admittedly, gorgeous figure.

Kia sent the woman a look, before turning to the long striped and sun bleached acacia tree that grew close to the Elephant skull, she planned to let Nibbler perch on when they were out here.

The Bateleur Eagle however, was not interested in staying on his perch, and with a surprising amount of determination, broke from Kia’s grasp, taking to the air.

“SHIT! NIBBLER! GET BACK HERE YOU DAMN TURKEY!” Kia shouted, breaking out into a sprint, bounding over the odd shrub and log as the Bateleur flew just over the ground.

“Kia! Be careful! THERE’S LIONS HERE!” Janmi shouted, knowing she’d have no chance of keeping up with the woman, the former latino track runner was only ever outpaced by her sister from another mister Ira, that speed demon could run laps around anyone, what she couldn’t do, was beat Kia in a wrestling match, the woman was as tough a cookie as her father before her, and just as intimidating.

Janmi let a content smile form on her face, being friends with one of the heads of the Triage came with some heavy perks. Not that she could brag about it to anyone, it could get her killed.

Kia however, was more focused on the fact that Nibbler had finally landed a short ways off, only to take right back up into the air, with what looked like a cube held in his talons.

The first thought that entered her mind was ‘What the flying fuck is a perfect cube doing in the
middle of nowhere’ the next was ‘MINI-ALLSPARK!’

That had come upon spotting the surprisingly familiar Cybertronian markings that she must of seen a few thousand times in her life.

The next thought was ‘The hell is a Mini-Allspark doing in the middle of Kenya?’

Before she could mull on it further, Nibbler was dropping it into her hands, it felt like metal, but also felt as light as a feather.

Then, Nibbler did a very strange thing, he landed right on her gloved arm, tilted his head at her, and let off a screech.

The next thing Kia knew, she was engulfed in a blinding light.

Said light, was clearly spotted by Janmi, who, in her panic, broke into a sprint, shouting her old friends name in terror.

When she reached the spot, all that was left was a smoking divot in the ground.

“Oh… shit... Imma dead woman walking… How the hell am I supposed to explain this to the Triage?”

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**Rome, Italy**

“IIIIIRRRRRAAAAAA!!!”

“I AIN’T DONE SHIT ! … TODAY !”

Two young adults scowled at each other, one perched on a sofa, the News playing in front of him, the BBC headlines running along the bottom as a woman droned on in English. The other, the female, was propped up against her doorway, free hand holding a dead mouse.

The male teen, Benedict, pointed furiously at the screen, apparently assuming that would explain everything to the female teen, despite the fact that she couldn’t actually see the device due to it being out of view of her position.

“Care to clarify? I was trying to feed Keeley. Yah dick.” Ira huffed, glaring at one of her many roommates.

Benedict scowled. “Oh yah know, ‘someone’ painted a fucking massive dick on the side of the Roman Coliseum last night, a giant, metal, dick.”

Ira scowl/pouted. “Fuck, I was planning to do that next week… on the Parliamentary Building… Why the hell yah think I’d deface history!? I ain’ pissing off both sides of Arien!”

“IRA!” Benedict exclaimed.

“Wwwwwhhhhaaaaaatttttttt?!?”

“You’re bloody fucking impossible!”

“No I am not! I just hate Politics righ’ now! But I ain’ home in tha USA where I could do it tah the source, oh, I don’t know, Capitol hill maybe! Yah know, to piss off tha lot! Besides! My previous statement was correct, I ain’ done shit !” With that said, she slammed her door back shut.
Benedict scowled. “YAH MENTAL!”

From inside her room, the young adult shouted right back through the speakers on either side of the now closed door. “SAYS THA ONE WITHOU’ THA PHD IN SOFTWARE AND COMPUTER ANALYSIS!”

“Damnit, why the fuck she gotta be a computer prodigy…”

A chuckle came from the woman lying strewn out on the island in the attached kitchen. “Cause she’s got three sisters, all with PHD’s, all rooting for her. An’ none of them ever let her fall behind, only pushed her further. Also, her entire biological family are tech prodigies, it’s as much in their blood as iron is.”

“Two, two, Clementine, she has two ‘sisters’ with PHD’s.” Benedict tried to point out. “DID don’t mean shit.”

“It does yah prick, stop saying Aria and Wren are the same person, you know how nuts Ira gets when yah go all ass about it.” Clementine huffed, pointing an accusing finger at the Parisian. “Remember who’s letting us stay in her penthouse, sleek and modern as all fuck home, rent free.”

Benedict scowled. “I’m just saying, how many recorded cases of the different personalities ‘getting along’ and not ending up like complete psycho’s are there? NONE! She’s faking it! You saw Split! DID’s are dangerous! Shouldn’t be trusted with a stick!”

“I’m not talking to you Benedict, you already know my opinion on the matter, also, why the hell yah tryin’ to rile her up, that ain’t a metal dick that’s on the news, it’s a human dick, like you. Yah dick’t.” Clementine retorted, scowl marring her face, before pushing herself off the island and striding towards the corridor, untamed blonde hair bouncing as the resident clean freak approached Ira’s room, pressing down on the button next to the door which linked to a set of speakers on the other side of the sound proof, and blast proof door, which was covered with many, many warning signs, pictures of Transformers, both Cannon and not, and a bunch of other stuff that Ira had stuck there over time.

“Who dares disturb mah domain!?”

Clementine snorted. “The ever loyal servant to the Tech Harpy of course.”

“Hmmmm… I have many loyal servants, what’s tha password.”

“Sisukno.” She whispered, Benedict wasn’t supposed to know, he wasn’t with them.

“Enter.”

The shit eating grins the two women exchanged at Benedict’s distant displeased comment could rival that of Hyenas.

Ira was perched at her desk, fingers lightly brushing over the head of her beloved Red Kite Keeley. “If he wasn’ such a good cook I’da shown him tah tha curb by now.” Ira huffed, just as her stomach growled. “Damnit, I’m cravin’ Aria’s beef wellington too…”

Clementine chuckled, moving to drape herself over the red and gold striped duvet which was neatly tucked into the edges of Ira’s bed. “Same, that girl knows how tah cook.”

Ira laughed then. “I ever tell yah about tha time Wren tried to use Aria’s recipe?”
“Only about sixty times this last month alone.”

That got a tongue being poked at her.

“Not denying it ain’t fucking hilarious.” She quickly added.

Ira snorted, a wide, fond smile on her features as she watched Keeley continue to rip into the mouse she’d given the Red Kite as an afternoon snack. “They’re at work righ’ now, I’ll call um later, ask Arien to see if they could come over some time soon, maybe Kia too… but she’s out in batshit nowhere, with as much signal as a fucking rock. Yah know, keeping off the radar till the heat dies down and all that…”

Clementine nodded, staring at the ceiling above, the posters there ranging from sleek sports cars, mostly Lambos, Corvettes and Aston Martins, others were paintings of all sorts of things, the ‘punk art’ as Benedict called it, was Ira’s, the landscapes painted in vibrant contrasting colours being Aria and Wren’s pieces that they sent Ira every so often when the women had some free time, and could agree on what to paint. Then there was the traditional Mexican artwork scattered around the room, everything from clay skulls painted for the day of the dead to a collection of pots which Ira used to hold her own painting tools.

A familiar clicking sound drew Clementine's view away from the ceiling, and instead to Ira’s hands, and the sleek custom revolver in the twenty four year olds grasp. “Pissed?”

Ira tilted her head just enough to flash a smirk at her closest friend after her sisters. “The Hell I am, someone’s tryin’ tah take over my shtick.”

Her hands, bejeweled with metal, gem studded rings, went right back to work typing code into the four separate computers on her desk once the weapon was safely put down on the desk, ready to be hidden away within its owners clothing.

“Yah trying to find the slagger?”

“Wha’ do yah think I was doing? Hacking Fort Knox? Been there, done tha’, they still ain’ caught me.”

Clementine smirked. “You could bring a country to it’s knees if you wanted to.”

“Pfft, I ain’t baiting the rage of Arien. They're why I’ve only been targetin’ ‘bad guys’ in tha world. They got more power hidden away than me. Best at hiding it too, no one but the highest tiers knows who they even are.”

Clementine nodded. “You three certainly could do a lot of damage, Kia’s links to the Mafia’s, Arien’s… contacts her and her folks… ‘acquired’ over the years, and you with your threats and capabilities of disarming entire military forces within a few short minutes… damn girl. Lord's help us if yah were all Con fans… Well, most Cons.” She added at Ira’s pointed gaze.

Ira shrugged. “Yah know we ain’ into causin’ anarchy, our parents were, not us, we’re fixing the damage not addin’ to it.” The words she spoke then were rehearsed, spoken a thousand times over to doubters of the Triage, the unity of the three global underground forces she, Kia, and Arien represented and run respectively.

“By painting giant metal dicks on the sides of some of the most important political buildings in the world?”

“Pfft, hobby. You heard from the boys down south?” Change of subject, Clementine knew not to
press further on the recent news.

Ira had probably already gotten a ping from Arien about it.

Those women were never out of the global loop.

Clementine shook her head. “Nothing new so far, everyone’s behaving, am I allowed to know the next stage of this grand plan of yours?” She watched as Ira shut down her screens, stroking Keeley’s head with the other hand before moving to pick the Kite up, the ever loyal bird not fussing at all as a decorative hood was placed over her eyes and she was placed into her travel case. “Can’t, gotta educational talk at the local high school, biology class, they’re doing about Predatory evolution, fascinating subject you know.” The twenty four year old smirked, swaying her hips from side to side in a taunting fashion as she stretched her arms over her head, causing her shirt to pull up and reveal the toned muscle beneath, marred by the odd scar. “Wonder how many little boys I’ll be getting excited today.”

Clementine responded with an appreciative wolf whistle. “Knock ‘um dead boss.”

Ira flicked her pixie cut, fiery red hair back, striking a dramatic pose. “Darling, wherever I go, I’m leavin’ them dead.” With that, she swept up her revolver, and two hand guns, each custom, one lush gold, the other blood red.

All three were quickly hidden away under her worn leather jacket, the thick leather also hiding the Cybertronian tattoos of both her full name, and code name, which wrapped around her forearms.

Sprawled across her chest, the emblem of the Triage, hidden by a tight fitting brownish red shirt.

Clementine went to stand, moving to open the door for the slightly older woman.

Ira gave her a thankful nod, picking up Keeley’s carrier, making her way down the corridor, when she reached the halfway point she stopped and turned back to Clementine. “I forgot tah grab mah keys.”

Clementine snorted, reaching over the key rack which hung next to the door. “Which keys?”

Ira paused, placing her free hand on her chin, pouting slightly as she mulled over her options. “Give me mah Gallardo, I wanna ride in Sunny today.” She responded, the mere nickname of one of her two favourite Lambos making a wide smile form on her face.

Clementine nodded, picking up the keys without even looking, and tossing them towards Ira.

Ira easily caught them, only to double take at the four keys now in her palm.

“Omega lock keys? When the fuck did ah get ahold of...” She was cut off by the sudden blinding light which exploded out from them, causing a minor shockwave to blast down both sides of the corridor.

The shockwave knocked Clementine back, and had Benedict jumping up from the sofa, ears ringing and expression filled with panic and shock as he rushed for Clementine, who was laying prone against the cupboard the force of the blast had thrown her into.

Already the smoke alarms had activated, the sprinkler system coming out of it’s hiding places around the penthouse apartment to handle the minor blaze left in the corridor.

Benedict went to help Clementine up, only for her to shove him away, a shocked look on her face
as she pulled out her phone from her slightly charred pocket.

She was quick to dial in a number she had memorised to heart by now.

A black and white icon stared back at her as the dial tone rang once, twice, three times, then went to voice mail.

An automatic voice began to play, but she was already redialing, praying that Arien would respond.

Arien never missed a call, one of them always picked up.

They never let it go to voicemail.

This time, there was another response.

‘The phone you are trying to reach, has been terminated.’ A deep, baritone voice spoke, then cut out.

Her heart was racing now, fingers frantic as they almost miss speed-dialed Kia’s number.

Nothing, it rang, went to voice mail.

Again, the same message, the phone apparently ‘terminated’ The same Baritone voice.

Arien and Kia had different phone brands...

Before she could dial again, a new icon appeared, Janmi’s.

She slammed the accept button.

“JANMI!”

‘CLEMENTINE!’

“IRA’S GONE!”

‘KIA’S GONE!’

A silence rung out between the two women.

Clementine spoke first. “Have you managed to contact Arien?”

‘Fuck no, got a message saying her phone had been terminated! That’s impossible! No one would dare even touch her phone! Let alone know who she was!’

Clementine’s resolve hardened then. “Ira just vanished in a big old ball of explosive light.” She dropped into the desk chair her boss had been sitting in not minutes earlier, thankfully, the sprinkler system had only come on in the corridor.

Screens lit up, the Triage insignia coming to the forefront.

Username, all seven different passwords, each designed to be harder to crack then the last flew past.

The main user interface was already before her.
‘CALLING ALL AGENTS! THE HARPIES ARE M.I.A. REPORT TO YOUR SUPERVISORS, PREPARE FOR WORST CASE SCENARIOS.’

Instantly, messages came flooding in, from all across the world, the chat line becoming a blur as thousands of Triage agents responded, trying to figure out what had happened.

She typed one last message.

‘We could be under attack. Prepare for a crackdown. All agents, number one priority is locating the Alpha Tier.’

She hesitated in pressing, Janmi was still on the line, likely viewing the feed herself.

Crackdown only meant one thing.

Only the four highest tiers had the authority to call for it, and it had to be cleared by all three Harpies.

But in this situation, that safeguard was impossible.

She hit enter.

Likely changing the fates of millions if not billions of lives in the process.

If it was deemed absolutely necessary, the Triage was coming out of its thousand years of hiding.

They had to find the Harpies, before everything broke down.

Human Headshots of our four lovely dames, the twins would have my head if I called them one person.
Wren: Damn right! Now what the hell kinda stunt did you just pull damnit?!

Aria: Ugh, duh, it's called getting warped to an alternate reality Wren.

Wren: BY A MATRIX OF LEADERSHIP?! What kinda shit are you trying to pull?!

Moon: Nothing.... much... maybe a bit of foreshadowing?

Aria: Well that's not a comforting thought.

Wren: You're lucky that if I kill you, we stop existing.

Moon: Should I expect that on all my birthday and Christmas cards now?
Aria: Most likely... anyway, thanks for reading readers! Hope to see more of you!

Wren: Sister, really, breaking the forth wall already?

Aria: Eh, why not, it looks like we got this ending to ourselves, right?

Moon: That's because the others have already arrived, you're destination is a lot further that the others were.

Wren: There better be no side effects to this.

Moon: I'm not promising anything.

**Edit - Got some really nice pieces from my beta reader DragonRiderWarrior so I'm going to be adding them to the chapters they're meant for**
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Lost, injured and hopelessly unequipped for surviving the treacherous Amazon, a lost human male finds himself in the reluctant care of beings that defy logic, and have their own, personal reasons for not killing him on the spot.

Chapter 2

December 7th 2005 Somewhere in the heart of the Amazon rainforest

The clamour of the Amazon during the peak of the night was almost a deafening din in the ears of a man as he scrabbled across the forest floor, eyes blown wide and barely spotting the difference between tree and the path he was on.

The sounds of the predator which had tried to attack him had long since petered away, the ambush failed.

But the man didn’t stop, didn’t realise that the blood pounding in his ears was not the sounds of a Predator moments from feasting upon his flesh.

His sleeping clothes seemed to get stuck on everything, his scarf already long gone on some tree that had tried to choke him.

Before he had time to react, he ran full pelt into a boulder which seemed to materialise in front of him, it was only waist high, but it was more than enough to send him tumbling to the ground, winded and drained.

For a brief moment, he lay there, panting from exertion, far above, beyond the canopy, hundreds of thousands of stars stared down upon him and the rest of this seemingly endless Rainforest, like silent vigils watching over all, seeing all, yet, never able to do a thing.

He snorted, cursing his exhausted mind.

He tried to rise, using the boulder as a prop.

Only to barely hold in a shout of pain as his right leg collapsed under him, broke, the impact with the boulder.

Pain came flooding back, his body covered in scrapes, bruises, and now, a wrecked leg.

There was no way in hell he was gonna make it back to the camp… if he even knew in which direction it was… he’d bobbed, weaved, changed direction so many times… trying to get back ran the high risk of him getting even more lost.

He was going to die here, without his body ever likely being found.

Another predator would find him.
As if his thoughts had beckoned fate, a piercing cry reached him, and the sound of heavy, beating wings.

His brown eyes traveled up, spotting the white, grey, black... the talons out, descending towards him as the wings caught the rays of moonlight, illuminating the form which would take his life.

Spotted the sea green, glowing orbs that were trained upon him.

Spotted the sheen of metal.

Felt the cold steel talons as they surrounded his middle, his left arm, and the loss of contact with the ground, as he was swept off, into the air, dangling below the unnatural, massive creature as it's wings caused the world around him to rustle and lean away from the heavy wing beats.

His mind gave up, unable to crack the code of what had him.

Oblivion over took his fatigued figure moments after the creature carried him beyond the canopy.

Some time later

A pained groan left the man as consciousness returned to him. His body ached, most prominently his right leg, and for the middle of the night, it was surprisingly bright beyond his tightly closed eyelids.

“Oh good! You're awake!” A chirpy, strange, feminine voice called from somewhere to his left.

Why was the ground suddenly so soft and squishy?

Letting off another groan, he willed his eyes open, only to find his gaze locking on what seemed to be the ceiling of a cave, one covered in crystals which seemed to glow a brilliant blue, they must've been what was illuminating the cave...

How'd he even get into a cave? Who was that voice?

Turning his head down, he found himself staring at a hodge podge of different large leaves, all being wrapped tight around different parts of his body in crude bandages.

Looking further down, he found his leg splinted between two sticks, held together by a vine wrapped around the two pieces like the loving embrace of a python.

Turning his head, he found his view blocked by a pile of mismatched sticks, plants, vines and moss, all stuffed together in what honestly looked like the side of a giant bird's nest.

Dotted with strange metallic feathers.

“Who... who's there?”

“Oh, just us. You know, you really had us worried when you were found, all banged up, you really shouldn’t off been out there at that time of night without anything to guide your way.” The upbeat voice called, then the ground started shaking with sudden, loud impacts, slower than a normal humans walk, dragging almost for every other, the screech of metal and a muttered curse.

It was enough to get him startled into full awakeness and trying to sit up to see the cause of the noise, only to hiss at a sharp pain from jostling his leg.
A chirring sound quickly followed, and something cold was pushing him back down into the strange nest.

“Don’t move, you’ll aggravate your injuries.” A cold, stoic voice, also feminine spoke this time.

Now, all the man could do, was stare at the massive face hovering over him, lips formed in a slight frown, the upper half of the face hidden by a visor of black glass.

What surrounded, was a mass of metal plates two different tones of grey, one light, one dark.

On either side of the massive head, three attachments, the longest at the top, black, the middle, the light grey, and the bottom and shortest ones a stark white, all flared out, a display of some sort, blocking a good deal of the ceiling from his already limited view.

His jaw fell, more in shock than in terror.

His eyes then shot to the blanket of metal feathers that were pushing him down by his chest, all of them leading towards a black main support, which was unfurled out towards him from where the… thing… knelt at enough distance so that the position of what he could only say was a wing, wasn’t going to be uncomfortable for the rest of the metal body attached.

“Tell me your name.”

Snapping back to reality he looked towards that black visor. “Huh?”

A sigh left the metal creature as she put her head to the side of the nest. “You’re name, I need to know your name you stupid fool.”

A slight prang of indignity hit him, but he answered none the less. “Jamerson, Jamerson Grant.”

A snort seemed to leave the creature as she returned her head to it’s previous position. “Knew it, naughty, naughty, carrying a fake identification like that. Hmm, let’s see… Jamerson… Jamerson Grant…” There was a brief moment of pause from the creature then, but it was akin to an eternity for Jamerson, his heart racing.

She must of gone through what was on him.

Why hadn’t he used his cover name like he was told?!

The reason was obvious, a giant metal bird woman existing before him had fried his brain.

“Hmmmm…. Interesting… C...I...A… Oh, I have ways of getting info outta boys like you… but, not now, you need to heal first. You stupid boy.” Her tone was now taunting, a hummed ring highlighting the British accent she held, if he didn’t know better he’d swear he’d heard a pleased purr come from this strange creature.

With that, she rose, revealing the rest of the towering monochrome form, currently left with a dusty blue tint due to the glow from the surrounding crystals.

He was stumped though. How had she even?

“Oh, and, seeing as you asked, I’m…”

“ARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR
form appeared attached to the wing.

“Yeah Ira! He just woke up! Come take a look! He’s CIA!” Her voice was suddenly chirpy, expression bright and inviting from what the visor didn’t hide, unlike the stoic glare he assumed he had been under.

Evidently this ‘Ira’ one, seemed to catch onto his confusion. “Tha’s Aria and Wren for yah, yah’ll get used tah it… now where tha fucks dinner?!” She suddenly snapped, but the playful smirk on what wasn’t hidden by the visor she to wore, gave away her joking intentions.

Aria… Wren… rose, striding over with wings slightly out and bouncing with the shrug of her shoulders, but with every other step, the dragging sound continued, her frame shifting to compensate for something which quickly drew a concerned albeit brief glance from the new one. “I don’t know, you ask me? Who’s been the one stuck trying to bandage up this stupid fool for the last four hours? Surely it’s not such a complicated task that the ‘tech prodigy’ couldn’t figure out how to cut a piece of crystal without a written instruction manual?” There was the cold tone again, tipped with a mocking edge as they drew closer, and the sudden size difference became blatantly apparent.

The Monochrome one was easily twice the size of this new one in all parameters, having to actually hunch and weave between the larger crystals to prevent any significant head injury.

Ira huffed, unfolding her own wings and managing to rest the second joints onto her hips, the metal plating there was dotted here and there with strategically placed spikes, as was the rest of her form it seemed.

“Ok then, yah tell me how ahm supposed to keep Kia from turning it inta another of her suicidal competitions?!”

“Oh! That’s simple! You send her out to find a very rare species of something to add to the mix! Plant or animal doesn’t matter! Then, pray you’re done before she get’s back!” The chipper one again.

Jamerson carefully pushed himself up into a seating position, watching on as the two drastically different metal bird… lady… things, became more and more animated in their jovial argument, the monochrome seeming to switch between personalities every time then went to respond.

“Ok then! Second problem! Yah tha only one here who knows how tah cook anything beyond ah microwave dinner!”

“And who’s fault is that?! Mrs, rely on your roommates for your every whim and need?”

Ira instead of verbally responding, tucked the second joints of her wings up against the underside of her head, and pouted.

“Pwwweeeeeeaaasssseee?”

The monochrome one caved, letting off an exasperated sigh as she slumped, before regarding the other with a warm smile. “Oh fine! Stop giving us that look! But you have to watch the human! His names Jamerson!”

With that she was ducking to get through the doorway towards another area.

He tried to push himself further back into the nest as this new one, Ira, approached, a wide, dangerous almost smile, more predatory grin blossoming on her features as her wings stretched
out, blocking the rest of the cave from view, showing off the cream, brown and black metal flight feathers.

“My… my… yah ah cutie… but, not mah type.” She announced, actually stepping into the nest now, revealing the massive metal talons which adorned her feet, each one easily able to smash clean through his skull as they shifted to adapt to the equally shifting surface of the nest as branches and other matter was simply crushed under the metal beings weight.

Then, she was settling down, it was an unnatural motion for the human male to see, her legs tucking up under herself, being hidden away by her wings as they folded in. It left her head hovering at most a foot away from him.

His jaw was still hanging down.

She scoffed at this, wing unfurling slightly and offered the second join to him. “Ira, Ira Halloran, pleasure to make you acquaintance, fun fact, las’ name means ‘Stranger from across the sea’”

He tentatively reached out and grasped the brownish orange metal there. “Jamerson… Jamerson Grant. What… what are you?”

She smirked. “Oh… ahm many thin’s… but most recently I added ‘Giant metal Harpy’ tah tha list… used tah be ah human like yah, yah know.” She had a twang he noticed, Irish, he should of guessed from her surname.

That was a bit of a surprise. “How… how did this happen to you?”

Ira shrugged. “Don’ know, one minute ahm catchin’ tha keys tah one of mah cars in mah Penthouse apartmen’ in Italy tha’ my friend tossed at me, next thin’ ah know, ahm in some forest in Germany in this body with ah splittin’ headache.” She responded, pulling her wing back to her side, tilting her head to the side. “Now, yah turn, wha’ tha high hell is ah CIA agent doing smack dab in tha middle of tha Amazon?”

Jamerson gulped, could he really trust these… women? With his reasoning for being here?

She apparently deemed it unworthy for her time with a shrug, rising again with a mumbled curse. “Ehh, ain’t mah job tah interroga’e. Look, how abou’ this? When yah all healed and we boot yah out back to yah camp, yah don’ say anythin’ about us being here, and we won’ tell tha world wha’ yah were doing here, and trust me, we can oh, oh so easily do that.” The way she acted so nonchalant about that whole statement put the man further on edge.

She noticed, he half imagined her raising an eyebrow, or whatever she had as an equivalent behind that visor of hers as a smug smirk formed on her metal lips.

“You gonna say anything? If not, I’m leavin’ yah here.”

“I’m… I’m struggling to get my head around all of this.” He responded, reaching up to rub at his temples and wincing as he discovered a very tender wound there which had a leaf stuck to it, probably with his own blood knowing his string of bad luck.

She puffed herself up with a roll of her wings. “Fine, ah’ll leave yah tah your own devices then, don’ move, Arien’l have mah helm if she see’s yah moving around.”

With that, she was out of the room, making her way swiftly into the main area of the sprawling, energon rich cave they had made their own.
She spotted Arien by the little… preparation station they set up, they were currently trying to dice up a few pieces of the energon they’d discovered growing in this massive cave system.

Already, the cut out which they used as a table was piled high of fruits, plant matter, and a healthy amount of carcases.

Heavy beating quickly drew both the Harpies attention to their final member, as Kia came careening down from the crack in the earth that the cave had slowly become, down along the water fall which left a river running through their makeshift home.

Clasped in each talon, a dead howler monkey.

“Got more!” The dark, light brown and cream femme shouted, redish pink faceplates spread wide as her equally bright talons hit the ground.

Arien’s helm tilted to the side, examining the newest kills. “That’s enough monkeys Kia, I would rather not have you wiping out the local population.” Wren spoke, turning back to her work as her right wing swept out, easily lifting up the now dropped corpses.

With a practiced flick, the two monkey’s bodies landed on the table, atop the already large pile.

Kia nodded, straightening up and approaching the two Harpies. “So, how long? All this flyin’ arounds got me famished.”

Arien gestured with her wing to what she was doing.

Attached to her front, was Hera, the young Harpy Eagle had, along with Keeley and Nibbler, joined their caretaker’s in the realm of metal, dare they say Cybertronian bodies.

It had been a few weeks ago the group of seven had discovered something.

Their beloved birds acted akin to Minicons, attaching to their frames, be it back or front, with the latter having the advantage of their bodies effectively becoming arms which, after a good deal of practice from all parties, could be used to a similar degree to the three femmes former organic limbs, before their own became very limited in their functionality.

“‘Bout twenty minutes… and we should be ready…” Aria announced, a frown on her lipplates as Hera carefully continued to slice one of the fruits with a knife Nibbler had pilfered from somewhere they didn’t care to look into.

Kia nodded whilst Ira let off an irritated sound, moving over to sit on one of the boulders which they’d left there as makeshift seating. [So, what tha hell we suppos’ tah do with tha little twerp?] Ira questioned, switching to Gaelic just in case the human found a way to clamber out of Arien’s nest and try and listen into their conversation.

{No fucking clue, Arien? What do you propose?} Kia enquired, following suit by switching to Spanish.

Arien just shrugged. (I don’t know, take him back to his camp at the dead of night at some point over the next few days…? It’s too bright now, his group would spot us easily.) Wren responded, easily switching to French.

The three Harpies all exchanged a look of agreement.

[So… how much do we tell him?]
(Very little, not that we know much ourselves, but anything beyond our names must be kept hidden, it’s obvious the Triage doesn’t exist here… again proving we’re on an alternative Earth.) Wren then announced, glancing over her shoulder plates at Ira and Kia.

Kia hummed, shifting to lean against the wall of the cutting Airen had turned into their kitchen. {You mentioned CIA, what else did yah get from him? If he’s dangerous, say the word and I’ll get rid of him.} She announced, wing flicking out, the momentum revealing the sharp scythe like blades hidden within the metallic feathers there, all whilst an almost gleeful grin formed on her lipplates. Arien and Ira knew better though, knew there was a pot of aggression within their close friend which was close to boiling over at the mere notion of such a human being within such close proximity.

Arien shook her helm. (No need, he’s a rookie, it’s his first mission, he’d be more useful to us alive than as a corpse Kia… blades away.) Wren stated firmly.

Kia was quick but reluctant to oblige, tucking the serrated edges away back under her feathers. {By that I’m guessing you want to… gain influence here?} There was no real point even asking really, they knew each other too well to genuinely need to question it.

Of course Arien wanting to regain control of her domain, just as Kia was already itching to regain control of hers and the same with Ira.

However, they had found themselves stuck, they had no idea of how to return to their own world, to their thirds of the Triage.

Arien snorted. (If I can use him to gain access to the CIA, then I’m going to use him, all I need is to get ahold of all those juicy secrets…) The unmistakeable sound of a low purr echoed from the femme then, Hera even bringing down the knife of one of the monkey’s necks with a definitive strike to emphasise the point.

Ira chuckled. [Then it’s settled… little Jamerson’s gonna be our first stepping stone, back to power…]

Once the hodge podge meal was ready, Ira was sent to go and collect their new human, hopefully temporary, companion from his place laying bored to the point of blowing spit bubbles like a child in Arien’s nest.

She came back out, with Keeley attached to her own front, and one of the talon tipped wing/arm things their bird companions became, had Jamerson hanging by his undamaged ankle.

“He said he didn’t want to eat a monkey.”

Kia snorted from where she was already visor deep in her own wooden bowl, making a mess of herself just to spite Nibbler who was trying to steal some of her food.

Arien was having no such problem with Hera, and so, leveled what the human could only imagine as a odd mix of irritation and something else he couldn’t place with just her lips visible.

“Once again! Our beloved Ira proves why she is not allowed within twenty metres of any human below the age of sixteen!” The largest of the group announced, wing flaring out slightly to gesture towards the smallest, whom was quick to respond.

“Hey! It ain’ mah damn faul’ they’re all heathens!”
Kia completely ignored the two.

“Yes but Jamerson here is clearly not a screaming infant, so you can carry him with dignity… or at least whatever is left of his… So give him here.” Wren ordered, wing stretching out and feathers curling to direct where she wanted Ira to place the man.

With a huff, the smaller redish orange femme obliged, dropping him into the other Harpies grasp where he was quickly whisked away from her reach and deposited onto the monochrome femmes lap.

In return, Ira’s bowl was half passed, half tossed at her, resulting in some of the contents ending up on the cave floor.

“Hey! Wha’s tha big idea?!”

Arien popped a chunk of Capuchin into her mouth, now completely ignoring the fuming femme.

Jamerson just switched his attention between the three, trying to understand anything to do with the current situation. “Can I get an explanation of some sort about all this?”

Kia lifted her head up from her bowl, one wing blocking Nibbler from it and the other still holding the bowl to her mouth, which was likely a skill brought forth by multiple previous attempts, but the scowl on her features was directed solely at him. “Can’t help yah there, we ain’t got no fucking clue what’s going on either.” There was an irritated ring in her voice, a hispanic accent easily made out.

He turned his gaze up to Arien just as she craned hers down, making him feel a little bit uncomfortable at how much longer her neck was in proportion to a normal human.

Not that they were anything close to human.

“We woke up here, Kia found herself in Zimbabwe, and Ira over there woke up in a forest in northern Germany. We were humans before that, we each experienced a flash of light, a burning sensation, and then us and our birds were here… and we were metal birds.” Aria stated, before having Hera reach into her own bowl and pick out a few pieces of sliced fruit to give to the human.

He gratefully took the pieces, having not eaten since the night before, and quickly shoveled them in, akin to what Kia had returned to doing.

“Oh terrific, now we’ve got two trying to choke themselves on their meals.” Wren muttered, left wing snapping out and getting Kia hard in the back just as something began going down the wrong way. “Breathe you imbeciles, myself and Ira are not performing mouth to fucking mouth.” She growled.

Kia completely ignored the warning outside a thankful nod, Jamerson took the warning to heed.

Ira apparently noticed, a bowl half raised to her mouth with Keeley’s help. “Bloody heck, at least one of them has ah functioning brain when it comes to food.” She half whispered, before pulling the bowl to her lips and slurping down the liquid cocktail of organic and mammalian juices which had pooled at the bottom before biting at the side of the bowl to pull as much of the contents into her own waiting mouth.

Kia shot a glare at Ira, saying something likely as a retort, but about as understandable as someone gargling gravel due to the amount currently in the dark brown femmes mouth.
Instead, a wing was flicked up, then something strange happened, the majority of the feathers curled, making a bowl like shape, whilst the middle of the large array remained upright.

Aria chuckled then. “A bird giving the bird, I’ve seen fucking everything.”

Kia, by her nature of trying to inhale her food, finished first, finally leaving the scraps stuck to the bowl to Nibbler, much to the smaller Bateleur’s delight and irritation at having failed to garner more spoils from the larger former human.

Completely ignoring Nibbler, Kia strode over to Arien, lowering herself down at the hips to get her first good look at the human. “What the hell you doing this far from the US. Don’t you fucking try and cover up anything either, I can spot a lying piece of trash in Texas from Florida.” She hissed.

Was it not for the fact the Planet’s circumference was against her, he would of believed the exaggeration. Not that he didn’t fully understand the underlying threat, the talons on her red feet could easily crush his skull like a hydraulic press could crush a watermelon.

He was probably going to be fired if his superiors ever found out about this, but he’d rather be alive and jobless than just outright dead. “We’re looking for a suspected cocaine factory… to try and decrease the amount getting into the USA.”

Ira let off a muffled curse, attention off her food and focused on the human the the Bateleur femme.

Hera’s talons gripped onto the human, pulling him back closer to Arien’s mid section.

The reason, in all of half a second, Kia’s lower faceplates had morphed into a vicious snarl. “You gotta be fucking kiddin’ me Amigo. Well ain’t yah fuckin’ wastin’ yah time here! There’s a thousand slagging things your stupid government could be doin’ that ain’t gotta do with that pansy of a wil’ goose chase tha’s only ever gonna make tha whole fuckin’ problem worse! Healthcare! Decent educations! Ending the fuckin’ Iraq war! Stopping the housi-”

“KIA!” Wren shouted, the sudden cry echoing throughout the glowing blue cave, cutting off the Bateluer’s rant. “Two thousand and five.” She pressed, especially stressing the last number with a strained bow and tilt of her helm.

Kia paused to let the year sink in before letting off an understanding sound. “Ah… right… forget that last one.” But then her irritation came back full force. “It’s Culero’s like you that give me such a fuckin’ headache, all you sunglasses wearin’, egotistical, law bashin’ sons of…. no, I’m not gonna give even one ah yah the satisfaction of seein’ me pissed, Arien, I want this ass outta our home by tomorrow night! Screw injuries, I ain’t havin’ no MIB, in unifrom or not, anywhere fuckin’ near me!” She snarled, before stormed away and taking to the air, flying up through one of the crags further along the cave.

Nothing was said for a good minute before Aria let off a distressed sigh, wing lifting up to rub at her face. “Ah hell… there’s no way she’s gonna listen to reason until you’re gone now… fuck.”

Ira snorted, Keeley popped another chunk of meat into her mouth. “Don’t go star’ beatin’ yahself up over it. Yah didn’t know how she was gonna react.”

Arien just growled lower, Wren snapping back a retort. “We are fully allowed to berate ourselves for failing to connect such obvious fucking dots.” She hissed back.

Hera grabbed up the man in Arien’s lap, and the femme stormed back to their room, the limp still there, still that dragging noise he’d yet to locate beyond the fact it had to do with their right leg,
kicking the log door shut behind them with a harsh kick and a hissed growl.

They must of switched over however, because Jamerson was then gently placed down into the expansive nest, and a blanket from the heavens knew where, was pulled out from between some of the sticks and offered to him.

“It get’s cold here at night.” He was right, Aria.

But he didn’t lie down like the wave of surprisingly soft, fibrous metal feathers told him to, suggesting he rest.

He was too awake for that.

Kia’s outburst had left him with even more questions.

Arien stepped away from the nest then, moving to perch instead on a bolder they’d sliced the top off to make a flat surface.

“You’re not from the present are you?” It was a notion which had only come to his mind at Wren’s interruption of Kia’s rant.

A jubilant chuckle was his answer. “Guess we weren’t quick enough to cover up that little slip?”

“No, when are you from then? How far in the future?”

“Pfft, only twelve years, nothing to write home about. We’re stuck here, and unless some unknown higher power changes their mind, something tells me... that ain’t gonna change.”

“A lot can happen in twelve years.” Jamerson responded, trying to move so that he could pull himself up the side of the nest without aggravating something, they must of put something on his leg to numb the pain, but what, and a whole load of other similar questions were set aside for now.

Evidently, they heard his struggle, and came to the conclusion the man wasn’t going to settle to aid in the recovery of his injuries. He’d managed to pull his torso upright when their wing stretched out, the metal feathers easily coaxing him away from the wall and up into the air.

Then, Arien returned to their spot on the boulder, right wing hooked to create an almost hammock like structure before he was slid back to his previous position against their midsection, and the strange, lanky appendages which he’d realised where the Harpies companions… only, in an alternate form, wrapped around him instead as the Harpies wings all but went limp, the weight of them pushing the limbs out, covering a good deal of the floor, at somepoint passing over a few random clusters of those glowing blue crystals.

He’d seen them in the three Harpies bowls, seem them eat them. “What are those crystals? Some weird type of Quartz?”

The sound of grinding gears and an half swallowed laugh followed, he guessed it was Aria, but she sounded more like a dying engine than either of them.

Wren answered, cutting off the odd sound. “No, they’re... they’re a crystalised form of energy… we have them in our Universe too, called Energon.”

(Wren… really?)

(Oh hush, he’d only have more questions if we made it seem like it only exists here.)
"Universe?" Jamerson called up, proving the persona’s point.

"Told ya."

"Universe? Ah! Sorry, my heads always stuck in Sci-fi, I meant country… how my side of my head translated that to the entirety of existence… I don’t know! Now, off to bed with you! Rest much and don’t toss around too much!" Wren then rambled, trying to force a smile on their faceplates to try and convince him whilst quickly putting him back in the nest, pulling the blanket back over him before settling down on the boulder again.

(Now if only we had a pillow for yah to scream into.)

(Better, I can do it in here.)

(Fuck...)

Back in the main cavern

Ira huffed, Keeley swinging the bowl around on one of her talons by it’s lip.

Heavy beating broke the near silence as Kia returned.

Ira watched the Bateleur land, rattling her armour with a shake and a stretch of each leg. “Needed that.” Kia muttered, rolling her shoulders as she strode back over to their little seating area.

Ira raised an eye-ridge behind her visor, twitching only slightly as the top right piece on her helm bounced along with the motion before settling back down.

They were all still trying to get used to that. “What poor plant life got mauled this time?”

Kia paused for a moment, having been reaching down for the bowl she’d tossed aside during her rant. “Couple of bushes, nothing major.”

Ira just hummed, Cran her helm out towards the larger, primarily dark brown femme. “How many.”

“Four.”

“I ain’t talkin’ ‘bout no bushes.”

“I know… seven…. Boulders…”

Ira huffed and returned to her previous position, before deciding against it, pushing off, and walking further into the cave towards the area she’d made her own. “Just don’t murder the guy in his sleep, ok? We ain’t in our universe anymore, these ain’t the same CIA we got. Besides, we need him, we’ve only been able to do so much from here. Once Arien gets into the US secure data banks, we’ll know for certain if their hindin’ the Allspark or not.”

Kia easily picked up on the extra spring in Ira’s step that came at the notion as it played around in
the smallest femmes helm.

All of them had been hoping for it, their new bodies matched the Bayverse style, though the blue energon crystals had made them question if they were instead in the Primeverse.

Honestly, they weren’t gonna complain if it was one and not the other.

They had all decided not to get their hopes too high though, after much insistence by Wren, they were in 2005, for all they knew they were in the Animatedverse, seeing what the Autobots and Decepticons looked like in the body style they themselves found themselves in would be entertaining if not jarring. Though if that was the case, they had to wait a good fifty years minimum to see if that was the case.

There were really just too many questions flying around at present, so, ignoring them until they had more information seemed like their best bet.

Kia let the reminder soothe what remained of her mostly spent temper, yes she had a deep seated… dislike… for the CIA and other such organisations, but, at present this little rookie Hera had chanced upon, was more useful to them alive than dead.

Nibbler’s irritated call from his perch a little way down into the cave system drew Kia from her musings. “Alright, alright, I’m coming yah overgrown feather duster.”

A faux bite from the Bateleurs hooked beak near the side of her helm was his response when she allowed him to hop up onto her shoulder plating.

“Why didn’t I just go for that damn Golden Eagle…”

She knew why, her brother had called dibs on the thing before she’d even made it back home from a meeting with a few of her primary underlings.

The damned spoiled rat had stolen the bird away to his room before anyone could stop him.

She’d been beyond irate at the time, but had grown used to the Snake Killer she named Nibbler, after her favourite little alien from Futurama.

Given the fact the bird had an apparent passion for stealing all of her food, or trying to eat anything he saw move.

Which is why Kia knew to lean away from Nibbler when he suddenly lunged off her shoulder and pounced on something darting through the dark further down in the cave close to Ira’s area.

A faint pained squeak and Nibbler was already digging into his meal.

Continuing on, Kia listened out for when Nibbler started to follow after her, his metal talons clanging and scraping along the uneven stone much like her own far larger ones were as she moved to pull her own makeshift log door open by wedging her right wing in the gap between it and the cave wall and yanking.

“Alright Nibbler, tomorrow, we begin our journey back to the top.”

An excited call came right back as Nibbler flapped past her, aiming for his perch just to the left of her nest.

One thing she certainly was happy about with this change, was how much brighter their birds were
now, they’d managed to get a lot more done around the cave with their companions actually understanding in detail what needed to be done.

It was how Hera found Jamerson in the first place, out hunting for ‘anything useful’.

With that thought, she settled down, content to rest after all the flying she’d performed the last few hours.

Kia top left, Ira top right, Aria and Wren bottom
Edit - Out those are old, got some much more recent versions of their designs that are much more accurate to their actual descriptions now.
And another from Drago
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Ok, this is a kinda intermediate chapter, this was just mostly to show what the Harpies planned to do, big time skip coming next chapter to the begining of the first movie. Hopefully the next chapter will come sooner, but, with the fact I'm going off to the Uni I wanted, that might not be possible, oh well, until next time!

Chapter 3

It was a few days later that Jamerson found himself being carried back towards his camp by Hera, the massive Adolescent Harpy Eagle easily carrying the healing man in her talons.

He spotted the tell tale sight of smoke on the horizon which came from the camp, feeling an odd sense of apprehension in returning to a camp that had likely already written him off as dead.

He honestly didn’t blame them, were it not for Hera finding him, something that in itself would be instantly slated as impossible, he would be something’s meal, be it a nest of Bullet ants, or whatever Predator that had scared him out of the camp in a panic to begin with.

He’d be carted off to an insane asylum if he started rambling and raving about just Hera, the giant metal Harpy Eagle who’d snatched him off them ground in the dead of night, whisking him to the aid of the, albeit mostly reluctant, Harpies.

Strange women from a parallel future who’d wound up stuck on his Earth as giant robotic birds.

Anything from the last few days would either get him tossed in a padded cell, or written off as suffering from hallucinogens from some plant or animal he’d come in contact with.

He’d decided to heed Ira’s advice, keep his trap shut about the seven mechanical beings hiding out in a giant cave system, and just tell the rest of camp that he’d climbed a tree until he felt comfortable enough to come down and make the journey back.

Being believed aside, there was no way he was going to be sticking around, Wren had stated quite frankly that his broken leg, regardless of it being set and splinted, meant he was going to be shipped back to the US.

Didn’t mean he wasn’t going to give his ‘self acquired’ intel that he’d ‘gathered’ whilst stuck up in that non existent tree.

Ira, claiming that she was bored out of her mind three days ago, had taken off, and returned a good three hours later, stating that she’d located the objective, a large illegal drug farm and preparation area, due North West of his camp by fifteen miles.

They apparently had quite the bonfire going so he was going to use that to explain how he’d seen it from up a tree in the middle of nowhere.

In the time he’d spent there, he’d also learnt another thing, what was causing that scrapping racket whenever Arien carried him anywhere, or just walked about.
Aria had actually given him the whole story, Wren not interrupting once during, for whatever reason he had decided not to pry for.

Around a month after they’d arrived, during the outfitting off their makeshift home, Arien’s foot, they called it a pede for some reason, had fallen victim to a very nasty landing, when they were still getting used to the fact that they could fly.

They had flown a good distance and located a small logging station, in their attempt to be left unsotted, they’d chosen to land, dropping out of the sky and into the rainforest below.

In their attempt to go unseen, they had fallen victim to horrifically powerful trap, a pitfall of metal rebar spikes meant to kill anything which fell within.

Due to their size however, it had only been their right leg that had fallen victim, the spikes driving through them in a multitude of different points.

The landing had also resulted in her other leg being sprained after landing on solid ground and been twisted out of place by the rest of their body continuing down into the deep trap, add to that the fact their head got smashed against a boulder, knocking them unconscious before the pain registered.

Hera, having gone unharmed, had detached from her position on Arien’s front, and taken to the air to bring Ira and Kia to the place of the incident.

They’d only recently managed to get walking again, flying was still out of the question, leaving Arien stuck down in their little cave maintaining it whilst Ira and Kia worked to bring back everything from food, building materials, to anything they could pilfer from nearby human camps they could find use for. The spikes had obviously damaged something vital, as the right legs talons simply dragged along the ground, causing the screeching sound, and it apparently took a lot of effort to put enough weight upon it just to take the next step without falling over.

A cry from Hera snapped Jamerson from his thoughts as the metal Eagle finally began her decent, gliding seamlessly between the thick foliage and down to the forest floor, setting him down before, with a few final quick flaps, she landed beside him.

Wide sea green eyes then turned to him, she’s was about his height as they began to walk the final distance, her head bobbing just over his own as he used her for support, she’d be with him until the path, then she’d be gone.

Hera was, if he was being honest, the most welcoming to him of the group, an adolescent of her former kind, she was clearly curious about him, being hand reared left her a bit apart from Keeley and Nibber, who kept back along with their trainers.

That being said, the number of times he’d had to pass on her ‘gifts’ to Arien, was quite high.

He honestly wasn’t a fan of mauled monkey.

Hera let off a little trilling gurgle, bumping her closed beak into his shoulder, being careful of the lethal blades the beak was made of.

He patted her side, but she just turned and gestured to what was already before them, the path.

Without even realising it, his free hand went down, burying into the pocket of the baggy trousers he’d had to wear solidly for over a week, he ignored the grimy feeling, instead wrapping his hand around the small device Aria had given him.
‘A storage device, I had it on me when we came, I don’t have any use for it… and given the date being December 11th, consider it a Christmas Present’.

It was a flash drive, small, but with one hundred and twenty eight gigabytes worth of data, unheard of to him, the most present devices had were eight.

It said something about the future of technology.

He turned to Hera again, only to find her gone, the sound of beating wings barely caught before she disappeared from audible range.

That was it then… turning back, he continued on towards the camp, letting off shouts to try and get the attention of his fellow agents or the locals helping their group.

They came almost immediately, taking in his state before rushing him back to camp, his senior officer already getting his 4x4 ready to get Jamerson out of the jungle.

He was able to get them to stop long enough to tell them about their targets location, before he was promptly whisked away.

Hera watched on as Jamerson was placed within the back of the truck, watched until it raced out of sight, and, from her little hiding spot she’d found a few nights prior on a scouting trip, watched as the camp returned to it’s previous activity.

She stayed there for a few more minutes until all of the humans returned to their tents to continue working, and now, preparing to the launch their assault on their target, or at least, try and locate it from the description that Jamerson had given.

Taking back off into the air, she shot between the thick trunks and hanging vines, rounded wings barely making a sound as she spun through the air, playing a little before she returned to Aria and Wren.

When Hera returned, she settled down upon one of the branches of a fallen tree the Harpies had managed to bring down and prop up for herself and her compadres.

Nibbler and Keeley were already waiting for her.

~Ah, the triumphant filth carrier has returned.~ Keeley trilled, shooting the far larger Harpy Eagle a scathing look.

Hera puffed up in indignation. ~Silence yourself Keeley, it was a vital task that only I had the lifting capacity to complete.~ Hera shot back with a snap of her beak and slight rising of her wings in challenge.

Nibbler, who’d been living up to his name gnawing on a thigh bone of some indiscriminate creature, looked up and regarded the squabbling females. ~Both of you shut it, Keeley, stop trying to rile up Hera, Hera, get that bone out of your cloaca, you’re really starting to sound like Wren.~ He huffed.

Hera snorted but settled back down. ~I can’t help it, I for one, liked Jamerson, he was friendly enough to be tolerable.~

~He stank.~ Nibbler shot back, remembering how foul the human had started to smell by the time that Hera swept him away.
~Alright, I’ll give you that, but that was only because Aria didn’t want to take him out to the waterfall, logs have fallen down that into the cave.~ Hera admitted, her point proven by the sound of something heavy crashing down into the plunge pool at the bottom of the waterfall which flowed in from the entrance.

~You forget that Kia hates his kind with a vengeance.~ Nibbler then added.

Keeley piped up then, had her face the capacity, she would of been smirking. ~My, my, you didn’t even insult her then!~

~Prolonged contact has forced me to adapt more, before this mess, I barely saw her every few days because of her work, now, I rarely get time away from her.~

Hera nudged him slightly with her wing. ~You are the only thing she really has left of her old life.~

Keeley slumped slightly. ~We all are… it’s weird… now that we’re so much smarter… we can understand them a lot more… a lot of things suddenly make sense…~

Their conversation was suddenly cut off by familiar music blasting out from Arien’s area.

Hera chuckled over the sudden deafening din, to any other it would of sounded like an extremely loud screech. ~Guess someone had a eureka moment!~

~WHAT?! I CAN’T HEAR YOU OVER THE NOISE?!~Keeley shouted back, getting even louder.

~STOP SHOUTING BOTH OF YOU! YOU’RE GIVING ME A HEADACHE!~ Nibbler then screeched, trying to be heard over the now even louder music.

It had gotten so loud they didn’t even hear as Ira and Kia ran towards Arien’s area, even the ground shaking impacts that their movements caused, dulled by the sheer pounding music's own soundwaves.

Ira reached Arien first, the largest of the group had the biggest grin on their face as their shoulder was yanked to turn them towards the other two, the speakers hidden away under their back struts platting still pounding out ‘Born this way’ by Lady Gaga, one of the songs on their playlists which had somehow transferred into her helm when they wound up in this reality.

The song cut off, and the smug smirk remained. “Guess what I got into?” It was practically a whisper, inaudible to the other two Harpies whose audios were still pounding in response to the deafening dubstep remix which had just been blasting through the cave.

“What?”

“THA HELL YAH SAY?!”

Aria started giggling, lifting their wings up to hide the massive grin now on their faceplates.

“YAH DID THA ON PURPOSE!” Ira was fuming, rubbing at her helm attachments with her wing joints, trying to rub away some of the ringing sensation.

“Eh, had to get your attention somehow.” Aria chirped, rolling their shoulderplates.

Kia apparently heard Aria well enough. “Well then, what did you find that it was so important you had to try and deafen us?”
Aria smirked, handing over to Wren who began projecting an image on their visor, causing the previously black glass to light up, revealing familiar documents. “A certain Air Force One flew within range long enough for me to snatch these, I had only a few seconds, so I don’t have the whole document though.” Wren announced, bringing up her right wing to rub at her chin.

Ira was practically pressing their visors together a moment later, the colour draining from the black glass to allow her primarily blue optics to take in what she was seeing.

All she needed to see were the words ‘Captain Archibald Witwicky’, and the smallest Harpy was jumping up and down with elated screeches, practically lunging at Kia to try and trap the Bateleur within her wings. “BAYVERSE~! BAYVERSE~! BAYVERSE~!” She sing-songed, as her excitement continued to come flooding out.

Kia however, remained firm, and somehow upright despite the fact that Ira was trying to use her as a stripper pole or something along those lines. “Now what? We know which reality we’re in, what course of action do you think is the best to take?” Kia enquired, managing to fold her wings in the closest thing to crossed arms their limbs could form, whilst Ira was still using her to spin around akin to a lamppost.

Wren paused then, letting off a low humm.

Ira however, needed no such moment of thought. “Ain’ it obvious! We get tha cube and leave no S7 lackey standin’!” She trilled, somehow having placed herself precariously on Kia’s left shoulderplate, the only point of contact being the line of armour plating which ran down all of their fronts, her wings and tail feathers twitching to maintain her position.

She got an irritated look for her troubles from Arien. “We’re not killing anyone. Instead. We’re going to do this right, we don’t want to make a PR mess for the Autobots to face the moment they land.” Aria announced, deactivating their visor so it returned to its pitch black state.

Kia seemed a bit put off by the statement, but nodded regardless. “Then we need to prepare, we need to get to the USA and establish an area of operation, cause flyin’ from here to wherever we’re gonna be ain’ gonna work amigos.” She continued.

Arien huffed, turning their gaze down at their mangled pede. “I agree, that many landings have a high risk of doing more damage… I can hold the fort here until you locate a safe place to stay, preferably one with an energon source like this one, then we can move out of here.”

Ira sighed, sliding off Kia. “Pity, I like this place… maybe we keep it as ah hideout, tha humans would certainly have a hard time finding us here if we stick aroun’ long enough for everything tah go tah shit.” She followed up, glancing around at the energon rich cave.

Noises of agreement left the other three Harpies, Kia being the one to speak next. “Well then, look’s like we’ve got a lot to prepare.”

Wren spoke then. “But, we wait until Jamerson’s used the drive and I have full access, from there, Ira, you can hotwire some satellites to project signals here, that way we’ll have a stable link to make the most of. Right?” She enquired to the smallest of their group.

Ira snorted and stretched her wings up, the tips having to curl back to avoid hitting the ceiling. “Hon’, I could do tha’ with mah toes! Blindfolded!!” She remarked. Then her chassis puffed up and she struck a pose. “Yah are speaking to the Queen of Tech, if I can’ do somethin’, no one ever will.”

“Pfft, wha’ever, yah know wha ah mean. I’ll get us in, no sweat.”

Kia watched on as the two fell into their usual habit of joyful bickering.

It ended when Aria had risen from her seat to try and whack Ira more effectively with their wing, the sudden shift was too much for her pede and it collapsed again, leaving them to crash against the wall that she had been sitting against with a pained groan.

The previous humour died instantly as Ira rushed to help prop Arien back up, muttering a curse and apology for what had happened.

Kia was too focused on glaring at the mangled limb.

Unbeknownst to Arien and Ira, Kia had found the ones who’d left that trap.

It had taken a long time to wash away the smell of copper from the blades tucked away at the ends of her wings.

Now, however, her thoughts were not on the headless corpses she’d buried, or the heads she’d tossed to the Piranha’s. “What should be a top priority, is getting a professional look at that thing.” Kia remarked.

It didn’t need to be said that there was only one potential professional that would work in this case, but in the meantime, they’d have to find someone who could help.

Two months later, Washington, Pentagon

“Mr Jamerson, good to see you recovered.” Jamerson spun in his just sat in chair, finding his boss, and father, standing there. “That Drug bust went off without a hitch, we’re proud of you. Surviving like that, truly a testament to your survivors training.”

Jamerson floundered for a moment, before remembering this wasn’t his father when they were at work, his father had already said all of this by his hospital bed over six weeks prior. This was for the ears of his co-workers.

“Thank you sir. But really, it was by chance that I saw their operation from where I was hiding.” A flash of his memories from that time came back and he gave a slightly nervous laugh. “I’m just glad I didn’t pick the tree of a nesting Harpy Eagle, they’d have had me for breakfast.” He remarked, shuddering slightly at the memory of Hera’s talons alone, the Harpies would of easily of killed him with their own if they wanted to.

Yet they hadn’t, Arien had done what they could with their limited resources and dexterity to patch him up and get him back to the camp when they deemed him fit enough.

Kia and Ira he wasn’t so sure about, Kia had been volatile, angry even at the fact he was CIA, Ira… there was just something about how she cackled at anything she deemed funny, how she vocally toyed with concepts of surviving a Nuclear winter now that their bodies technically couldn’t suffer from radiation the same way a human could… that gave him a strong reason to feel on edge around her.

Even Wren on her own was difficult to get accustomed to, Aria tried to be as accommodating as
possible, but with her reassurances always being cut up with snark, cold remarks, the effect was somewhat lessened when Wren found herself in a particularly bad mood over something.

Normally relating to their injury giving way again, it had happened a few times, but the narrow confines always meant they had something to catch themselves on.

“Jamerson. Jamerson!” The shout of his name jolted him back out of the present, his attention drawn back to his father.

“Yes sir?”

“A new memory stick? Surely your old one still has some space on it.”

The remark was so out of left field he had to run it back through his head again before he even realised he’d pulled the memory stick that Aria had given him out of his pocket and began thumbing the device, it had a push switch on the side, sliding out the tip and then back in.

“Err, yeah, my old one ended up stacked up with hospital documents.”

“Has it been screened yet?”

Protocol, all devices had to be screened for bugs.

“N-no… I’ll go do that, sorry, I’ve been stuck in the hospital so long…”

His father’s hand coming down on his shoulder stopped his ramblings, further silenced by the pair of crutches his father then passed to him.

“Go get it screened, then, get to work, and remember, your mother’s cooking us all a big ol’ bird for a celebratory ‘first day back at work after traumatic injury’ meal.” With that, the man excused himself, and walked away back to his own group of equally ranked officials.

Two hours later

Jamerson sighed, dropping his crutches back to the ground as his weight was fully taken by his chair, grumbling he drew the memory drive, it was completely clean, yet it had taken the tech heads well over an hour to stop freaking out about the storage capacity, he’d forgotten it could hold sixteen times the normal amount currently on the market.

It had raised some serious questions, which he’d simply answered with the fact that it had been a gift from someone who had helped him out a few months prior, they’d bought it, thankfully, the rest of the questions had hardly been directed at him, but they didn’t let him leave either, nor offer a chair, too enamoured with trying to persuade him to just let them crack it open, and try and pry from him whom he’d gotten it from.

A ‘friend’, one who didn’t want to be hassled.

Finally it had ended, and he’d returned to his desk, drive ready to go and his monitor already logged in.

For the foreseeable future his busted leg was gonna be keeping him on desk duty until he could return to tip-top shape.

He expected it after the doctors had told him not to get his hopes up about returning to the field for a long time, his leg had multiple fractures, some bone fragments had even separated and had to be
surgically put back in place in the hope of the bone mending itself.

Deciding to stop thinking about his impediment, he drew the little device, and plugged it in.

Hidden away within the inner workings of the device, a small circuit board connected to the main motherboard, and like a venomous snake bringing it’s fangs down on prey, delivered it’s hidden package.

It took mere moments for the virus to spread, jumping from one computer to the next like a wildfire.

The effects went completely unnoticed, despite its ferocity, there was nothing advanced enough to detect it.

Only four beings noticed as the virus copied everything, transmitting it all directly to them in a heavy stream of information.

Hidden deep in the Amazon, Arien couldn’t have stopped the gleeful grin that overcame their features even if they wished to stop it.

“Oh girls…~ We’re in.~” Aria practically purred, already sifting through all the information pouring through the digital stream being transmitted directly to them.

Ira pushed herself up with a snigger. “It’s abou’ fraggin’ time.”

Kia merely let a smug smirk form on her features. “Guess that piece of trash was worth something after all. Sorry for doubting you Aria, Wren.”

Ira huffed and spun on Kia. “Wha’ am I? Chopped T-cog?! Ah made tha’ damn device!”

A wing coming to rest on her shoulder stopped her from potentially ranting further.

Aria beamed at the smallest Harpy, visor draining of colour to reveal the optics beyond, ones which radiated a sense of gratitude that only Aria expressed freely. “Thank you, sister.” The the visor went dark again and the smile went to a smirk. “Now, let’s get this show on the road.”

“Amen tah tha’!” Ira chirped, chassis puffing up in pride.

Kia huffed, folding her wings. “Since when were you Christian?”

“Hey! Don’ judge! I can say whatever tha hell ah wan’!”
Concept sketches I did for Arien's anatomy a while ago, decided to post them with this chapter, they're not meant to be clean, they're just so I and now you could get an idea of what's being referred to in the fic when I describe parts of their anatomy. Also I know this is a pretty short chapter but I didn't want to stretch it out with even more filler.

Edit - More pics
Also I couldn't not post these amazing pieces by TalonV on DeviantArt that Drago commissioned from them.
Hera (Little One)

Location: Monako
Keeley (Keels)  
Location: Rome  
Red  
Ventral
Nibbler
Location: Barcelona
Chapter 4

Fun fact! I'm at Uni now! And I don't have my drawing tablet, or any of my pieces I've done for this fic because I never thought to save them as JPEG's so I could actually open them on the laptop I took with me to the other side of the country. So... yay... Anyway, this just means I have had all the more time during freshers to write! And the pain in the ass that has been chapter 8 is finally done! (Though I'll likely add more in edits) Anyway, enough from me, on with the chapter! Hope you all enjoy!

Qatar July 2007

The base was in chaos, humans of every military rank either strewn across the ground in burnt, bloodied messes, or trying to escape the mayhem which had descended upon them with little to no warning.

The former Helicopter, now towering goliath of mechanical carnage was tearing through the fortifications of their base, devastating their vehicles without half a thought as it approached its target.

Blackout snarled as the humans useless ammunition continued to rattle against his platting, his deployer Scorponok was already taking out the remaining humans which stayed to foolishly fight from below.

It was easy enough breaking through the roof of the base to access its main systems, despite the shouting humans within, he reached down, snatching up what he could of the computer systems, and began the download process.

Not a moment later, something raced through his systems, his spark jumped, a virus, a powerful one that had just smashed through his primary defenses with the equivalent force of a combiners kick.

His systems were already going haywire, he felt things within him as they began to work too hard, everything working at triple the necessary level, straining everything, burning through his energon reserves.

How… how did the humans have a virus this powerful?! They shouldn’t be this advanced!

Then, his vision was blocked by a message that opened itself.

A holographic image flickered into existence before his optics, a triangular shield, the crest decorated with three organic wings flaring out from the centre.

Then, it was replaced by a simple bobbing orb.

“Hello Blackout! Thank you for being a stupid tool and allowing our hacking prevention software to take root within your frame! You have three human minutes to leave this base before we shut you down and let you get carted off by the humans to be dissected!” A chirpy voice announced before the orb was replaced by a quickly dropping countdown.

He could already feel the virus working, but, as he tried to reopen the ports to access to collect the data he was seeking, he made a new discovery.
It was all gone, every scrap of data other than a painted image of an almost completely fisted servo, save for the middle digit.

Twenty seconds was already lost from the timer, the mission was a dud.

Now, it was just a matter of making sure that the voices threat didn’t come to fruition.

How had it even knew it’s designation?

He decided to question it later as he broke into a sprint away from the base, trampling a few burning husks of former vehicles, the squelch of human flesh under pede drowned out by his racing spark as he felt parts of his system run ever hotter.

The virus was going to cook him from the inside out.

His T-cog strained as his form shifted into its Helicopter form, rotors spinning far faster than usual due to the influence of the virus as he headed directly East.

He had only four seconds left when the countdown suddenly stopped, the virus all but disappearing, his form slowing.

He must have reached the exclusion zone perimeter.

His transformation was arduous, rotors straining as they folded down against his back strut, just as his pedes gave way, leaving his burning frame to collapse to the night cooled sand, had he landed in water, it would have evaporated in seconds, even now he could feel the sand beneath him beginning to liquify, turning to crude glass under his armour.

Then the shield appeared again, then was promptly replaced by a darker orb.

“Congratulations, you’re alive, which means I won mine and my sisters bet. Oh, and do consider that little sample, a warning. Have a wondrous day you fucking piece of shit.” A colder, smug voice announced, before the dark orb vanished from his view along with the countdown, returning his vision entirely.

He had to warn the other Decepticons on Earth.

They’d greatly underestimated the humans defences.

Las Vegas Strip, The Cosmopolitan

The normally blinding, famous lights of the Las Vegas strip were all off, the blazing sun out shining over all as it continued its merciless assault upon the land.

Despite this, the sweat upon the brow of one woman as she stood at the main entrance of the Cosmopolitan, was not from the heat, but out of trepidation, her fingers twitching in the need to fiddle with something to calm her nerves.

Taking a deep breath, she decided to bite the bullet, she’d been half summoned, half requested to come here, and with a shaking hand, pushed one of the many front doors open.

Immediately she decided that she was woefully under dressed.

The interior screamed wealth, style and grandeur she’d never seen in anything but the movies, all intricate architecture trying to out do each other piece in regards to glamour and sophistication.
Her torn, worn and stained jeans, slightly too small top and hair held back by a single old hair band, made her feel even more out of place than she had walking down the strip.

The foyer was mostly empty, but the eyes that did linger, lingered on her, her attire, with a glare akin to one would receive if they smashed a priceless antique.

“Heck hem. Ma’am, if you’re going to gawk, you can do so outside.” One of only three currently posted receptionists remarked, breaking the teenager out of her stunned state.

“Oh! Sorry! No I’m here for a meeting!” She answered back, reaching for her backpack, managing to draw the necessary papers as she approached the receptionists desk, offering them out.

They were snatched away by manicured to perfection nails, a sneer shot at her as the other two, younger receptionists sniggered and snorted behind their respective hands.

The sneer faltered however after only a brief glance at the papers offered, a choked splutter leaving the main receptionist as her gaze returned to the teenager standing before her once again. The sudden change caused the other two receptionists to pause, looking closer at the papers, only to pale despite their tanned faces.

The teenager shifted. “I received this in the post two days ago telling me to come here…” She was stopped by the head receptionist putting her own shaking hand up as the other placed the papers down so that she could instead reach for the intercom, tapping a few buttons hidden from view before leaning the mic towards her as a dial tone rang.

“One good reason why you’re bothering us. Now. Before I have you fired for interrupting us right after a meeting.” A voice snapped, their tone cold and unforgiving as an Antarctic winter.

“There’s a… Miss Mikaela Barnes here… with paperwork…”

“That’s all we need to know, send her up.”

“O-of course! Right away Ma’am!” The receptionist waited for the other end to hang up before turning back to the teen. “To your left, top floor….” She gestured to the set of gleaming elevators. “You’ll need this…” A key card was passed over to the teen, whom took with slight trepidation and concern at the sudden shift in the three women’s personalities. “You’ll need to swipe the card reader within the elevator to gain access to that level.”

The conversation was over, she could tell, nodding, she walked over to the elevators and pressed the call button, ignoring the many doors that lead to both the resorts casino, and other such tantalising facilities she would never be able to afford.

The elevator took only a few seconds to arrive, the doors sliding open to welcome her.

Before she could enter, four men in black suits stepped out, speaking quickly in what she guessed was Chinese, that assumption boosted by their Asian appearances.

Two of the men were speaking especially rapid, whilst the other two seemed to be fuming slightly.

They didn’t even acknowledge her presence as they walked around her and out of the building all together.

With the elevator now clear she stepped in, turning her attention to the slot on the side of the elevator just over the many floor buttons, sliding the card against it, a quiet ping answered her back.
Then, just below the card reader, a shifting of the gold plated metal slid away seamlessly, revealing a new button.

Pressing it after a moment's hesitation, the teen watched as the doors slide shut, and felt the sudden shift as the elevator shot upwards at an almost ear popping rate.

The ride ended almost as quickly as it begun, the doors sliding back open to revealing a sprawling suite.

She’d seen pictures of the rooms that the resort offered, but this was on another level.

Crystal chandeliers hung sparingly throughout the open plan living area, kitchen, dining room and from the glimpse she got from the corridor, some sort of private gym.

She had only just stepped out of the elevator when a voice called, their tone chipper, inviting and warm, unlike the cold, snappish tone she’d heard on the speaker of the intercom.

“Ah you’ve arrived! Good! Good! Oh, do stop standing there, you look like a lost child like that!”

How could she not stand frozen to the spot?

The woman whom had just come into view practically shone, the sweetheart neckline, dress she wore outshine all the chandeliers above them combined, studded with what looked like thousands of diamonds.

Given where she was, the notion of rhinestones as a cheap diamond replacement didn’t exist.

The woman's hair was left to flow behind her, along with the slight train that the dress had, the black and white locks on opposite sides to the black and white of the dresses, creating an evident contrast, like a checkerboard.

“Dear, are you… Oh my! Give us a few seconds and we’ll go change into something a bit more appropriate for casual conversation! We just finished off a meeting with a few officials from Beijing, so we’re a little glammed up. Do help yourself to anything in the kitchen, you look famished!” The woman announced, waving her hand at the teen.

Then the woman was whisking herself away, the sweeping transparent half skirt which trailed behind fluttering like a calm sea.

Mikaela just stood there for another moment, trying to understand what had just happened.

There didn’t seem to be anyone else around, who had the ‘we’ been that she’d been talking about?

Deciding to take up the woman's hospitality, she slowly approached the kitchen, everything about this place screamed ‘enough to buy a third world country’, and put her on an ever increasing edge.

She pried open one of the four massive fridges, and found herself gawking at the sight of not one, not two, but three entire roast turkeys which looked right off a food add.

Deciding that those were likely meant for another time, she reached lower down and plucked a simple green apple from a basket full of both reds and greens, the fruits chilled skin helping to ground the teenager in reality as she closed the fridge door and looked out from the kitchen.

What she found was a wall to wall view of Las Vegas, a bird's eye view of the entire strip.

If she looked down far enough.
Whomever had summoned her from her little garage in California, paid for their flight tickets and even ordered her to be picked up by a stretched hummer, Mikaela had the odd thought they were the type to of seen more money within their infant years than she ever would in her lifetime.

“Yah going to eat that or not? If not, put it back.”

The cold tone snapped her back away from the stunning view, finding the woman again, this time she was dressed in comparatively casual clothing, given the fact that their previous attire looked like it belonged to the daughter of a diamond mine tycoon.

“Umm…” Her grip around the apple tightened slightly.

Suddenly, the woman's expression shifted, becoming welcoming again. “Oh don’t worry about it dearie! Wren’s just being a grump because one of the officials decided to make a… lecherous comment! Don’t take it to heart, enjoy the fruit!” She chirped, before turning on one of her cork heels and practically strutting to the six seater, pure white leather sofa which sat perfectly opposite to the black mirror image.

After a moment of pause, the woman gestured to the black sofa with a flick of her wrist. “Sit… Aria’s nagging at me to apologise, so, I’m sorry I snapped at you out of internal impatience.” The cold tone announced, not looking at Mikaela, instead staring out at the Strip below.

Mikaela decided to remain where she was. “Is… I…”

The woman’s head swung back around, facial features morphed into surprise, Mikaela swore she saw something tucked back under the womans’ hair twitch. “Oh! How rude of us! So sorry there! We rarely properly introduce ourselves! We’re Arien! I’m Aria and miss-snark-alot, is my dear sister Wren… we were born in the same body so we have to share.” She chirped, but her lips shifted into a small frown as she shifted, wringing her hands together. “And… those officials decided to make some… very… dramatic accusations about us, so we’d rather not discuss it again today, I hope you understand?”

Mikaela nodded, picking up that she should probably try and ignore the fact she’d found herself in the… home? Of twin sisters who were more than a little attached.

Conjoined twins, she mentally corrected, a very extreme case of conjoined twins.

“But we didn't pay for everything to get you here just so you could listen to our story, we're here to talk about what you…” Wren then cut in, gesturing to the teen with grey painted nails which honestly looked sharp enough to pierce metal. “...and what you can do for us, in repayment.” Aria then announced, gesturing to themselves.

Mikaela gulped, she knew it would be something like this. “You got my daddy out of prison, I guess it's only fair. What do you want me to do?” She enquired, before a new question entered her head. “Why me anyway? Why did you decide to bail my dad and not someone else? I’m just a high schooler who knows her way around an engine block better than my own boyfriend!”

One of the twins snorted, humour evident in their features, before it was replaced by a coy smirk as they leant closer to the edge of the sofa. “Mikaela, dear, we know from personal experience and knowledge that you're destined for far greater things than being a ‘simple mechanic’.” Aria announced, a spark of glee in those sea green eyes as the smirk grew wider.

Before she could make a remark about that, Wren took over the conversation from her twin. “For now, how we know that, is irrelevant, we brought you here because we need you to get something
for us, from one of your history classmates. To be precise.” They announced, pulling a picture out from their left pocket, handing it over to the teen. “I’m sure you are at least aware of his existence?”

Mikaela looked at the picture, she did recognise him, he was the kinda awkward teen she sometimes caught staring at her, he was weird in her books. “Yeah… I recognise him.”

Arien nodded. “Good, he has something we need, a pair of glasses.”

Mikaela gave them an odd look at that. “What’s so important about a pair of glasses? It seems to me like you’re loaded, why not just buy a pair?” She enquired.

A chuckle left the twin women, a soft smile forming as Aria responded. “Dearie, it’s not the glasses themselves, it’s the code imprinted on them, a unique code that we must get our hands on.” She responded. “He has put them up for sale, but, we cannot simply buy them, we cannot link ourselves to the pair of glasses with any sort of digital transaction whatsoever, and us suddenly showing up at his front door with a wad of cash won’t fly either. That’s why we need you to perform the transaction for us, person to person. Tomorrow, he will use them in his history report, where he will likely try and sell them. That is when we want you to acquire them.”

Mikaela was floored, but one thing stood out to her. “How… how do you know this? How do you know about the history report?”

Arien smirked, and tapped the side of their nose as Wren spoke. “That, is for us to know, and for us to tell you when you succeed. We do not wish to pressure you here, but, we must get that code, or else a lot of people may end up dead. Can we trust you with this?” The tone Wren used felt as serious as a heart attack as Mikaela tried to decipher her choices.

After a few minutes of mulling over everything, and everything she didn’t know, she reached out her hand. “You promise I’ll get a full explanation?”

Arien nodded, Aria responding. “Cross our two hearts and drown at the bottom on the deepest abyss.” The words were joined by both of their hands crossing over each breast.

Mikaela sent them a look, asking if they really did have two hearts.

Arien just grinned. “Once you get the glasses, contact us, there’s a Lake not far away from where you live, we’ll have someone there to pick you up, we hear there’s a party there, so one, don’t lose the glasses once you have them, and two, well, have fun.”

Their hands came together, and the deal was made.

Pentagon

Jamerson rocked on the balls of his feet, eyes trailing all around those present in the assembly.

He stood just to the left of the podium where the Sec Def was about to make his announcement to those assembled, regarding the Military base attack in Qatar.

“Hey, Jamie.” One of his co-workers, Flint, he forgot his last name, called to him.

“Yeah? What is it?”

“I overheard some of the big wigs talking about this, apparently something seriously high tech
attacked the base, like, sci-fi, half of them were calling the rumour fantasy, pretty weird huh? Apparently they don’t want that part getting out yet. Oh there’s something else…”

“Shhussh! He’s here!” Jamerson cut over his co-worker, the man had a brilliant mind, but it was prone to wander and twist the things he’d heard, so his words always had to be taken with a pinch of salt.

The Secretary of Defence was indeed already speaking, and had been for a short while before he gestured for what they had to be played.

Jamerson listened in as the sound was played, it was strange, right out of a sci-fi movie, he gave Flint that, but then it abruptly cut off, after only a second or so.

“The signal, our specialists say, was then intercepted, and prevented, by a third party, mere moments after, the attack, to our knowledge, ceased, and any attempt to access the information stored in Qatar, is gone, wiped clean, by the third party group we can assume.” He announced, his features showing his concern.

Whispering broke out among the analysts within.

“Sir! Do you have anything from the third party?” One man called from somewhere halfway up the room.

The Sec Def shook his head. “No, this third party somehow managed to sever every connection we had at the time, we have nothing to go on other than the fact that it happened, and that the original signal was not long enough to have the ability to completely wipe the entire system clean… We are dealing with something we have never seen before, and we must crack this code, swiftly. Before these two parties do anymore damage… you will all be split into teams, it will be your duty to this country to crack this code, and remove this threat to our systems… Dismissed.” With that, he stepped away from the podium, and returned to the side, entering a conversation with Jamerson’s father and a few other government officials of the higher brass.

Flint nudged his side again. “They were yappin’ about how they think it could be either China or Russia… Maybe Japan, those guys are really advanced, maybe they’ve been keeping their real range of tech from us?”

Jamerson rolled his eyes. “Flint, please, let’s just get back to work.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever you say, Jungle Boy.”

Jamerson scowled at the nickname, he’d been ‘graced’ with it ever since returning from the Amazon after performing his ‘miracle of survival’ it had gotten him in the good books of the higher ups even more than before, and had helped him go up a few ranks over the past year and a half through hard work and determination, and not just the fact that his father liked the idea of him taking over his own place when he retired.

He’d long since moved on from the entire experience, yes he still remembered it well, but he no longer dwelled upon it, for all he knew, his saviours had already found a way back to their own time, or found a way to happily live with their new bodies somewhere on this planet, or maybe even beyond, they didn’t exactly need oxygen anymore after all…

“Jamie! Earth to Jamie! We gotta go!” Flint declared, snapping him out of his revier.

Nodding, he quickly followed along with the rest of his team mates.
He broke off to slip into his desk, his gaze subconsciously going to the memory stick that he still used, the little light on the end still glowing as green as ever.

Cosmopolitan

The elevator doors slid shut behind Mikaela as Arien gave a final wave to the teens back.

Sighing Arien’s head swiveled around to give Kia a firm look as the slightly older woman stepped out of her room, her clothing no longer the ruined suit she’d worn coming in not two minutes before Mikaela had entered the front lobby.

“You are a damn lucky thing she didn’t spot all that blood, or the officials for that matter.” Wren remarked.

Kia was leaning against the doorway of her room, giving a shrug as a response. “Wasn’t expecting her to get here so early amigo.” She responded, pushing off the doorway and coming out into the main area, reaching back to run her fingers through the damp brown locks which now cascaded down her back further than they had earlier when they weren’t leaving a wet trail behind them on the floor.

“But you knew we were hosting those officials, yet you still come waltzing in here, covered in blood and complaining about how you ran out of ammunition.” Wren pressed, hands falling to their hips.

“Well at least she didn’t bring a head as a trophy this time.” Aria remarked to her sister.

“That’s hardly something to be celebrated.”

“Hey, at least I learnt my lesson and didn’t hack the head off my target this time.” Kia shot back, oblivious to the twins internal discussion.

Arien’s expression was all Kia needed to know to understand that point was invalid.

“So… you seen Ira today?” Kia enquired, opting to change the topic.

The twins shook their head. “No, not since this morning, either she’s still in her room…” Aria replied, before trailing off.

Wren took over. “Or she’s getting plastered somewhere… it’s not September so she’s not at Oktoberfest yet…”

“Though that’s never stopped her from going to Germany… or Ireland… or Russia…” Aria added, left hand scratching at the side of their head for a minute.

The sound of one of the doors down the corridor drew them to the sight of Ira half stumbling out of her bedroom door, rubbing at the side of her head which was currently an unruly nest of ginger locks. “Gah… would you all quiet down… I got a killer headache…” She grumbled, scratching at her side through her spaghetti strap pajama top.

Arien and Kia exchanged a look before Kia replied. “Serves you right for downing so much last night, looks like you finally discovered your alcohol tolerance…”

“It ain’t a hangover! I damn well know what one of those are! I just hit my head… oww…” The woman grumbled, rubbing at the side of her head with a grumble. “Next time, I’m sleeping on the
ground…” She remarked.

It took a moment for the two to realise what the third member of their group meant. “Ohh! You banged your bipedal form’s helm when you fell from your perch back around six this morning… seriously though, are you trying to become a Bat or something? You were hanging upside down too.” Aria commented, regarding the holoform a second time.

Ira huffed and straightened, letting off a quick curse as an attempt to run her fingers through her hair got them stuck. “I wanna be wide awake for when we get to meet the bots, so, I’m oversleeping, duh, then I won’t be so tired!”

Arien rolled her eyes. “Ira, studies even in this reality and time have proven that that doesn’t work, sleeping more only means that your body expects even more, and so makes you more and more tired for longer periods of time.”

There was a long beat of silence before Ira huffed and stormed past them towards the kitchen. “Hungry.” She remarked as she threw open one of the fridges and she pulled out a bowl of salad, a pot of Nutella and a chunk of roasted steak left over from the night before, balancing them as she kicked the fridge door shut with her foot and went back into her room, kicking that door closed behind her as well.

With that discussion closed, Arien turned back to Kia as Wren enquired. “You disposed of the bodies right?”

Kia nodded with a smirk. “What’s wrong? The little Chica not have faith in my abilities? Of course I got rid of the evidence!” She exclaimed, waving the two off as she walked towards the gym. “It’s why my suits ruined, the wood chipper decided to spit out of both sides!”

Arien felt themselves turning a bit green around the cheeks. “TMI, Kia, TMI.” Aria muttered, deciding to go and lay down for a bit so their stomach would stop rolling itself into knots.

There is a sketch I would put here if I had it of Arien's casual clothes and the two mentally bickering, but, again, no access to it until I visit home at the beginning of next month. So just go with the mental image of them bickering in their shared brain case.

Hopefully you all enjoyed this chap, movies starting to kick off, and by all the fires of hell are the Harpies going to let the plot take it's course. Until next time!

Moon

Edit - Another piece from Drago
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Decided it was time to put another chapter out, hope you all enjoy!

Chapter 5

The Next Day, Tranquility California

Mikaela glared out of the window she sat next to, doing her best ignoring her boyfriend Trent as he tried to coerce her into staying round his home after the lake party.

She’d already told him she couldn’t, that she had to do something to help her recently bailed father get himself back on his feet.

Trent wasn’t having it however.

“C’mon babe… yah old man can wait can’t he?”

“No Trent, now shut up, I don’t want to talk about it anymore. I’m going to the lake party with you, but I need to do something else after, not hang with you, maybe tomorrow?” She tried.

Trent huffed, but seemed to relent for now.

Turning her gaze back to the front she found herself praying that this Witwicky guy would hurry up already, Arien had given her enough cash to buy the apparently really important glasses he was currently waving around, she just wanted to get this all over with.

“I’ve got them on Ebay right now… You could bid… you know… if you’re interested…”

The final bell graced her ears then, she swore she’d never gotten out of her chair and away from Trent faster.

“Hey! Sam!” She called to the teen who was trying to offer the specks out to their other classmates trying to make as hasty an exit as possible.

He spun around and seemed to all but have his brain crash as she walked up to him. “Y-yeah? C-c-can I help you?”

“Yes, I’ll buy them, here.” She offered the wad of tens, honestly it was way more than a pair of glasses could ever be worth, but, oh well, it wasn’t her cash that was being used here.

Sam floundered, and the wad drew some wandering and surprised looks from their teacher, Trent, and the remaining classmates.

“He spun around and seemed to all but have his brain crash as she walked up to him. “Y-yeah? C-c-can I help you?”

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“A friend of mine likes to collect stuff like this, so she gave me this to buy anything I could do to help boost her collection. So, this enough?” She huffed, propping her hand on her hip.

Sam promptly nodded. “Y-yeah! It’s enough! H-here!” He offered her the ancient looking glasses,
which she quickly took, then the case that was offered, all whilst she passed over the bound wad.

She didn’t wait around to hear him continue rambling, marching back to her chair, grabbing her stuff and leaving, Trent quickly following behind.

“Babe, we need to talk.”

She halted in her power walk, spinning on her frowning boyfriend. “What is it Trent?”

“You never mentioned having a friend that was loaded.”

Mikaela scowled. “She’s a new friend, met her… a few days ago, now I need to go call her, let them know I got something, I’ll see you at the Lake Trent.”

“Or I could give you a lift home?”

“In other words, you want to grill me on Arien.” She shot back.

“Ari-en? Huh, pretty name…” He wasn’t focused on her for a moment, giving her all the time she needed to turn back towards the exit and storm away.

When she reached the door, she heard him call to her, but she pushed through, reaching into her pocket and pulling out her flip phone, dialing in the number of Arien’s phone number that she’d been given on a square of paper.

“Given the time of the call, I’m guessing… Mikaela?” She heard Aria’s chirpy voice call.

“Yeah, it’s me, I got them.”

“Excellent! We knew we’d done the right thing entrusting you with this! We’ll send someone to come pick you up! Oh, Wren want’s to speak to you quickly… If you see a yellow with black racing striped vehicle following Sam, walk up to it, driver or not, and tell it you have the glasses and to stop targeting Sam. It should be at the lake, so you’ll probably just have to wave them at it to get it’s attention.”

Mikaela paused in her walking. “Is this all just some stupid joke?”

“If it was, Aria would’ve lost her composure by now and started laughing our head off, listen to me Mikaela, the vehicle, is not a normal vehicle, it is a he, he is sentient, and we need you to get his attention to save him from a lot of potential harm, please… I’m sending you a clip to your computer at home, watch it, and you’ll understand.”

With that, they hung up.

This was getting way too weird.

Shoving the glasses into its case, she then shoved that into her bag and took off towards her house at a jog, her mind racing as her eyes darted around, paranoia spiking.

She was just about to cross a street when she saw it, rolling right past her, old, banged up, but yellow, with black racing stripes.

And no driver.

“It’s you…”
The car slowed for a brief moment, she swore the wing mirror lifted up slightly.

She turned, and bolted, panic rising within her, her feet carrying her fast on a longer route home, doing her best not to look back.

She didn’t hear its engine following, but when she reached her front door, she did look back.

It was there, at the end of her street, turned directly towards her.

She practically threw her front door open when her keys finally unlocked it, and then slammed it behind her, hand pressed to her chest to quell her racing heart.

“Miki?”

Her head swung around, finding her recently bailed father standing there, looking more than a little surprised, with concern brimming in his eyes. “Was… Was some bastard following you?”

How could she explain the driverless car that had followed her right after she’d been told to get it’s attention from a woman she’d met the day before after they and their twin had had her whisked away to Las Vegas, women whom somehow shared a body…

“No… no… just… just got homework! Yeah, homework!”

“But it’s near the end of the year isn’t it? Shouldn’t they be tapering off homework by now?”

“Yeah, but I got it dumped on me by history, due tomorrow, want to get it done before the party up at the lake later tonight.” She rushed out.

“Oh, ok, well… let me know if you need any help with it?”

She paused in her preparation to rush to her room, the urge to see what Wren had said had been growing steadily since she had been told that something had been sent to her. How did they even have her email address?

Her father was really trying, she realised, he’d missed so much of her childhood and teen years he was struggling to know how to properly help her like a father should.

She stepped forwards and pulled her father into a quick hug. “Will do daddy.”

His arms trapped her against him for a moment, before he let her go and patted her on the shoulder. “Go on, I’ll be cooking up some dinner so you don’t get hungry while you’re at that party… mac and cheese?” He enquired.

Mikaela nodded. “Yeah, sounds good dad.” She then stepped away, calmed by her father's naivety of the situation.

Walking into her own room she walked over to her computer, booting it up took a few minutes, but she was able to quickly open up her email, finding a new message, how had they even gotten ahold of her email?

‘Bumblebee aka, yellow and black car’

“Bumblebee…?” She mumbled, opening the email, glancing at the sender Username ‘Ar/WrOriciono’.

“Guess their last names Oriciono…” She mumbled, finding below a tagged video.
With only a few moments pause, she clicked it.

The video player went to full screen immediately.

Robots, giant, different coloured, different sized robots, all standing around and on what looked like some old observatory.

The largest was kneeling, the same glasses she’d just bought, held almost comically between two of his giant mechanical features.

“Please… let this work…” His voice was deep, a baritone if she remembered right, as he stared at the glasses.

It then panned out to the others again, the smallest speaking. “Fire it up Optimus.”

Optimus, the big one was Optimus… why… what was she seeing?

Then, it just got stranger, light beams shot out of ‘Optimus’ metal eye things, entering the glasses lenses.

And a giant glowing map of the Earth appeared.

“The code…” Arien had mentioned a code… was this it? “The code on these glasses indicates the Allspark is two hundred and thirty miles from here.”

The glasses were a map… a map they needed to find the ‘Allspark’?

The green one then spoke up, the view panning to him. “I sense the Decepticons are getting ready to mobilise.”

The black one then spoke. “They must know it’s here as well.”

Was that a bad thing? Decepticons didn’t exactly sound like a friendly name…

“What about Bumblebee?!” The smallest interrupted.

Mikaela felt herself lean closer to the screen.

“We can’t just leave him to die!” The shot cut away, turning to a new one, yellow and black, Bumblebee, laying out on some moving slab as white clouds of something were sprayed at him. “... And become some human experiment!”

She felt something her her stomach drop.

Then the Optimus one cut over. “He’ll die in vain if we don’t accomplish our mission!”

Then the shot returned to them. “Bumblebee is a brave soldier! This is what he would want!”

The black one snapped back. “Why are we fighting to save the humans?!”

Then it cut back with him still talking, showing ‘Bumblebee’ thrash and buckle as he was blasted with what looked like electricity, pitching mechanical whines leaving him with each blast, the weight in her gut was just getting heavier… she’d just seen him… How did they get this?

“They’re a primitive! Violent race!”
“Were we so different?” Optimus sent back.

Then it was over, the screen going dark.

And her phone ringing from it’s place in her pocket.

She jumped at the ringtone, flailing for a moment to pull it out and answer it, this was too weird, she lifted it to her ear, pressing answer.

“We’re trying to save them… this hasn’t happened yet… we’re trying to change their fate… we need those glasses to lure them away from the grasp of your Government…” It was Aria, at least, she thought it was, her tone was softened, saddened even, like she’d been forced to watch that a hundred times over, like she knew things that warred upon them.

Mikaela gulped. “They’re trying to keep us safe… why would that do that to him? Who are you?”

“I can’t risk saying too much, this line isn’t secure, we’ll speak more once you’re back in Las Vegas… you’re okay with another visit right?”

She nodded, despite the fact that they couldn’t see her. “Yeah… yeah, I’ll tell my dad I’m sleeping over… I think this is gonna be quite the explanation.”

“Given there’s the chance you’ll faint, I’d have to agree with you.” Aria responded, her voice returning it it’s more positive tone.

Then Wren cut in. “A close friend of ours, Kia, is going to be sending a significantly sized convoy to transport you… don’t freak out, she’s just trying to cover all our bases. Just in case a ‘Con chances upon you.”

Mikaela gulped. “Was that supposed to help me calm down about all this?”

“No, I was stating a fact.”

“Good to know… see you then I guess…”

“See yah soon Mikaela! And remember, grab Bumblebee’s attention! We need to lure him to us so we can alert them to the danger they’re in.” Aria finished up, before the call was dropped.

Sighing, she dropped her head to her desk.

Her life had certainly taken a turn for the bizarre in the last twenty four hours.

Witwicky residence

Bumblebee was having a hard time focusing on the human male Samuel Witwicky he was supposed to guard, his processor stuck on that weird encounter with the human female.

She’d recognised him… then bolted, had his movements been too much? He’d just tried to get a better look at who’d suddenly spoken at him.

Maybe she was just a conspiracy nut… or she knew someone who had a similar vehicle to his alt mode?

Nothing he could think of made sense… Well it did, but every time he thought up another explanation, something nagged in the back of his processor saying it wasn’t right.
The sound of the front door closing brought the scouts attention back to the present. He had to quickly hold in a shudder as the human teen opened his driver side door and slid in, foot hitting the side of his central column in his haste, this was still a very new feeling, having something else alive inside him, but, to the teen, he was just a normal car, he had to make sure he was safe long enough for them to get the glasses from them.

“Alright… Lake… to the Lake… Gotta get Miles… god Mikaela was so hot today…”

This human was very, very, very strange.

When this ‘Miles’ human was picked up, Samuel decided to have a very rampant conversation with them.

“Dude! I got a sell! Mikaela bought one of the pieces of my Great Grandfather’s junk!” He exclaimed.

“Bro! Awesome! How much did you get?”

“Dude… a fucking grand!”

Miles did a spit take, spraying his dashboard with his saliva, and again Bumblebee had to hold back the urge to shudder, he’d need to wash that out… as soon as possible.

“What?! Dude, the fuck she buy?! His preserved leg?!”

“No! And, eww, that’s gross, she bought the old mans glasses!”

It took a few minutes for the humans statement to sink in, when it did, he very nearly killed his engine.

Samuel Witwicky didn’t have the glasses… apparently he’d sold them, that day…

The scout wished he was able to be in his alt mode so he could perform the human expression of ‘face palming’.

“Really? Dude! Those things were like… junk?!”

“Apparently a friend of hers is a collector of stuff like that, she bought it for them… she handed over the wad, took the glasses, then left… she’s probably gonna be at the lake party too… maybe I can ask her there? Give her the extra money back maybe to try and gain her favour?”

“Dude… Chivalry’s dead, don’t bother, keep the cash, besides, you’ll get your face pounded by her jock boyfriend if he catches you tryin’ to make moves on his girl!”

“Worth the shot.”

The rest of the conversation, Bumblebee decided to tune out, focusing on following Sam’s motions on his wheel so as to reach this lake and try to identify this ‘Mikaela’ human.

Hopefully she had the glasses with her.

When the humans finally got out of him, they were ranting and raving all over again, apparently Samuel had spotted his new target.

His optics ran over everyone within range.
Stopping on the human female from earlier that day, despite being surrounded by a group of other similarly dressed females all seeming to talk at once, she was staring directly at them.

“Dude she sees us!”

That was it, that was the final confirmation, that was the human he somehow needed to get ahold of.

How? That was the big question.

“Bumblebee to Optimus, come in Optimus.”

“Optimus here… status report Bumblebee?”

“The glasses have a new owner, they were exchanged for local currency to a human female, I have located her, but we are in a public place, the Witwicky boy brought me to an outdoors celebration of some sort next to a body of liquid.”

“Hmm… try and draw their attention… discretely.”

“No need sir, she’s staring dead at me, I encountered her earlier this cycle… she somehow seemed to know I was more than just a vehicle…”

“You’re suggesting she knows you are more than a vehicle?”

“Yes sir, and I haven’t shifted into my bipedal form in any location where she or any human could of chanced upon me, I made sure of it.”

“Hmm… this does complicate things… What are they doing now?”

He turned his focus back to the human female, she was looking away now, talking rapidly to some of the surrounding females, trying to make her way out of the group.

He turned his audios up.

“Sorry Girls, I, I gotta go, I’ll see you all tomorrow, promise.” She was going somewhere.

One of the males then grabbed her. “Babe, you’re acting weird, what’s going on?”

“Optimus, something is occurring…”

“Nothing is wrong Trent, I’m going to visit my friend in Las Vegas so I can give them these glasses, they sent a car to pick me up, see, the drivers over there waiting!” She was becoming stressed, trying to wrench on hand free of ‘Trent’s’ grip, using the other hand to gesture to a car parked a short way behind himself, he felt himself tense, he hadn’t noticed that vehicle arrive, a quick scan reassured him, no Cybertronian signal. Though even he felt a little bit imitated by the slight scowl on the face of the giant man whom stood next to the driver side door, the taut white suit he wore straining to contain the musculature beneath, the man seemed to be of African descent, his skin tone and head of greying black hair standing out against the white suit.

“Babe, this is bull, when the hell did you… it ain't a friend is it?! You got yourself a sugar daddy didn't you?! That's how your old man managed to pay his bail! You hore! You slept with some old guy! What's his real name! None of that ’Arien’ shit!”

Throughout the rampant accusations, she was shouting right back, drawing attention from the surrounding humans.
“The hell Trent?! Why the fuck do you think I’d do that?! You know what?! For that? We're done! I'm sick and tired of you always trying to control what I do, treating me like some dumb trophy you own! I ain't no damn ornament you can lord over! Good bye!” She wrenched her hand away and stormed towards the large, white SUV, the driver holding the passenger door open for her.

“Ma’am, the ladies will be waiting for you in the Lobby of the Cosmopolitan Resort, estimated arrival time to the airport is just under an hour, Arien’s private jet is waiting for you there.” The driver announced, speaking loud enough to be heard by her now ex boyfriend.

“Thank you…”

“Winston ma’am.”

“Winston, thank you.”

“Any friend of Arien is a friend of Kia, and so, should be given the same level of respect. In my opinion at least.”

The door was the shut, the driver moving into the driver's seat.

He didn't hesitate to start his own engine, earning a panicked shout from Samuel as he quickly ditched the human teens to follow the SUV.

Mikaela Barnes was his new target.

Mikaela sighed, slumping against the plush black leather which covered the back seats. “Talk about getting the rumour wheel rolling…”

Winston chuckled, pushing his glasses up his nose. “Petty words, jealousy and envy have no effect if you stand strong against them… i hope I didn't make too much of a scene now did I?”

She chuckled. “No… no… it’s fine…” She pushed herself back up, glancing to the rear-view mirror. “Is that Yellow and Black car following us?”

“Yes Ma’am, but I was told to expect that and not to be too concerned…Does it make you feel uncomfortable?”

“No, just wanted to check…”

“Hmm, very well, ah, the Convoy is merging, don’t worry Ma’am, you’re safe.”

Mikaela nodded.

After a few minutes of just soft piano music coming from the speakers, she decided to speak up. “Hey… Winston?”

“Yes?”

“Who’s Kia?”

“Ah, Lady Kia Estrada, she owns the majority of the Casinos on the Las Vegas Strip, and other such Casinos around the world, hence why she has such a level of security… She is a very close friend of the Ladies Aria and Wren Oriciono, and that of Ira Halloran, the fourth member of their little friendship group, they're all quite influential women… I do believe that Lady Kia will be joining you on your flight to Las Vegas, she had business elsewhere in California hence why the Jet is here.”
“Oh… well, thank you Winston.”

“Oh don’t thank me, I’m just doing my job! Anything you want me to change the radio to? Oh and for your comfort, there is a cooler built into the middle seat, just pull the tab down and you’ll be able to access them.”

Mikaela chuckled at that, of course the SUV would have a feature like that.

Bumblebee was more than aware of the group of white SUV’s that now surrounded not just the vehicle with Mikaela in it, but also himself, they were shepherding him.

That was not something he felt comfortable with.

“Optimus, I believe that I have come into contact with humans who know I am sentient, they seem to be leading me towards an Airport.”

“We cannot lose the glasses Bumblebee, do you know their destination.”

“Yes sir, Las Vegas… the Cosmopolitan Resort, I overheard that there are a group waiting for Mikaela in the lobby to receive the glasses.”

“Decepticons?”

“No sir, if it was, they would of attacked by now, I’m not picking up any readings from these vehicles.”

“Hmm, this could be a trap, remain on guard Bumblebee, we are altering our trajectory, Ratchet estimates we will have arrived just before the end of the next Earth cycle.”

“Understood sir, I’ll report back with anything else I find…”

“Be careful Bumblebee.” The line ended there.

Visalia Municipal Airport

When she stepped into the Jet that was to take her to Las Vegas, Mikaela once again had the sudden feeling that she was stepping into a completely different world.

Evidently, the life of luxury was something Aria and Wren indulged in heavily.

Shuffling to the plush seat about halfway down the plane, she was almost immediately offered a tray of condiments by a smiling Air hostess wearing a black and white uniform.

Realising a single peanut could probably set her back an amount which could be classified as extortion, she turned it down, glancing over at Winston, whom was apparently going to be both her, and Kia’s driver when they arrived in Las Vegas.

Her gaze then drifted out towards the window, and the parking lot beyond.

She spotted Bumblebee just as he took a corner and disappeared.

He was probably going to find his own way to Vegas… The convoy had broken away from him, and now sat ready to go again in the short stay car park, they’d been there to stop any funny business from the sentient robot.

“Mikaela? Are you nervous?” Winston enquired, going to sit in a seat close to hers, gesturing to the
“Yeah… looks like the cars going it’s own way…”

“I know who he is dear, you don’t need to pretend you don’t know who he is either.” Winston responded once he’d cleared his throat.

Mikaela turned her full focus on him. “How did you react?”

“How else? I fainted, manly fainted, though I didn’t find out about him and his lot until later, it was accidentally stumbling on something else that triggered my lapse in consciousness… Then Aria and Wren explained a few things, and now… well… my life has certainly become more interesting… ah, it would seem Mrs Estrada has arrived.” He announced, having apparently spotted something she was facing away from.

A minute or so later they were joined by a Hispanic woman, but Mikaela had to perform a double take just to make sure she wasn't imagining things.

The woman was a vision, and her posture radiated out an aura of intimidation as she flung dark brown windswept locks out of her face, the rest held in place by a sun hat with a significant rim.

She wore a sundress, soft cream with rouge trimming and a transparent black shawl draped around the back and around her arms.

“Mikaela Barnes?” Her tone was soft as she asked that question, approaching the assortment of seats as if she was approaching an easily spooked animal.

Mikaela nodded, holding her breath for a moment as one hand reached out, palm up. “The glasses.”

“Oh! Yes! Right!” She fumbled there for a moment, finally pulling her backpack off her back, digging around within before pulling out the case and handing it other.

A strange, trill like sound left the older woman as she slowly coaxed the case open, examining the glasses for a brief moment before sliding the case back shut. “You did well, Aria and Wren are going to be pleased… for now though.” She offered the case back. “Hold onto them for me alright?”

Mikaela nodded, placing the case back within her bag and placing that at her feet, watching as Kia took the seat facing her next to Winston, waving to the hostess who returned again with an already poured Martini, a cherry bobbing around in the liquid.

However, she paused just as she was about to take a sip, a smirk forming on her faded gold painted lips, her hand stretching out. “Kia De La Estrada, pleasure to meet you. We didn't meet yesterday because I was occupied with a bath. We didn't meet yesterday because I was occupied with a bath. You'll meet Ira when we arrive, she's no longer nursing a nasty bang to the head… no wait, she's off on a little excursion… you'll meet that maniac eventually.” The warmth that was in her tone even at the last part of her statement was somewhat comforting to the teen.

Mikaela shook the hand offered to her. “So… can I… get an explanation… I have so many questions after that video…”

“Video? … Ah, I see, the twins sent you part of the film to convince you of a few things. Yes, film, well a film to myself the twins and Ira… real life to you and the rest of the human race here…”
Mikaela glanced to Winston, who’d remained silent since his comment about Kia having arrived.
“You’re certain she’s not crazy?” She hissed to him.

Kia laughed at the question. “Dear, I may have a bolt or two loose, but I’m hardly crazy, the
situation we find ourselves in is very real. You see Mikaela, back in September of 2005, in your
time, myself, Ira, and Arien, were all transported here, from a parallel reality, by a force we have
yet to identify, this reality is one, that, before our arrival here, we knew as nothing more than…
well… fiction, you especially, were nothing but a fictional character belonging to a franchise
myself and my close friends enjoyed greatly… Think of it this way, you know Star Wars?”

Mikaela was really having a hard time believing a word this woman was saying, but she nodded, of
course she knew Star Wars.

“Well then, imagine you were say… all of sudden flung from your daily life as a part time
Mechanic, and right slam bang in the middle of Nabu without so much as a map to help you. That
is, in effect, what happened to us, only I ended up being transported from Kenya to Zimbabwe, Ira
from Rome to a forest in Germany, and Arien, well, those two were flung all the way from London
to the middle of the Amazon… do you understand?”

Winston then leant over and passed her a bottle of water. “Here, drink.”

She quickly obliged, having found her throat suddenly very parched, after a quick sip she tried to
respond. “So… You… that’s how you knew to get me? Get these glasses? Following the plot?”

Kia snorted. “Fuck no, we have no intention of letting what’s in the film, happening here… No
one’s needlessly dying on our watch.”

Mikaela stared at her for another long moment before the Pilot chose that time to tell them they
were about to taxi out onto the runway.

She thought that her life couldn’t get any weirder when she accepted the existence of sentient cars
able to take humanoid form.

Now she’s got trans-dimensional beings on her plate whom apparently know the future.

“Can I ask a question?”

Kia nodded, a small smirk on her lips as she continued to sip at her drink, her free hand buckling
herself in, which Mikaela quickly followed with.

“How much weirder are things going to get?”

“Dear, by the fourth movie, there’s a Giant Robot Rex with a Scottish Accent… don’t tell anyone I
told you that.”

Winston had the grace to try and hide his snort behind his hand.

Mikaela let off a groan as she felt the jet they were on begin to accelerate down the runway.

Once they were in the air and the seat belt sign turned back off, Kia rose, a single stride putting her
directly in front of Mikaela so that she could rest her hand on the teen’s shoulder.

“It’s a lot to take in, I advise you take a nap so that you can save as much energy as possible for
what’s to come.”
She took that more as an order than a suggestion, the idea of sleep was a welcomed one, and the plush seat was more than comfortable to nap for a bit…
Hello everyone! I wanted to have this chapter ready to go for yesterday to say goodbye to 2017, but one of my goldfish who's at least seventeen has suddenly bellied up, he's still alive but we were all in a bit of a panic yesterday and I clean forgot about posting.

Also we think one of our other fish is gonna pop his second eye out, i'm not making that up, he's developed cataracts in both and he ejected the first over a year ago and we're just waiting to see if he can live happily fully blind.

And on top of that, the youngest has a tumor growing on his side larger than the top of my thumb, so yeah, our fish have had a few interesting days and led me to be a little bit stressed cause I love those guys.

Enough about the fish, I should also apologise for not posting much, Uni is a ton of fun but it's also draining and the accommodation feels more like a prison with how it works so I struggle to find the right mood for writing.

Anyway, I've yammered on enough, hope you all enjoy!

Air Force 1

High heels were muffled against the well used carpet as one of the hostesses passed down the plane between officials, their gaze flicking about, spotting the form that seemed to go unseen by all others.

When you don't know what you're looking for, you're blind to it existing.

An old quote from her mother, but oh so fitting to the current situation that it was almost chilling.

But it only brought a smirk to her face, all the more space to walk about without drawing questions.

After all, who'd think that the redhead who'd just finished serving some drinks was nothing but an illusion? A solid projection made by the advanced technology she had access to.

Technology which was currently clutching to the underside of the massive airborne vehicle, talons large enough to pop a head like a blueberry, stabbed clean through the hull as massive metallic wings wrapped tight around the fuselage, metallic feathers leaving the faintest of paint scratches, helm craned to stare ahead and enjoy the feel of wind against their metal features.

Strutting up to the door at the end of the corridor, she reached out, and twisted the nob, regarding the President beyond as he lay strewn out on the bed. “You called sir?” Her tone was accented flawlessly, the epitome of a Sweet Southern Belle.

“Yeah, go get me a couple ding dongs, okay darlin’?”

“Borche sir?”

“That's it. Thanks doll.”

She shut the door, stepped into the elevator, and turned her gaze down, her lips twitching up at the
sight of the stereo system in the corner, she reached down and plucked it, him, up by the handle. When she reached the level below, she placed the stereo down on one of the raised tables and pressed her custom revolver right against the center of the disk lid. “Gigs up Con.” Her native accent came back as she pulled the handle back with her thumb. “Ah assure yah, play any funny shi’ and ah'll put more holes in yah than tha’ base yah buddy attacked over in Qatar.” She hissed, baring her pearly whites in a grin that left no doubt of her seriousness.

There was a moment of silence before the stereo began to transform.

The gun remained pressed up against the metal, she almost laughed at the fact that when the transformation ended, the muzzle was pressed right into the Cons tiny crotch, oh what good aim she had.

She did smirk and lean up into Frenzy's personal space. “Scarred ah’ll blow whatever yah've go’ there tah bits? Good. Cause one wron’ move an’ ah'll more than happily unload the whole god damn magazine inta yah crotch.”

The minicon quickly nodded his spiky little head, his processor suddenly rolling over what had just happened.

A moment later, something stabbed into his servos mechanism, causing him to hiss at the woman who'd just stabbed what looked like a human syringe into his circuitry.

He locked up though at the increased pressure of the muzzle on his hipplates.

“Good li’l minicon. I knew yah'd try to go for the POTUS main frame. Know tha’ yah wan’ information, well, yah gonna want to be a smart li’l mech and leave well damn alone, unless yah wan’ tah be mah next victim like you're buddy… Blackou’.” The designation was practically purred out, her eyes shining with malice.

He locked up just that bit, the revelation somehow making sense.

It also made this human even more of a danger.

Then, his servo began to shake and rattle, the one that still had the little syringe stabbed in, two of the fingers were pulling back the plunger, his energon trickling up, filling the glass tube.

Then it was pulled out, the single hand easily capping it and placing it into the deep pocket of her hostess uniform.

“Now if yah try tah hack tha Government, tha’ little gift from meh to yah, will activate. Ever heard of locked in syndrome? I suggest yah don't look it up, because it's quite a nasty fate. One ah’m certain tha humans will more than happily take advantage of… how do dissection tables sound tah yah?” The smirk on the woman's lips was stuck somewhere between playful and downright sadistic.

The minicon nodded slowly.

Then the handgun was removed from its threatening position. “Good.” It was holstered under her skirt as her other hand raised and made a becoming motion to something behind him. “Here girl.”

Clanking metal on metal caused him to spin on his spot atop the high table.

Just as a large metal bird head came level with his own form, for a brief moment he thought it was
Laserbeak, but everything from the bright blue optics focused dead set on his own, to the fact it's entire frame seemed to be covered in the mass of metallic brownish red, and white with black speckled feathers, dashed that perceived notion as the giant creature's helm tilted to the side, razor sharp beak clacking a short distance from his faceplates.

“Here girl. Got somethin’ for yah.” The human called, pulling the syringe back out and waving it in the air.

The creature's helm swung around and it stepped over, its entire body swaying from side to side as it opened its beak.

The syringe was placed within, the beak shutting once the human's’ hand was clear.

The human patted the large creatures head. “See yah outside pumpkin.”

Then it was walking back off, round a corner, out of sight.

Then the human turned back to Frenzy with a renewed smirk.

Then, within the shutter of his optics, the revolver was re-drawn and being fired into the ceiling, six shots, each ringing out as they buried into the reinforced metal.

Shouts quickly followed causing his helm to snap round as he let off a hiss, arming himself with his weapon.

One shot towards the woman and she was gone, just before the round hit, the form vanishing in a flurry of pixels.

A holoform, that meant that there was another Cybertronian here, the creature?

His musing was cut short by harmless rounds rattling off his armour, causing him to snap back to present and begin his attack.

Then, the alarms began to scream over them.

The air pressure shifted, and it was all the warning those within the lower bay had, before they were suddenly sucked out, the humans screaming as they were ripped out of the plane by the sudden decompression.

Frenzy was also sucked out, his metallic form tumbling through the air.

When he righted himself, he spotted something coming towards him, the creature, it’s talons out ready to snatch him out of the sky.

He leveled his weapon and fired again, if it went in, he couldn’t tell, the howling wind drowning out even the sound of the weapon firing.

Then those talons closed around him, and he was practically snatched out of his fall and swept away.

They were passing over a body of cloud a moment later, under the massive aircraft he’d just been within.

He spotted the fuselage, and the massive tears in the under side, the talons which grasped him were far too small to of caused them.
A high pitched screech came not a moment after as a far larger form slid out of the clouds, massive wings beating and easily keeping pace with the far smaller one, each beat causing the clouds to flurry and thrash around them.

The smaller creature, a minicon like himself, screeched back, then spun, and let go.

He was airborne again for a brief moment, before he was once again snatched out of the air, and left to dangle beneath the far larger bird.

He was shooting off obscenities now in his native dialect, but once again, the howling wind drowned him out.

Then, the two bird like creatures were diving through the clouds, wings folded to their sides as they shot downwards.

They broke through, over some sort of woodlands, they leveled out, the air currents the larger ones wings were creating forcing the tops of the trees to bend and rock in their wake.

Then, he was let go, the birds already disappearing over a ridge of foliage before he even dropped below the tree line, leaving him to careen and crash through the branches painfully slowing his fall until he hit the pine needle covered ground.

The minicon lay there for a few minutes, trying to reach out on the com-links to try and connect with the others, no luck, those damned… things, had dumped him in one of the remote places in the damned country the humans called ‘America’.

Turning his gaze to his servo, he scowled, running a diagnostic, and finding something that only cemented that things threat. A virus, already nestled deep within his coding, his own defenses having barely lasted a moment against whatever onslaught had been unleashed upon his systems.

In his moment of pause, the tiny minicon did not see a form materialise out of the shadows of the trees, a snarl on the only part of the faceplates not hidden by a thick pane of black glass.

The smashing of a rotted log under massive talons jolted the minicon to spin and draw his small weapon.

He didn’t even get a chance to fire, something massive slammed into his side, sending him crashing into a nearby tree.

Dazed his optics and helm drifted upwards, locking on the murderous snarl of a mech who’s stature left him likely to even tower over Starscream.

The mech was hunched over, massive sweeping limbs stretched out and curled in slightly to create a feeling of being trapped within as he tried to regain his boundaries.

“Pet, hold it down.”

Not a moment later, talons smashed into the wood around him, trapping the minicon even further as his blue optics finally managed to get themselves working again.

His tiny spark dropped.

It was another of those bird creatures, it’s helm white and the majority of its body brown, murky yellow pedes and black talons holding him in place.
The mechanical bird that pinned him blinked its wide gold optics at him, but at the snarl of the massive mech, it ducked, trying to shift out of the way with one leg stuck in a tree to give the mech room to get down on all fours and lean into the personal space of the minicon.

“I know you.” The mech hissed, tilting his helm to the side, strange flaps on the sides of his helm flaring out, making his helm seem even wider than it already was.

Frenzy just stared, his processor having just simply given up trying to understand the situation he was suddenly in.

“You’re one of those freaky alien things.” The mech chuckled, a low rumbling sound that held an ominous ring that, despite the vorns he’d spent within close proximity of mechs such as Megatron, cause a shudder to go through his main strut.

“Oh, this just made the last few years so much more worth it… Wait a minute…” The mech somehow got closer, Frenzy finally took in the mech’s colour scheme, surprised to find it the same as the one still pinning him.

Then, the mech sniffed him, one long deep pull before a moment of silence, and a twisted smirk replacing the mech’s snarl.

“There’s only one bitch I know who has access to that mix of drinks, heh, guess that stupid anarchist is here too… good… good… and where one Harpy is, that dual freak is quick to follow, if not lead the way, and of course, my disgrace of a sister at their side…” The mech was rambling to himself, not even paying attention to Frenzy, at least until the mech’s helm snapped back to regard the minicon once again.

“Let me guess… you just got flung out of a plane by a redhead psycho who’s more than a little trigger happy?”

Frenzy nodded slowly, a mounting sense of dread filling him as he regarded this mech, there was something wrong with this mech, something was missing from his helm, and it was a vital component.

The smirk grew larger.

“Oh, this is just getting better and better, alright bird beak, drop the alien freak, we’re paying the Harpy’s a visit, and if I know my sister, I know exactly where they’ll be…” The mech rose as the bird creature ripped its talons back out of the tree, letting the minicon drop to the ground dazed.

Raising his helm slowly, Frenzy was left to stare at the mech now towering over him.

Nothing about this mech was normal, to the point that Frenzy was beginning to seriously doubt this mech was even remotely Cybertronian, despite the metallic structure.

No Cybertronian would ever trade their arms for wings...
No Cybertronian would view his own kind as ‘alien freaks’...

Apparently though, in those few moments of contemplation, the mech had changed his processor on something.

“Alright freak, change of plans, you’re gonna take me to your fucking leader.”

What?
Jamerson sighed, what was he even doing here?

Watching over the signal analysts trying to crack the code that was used to hack into the Qatar base. That’s what.

They were to report to him if they had anything, and then he’d be the ferry boy going off to tell the higher ups.

A desk jockey.

Damnit he needed a smoke.

It had been two years since his incident in the Amazon, yet still they kept him on desk work.

It was startling to drive him mad.

What was his four hours of exercise worth every night if he couldn’t use it for anything other than to run around between Generals and other higher ups?

A murmur from one of the closer groups of analysts drew his attention, he didn’t catch the words the blonde was saying.

But he did catch her hiding a memory card in her compact mirror.

He was about to start moving to confront the analyst about what she was about to pull when someone called his name from the other side of the room, one of the other Analyst teams.

Glancing at the blonde quickly, he decided she’d still be there after he checked with the group, so he turned and walked over to the group that had called him.

“What have you found?” He enquired, leaning over the one who’d called him.

“Well, after much consideration, we think it could be China, the coding language is completely alien, but the symbols could be a older version of their dialect not globally known they’re using to hide their coding in?” The statement came out more like a question.

Sighing, he answered, knowing they were trying. “Honestly your guess is as good as mine on this, but I’ll let the Brass know.” He finished his statement with a pat on the shoulder. “Keep working on it, you might be onto something for all we know.” With that he pushed himself back upright, turning his attention towards the group the blonde was in.

Only to find her already gone.

“Shit.” He cursed, quickly breaking into a fast paced walk, not wanting to raise alarm as he aimed to find his superior to alert him to the situation.

Las Vegas, Cosmopolitan a few hours later

Bumblebee’s engine cut as he parked himself into a reserved spot that a elderly Valet had pointed him to.

A second convoy had surrounded him just out of Vegas and led him here.
The Valet stepped up to his driver side door, he’d changed his alt mode on the way here, replacing the old battered frame with a sleek modern Camaro that felt far more comfortable and clean than the form he’d had to take to be valued within his previous charges purchasing range.

His Holoform was up, his tinted windows would not help if the man went to open his door, he could lock it… but something told him that whoever had gone through all the trouble of leading him here, likely wanted to at least talk, if they weren’t a con trying to offline him at least. Then again, when did a con have the patience let alone subtlety to set a trap this long winded? Certainly none he knew of...

The Valet did indeed reach out, 0pening his door. “Sir, the Orichiono’s await your presence in the main entertainment hall.” The man announced, stepping out of the holoforms way as the blonde and black tip haired teen stepped out, shooting the blank face Valet an odd look.

Orichiono, he quickly made a scan of the World Wide Web.

What he found surprised him, an up and coming billionaire within the global market, who was gaining notoriety for her ability to tell which businesses would prosper and produce the greatest returns within the stock's industry, they hadn’t made a single loss since appearing on the international radar. Something unheard of.

A heavy investor whom seemed to have their hand in every pocket in the world, especially such industries such as the hotel industry, shipping firms and renewable energy, having acquired ownership of some of the most desired places, and companies on the planet, including the hotel he now stood in.

Clearly this woman had money to burn and expanding her monetary value at a rate of speed which was boggling the minds of those who'd caught notice.

But, she was also beyond illusive, not a single image or video, or even audio recording of this woman seemed to exist. That alone had apparently caused the conspiracy nuts to go wild.

His best bet, she knew about him, how he didn’t know, and he had every intention of getting to the bottom of it.

Alas, his holoform was just as vocally impaired as his actual form, and he doubted spewing radio clippings from ‘human’ lips would do him any favours.

So when the valet regarded him curiously, he just nodded, shut the door, and walked in the direction the man was now gesturing, up the flight of stairs which led from the underground parking lot and up into the main resort.

After a few minutes of following signs, he found himself in quite a long que, filled with humans far more well dressed than himself in yellow and black dyed leather jacket, black shirt and ripped jeans.

Apparently however, that meant he was swiftly spotted by one of the staff.

“Sir? Private seating is upstairs, this way.” A young woman called to him, wearing what looked like a traditional receptionist uniform, her voice was a bit on the timid side and she kept her head bowed. “The ladies told us to look out for someone wearing your attire.” One of her closed fists opened up, flashing piece of metal with an insignia on it that he hadn’t seen in Vorns, Neutral.

Neutrals were here, on Earth, this was a major revelation he’d have to inform Optimus as soon as possible.
And given what he’d just learnt about his ‘host’, their elusive nature suddenly made a lot more sense.

A neutral on a planet which he himself knew Decepticons resided, the best course of action to them was to blend in, and make a life for themselves in this world masquerading as humans.

Being a potentially centuries old Alien being likely aided in some areas that he couldn’t think of as present.

The woman was still waiting for a response, so he nodded, gesturing for her to lead the way.

Three flights of stairs and good few odd looks later, he was being ushered into a private booth, which provided a clear view of the large stage below and the horde of adult humans flocking to fill the seats in the rows and levels below.

A shuffling sound caused him to swing around, finding Mikaela Barnes sitting on one of the plush sofas which lined the booth.

“H-hey…”

He gave a wave back which could only be described as equally awkward, gesturing to the sofa she was sitting on.

“Oh! Sure! You can sit! Sorry… I wasn’t told you’d… have a form like this…” She responded, timid smile forming as she shuffled to the furthest side of the sofa as possible, giving him enough room to easily lie down if he so wished.

Was she not aware of ‘Orichiono’ s’ true form? Whatever that was? Had the Neutral only interacted with this teen under the guise of a human?

Given her actions however, he chose to follow her lead and sit against the other arm rest, his holoforms bright blue eyes flicking between the empty stage below and the teen in his peripheral.

They sat there in an awkward silence before the scout remembered why he’d driven so far, turning to sit cross legged on the sofa he waved his arm to try and get her attention, humans vision was motion based right? Or was it that giant scary as all frag lizards vision which was motion based?

Thankfully he didn't need to windmill his arms for long to get her tentative attention.

He promptly looked up the hand gesture for glasses, and quickly made it himself, even if he suddenly felt like a complete fool having most of his holoform hands blocking his face, pointer and thumbs connected and pressed over his eyes upside down like a mask with his free fingers wiggling in the air.

She stared at him, dropped jawed, for. a moment he froze, fearing he’d accidentally insulted the human teen, had the World Wide Web been wrong?

Then she burst out into peals of laughter, slapping the arm rest mercilessly.

So, not an insult?

He was way too confused, humans were weird… this entire situation was weird.

He knew that her loud laughter was drawing attention from the humans below, thankfully the balcony hid them from the prying eyes of those disturbed from their own enjoyment.
An equal blessing was that her laughter was quick to die down into muffled snorts behind her hand as her cheeks went red.

Tilting his head to the side he removed his hands from his face, hoping that that would help somehow, he was still adjusting to human behaviour.

He’d rarely dealt with such peculiar species like this since the exodus of his dying homeworld.

The thought caused his features to sour, and the human quickly shrunk into herself, likely misinterpreting the expression. “Oh god, sorry, I… it’s just… the glasses right? That’s what you were trying to say?”

Thankful for the change in topic, he nodded, opening his hand out, hopefully she’d just hand them over.

She fidgeted. “I… I don’t have them anymore… I gave them to Aria and Wren when I got here, then they sent me here telling me to enjoy the show…” She admitted.

He deflated, dropping his hand back to the sofa, maybe he could write to better communicate… Who were Aria and Wren? Orichiono’s assistants? Minicons? Other? He needed answers...

As if reading his thoughts, she ruffled around in her bag, pulling out a notepad and pen. “Here… I don’t want to insult you by making assumptions… but if you’re still learning our verbal language…”

He quickly grabbed them, popping the cap off without much care of where it went and quickly doing his best to scribble down a response, scanning the World Wide Web to make sure his script didn’t end up looking like a hybrid of his own and their language.

‘Then why are you still here?’ He spun the notepad so she could see.

She shrugged. “No idea, Kia led me up here, then vanished, she told me to stay put so I did… then you show up…”

‘Kia?’

“Yeah… one of Aria and Wren’s friends, it was her employees that were sent to pick me up from the Lake.”

‘Aria and Wren?’

“They’re the ones who brought me here yesterday and told me to get the glasses from Sam… they’re… unusual…” So she had yet to interact with ‘Orichiono’?

‘How so?’ He didn’t want to seem like he was trying to pry all information as possible out of her, but as a scout, it was kinda his job.

“They… They’re… down there…” She was pointing towards the stage.

A woman now stood center stage, their hair and clothing looking like they’d just come out of a chessboard, the skin tight dress clung to their lithe form, one hand holding the brim of an equally black and white top hat, a ribbon wrapped around the base alternating from blue to red, blue on the white side, red on the black.

Tilting his head to the side, he gestured to them and then looked back to the teen who’d moved to
sit on the plethora of cushions that sat at the front of the booth, the low front wall making it easy for her to rest her head on her elbows.

“Yeah… that’s Aria and Wren… that’s what I meant by unusual, two people, one body, they seem to get along pretty well though… looks like contrasting colours is their thing.” She responded with a shrug.

He followed her example of sitting on the cushions, placing the notepad and pen on the lip of the booth wall for a moment before picking up the pen and scribbling another question.

So Orichiono’s assistants/minicons, were… a permanently linked duo? Did that mean they were inseparable? A rare case of split sparks? Did they become one weapon? Or two? Did they even become a weapon? Something else? Where they just humans working for Orichiono?

‘Is that normal?’

“No, no it’s not… shh, they’re about to start I think.” Mikaela responded.

He raised a blonde eyebrow at her, surely she’d caught onto his muteness.

“I meant no more writing, I wanna focus… Where the hell did that mic come from?”

The rhetorical question drew his attention back to the women rising the mic to her lips, or was the correct word ‘they’?

“Ladies and Gentlemen! We are glad to welcome you to this night’s activities! Here at the world famous Cosmopolitan Hotel and Resort!” The chirpy voice came over the speakers above as Arien performed a quick twirl into a pose on stage, the bottom half of her dress flaring out as straps of fabrics attached at their hip flurried out.

“That’s Aria, she’s the more friendly of the two.” Mikaela narrated.

He decided not to comment on the fact that she was being a hypocrite.

“Normally we wouldn’t be the ones to open up the show ourselves, but, we have managed to squeeze in this little performance for you, our guests, into our very busy schedule, consider yourselves lucky.” The mic had been handed to the other, right hand this time, the voice that came over the speakers being significantly colder and lower.

Left arm reached up and snatched the microphone away. “Oh sister! Always sooooo welcoming to our paying guests! I must apologise! Wren here has a nasty habit of being as welcoming as sandpaper right out of the freezer!”

A few members of the crowd laughed at that. Recurring guests?

The microphone was snatched back. “Says the one who can’t help but toss ourselves at anything with a damn pulse, I still haven’t forgiven you for the time you had us hug that porcupine!”

“But he looked lonely! And we only got a few quills stuck in us!”

“A few?! A few my asscheek! We looked like the victims of a trainee acupuncturist!”

There was a long moment of silence on the stage as the woman’s expression shifted, whilst the audience laughed along to the image, before one of them rolled their eyes. “Alright, you go off and sulk, I’ll go entertain our guests… Sisters am I right? Can’t live with them, and in our case,
certainly can’t live without them! Now then, we’ve held you all up long enough, we have an
amazing show for you tonight, and I at least, hope you all enjoy! Now then, let’s get this show on
the road! ” With an over exaggerated flourish and bow, the women strut behind the curtains, which
began being pulled back a moment later.

The show was a spectacle to say the least, the scout had certainly never seen anything like it, the
acrobatic displays were especially thrilling to the mech.

It was an experience in colour, sound and wonder that he’d begun transmitting to his unit, they’d
made a few comments to begin with chastising him for wasting his time, but they too soon fell
victim to the shows addictive thrills.

The music especially seemed to enthrall Jazz, initially slow heavy bass beats caused vibrations to
run through his very holoform, it honestly felt like war drums were being used with such vigor that
they were calling upon all to rally into a frenzy as the tempo quickly grew faster and faster,
matching a racing heartbeat, if he had a heartbeat like the humans around him, he could imagine
the feeling of the soundwaves reverberating within him, but, alas, the holoform did not react the
same way an organic body would to such sound.

The spectacle quickly rose in tempo too, human formations coming together with the help of
launch pads and seesaws as the formations moved and swayed with erratic beats.

He nearly fell from the balcony at one point had Mikaela not acted fast enough to grab the back of
his jacket, and with a bit of effort pulled the bashful scout back.

Then the temperature in the room spiked, as if the heat of mid day had suddenly rushed into the
venue.

The area, having gone dark to illuminate the vibrant neon colours of the performers, suddenly burst
back into bright light and colour with an finalising clamour of sound, the entire stage and the
audience seating, even their own booth, suddenly looked straight out of the jungle, the walls and
even the cushions they sat upon wrapped in thick vines decorated with flowers of every colour and
tone. For a moment he wondered how this was possible, surely this was an advanced use for a
holoform, he could feel the energy pulsing through the physical projections that now filled the
hall.

It certainly had Ratchet ranting and raving on the other side of the comm-link.

Arien stood center stage once more, their attire changed, the form hugging dress long gone,
replaced by a two piece gown, made of layers of black and white fabric, the black sparkled like the
night sky, the white like a canvas decorated with a flurry of black spots , a plume of feathers
trailing out behind them to the ground, black and white in a zigzag pattern. The upper half of the
dress was made of sweeping fabric fastened tight around their body.

Their twin toned hair traveled down their back, unbidden and free to sway along with the rest of
their body, as if they were a Cobra being charmed with a melody only they could hear.

Suddenly everything went silent, like an instinctual notion to not even twitch as the left arm slowly
raised up, bringing with it a veil of grey translucent fabric held in place by a band on their wrist.

Then the right followed, they came together, and, in one swift clap, the silence of the stage was
destroyed by clamorous calls and an explosion of energy as all those on the stage burst into action.

The lights suddenly flickered violently, some of the audience let off surprised cries and shouts, but
all was drowned out.

The music reached a thunderous crescendo within moments, as if the lull of silence was the eye of a powerful storm they were once again thrown into, the war drums now visible on some of the upper levels of the stage which had been brought in earlier in the performance, their players hammering upon them with padded clubs in a frenzied yet well planned out fervour.

Then an echoing, avian screech, an explosion of smoke, and flashing lights came together with the music like a thunderstorm bearing down upon them with full force.

Bumblebee had to hand it to the humans, they new how to put on a spectacular show…

Then the smoke cleared, and where one once stood, was now two.

The entire hall let off a collected gasp at the two women now standing shoulder to shoulder, one arm raised each, the veils no longer grey, one white, one black.

Bumblebee wasn’t sure how to describe what he was seeing, nor could his unit as they fell deathly quiet over the com-link.

The one on the left was white in their colouration, where black had been on the attire was now grey, and upon the black one, where the white had been, was now grey.

As if they’d simply halved themselves, each taking a body, and yet still showing where the other should be.

Mikaela muttered something under her breath that he didn’t catch, to focused on the new music which was beginning to play, it was synthetic, controlled by electronic instruments on opposite sides of the stage, a steady beat rolling over the crowd, the previous music still played, almost like a backdrop matching the jungle like environment that now surrounded them.

But the main beat was something different entirely, a heavy slow beat that somehow reverberated even lower on the spectrum, even the jungle like holoform around him seemed to shudder.

Even from this distance, he could see the wide smirk that each woman had as they raised the mics to their lips.

“*Sweet dreams are made of this*
*Who am I to disagree?*
*I travel the world and the seven seas*
Everybody's looking for something”

For a long moment, Bumblebee felt himself consumed by the ethereal sounds that made up those lyrics, the duet beautiful yet hauntingly so, the unison of voices smoother than the finest oil.

But in that beauty, there was an edge, a radiation of the power these two had over the crowd, whom were giving their undivided attention to the two temptresses on stage, their bodies moving with the music in slow motions, mirrored perfectly by one another.

This was surprising, he hadn’t expected this to be the direction the show went in. Speculation had become fact, these two were holoforms, no question.

Which raised the question of, why couldn’t he pick up any other Cybertronian life anywhere within his scanning range? Which was far further than a holoform could be projected.
“Some of them want to use you
Some of them want to get used by you
Some of them want to abuse you
Some of them want to be abused”

Before he could react, someone had him by the shoulder, had yanked his holoform up, and dragged him, as well as Mikaela out of the booth, the doors shutting on their own and dampening the sound coming from beyond.

“Alrigh’, that’s enough for tonigh’, yah accommodations, ah ready.”

He spun to the voice along with Mikaela, finding the completely disinterested expression of a red haired woman wearing an ensemble of clothing that clashed even more than his own with the high class surroundings.

Her red hair was mostly covered by a white beanie, a torn jean jacket over a top with a lit bomb and two skulls against a reddish orange background, lower down on the ensemble was a pair of ripped jean short shorts over a pair of striped red and gold leggings.

A popping sound drew his attention to the gum she was apparently chewing as her right hand played with the red and gold hanging earrings in her right ear.

Mikaela spoke first. “Who are you?”

The woman snorted and gestured for them to follow as she turned on the spot and began almost speed walking down the corridor that led further into the luxurious resort.

The two exchanged a look and quickly went to follow, keeping a few paces behind and sharing the odd confused look.

They came to a stop in front of an elevator, which the woman pressed her thumb against the call button, he could just make out a line of light running over the button, a thumb scan? To call an elevator?

The door slid open a moment later, and the woman stepped in, gesturing for them to follow. The chatter from his unit had begun again, but he wasn’t honestly paying much attention to what they were saying.

They stepped in, and the woman reached over, placing a hand on his shoulder.

“Imma gonna have tah as’ yah tah cu’ the filmin’.”

He stared at her blankly, how in the name of Primus had she known? There was equal confusion from the rest of his unit as he stared at her, surprised upon realising that the blue in her iris’s was glowing, another holoform? Another Neutral? How many were here? How were they hiding from his…

Everything went numb, he’d been so distracted by his internal questions he’d not felt the sudden rush of another presence in his frame, until they were forcefully shutting down everything via the wireless connection to his alt.

Fear gripped his spark as everything except his vitals and the holoform generator shut down, even the motion of said holoform.

Everything stopped working, he was numb, and was quickly being forced into stasis, the call with
his unit cut off abruptly by this femme.

He felt her catch him just before everything went dark.

Mikaela watched in shock as Bumblebee’s form slumped under the woman's touch, she stepped back, pressing herself into the corner of the elevator as the woman easily hefted Bumblebee up into a fireman's carry.

It was so sudden, his shoulder had just lit up around where she had placed her hand, thin wires of orange light burying into him.

Then he’d collapsed, and now she was being stared down by the woman who’d brought them to this elevator, which she felt descending without a single button being pressed.

She wanted to run, but there was nowhere to run to, if she could do that, to an alien, what would she be able to do to her?

“Relax lassie, I ain’ gonna hur’ either of yah. Jus’ needed him playin’ with the fairies so he didn’ ruin the surprise we go’ in store for his buddies.” The red head announced before sticking her hand out. “Ira, Ira Halloran.” The accent was undeniably Irish, a thick one at that.

Ira, this was the last member of the twins small group of friends.

Slowly she reached back out, but hesitated from accepting the offered hand, eyes darting to the blonde and blackette currently slung over the woman’s shoulders, how could she even carry him like that so easily?

“Now listen here lassie, I can’ knock yah out with ah touch, works on tech only. I’d need tah deck yah tah punch yah ligh’s ou’.” Ira announced, leaning further over and grabbing her hand in a firm shake before pulling away just as the elevator doors pinged and opened, revealing a corridor far less done up than the rest of the resort, a staff only corridor?

Ira stepped out, walking down the corridor the elevator opened up to and towards what looked like a large open space up ahead.

“Ah’d move yah ass lassie, tha door’ll be shuttin’ and yah need a scan to come back down again.” Ira called over her currently full shoulders.

Deciding she’d come this far, Mikaela quickly made her way out, the doors beginning to slide shut not a moment after she was clear.

The sound of the elevator going on it’s merry way was akin to a door being shut behind her, for all she knew, she was walking right into a lion’s den.

Ira was at the end of the corridor when she looked back, winked and then sucked in a breath…

“WE’RE HOME!”

“YOU DON’T HAVE TO FUCKING SHOUT!” She heard someone else shout back, Kia, it sounded like Kia, but… also not… it sounded… deeper? Why did it sound like something big and metal was moving about just out of view….

“HYPOCRITE!” Ira shouted back before breaking out into a laugh that was borderline maniacal, followed by an elated chuckle as a massive, metal, dark rouge…. Bird foot... came down in front of the exit... of the corridor...
Mikaela stopped walking, jaw dropping as the massive talons then shifted out again moving back to make room for whatever else was about to come into view.

When it did, and massive beady gold eyes locked on her, she sucked in her own breath, and screamed.

When her lungs were all but out of air, she felt the world go dark, and just managed to see the ground rushing up to meet her…

Ahhh Ira, always one for creating the drama of life

More about the mystery mech later.

Well, hope you all enjoyed! Until next time!
Okay! To make up for the long hiatus, I give you a bloody long chapter! 10,000 plus words to be precise! Sorry to everyone who’s waiting for Stealth to be updated, my muse did tank for a long while but I am back on the next chapter now and hopefully it will be ready in the coming weeks, but Uni is a demanding affair that must be kept up with, I hope you all understand. Anyway, lots is going to happen this chapter! And I hope you all enjoy!

Pentagon

Jamerson honestly cursed his own vigilance at the current moment.

He didn’t even want to look at what time his ever fateful watch said it was.

It was some god awful hour gone midnight and he hadn’t had his coffee.

Beyond the door he stood next to, he heard the African American teen they’d brought in with the blonde bragging about having eaten the entire plate of donuts. Apparently he thought them giving them the only food left in the cafeteria that night was a test of how guilty he felt.

So, he’d eaten the whole plate.

There’d been what, twenty? Yes, twenty donuts, they’d just dumped all that was left on the plate thinking that it would state the hunger of both.

Clearly that hadn’t been the case.

And he was getting distracted by the eating habits of a teenager.

He needed a shot of caffeine or he’d be keeling over sideways asleep before he could name the Capital he stood in if he wasn’t careful.

“Agent Grant.” The sudden voice jolted him back to full alertness as he quickly saluted.

“Sir!”

“At ease jungle boy.”

Turning at the nickname he found himself glaring at Flint. “Would you cut it with the nickname already?” He hissed.

Flint raised his hands in surrender. “Alright, alright, jeez, anyway, looks like we’ve been partnered up to interrogate these two, so, I’ll be good cop, and you be bad cop because you’re obviously in a pissy mood already. Here. The files.” He then finished, passing Jamerson the manila folder that he’d had tucked under his arm.

Jamerson gave him a withering look before sighing and nodding, taking the folder and turning the open the locked door.

All it took was for him to drop the folder on the table for the gluttonous kid to break.

He honestly caught very little of what he was rambling about over the blonde’s constant attempts to
get him to shut up.

He decided to help her, banging his fist down on the table hard enough to get the empty crumb covered plate to jump.

Instantly there was silence.

He turned his attention to the blonde. “Maggie Madsen, you were caught having stolen top secret information out of the Pentagon. Then passing it onto a hacker. This man. You’ve got some explaining to do. Both of you. But you’re going to go first because clearly this young man can’t keep his own tongue in check.”

Flint frowned. “Yo, what kinda cop you playin’?” He hissed into Jamerson’s ear.

Jamerson responded with a look between all three. “I’m playing myself, and myself has a nice warm bed that this mess is keeping me from. So I ain’t gonna play around with this shit.”

He saw the kid gulp and Maggie shrink back a bit in her chair.

“Oh… I know what I did was wrong, but I knew that Glen here would be able to crack this thing. I was right. The first hacker… it’s like nothing we’ve ever seen, and there’s mentions of these things like ‘Cube’ and ‘Allspark’, hidden within the code, those are what we think were used to search through the files. But then, as we all know, the second signal cut it off before it got anywhere. And it’s that second signal, that Glen found out the most.”

Glen nodded, taking over at Jamerson’s skeptical look towards the teen. “Right! I know the hacker who did this! I recognise their work!”

Now that, was interesting.

“Who. Who’s the hacker who emptied our files in Qatar? Who are they affiliated with?” His tone was firm, leaving no room for the kid to squirm out a half truth.

“A new hacker to the global scene, I only noticed her a few months back when word of her hacking clean through a Russian base in Siberia’s security system got out onto the forums, someone managed to get snapshots of the codes she used to bust right through the firewalls. I ain’t ever seen anything like it man! It was… almost… rotting the systems from the inside, destroying even the coding the security systems was made up of, nothing was spared, not even the heating system! An I don't know who they're working with.” Jamerson was losing his patience, and one firm glare got that message across. “Right, basically, no one's able to even remotely match her speed, skills, nothing, and she has a calling card, one of my buddies over in Tokyo found it hidden within the code they managed to copy and contain so it didn’t wreck their systems too. The calling cards a wing, specifically a Red Kite wing, with the word Halloran, printed over the feathers. Means ‘Stranger from across the sea’, weird huh? I mean, that birds from Europe, so I guess it works…”

Jamerson frown deepened. Halloran… he recognised that from somewhere…

Then it hit him.

“Ira… Ira Halloran…”

Glen tilted his head towards Jamerson. “Come again? You tellin’ me you know this chick?”

Jamerson didn’t pay him any attention.
He was already pacing in front of the table. “You said you’d never seen hacking like this.” He remarked.

Glen nodded. “Yeah man, never seen code like that.”

“Like it was from the future…”

Glen sent him a look of cautious concern. “You lost me.”

Maggie spoke up then. “What are you talking about?”

Flint was also giving his partner a very confused look. “Dude, care to share?”

Jamerson didn’t respond, going back to his pacing.

None of this made sense, they said they wanted to go home…

Arien even gave him that memory stick as a parting gift…

The memory stick…

If Ira was able to hack…

The realisation that dawned on him then was one of impassable horror, his heart dropping into his gut as he realised what he should of two years ago.

“No… no… no… no no no nononononoNO!”

He shoved Flint out of the way and sprinted from the interrogation room.

“Jamerson! Hey! Wait up!” Flint shouted after him, trying to keep pace with the sprinting agent.

Surprisingly, even Maggie and Glen were chasing after him, though the later was struggling to even keep pace with his friend.

He made a beeline through the building to his personal desk, scrabbling for a moment before tearing the device from the port.

The green light flickered out, but he felt it was nothing but a hollow victory.

They'd had access to their systems for over two years.

And no one had even noticed.

There wasn't anything advanced enough to detect it.

Just like the second hack on Qatar.

After all, what was a better tool for hacking a computer, than a sentient one from the future?

Flint came to a stop next to him, followed soon after by Maggie, Glen, and a few of the night guards who'd tried to stop the later two from going into the room, but not being fast enough to stop them.

“What the hell was that all about?” Flint demanded.

Jameson turned to him with a haunted look in his eyes.
“We’ve been compromised. They’ve had access to our systems the whole time… they’ve probably got copies of everything I’d bet. And all because I stupidly used this device.” The hand holding the device clenched almost in an attempt to break the memory stick, no luck, the metal it was made of didn’t even strain under his shaking grip.

“Who? Who's compromised the system?” Maggie asked.

Jamesom took a deep breath, once he admitted this, he could pretty much say goodbye to his career.

“The Harpies. The beings who saved my life in the Amazon over two years ago… and I stupidly used their parting gift to give them access to potentially the entirety of the USA's Government systems… We need to raise the alarm.”

Not even a moment after saying that, one of the other agents burst into the room.

“Someone get the Secretary of Defense on the line! Or anyone! We're getting mass responses from every space research station and radar center of hostile virtual takeovers! We’re blind!”

Jameson felt like his gut couldn't drop further than it did right then.

Glen was the one to speak then. “I got my money on Halloran.”

Jamerson scowled and spun on the man.

“For all we know, there’s a Nuke coming our way because one of our enemies just knocked out our systems so that we couldn’t see it coming! That’s what they’ve been doing! Weakening our systems so we can’t defend against such attacks! Oh God… I’ve doomed us all.”

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**Beneath the Cosmopolitan**

Winston let off what had to be the hundredth resigned sigh of the night as he once again glanced at where Mikaela was strewn out on the couch in the moderately sized human common area, his form primarily turned away from the still unconscious teen as he worked to make something for her to eat when she came around, something healthy preferably...

But Ira’s passion for junk food made it difficult to find anything for the teen to eat without putting her health at risk.

Speaking of potential health risks the man’s gaze then shifted to the Alien masquerading as a Camero down on the ground floor of the massive basement of the Cosmopolitan. Or at least the spot on the floor that he assumed he’d be able to see the Alien Camaro if he was Superman. Alas that was the not the case.

Yes he understood the full situation, yes he knew that they technically posed no threat to himself or any of his co-workers.

But this was an actual alien… not transdimensional humans who’d found themselves trapped in Alien bodies… This was a whole new ball game for the man.

But as Aria had rightly exclaimed when she realised what Ira had done upon arriving back after the end of the show, the act of knocking one of the Aliens unconscious for the sake of not wanting to deal with questions, was likely to sour any relations with the rest of his unit that had been desired by the four.
Exclaimed was a soft word, given the fact that they’d grabbed Ira by the top of her ear and given her her rights whilst dragging the younger woman around in a frog march whilst yelling repeatedly about how stupid she’d been.

He was honestly surprised that the spectacle didn’t wake Mikaela or the Alien.

Especially when Arien had then turned their attention on Kia whom had been the cause of Mikaela passing out.

Letting off another sigh he remembered how the whole situation had been brought to his attention, at ten in the evening nonetheless, he’d been just rolling into bed when they’d called and asked him to come check on her, giving that she’d hit the ground before Ira, the only who could of reached her in time, had noticed the fact that the sudden appearance of Kia’s beast form had sent the poor teen into a state of unconsciousness, after apparently, a very loud vocal outburst.

She had no significant harm to body, though the likelihood of her freaking out when she came too was a lot higher than any long term cognitive damage…

Finishing up the small, moderately healthy snack, he glanced at his laptop, which he’d brought with him to finish his work, which he had already completed, now it was just playing CSN, the news focused solely on the reported emergency landing of Airforce one, with reports of gunfire and a sudden, thankfully non-crippling, decompression from the hull bay doors opening.

The news agencies were already in a state of frantic conspiracy over what could of caused it, thankfully no one had the ludicrous notion which was actually the reality.

Though the massive tears in the fuselage was also raising a lot of concern, theories such as a dangerous high altitude monster threatening the airways, to sabotage, to more damage done by large objects being flung loose from the moorings inside during the decompression and causing the damage.

Giant Sentient mechanical birds of prey were thankfully not something that anyone wanted to stake their credibility on, even if they had the pre-existing knowledge of them existing like himself.

Speaking of the Harpies, not long after he’d arrived, he’d watched all four race down the main exit tunnel, the massive structure had only recently been completed, a full ten miles of tunnel out of Vegas which slowly angled up so that when they reached the end, lunging into the air was a breeze in the final vertical segment of the tunnel, it was yet to be fully lit though, so the Harpies had to rely on their ‘unique’ and very loud method of ‘echolocation’ to guide them through.

Their exit in general was even louder than Arien had been giving their friends the what for, given that, despite their low density for flight, they were still made of metal, and they were effectively running down a massive echo tunnel. Add to that Arien’s pede damage and you’ve got quite the unholy ruckus.

At least the Twins were able to run with the damaged pede, it was a lot better now than it had been when he’d first been introduced to the group, back when the largest member of the group could hardly make it from one side of the underground hangar to the other without collapsing. That being said it was still nowhere near fixed and more their tolerance to the pain was higher after all of this time.

Soundproofing was a blessing really in this situation.

A groan from the sofa caught his attention as Mikaela finally began to come around.
“Ah good, I was getting worried I’d be waiting till tomorrow afternoon for you to wake up.” He announced, trying to keep his tone quiet so as to avoid jolting the poor teen too much, she’d already had a lot loaded on her over the last two days, she didn’t need anymore now, though that was inevitable.

“Ugh… Winston?” The teen guessed, rubbing the area she’d hit her head.

“Yes, just me I’m afraid. Don’t be alarmed now, you’ve had enough excitement for now… Peanut Butter and Jelly?” He responded, offering the small stack of sandwiches.

Mikaela was quick to accept one, unsure of the time she figured she’d been out a long while, given her stomach was less than happy at the moment.

“Thank you… “ She quickly wolfed down the first one, before she picked up the second however, she looked around, taking in the massive hangar like structure they were in, at present they were on a raised platform, decked out with a full kitchen, a cluster of sofas, even a pool table, and a TV in the corner that was currently turned off.

The rest of the massive structure was comparatively empty, a few large rolling doors leading off to other areas you could fit an upright space shuttle through, and the massive open space they were in broken up by the odd massive concrete pillar and hanging lights from high above.

Said lights were at present dimmed, leaving most of the place in a dark hue which made picking anything else out quite difficult.

“W-where are we?” She asked, finally picking up another sandwich that Winston had placed down on the sofa cushion next to her. In her observation she’d managed to eat the entire of the second sandwich.

Letting out a slight grunt the large man sat down on the over end of the Sofa. “We, are in a little known bunker under the Cosmopolitan, the Harpy’s had it commissioned just after they bought the entire resort out from the previous owner.” He answered.

“H-Harpy’s?”

He nodded. “Yes, the Harpy’s, it’s what Aria, Ira, Kia and Wren call themselves, apparently, before they got tossed into our world they went by the codename to prevent them being tracked, hid how many of them there were at the top , since they’ve arrived here, it’s become a lot more... literal.” He answered.

Mikaela sucked in a breath, nearly choking on her most recent bite.

“So… the… thing… I saw? That wasn’t a…”

“A dream? No, what you saw was Kia, she hadn’t been alerted to your presence and so approached in her… ‘true form’ you could say... “ He reached over and placed a massive comforting hand on her shoulder. “ I know it’s a lot to take in, but if you’re willing to give it time, you get used to it. Becoming like this wasn’t their choice, they’ve had a lot of hurdles to adapt to in the last few years.”

Mikaela took in a deep breath before letting it out. “This is too weird… Metal Aliens from space and Metal former human bird… things from an alternate reality… shit this sounds like the plot of some stupid Sci-fi film.”

Winston chuckled at that, patting her shoulder. “I’ve thought the very same thing every now and
then…"

“Where are they now?”

Winston hummed for a moment. “Not really sure exactly, but I know that this place is likely to become quite a bit fuller soon.”

Evidently she was able to piece together what that meant. “They’re going to meet the other… the other Aliens… wait! Where’s Bumblebee?!?” She suddenly exclaimed, jumping up and looking around.

Winston chuckled again, it sounded more like a low rumble, and gestured to the railings which prevented a nasty tumble down to the actual ground floor.

On shaky legs Mikaela rushed for the railings, barely catching herself on them as her gaze shot down.

Sure enough, the yellow and black paint was visible in the low light, as well as the strewn out form of his human projection….

Projection, that must of been what she’d been talking to when she was speaking with any of the… Harpies.

Glancing back over her shoulder she found Winston back over by the laptop playing the news on the kitchen countertop, seemingly entranced by whatever was on the news.

How could he be so fine with all this?

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**Somewhere outside of Vegas**

Before he’d even finished transforming, Optimus Prime knew he was being watched, the dark night was only lit by the small bush fires his landing had caused, leaving the organic world surrounding him in pitch blackness, the moon of this planet currently completely hidden by darkness.

His com-link was off, his unit already all clear on the plan to meet up at the Primes location, from there, they would seek out their unresponsive scout.

The mere thought of Bumblebee being in danger had his armourless fists curling, whoever that human was, they had some explaining to do.

But there was still that feeling of being watched, of eyes, optics? Bearing down upon him.

Craning his helm up, he regarded the star filled sky above, trying to map out the stars from this Planet's upper hemisphere.

That was when he spotted stars disappear, then quickly reappear high above, the size of the void too large to be a native creature.

And the faint, barely audible sound of something mechanical.

As if his realisation had been picked up, whatever it was moved into a dive, the black void growing larger and larger.

The sound of something beating the air… wings? The humans didn’t have…
Whatever it was, landed, just beyond where the light of the quickly dwindling bushfires lit.

Something groaned, like metal being forced into a position it did not want to be in.

Then, came a chuckle, low, with a slight hitch half way through. “My, my, looks like our... childhood fantasy... has finally... become reality...” They were moving, circling him like a predator would with injured prey, the voice was accented, but undeniably that of a femme.

His audios caught the sound of that groaning metal with every other pede step, for a brief moment he considered that whomever this was, they were injured, the sound was telling enough.

But his attention quickly snapped back to caution when he realised they had gone full circle around him, and the silhouette that blocked the mountains was surprisingly large for a femme.

Up to the top of his chassis.

Not even Elita-1 was that tall.

And he couldn’t see the glow of optics, perhaps hidden behind a visor?

Or was this somebot simply without Optics?

He decided to speak. “Who are you? Identify yourself. How did you know I would be here?”

The figure remained silent before another sound, like rustling tin leaves reached his audios, then, and only then did this femme answer.

“In due time Optimus Prime, explanations will come once you and your unit have reunited, preferably with us all tucked safely away in our little hidey hole. It’s hardly safe to remain out here where any random scanner could pick us up after all.” They responded, their voice suddenly a lower, colder tone than he’d first heard, which had been lighter, more playful.

He paused for a moment, before nodding. “Very well... But I must enquire, you are one of the Neutrals who lured my scout are you not?”

There was a brief pause before the femme...s? Answered, the lighter tone responding.

“Never one to miss a beat it seems... but yes. We used Mikaela and the glasses to lure you here.”

Then they admitted it, he felt his fists clenching again. “Why? Why attack our scout?”

The sound of the Neutral taking a step back reached his audios, no groan that time.

“That really did look bad didn't it?” A sigh from their vents. “Allow us to apologise for our friends actions, without a doubt they were uncalled for, but Ira rarely thinks straight when she's tired and she'd only just returned from a very strenuous task. She simply did not want to deal with both your Scout and Mikaela's questioning so she... knocked him out simply put.” They responded, the lighter tone remained, sounding honestly remorseful over the incident to the Prime's audios.

He decided to take a step forward, the bushes around his landing crater had all but burnt out, plunging him fully into the darkness.

“Why go through such trouble?”

There was a huff, like a laugh with none of the humour.
“We’ve lived on this planet long enough to know that the humans are best avoided, especially if they are fueled by power over the majority, we’ve found a few humans we can trust, but they can hardly stop armies of their kind. Because of that, we thought it best to at least help you settle here safely without drawing unwanted attention.” The lower tone answered, their voice cynical.

His helm tilted to the side slightly. “And how long have you been on this planet?”

“Long enough to fall victim to one of their traps.”

They took another step and that same grinding sound was heard by the Primes Audios.

That just confirmed it. “They harmed you?”

A huff. “Not intentionally, the majority of humans do not know we exist, another reason to lead you away from heavily populated places to keep you from exposing the lot of us with your dramatic entrances!”

There was an accusatory tone in their voice for a brief moment then, evidently his units sudden arrival had forced their servo in someway.

Before he could respond, the lighter tone spoke up.

“As much as we’d love to stand out here in the cold night, I think it’s best we get this show on the road, oh, could you possibly tell your medic to back off Ira a smidge? He’s currently choking her out.”

The complete deadpan way they said that statement urged one of his optic ridges to raise, but he decided to check on his unit anyway.

“Ratchet?”

What came back over the comlink was a very graphic and extreme screaming match of Cybertronian and a very odd sounding language he’d never heard before, along with a lot of just outright screaming, banging of metal on metal, and the pandamonium which came over the comlink at such a volume his audios shorted for a moment.

So loud that the femme(s) in front of him snorted, evidently they could hear it as well it was so loud.

He tried again. “Ratchet? What seems to be the issue?”

“PRIME! NOW IS NOT THE TIME!”

“Is oh go bhfuil an Príomh-? HI OPTIMUS! Aria! Wren! Níorbh fhéidir leat seo a fháil asal grumpy d’aois chun aonaigh mé ?! Chaith mé díreach tar éis a bheith ag bonn ag dó! Geallaim! Ceart go leor go raibh sé trí thine! Ach tá sé seo le beagán de thar an imoibriú barr!”

He paused. “What.”

“She said ‘Oh is that the Prime? HI OPTIMUS! Aria! Wren! Could you get this grumpy old ass to let me go?! I just threw a tire at him! I swear! Ok it was on fire! But this is a bit of an over the top reaction!’” The lighter tone pitched in, evidently they could understand that language, and that their names were Aria and Wren… so two individuals, he was beginning to view this femme as something akin to the Decepticon Blitzwing, only with two personas instead of three.
“Grumpy old ass huh?! I’ll show you old you little punk! You nearly took my helm off with that thing!”

“Ira for the love of my sanity could you for once not be such a pyromaniac?!” The lower tone huffed, he could practically picture them folding their arms over their chassis.

“Riamh!”

“God damnit. Ira, behave, I do not want to give you another talking to today and I doubt you want that too. It is too god damn late at night for you to be pulling your usual shit!”

A strange growling huff came over the com-link as the sounds of struggling finally died off. “Oh fine! Only cause ah don’ wan’ you yanking my audios again, damn, Arrrrriiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii~ tell your sister to be nicer to me!”

“Ira, I’m am one hundred percent on Wren’s side here, it’s too bloody late for you to be flinging flaming tires again… wait… if you two are getting along so… well… what about Kia? She went to get Ironhide? Right?”

That was when the com-link was joined, not by the aforementioned Weapons specialist, Optimus was beginning to wonder how these Neutrals knew the designations of his mechs, instead, it was Jazz.

“Prime! There is a bunch of fragging giant birds dive bombing me! They’ve got me pinned in a cave! This planet is way more wigged out then ah thought it’d be! Oh Primus they’re back!”

The com-link cut off and he turned his gaze back to the femmes as the silhouette of their form grew significantly and the sound of metal on metal reached him.

“… What were we thinking sending those three to get him?” The lower tone, Wren, the lower tone was Wren, he’d been able to put that together from ‘Ira’s’ pleas which were still coming over the com-link as Ratchet maintained his firm hold on the femme.

“… Hera at least has never failed before, maybe he landed on something and they’re more interested on the meat stuck on him? They’re easily distracted by food after all.” Aria then respond, clearly having a conversation with her other half.

“If I’m allowed to put my two sense in here, maybe, now hear me out, this is just a maybe, but did we really have to go through all that trouble to get these dolts away from trouble, only for one to very nearly wring my neck out?! Yes I dealt the first blow, but I’m really not in the mood for any of this shit anymore and I’d love to know if our beloved twins agree with me when I say that I’d be much happier sleeping the next few days then deal with any of this?!”

“Ira shut up, we know you’re tired and cranky, just kick him in the crotch and fly back to the roost if your that done with everything.” Aria huffed, clearly their exasperation was growing quickly as well.

“Like I haven’t already tried that! He’s got me pinned! And my feathers are getting filthy! I’ll be up till mid day trying to get all of this damn scrap out!”

“Feathers?” The Prime inquired, a quick scan of the World wide web alerted him to the fact that they were lightweight constructs which allowed the organic ‘Birds’ of this planet to produce lift and fly, said creatures were, seemingly regardless of species, very meticulous in their preening… they used wings to fly, like the wing beats he’d just heard before Aria and Wren’s arrival…
More questions were arising than he could really keep track off.

“Ugh… this is getting us nowhere… Optimus I must apologise for our friend, she’s highly irritable when she’s like this and rarely thinks about consequences to her actions.” Wren spoke, now that he thought of it, ‘Wren’ was a strange name for a femme, as was ‘Aria’, where they abbreviations?

‘Wren’ was as far as the world wide web was concerned, a sub group of eighty eight separate bird species of incredibly small size, which also had a similarly named secondary group native to the Oceana Continent who seemed to have far brighter plumage to add to their still tiny size.

‘Aria’ was apparently a type of song sung as a solo.

“Let us try and right the course of this discussion, those two can avoid killing each other for a few more minutes surely.”

He nodded, deciding that working out the next course of action would likely be for the best, instead of musing why their designations were so odd.

That was when he received a com-link request, origin, directly in front of him.

“We wish to transfer a pack of potential alt modes for you and your unit, as well as the location of a hidden entrance into our home, given this rocky introduction thanks to Ira, we will understand that you likely do not trust us enough to simply go in blindly to our home so soon after arriving on this planet. After all, what reason do you have now to trust us?”

That was a very fair question. “Your… methods, shall we say, have been less than, desirable.” He responded.

The femmes huffed, he might of just said the wrong thing. “And if you’d stuck on your original trajectory you would of alerted the majority of the largest superpower on this planet to not only your existence, but potentially ours as well, you were set to land in one of the biggest cities in this damn country. On top of that, we had no way of directly communicating with you without risking alerting the Decepticons already on this planet to our existence. So we had to do this, as undesirable an outcome as this is.” Wren responded, a noticeable bite in their voice as they answered him.

“We did what we could because we wanted to help you, not make enemies on this planet, we’re just, not very good at it, we… have always been quite… socially inept.” Aria added, he made out their silhouette shifting, as if anxious. “Are you… going to accept the pack? We’ve already sent it, you did get it right? We’re not quite sure if our communication system works with yours…”

Jolting slightly at that he realised he had received the package, but he found himself prevented from opening it out of curiosity by Ratchet.

“Don’t do it Prime! It could be a virus!”

“Oh fuck yah too then! ah made tha’ fraggin’ alt mode pack! I had tah fraggin’ buy each and every one of their patents tah have full access tah their schematics! Not tah mention how long it fraggin’ took meh tah find vehicles suitable for all yah frames once ah managed to ge’ long range scans of you bastards! Do you have any Idea in tha’ damn processor of yahs how much of a fraggin’ chasm in mah bank account there is for you, no!? I COULDA BOUGH’ AH THIRD WORLD COUNTRY WITH THA’ MONEY YAH MOTA FRAGGER! MAR SIN, DUL SCRÍ ÚBÓ!” Ira’s incredibly insulted shout was enunciated at the end by a very loud clang of metal on metal, followed by a very pained groan from the medic just before the com-link cut out.
What filled the empty space, was the faintest, most lilting giggle he’d barely ever caught with his audios.

Then.

“She did what we told her for once!”

“She kicked him in the dick!”

Then he was surrounded by two types of laughter and the sound of them actually crashing to the floor, the laughters cutting over each other, one lilting and and the other rumbling guffaws.

Dick?

What was a dick?

“Ironhide come in, I have a question to ask? Do you know what a... dick is? Apparently Ratchet has just had that part of him kicked... Ironhide? Ironhide?” The lack of response was concerning.

There was no response from the other side, not even a confirmation that the link had gone through to his weapons specialist.

Maybe it was a good thing that Ironhide hadn’t picked up, something told him the mech would be little help in this situation.

Given it was clearly an uproarious topic.

“Heck hem... alright... back to business.... Damnit... this whole thing’s gone sideways off a cliff. Ugh... so much for good first impressions...” Aria’s voice suddenly cut off the laughter coming from the two as they apparently sorted themselves out.

He tilted his helm to the side. “I must agree... this... greeting seems to of gone off the rails.”

“Should we start from the top?”

“Yes, but quickly, my weapons specialist, Ironhide is not responding to me, given you’ve obviously...”

“He banged his helm on a boulder whilst landing, Kia is trying to rouse him as we speak, though she is not having much success, now then, from the top, Optimus Prime, it is a pleasure to meet you, I am Wren, along with my sister Aria, we are the unofficial leaders of our small group of neutrals, whom, have resided on this planet for a number of years. In that time we have been able to garner significant information and success within the human world by integrating into their society with the use of our holoforms. The reason we have brought you here is because of that information, seek out the Allspark without our words of caution, and you will have a very unsavoury surprise waiting for you on your attempt to reclaim the Allspark... or destroy it, depending on how much of a Martyr you’re feeling like Prime.” Wren declared, they moved forwards, stepping to his right side until they were parallel. There was a bite in their tone, an accusation.

The words hung in the air, and he felt a sliver of fear touch his spark, how had they known about his final resort? He had not even discussed it with his mechs...

He offered his right servo out, as if to shake. “Aria and Wren, I am thankful for your attempts to help us, despite how circumstance has turned this meeting. From what I have gathered, it is a
custom on this planet to shake servos in greeting?” He spoke, waiting for a physical response from the other.

He got it, he felt something long and thick press into his servo, and his attempt to close his servo around it proved fruitless given the girth prevented a complete closure of his servo.

For a brief moment he pondered if they’d just dumped a piece of metal into his servo, but he felt it push up and down, causing his arm and servo to at least go through the motion of shaking. “I was… expecting a servo.”

They chuckled, and Aria responded. “We have no servo to give you Prime, our arms are all currently trying to herd Jazz to our roost. You’ll have to do with the limbs we do currently have available.”

“You, are armless?”

“Yes. It is a difficult predicament to live with, technically we still have the same struts that make ‘arms’ function, it is simply the fact that ours are not designed to to function the same way as yours so to speak.” Wren responded this time as whatever he was holding pulled away, revealing itself to be a long, slightly curved, conical structure which took a good while to taper off.

But in that time, he felt something he hadn’t further up, the brush of strange, fibrous structures which bent and shifted around his digits as they were pulled by.

Feathers.

Metallic feathers, not decoration like he had assumed was what Ira had been complaining about.

These femmes, did not have them as decoration, but as a functioning part of their anatomy.

It explained the rustling which came with each breeze and the lack of transformation when they were approaching from the air.

Their bipedal form was perfectly able to remain airborne, something he’d previously only found with those who had the function of having thrusters, which these two did not have.

He was getting off track once again, so he returned his attention to addressing these strange femmes. “You…”

“How about we continue this at our roost if you do decide to join us within our residence, I do not mean to sound rude, but we did not intend for this to stretch out as long, and we are quickly feeling the effects of exhaustion, we must depart for our roost now lest we risk falling out of the sky on the way home.” Aria interrupted, the femmes stepped back and their wings, not arms, full blown wings stretched out in preparation to take off. “If you decide against joining us, we shall give the knowledge we have gathered to Bumblebee once he has arisen, then we will send him back to you to relay our information.”

They took another step back, and he heard the grinding sound again. “What of you?” He enquired.

They took a moment to answer. “We will manage, damaged talons are damaged talons, we’ve lived well enough so far, we had hoped to trade our knowledge for your medic repairing, or at least taking a look at the damage, but it is not something we will force… if you do not come, we will give Bumblebee the information for when he regroups with you, good night Optimus Prime.” Wren responded.
Then their wings were beating, the massive limbs almost blowing back the Prime as they quickly ascended into the sky.

What followed next, he had no preparation for.

An echoing, near deafening animalistic screech to the stars above which seemed to shake the night sky itself.

By the time he managed to pull his servos away from his audios, they were long gone, and in the far distance, he heard likely equally loud screeches responding to the call.

“By Primus ah think they got bored of meh…” Jazz suddenly called over the com link.

“Are you in anyway damaged?” He enquired. Aria and Wren had mentioned sending a group after the short mech

“Only cosmetic, crazy things kept trying to drag me of the cave! The biggest one managed to get my whole arm out of the cave at one point!” The mech exclaimed.

“Hmm, likely because they were supposed to lead, if not drag you to the location we are now to go to ourselves.”

“…. Come again? Ah think mah audios are failin' me Prime, tell me you didn't just say we're going to the place those crazy things were trying to carry me off to?!”

“Jazz, they are neutrals trying to help us. Our arrival has risked potentially exposing them to both human kind and the Deceptions. They have information that will help us in our quest. Finally, two of them are injured, badly I fear.”

“… Oh… so, they didn't tell yah tha information?”

“It would seem they wish to trade the information for medical attention, but have given us the option of not going, if we do not go, they have promised to tell Bumblebee before he departs them so he may tell us.” The Prime responded.

“So… you've decided to trust them?”

“They didn't intended for yours and Ratchets interactions to go so foul.”

“What happened tah Hatchet?”

“Apparently one of the Neutrals did not have the patience to be courteous and instead flung a flaming tire at him, it would seem they had a very vocal and agitated interaction before the neutral drew a blow which Ratchet has yet to recover from, in his… dick?” It was then that it finally dawned on the Prime what that was, and almost immediately felt a shadow pain go through that very same area for himself, yes, that would be quite a difficult blow to remain fully functional afterwards.

“Sounds like they're pretty hostile tah meh.” Jazz responded.

“They were rebuked for their actions by the two who came to welcome me.”

“They didn’ harm yah did they Prime?”

“No, nothing of the sort, it was an… interesting interaction. But my decision still stands, once Ratchet and Ironhide are operational, we will seek out the Neutrals hiding place.”
“Understood Prime, not quite feelin’ yah confidence, but, understood, besides, what kinda mechs would we really be if we didn't try and help those in need.”

The Prime felt a small smile grace his faceplates, reassured to hear that Jazz was still a mech of impeccable morals.

It was Ratchet who responded to the call first, albeit it took the Prime a level of patience worthy of a god, and a lot of persuasion to convince the seething medic of the fact that, whilst his experience was… painful, there was a pair of injured neutrals who did require medical aid, and that he would have to swallow his damaged pride.

By the time he'd managed that feat, Ironhide had finally come around from stasis and had been filled in by Jazz.

Once all of his present unit was up to speed, he opened the data pack.

No traps, no viruses, nothing present of ill intent was found when he opened the pack and regarded the many vehicles, colour schemes, everything down to licences for each potential vehicle form, and most importantly, coordinates.

It took only a few moments for them to pick out ones that pleased them most, their processors left intrigued at the fact the Neutrals somehow knew of their preferred individual colour schemes, though the flame paint job that was offered to Optimus within the layout of the pack did earn a round of humour from his mechs.

He was half tempted to take the flame paint, but decided to go with the colour scheme that had always been his, red white and blue, apparently this country they were in viewed those colours as highly patriotic.

Once their respective alt modes where fully integrated, the four mechs set off over the rough untamed terrain, headlights illuminating the dry land before them.

The Primes curiosity warred within his processor with his focus on the task at hand, wondering what these neutrals could possibly look like, with wings instead of arms, how that would prevent such simple actions as holding one's own cube of energon.

The silence over the com links was now to prevent any nearby by potential Decepticons or humans picking up on their conversations only aided in the wandering of his processor as it contemplated what warning these beings would give for their search for the Allspark.

So much so was his distraction, that it took Ironhide's warning shout from directly to his left to alert the Prime that they had reached the coordinates given.

A giant metal door in the ground, with their headlights illuminating it, the steel was easily spotted under the camouflage which would hide it from view of any who were not aware it was there.

Transforming back to his full height once more the Prime regarded the gateway to the Neutrals hideout with his mechs, on the horizon, a sprawling human city illuminated by millions of lights of seemingly every colour under the sun.

That was where Bumblebee was, he had been in one of those buildings in his holoform when one of the Neutrals, Ira, took him out.

A sudden hissing noise from the massive doors drew his and his mechs attention into it fully as the doors parted revealing an inky black void beyond where the lights on their chassis could not reach.
A near vertical drop existed before them.

“Whoa… any bot here thinks there’s ah trap down there?” Jazz inquired, squatting to try and get a better view. “Cause damn, be a pretty damn good spike trap.”

Optimus took a moment of pause to regard all three mechs before stepping forwards and turning around so that he could begin climbing down the grooves, surprised to find significantly sized grooves ringing the wide tunnel, likely to support the aerial capacity of its residents.

“If it worries you so their trustworthiness in not setting a trap for those whom they seem to want to help, then I will go first.” He finally responded just before his helm disappeared over the lip.

“You weren't the one to be physically assaulted Prime.” Ratchet remarked in rebuff for how trusting the Prime was in the face of this unknown.

“You’ve had worse.”

With that not exactly snark free response, the towering mech continued his climb down, quickly finding he could once again stand fully upright as the tunnel leveled out into a banked chamber, another wider tunnel directly to his left, towards the City on the horizon, it became clear to the Prime that this entrance was more suited for those with flight capacity but was still tall enough for him to comfortably walk down, though he did have to stoop his helm ever so slightly if he did not want to scrape the top of his helm.

Craning his helm up, he could see his units figures looking over the lip of the entrance down at him.

“Autobots! The path is clear!” He called up, banging his pede to the ground for emphasis.

With a bit of grumbling from Ratchet that Optimus couldn’t quite make out, the three mechs cautiously made their way down into the large chamber which stretched out around them.

Jazz let out a noise of appreciation as his headlights searched around the large but mostly bare chamber. “Gotta give it to them, this place is huge!”

Ironhide was about to respond to the smaller mech when he realised that Optimus was already walking down the unlit tunnel ahead of them. “Prime! Wait! There could be more traps!” He shouted.

“Prime! Wait! There could be more traps!” Echoed back from the tunnel.

Jazz snorted. “Yeah mech, yah vocaliser on replay.”

He got a whack over the helm from the weapons specialist for that one, but the three mechs were quick to follow after their Prime.

“There are no traps Ironhide.” The Prime responded, continuing his steady pace towards wherever the tunnel ended.

Letting out a disgruntled vent Ratchet sped up enough to fall into step with his Prime. “So, the trade is I treat them, for information?”

Optimus nodded. “Yes Ratchet, Aria and Wren require medical assistance.”

Ratchet huffed. “Do you know what is damaged?”
“One of their pedes, it was damaged in a human trap, I could not see it, but it would seem that the damage is significant enough for it to warrant a significant overhaul, it sounded akin to a half mangled joint, damaged enough to cause discomfort, but not enough to completely cripple.” The Prime responded, trying to explain an injury he had been unable to see was not an easy feat in the slightest.

“Then why would both of them need repair if only one is injured?” Ratchet questioned.

Optimus paused in his steps and regarded the medic. “They are twins Ratchet, same frame twins.”

He watched as the CMO’s jaw dropped slightly, and in his peripheral he saw Ironhide and Jazz exchange a look.

“Impossible… the only case… Blitzwing was a Decepticon experiment gone wrong! Every mech worth his armour knows that Prime! This could very well be another!”

“Ratchet.”

“Such a phenomenon is impossible outside of that!”

“Ratchet…”

“Who knows how unstable their mental capacity is!”

“Ratchet!” The Prime shouted, cutting off the medic.

“Ratchet!” Echoed back.

The CMO paused in his rant.

“We will discuss this, later.” Optimus stated firmly, before continuing on his way.

The walk was that of a significant distance still, and where it not for the seemingly endless grooves and bumps purposefully put into the floor to impede vehicle transportation, they may well of already arrived.

That was when Optimus spotted a light in the distance, believing it to be the end of the tunnel, the Prime’s pace was quick to increase.

The light seemed to do the same, quickly coming closer and closer until two wide blue optics could be made out in the dark as well.

It took not a spark beat more to recognise the now sprinting scout, and the worry in his optics as he raced towards them, not a scratch to be seen on his frame.

“Bumblebee!” He heard Ironhide call, quickly followed by a clamour from Jazz and Ratchet as well.

It silenced when the scout practically crashed into Optimus in his haste, having not even tried to slow down his approach as he grabbed for the Prime’s arm and began trying to drag the far larger mech back the way he had just come from, radio clippings firing off and being interrupted each time before sense could be made of what he was saying.

“Yo! Mech, slow down! What’s got your gears runnin’ so high?” Jazz exclaimed, managing to get Bumblebee’s attention enough to slow down in his attempt to drag Optimus.
‘They went down! Mayday! Mayday! We got a bird down!’ An accented voice shouted over a radio clipping as he continued to pull at the Primes arm. ‘Couldn’t - take it! …’ The scout trailed off, his helm craning back the way he came. ‘They - sent me - to get you.’

Optimus glanced to his CMO, all of his reservations seemingly gone as, after a brief nod that they would in fact continue this discussion later, the medic bolted the way Bumblebee had come, leading the quickly forming charge of Autobots as they pressed on, the sounds of their heavy pede falls ringing within their audios in the giant echo chamber as they kept going, Optimus quickly catching up with Ratchet with his longer strides, Bumblebee racing close behind, with Jazz and Ironhide pulling up the rear.

They barely noticed as the tunnel suddenly opened up into a massive dimly lit hanger, focused solely on the location of where a pained muffled scream suddenly erupted from.

When their optics found the source, all but Ratchet and Bumblebee froze in place, the former quickly rushing over and outright shoving the two smaller… beings, out of the way and dropping to examine the largest as they lay strewn out on the floor, the later likely because the scout had already seen them and wasn’t so shocked by their appearance.

‘They really do have wings for arms’ Was the first thing that the Prime thought when the initial shock finally wore off, leaving him to take in the monochrome colour scheme, the wide set helm design, the prong like additions on each side which twitch and flared as the femmes helm arched back and whatever they’d been biting down on to try and muffle their cries snapped.

He heard Ratchet curse when his attempt to grab something now out of the Prime’s view earnt him a brutal kick to the faceplates, sending him stumbling back.

Leaving the mangled limb in clear view.

It was grotesque, there was no other word for it, the limb looked like it had been forced apart from the inside, with noticeable holes through the metal right up to the first joint of their leg.

They had been standing on that for the entire time they had spoken to him. Walked on that wound. Primus they had used it to take the brunt of force from their landing.

Then Ratchet was blocking his view again, shouting for someone to come help him pin the massive femme down so that he could operate.

Before either him or his mechs could react, the two other neutrals Rushed to the medic and their stricken comrade, the red/orange, white and brown one using the struts of their wings to pin the far larger femme by their wide shoulderplates as best as they could.

Whilst two spindly limbs came out from the sides of their chassis, the claws grasping at the prongs on either side of the femmes helm.

“Shh, shh, easy Wren, easy, we know it hurts… c’mon… shh, shh, easy, he’s here, he’s gonna fix yah… right?” The femmes helm came up, even with the pitch black visor blocking the upper half of their faceplates, the panicked nature of the smallest femme was easily read.

The other was also quick to join, using their own wings to try and pin the undamaged pede to the ground so that it could do no more harm as the largest of their group continued to thrash and out right screech as Ratchet set to work, jabbing a needle directly into the wound in an attempt to numb
It only took a few more moments after that for the screeches to peter off into laboured venting and groans held back by clenched denta as their helm dropped out of their companions tiny servos and onto the floor with a ‘thump’.


“Technically it’s two in the morning.”

“Ira, at this point, neither of us have the energy to give a shit.”

The one who’d been silent up until then, Kia, looked to Ratchet. “How bad is it?”

The medic responded with a near lethal look. “It’s not life threatening, one of the main struts in her pede has splintered. That is, if my guesswork of how your anatomy works is correct, it looks like… like…”

“Ugh, like we got impaled by a ton of spikes?”

A snort from Jazz got Aria and Wren’s helm snapping round and baring their denta (?) at the Polyhexian. Where denta should be were two smooth plates with hooked centres, there was no illusion within the Primes helm how sharp those were.

“Not those kinda spikes you gutter processor! Ira! Go get the instruments of mutilation then!” They snapped, focusing once again on the one their helm now rested against.

The irritated huff that came from the smallest femme suggested to the Prime that an optic roll of dramatic proportions had just occurred, amplified by the fact that the femme’s sudden upright position left the largests helm to clang against the ground.

Followed swiftly by that same language that sounded a lot like they were more than a little aggravated as she strode over to one of the open hangar doors which lined the walls of the large chamber.

Not a few moments later and the sound of metal clanging together, the smallest was returning with a bundle wrapped in canvas.

Said bundle was then unceremoniously dropped on the floor in front of Ratchet, causing rusted, large jagged lengths of metal to scatter across the ground. The medic was quick to pick up one of them, bringing it under his scrutinous gaze as he took note of the long dried energon still splattered over the primitive mutilation tools.

“Now if yah’ll excuse me, ah got ah nest with mah name written on it an’ ah inten’ tah use it tonight!” Ira stated, banging her right wing support against her chassis before turning back around and storming off to one of the other hangar doors which opened at her approach before slamming back shut behind the femmes backstrut and forked tail feathers?

It took a moment for the Prime to add that little feature to his interpretation of all three femmes, Kia’s being the shortest and seemingly only barely getting past her upper legs before cutting off in a rounded curve, Ira’s dropped to the top of her second leg joints in regards to the tips of the deep wedge cut that left the centre of the feathers half way up the full length of hers, and the twins had, unsurprisingly, the longest of the three, but in their current laying position it was difficult to gauge just how much longer than their partners theirs was as the black and white collection was mostly trapped under the femmes frame.
He was jerked from his musings when Ratchet rose, apparently having finished with his quick repair job. “It’s not perfect, but until I have a better understanding of this abnormal anatomy you have, it’s all I can do.” The medic announced, his servos coming to rest on his hipplates as the large twin femmes tried to push themselves upright.

It was a clearly difficult procedure but one they seemed to manage with surprising ease, but they went no further at the warning scowl they got from the medic.

He’d expected them to shy away or something to that account, all the neutrals he had experienced were, if he was being truthful, quite timid, and uncertain of their new lives away from their home world.

Though that was hardly something he could rely on, to his knowledge, the Decepticons had made it a side mission to wipe out all Neutral groups who’d turned their backs to the war.

What he hadn’t expected, was the almost smug smirk the femmes shot his CMO.

“Naww, what’s the problem Doc? Never patched up someone with honeycomb struts before? Don’t worry, our buddy Winston can give you a crash course on our anatomy in the morning, he took Mikaela up to our apartment just before we got back and went down, he’s probably crashed himself now that I think about it.” Aria spoke, trailing off into her own thoughts by the end before the left shoulder shrugged.

Kia seemed to nod along to some unspoken notion. “Best to get you two to your own nest and get some rest, I’ll fill these guys in on everything ok amigo?” They asked, already using their own wing supports to hold onto the larger femmes under their own wings, helping to hoist them up onto one pede as they held their mauled right pede off the ground, said action, due to their nature of their struts, seemed in no way to the mechs remotely normal. Then again, this cycle had not been anything close to normal since they arrived on this planet, so that wasn’t the best comparison in the Prime’s optics.

“Merci Kia.” Wren responded, before turning to them. “We’re sorry if this incident forced your servo, it was not our intention to collapse like that… we clearly over did it this time, thank you Ratchet. Kia will give you the location of the Allspark in a moment, but do not just jump and rush off, it would likely be best if we helped you civilly interact with the branch of human Government currently looking after it.” They paused for a moment. “And a certain… someone I do believe you all know very well.”

Ironhide was the one to take the bait after a brief moment of silence as Kia shifted the larger femme into a shoulder carry. “And who, would that be?”

The larger femme let off an airy chuckle, Aria responding. “Why, your old pal Megzy.”

It took all of three human seconds for the nickname to register with the faceplates of the Decepticon Warlord, but when it did, a sense of dread dropped into their tanks.

“That’s why we need you to really at least let us help you with this part, he’s on Ice, frozen stiffer than a flagpole in Antarctica, but if the humans get the wrong idea about you, and decide to wake their ‘NBE-1’, as they like to call him, well, he’s not even got a hundred metres to cross before he’s got the cube in his servos.”

There was a long moment of silence as they watched Kia lead the larger twins into another hanger door, the rouge faced femme returning shortly after into view before the door slid shut behind her on its rollers.
“Now then, shall we begin? I guess you deserve to know everything we can offer.”

Ouf! Would you believe me if I said that this chapter was initially only half as long? That’s what having buffer chapters does to you, you keep having ideas of what to add and what sounds better and it can just get out of hand! Oh well.

Sorry about the long hiatus between chapters, I write so much yet it feels like the chapters take so long to be complete!

Anyway, hope you all enjoyed!

Moon
Chapter 8

Woo! Been wanting to post this chapter for ages! Finally got around to finishing chapter eleven. Not much to say other than that I hope you all enjoy this latest chapter. Uni's been really busy recently, but I'm managing. So again, hope you all have fun!

Chapter 8

When Kia had announced that they would ‘begin’, Optimus had honestly expected an explanation, his mechs too, what that explanation was, he had no honest comprehension of, still reeling from the fact alone that Megatron himself was dangerously close to achieving his goal of obtaining the Allspark, frozen in Stasis or not.

Let alone everything else which had transpired in not even a full joor.

What they got for their expectations however, was not an explanation, instead, it was the avian femme turning their back strut to them and walking over to yet another hanger like door.

Jazz had been the first to follow, and promptly had the door slam in front of him.

“Urr… am ah missin’ somethin’ abou’ Earth’s Culture or somethin’?” The mech remarked, turning back to face the rest of the Unit and his Prime with servos on his hipplates.

Before any of them could reply, a voice from the raised area clearly designed for the natives of this planet, answered him. “Depends, how much do you know about the Tango?” The accented voice was undeniably that of Kia, their helms and upper chassis all turning sharply to regard the human standing there as they threw their ‘hair’ back and gave a slight shake of their hips, as if to taunt the mechs as they stood there.

“What? You thought I was going to talk down here? Bah! This is where we store our frames! Not live! Now then, I’m going up to our apartment on the top floor, the elevator over here leads directly to it, you all have holoforms in the pack the twins gave you, so you better learn to use them, here, bipedal forms are a no go, we don’t fit simply put, and the employees are skittish enough around us knowing that we’re aliens, having human ‘forms’ helps ease them a bit.” They listed off, gesturing to their form before turning on the heel of their leather sandal covered foot and walking to the aforementioned elevator, the double doors opening wide for the femme before closing behind her, followed by the quiet sound of the elevator heading upwards.

Another silence followed as all attention turned to the Prime.

“Store their frames? Prime these femmes, whatever they are, there is a major malfunction going on in all of them.” Ironhide grumbled, glaring at the door that the holoform had left through.

Before any of them had time to react, the hanger door that Ira had passed through slammed back open as the femme came storming out, a livid twitching snarl etched over what was visible of their pale white faceplates as they stormed right up to the far taller mech, their armour rattling as they came to a stop before the weapons specialist and pulled their left wing back behind them.

In the time it took an optic shutter to close and open again, said wing strut had collided with the
Weapons specialists faceplates in an echoing clang, wrenching his helm to the side from the harsh impact that left the side of his faceplates dented in, leaving whatever he’d gone to say to the femme to fall silent before it was ever heard.

Ira was in no way done, taking in one long vent as if to calm herself, then, with one of the spindly arms which was now attached to her chassis, pulled her visor clean off to reveal optics that burned with a rage as potent as the look that Megatron regarded his arch rival with whenever they met upon the battlefield.

That was when her optics actually registered in their processors.

When they realised that it was not their own tiredness getting the better of them when the blue, green, orange and red, actually shifted, warped and twisted behind the glass of the femme’s optics like a pool of heated oil.

That was all they had time to take in before said femme decided it was time to explode.

“MAJOR FUCKIN’ MALFUNCTIONS?! YAH STUPID SON OF AH HALF COOKED COCKEREL! DO YAH HAVE ANY FUCKIN’ IDEA HOW MANY TIMES AH HAD TAH BEND MY ASS OVER BACKWARDS TAH WORK OU’ HOW TAH DESIGN HOLOFORMS FOR YOU THAT WOULD AUTOMATICALLY ADJUST TO WHATEVER ALT MODE AND COLOURATION YOU STUPID SONS AH BITCHES TOOK?! YOU GOT ANY FUCKING CLUE IN THA’ MICROSCOPIC GUN FETISHED HELM OF YOURS HOW MUCH WE’VE DONE TO MAKE SURE THA HUMANS DIDN’ FIND OU’ ABOUT YAH ARRIVAL!? AH HAD TAH FEND OFF OVER FOUR HUNDRED HUMAN TEAMS AH SCIENTISTS AND ANALYSTS, TRYING TAH GE’ BACK IN CONTROL OF THA RADAR AND TELESCOPES THA’ WOULD AH PICKED YOUR SORRY ASSES UP WIThou’ MEH DIVERTING EACH AND EVERY ONE AH THEIR FOCUSES UNTIL YAH LANDED?! ALL WIThou’ THEM FINDING OUT WHO AH WAS?! OOOOOOH BUT THAT’S NOT EVEN THE KICKER! BEFORE THAT I HAD TO SPEND THREE SOLID HOURS CLINGING TO THE UNDERSIDE OF AIR FORCE FUCKING ONE AT THIRTY THOUSAND FEET IN THE AIR! THA’FUCKIN’ FREEZIN’! JUST TO MAKE SURE THA’ THA DECEPTICON FRENZY DIDN’ GE’ AHOID OF THA ALLSPARKS LOCATION FROM THA POTUS MAINFRAME SO THA’ AH COULD BUY YAH SORRY ASSES THA TIME TAH GE’ HERE AND WORK THIS SHIT OU’ WIThou’ CAUSING A MASSIVE DISASTER! ‘CAUSE LE’ MEH FUCKIN’ TELL YAH BOLLIXES SOMETHIN’! THA HUMAN RACE AIN’ FUCKIN’ READY FOR YAH AND OUR KIND, YEAH, YOU’RE KIND, AND OUR KIND! WE AIN’ CYBERTRONIANS YAH TWATS! WE ARE THA UNFORTUNATE VICTIMS OF AH SPACE TIME ANOMALY WHICH TURNED US INTA THESE FREAKS OF FUCKIN’ NATURE THANK YOU VERY MUCH! SO TAKE THA’ ‘MAJOR MALFUNCTION’ LI’L COMMENT AN’ SHOVE IT AS FAR UP THA’ ASS AH YOURS UNTIL IT’S FUCKIN’ SPOUTING OU’ OF YAH OPTICS! WE DIDN’ ASK FAH THIS! WE DIDN’ ASK FOR YAH TAH COME SAILING INTA THE WORLD WE’VE MADE OUR SAFE HEAVEN ON! AND BY EVERY DEMON IN HELL WE DIDN’ ASK TAH BE MOCKED BEHIN’ OUR BACKS AND REGARDE’ AS NOTHIN’ MORE THAN FREAKS! YOU GOBSHITE!”

With each outraged shout the smallest femme shoved at the mech with surprising force with the final parts of their wing joints, akin to that of a Praying Mantis as she drove home every point.

The final insult however, was accentuated by another hard slap across the faceplates from the other wing and the femme turning on her talons with an Avian screech and stormed off towards a large red button on one of the pillars that held up the high ceiling.
“God fuckin’ damn it ah need tah sink mah beak inta something before ah kill one of yah.” She hissed as she shot a livid glare over her shoulder at them, her optics primarily red with tinges of blue, green and orange trying to flicker across the edges.

The button cracked under the force in which it was hit.

Almost immediately a horn sounded from somewhere above as a door in the ceiling opened up a small way away from the pillar.

Not a moment later, something fell through, hitting a hollow in the concrete floor with a sickening organic thump and a wave of what looked like skinned legs.

Then the femme was transforming, reforming into an avian creature that’s helm reached just above Jazz’s abdominal plating. But those moments of transformation became locked in all their processors, it wasn’t the mechanical, if at times jerky movements of their platings as they transformed, this, what they witness was seamless, flowing like high quality oil, plating and components sliding together and reforming with barely a sound or jerk, if anything, the femme was showing off, their wings flourishing out as hordes of larger feathers appeared from tucked within seemingly their protoform, unfolding out and covering the femmes entire frame instead of what was visible peeking out from under her armour in her bipedal form.

She shot them one last livid look over their feathered covered shoulder plating before walking over to the carcass which had been dropped, beak lunging down and slicing a chunk of flesh and bone clean off the corpse.

All the Autobots could do was watch on in stunned horror as the entire dead, whatever it was, was devoured, bones and hooves included.

When all that was left was a fresh splatter in the blood caked hollow, the femme rose again back into her bipedal form and stormed back to the hanger door they had come from, before closing it this time however, she looked back.

“Ah ever hear you callin’ us malfunctions again, an’ yah gonna wish tha Unmaker himself ate you and yah dead planet whole, yeah, we know abou’ Cybertron, I’ve hacked enough Con cannels tah know what kinda shit you all did tah yah own home, you do tha same here, and we’re gonna have all yah heads.”

With that, she slammed the hanger door shut.

Ironhide scowled as he rubbed at his dented faceplates. “Small fry has a swing.” He muttered.

Optimus regarded his weapons specialist from behind. “Perhaps you will think twice on insulting our hosts again… though I am curious of what she meant by ‘space time anomaly’. ” He remarked, turning his gaze to Bumblebee, who responded with just a shrug.

“Hmm. Optimus I believe it would be best if I remain here and see if I can do any more for the damaged ones pede… the sooner we are complete in this exchange I believe the better for both our parties, they are clearly strained by our presence here.” Ratchet announced, regarding the door Kia had lead the twins through. “I also wish to see what I can garner about their ‘condition’.”

Optimus nodded. “Very well Ratchet. Bumblebee, Jazz, Ironhide, vehicle mode. I believe it best if we try not to delay this any more either.” He ordered, shifting down into the Peterbilt he had chosen as his alt mode.

His mechs were quick to follow his lead barring Ratchet who was already making his way towards
the door the twins were beyond.

Once the holoform programs had come fully online, they turned their attention on the elevator that Kia had used, the threshold decorated with what looked like silver ivy.

Without another word, they slowly made their way over, far more cautious now of their hosts as they arrived at the elevator and Optimus pressed the button to call the elevator back down.

Almost immediately the doors slid open, revealing a surprisingly large floor space and gilded selection of buttons to press for the individual levels of the building above.

The highest one, labeled simply ‘roost’ was the one he then pressed.

A cheery chime answered the press, and the mechanical box shot upwards.

They didn’t even have to wait more than a few seconds before they reached the top floor and the doors slid open with another cheery chime coming from the speakers hidden somewhere out of sight.

A little bit thrown off balance by the acceleration of the elevator, the four holoforms stepped out into a far smaller, but far more luxurious corridor than the underground chamber they had only just been in.

In the middle of said corridor stood Kia, their expression marred by a raised eyebrow and half pout, arms folded across her chest and hip jutted to the side.

“Wow, you have... no tact, I was gone what? Twenty seconds? And you manage to piss of Ira to the point of a physical confrontation? Just… wow… The only person who’s been able to do that before was my brother, and he was a fucking Asshole.” She paused then, shooting an exceptionally pointed glare at the weapons specialist before the holoform rolled it’s eyes and gestured for them to follow. “No use crying over spilled blood, now be quiet, Mikaela’s sleeping in the living room.”

She announced quietly, turning on the heel of rouge fluffy slippers she was wearing, having apparently changed a part of her attire.

Bumblebee was the first to move, side stepping around the rest of the group and quickly moving to follow on Kia’s heels, blonde and blackette head swaying from side to side to take in the gleaming walls and lush checkered carpet.

Without many options to the contrary, the rest of the mechs holoforms followed soon after, taking in the penthouse themselves.

“Since Arien bought the Hotel, the top three floors have been renovated completely to house our needs, as well as the old underground car park being repurposed into our frame storage. The boardroom is just beyond our rooms and used to be the living room, the current living room was two of the old bedrooms.” Kia announced as she stepped into the wide open plan kitchen, dining area and living room.

The Autobots gave the luxury apartment a cursory and cautious look, Jazz letting off a low whistle at the site of multiple crystal chandeliers hanging from the high ceilings.

“You femmes certainly know how to live the good life.” He commented.

Kia gave him what could only be called a half smug, half proud look. “Well of course, we accept nothing but the best.” She remarked, but kept on her way.
As they passed the living room area, the mass that was Mikaela’s blanket covered form shifted, her head appearing into view as she rubbed her eyes. “Huh? What’s… what’s goin’ on?” She asked, her eyes blearily trying to focus on the group.

Bumblebee quickly diverted his path, moving to crouch in front of the sofa that held the human, giving her a friendly wave to get her attention.


The holoform nodded his head, before gesturing to her.

“Oh? Yeah… I just got… really tired… Winston brought me up here… how… what’s been happening… god it’s too late for this…” She grumbled, breaking out into a yawn mid speech.

Kia chuckled as she called out. “It’s two in the morning chica, go back to sleep, you’ll be taken to the airport at eleven to get you safely back to California, unless you want to stay a bit longer?”

Mikaela snorted. “And miss all the giant robot aliens? No thank you! I’ll just tell my dad I’m staying over, he’ll be cool with it.” She responded, before dropping her head back down to the pillow and almost immediately falling back to sleep.

There was a moment of silence before Kia’s gaze shifted to Bumblebee. “You can stay here and watch over her if you want, you are her guardian if my assumption is correct?”

Bumblebee’s bright blue eyes widened slightly in surprise before he nodded, shifting out of his crouch and into sitting cross legged with his back resting on the plush leather sofa, his gaze going from the strange femme’s holoform to the bright city below that illuminated the sky with it’s bright neon and flashing lights.

Nodding at the scene before her, Kia turned again and continued to lead the rest of the Autobots to the large wooden double doors at the end of a corridor which bore the doors that seemed to lead to each of the femmes personal rooms.

Kia didn’t even hesitate to push the doors open, revealing a long dark wood table with eight leather padded wooden chairs surrounding, one at each head and six running along the sides.

“Gentlemen, please, take a seat.” Kia called, moving towards the end of the table which was backed by another floor to ceiling window of the Vegas city skyline and night sky above.

With that, she took her seat on the far right of the table, leaving the chair which sat at the head of the table empty.

The three holoforms left, Optimus, Ironhide and Jazz, all moved to take the seats at the closer end of the table, Optimus taking the one at the other head of the table, with Jazz and Ironhide flanking him.

Jazz huffed. “So, which one of you calls the shots if it ain’t you?”

The look that Kia sent him could have melted steel.

“You seem to have made another foolish assumption. Of how we operate, we are not soldiers, Lieutenant, we are Business women, we are equals and we work together in collaboration to squeeze the most profit possible out of our customer bases, not that an alien soldier would understand the fine arts that we must craft every day to maintain our individual empires.” Kia replied, curling the large lock of dark brown silky hair that hung over her left shoulder with her fist.
The bite of her tone quickly had Jazz leaning back into the seat he was in as much as it would give.

Optimus, clearly sensing the building aggression, imitated a human gesture he had noticed on his search of the World Wide Web, and cleared his holoforms throat.

Thankfully it did the trick and immediately drew Kia’s gaze, though it was slightly disturbing with the level of absolute focus those golden hazel eyes bore.

“I would like to apologise for the actions and declarations of my soldiers, we are all currently in quite the unknown situation.”

Kia went to respond but the double doors behind the Prime sliding closed drew her gaze a moment later, along with a small smirk forming on her lips.

Before any of them could so much as enquire as to the sudden change in expression, pale arms had slipped around the Primes shoulders, draping over his chest as a pair of lips pecked him on the cheek, a head of white and grey hair dropping to nuzzle his shoulder.

The holoform froze in place as a low almost purr like sound came from the woman who’d just appeared.

“Naww~ We forgive you. We know this has been hard~ We’re just worried that you bringing your war here will put us in jeopardy.” Aria’s sing-song voice was the one that answered as she pulled her head away, her right arm lifting up to catch the Prime’s chin with two fingers, raising and tilting his head to the side to lock gazes with the sleepy eyes and pouty lips of the white themed holoform.

The jaw of the Primes holoform would of dropped had it not been for the two fingers holding it in place.

Though that didn’t stop a faint colour change in the holoforms cheeks, leading to the light and airy giggle that left the female holoform as she pulled her fingers away, turning and practically sashaying down to the other end of the table, where she dropped into the chair at the head of the table with a sigh, head coming to rest in her palm which was propped up by her elbow on the arm of the chest, her gaze turned to Kia. “That medic went and woke us up, I didn’t want to deal with him and sis screaming at eachother, so I came here to join you, after I realised that sis wasn’t appreciating my attempts to calm them both down…” She explained before letting off a dramatic yawn and flutter of her eyelashes.

Kia snorted. “You just came up here to flirt, knowing Wren can’t keep you in check.”

Aria pouted. “Aww! Kia! Stop reading me like an open book! That’s Wren’s job!” She whined before turning her gaze back to the Autobots, after flicking Kia’s fringe with the ends of her fingers that is. “Soooooo~ We made any progress yet? Or do I have to jumpstart this morgue of a conversation?” She remarked in a playful tone, her shoulders swaying from side to side akin to a feline about to pounce on some hapless prey.

After a moment, the Prime’s holoform nodded in agreement. “Best not to have any more time wasted.”

The two femme holoforms nodded, as Aria pressed something hidden to them in the divot of the table in front of her seat.

“Alright, over the last few years, we’ve managed toooooooh… acquire, shall we say, the complete layout of the Hoover dam, where the Allspark is being kept.” She announced her tone,
mannerisms, practically everything about her shifted, gone was the cheerful flirt that had joined them, replaced by a calculative gaze and strict posture, all as a 3D projection of the massive underground structure appeared over the table between the two groups.

Ironhide raised one of his holoforms eyebrow. “And how, precisely, did you manage that?” He enquired, his voice trying to hide the growl in his tone.

Aria snorted. “That’s, a trade secret, you just need to know that we have these specs and nothing more, you can hardly be successful in our line of work by yammin’ yah gob all the time.” She remarked back, before pressing something else that caused three spots on different parts of the dam to light up, one at the top, one over the reservoir, and one in the hill alongside it. “Alright, there’s three entrances to getting into this place, two of which are heavily guarded, the main entrance that’s big enough for you to get your massive afts through is at the bottom hidden amoung the generators, there’s a human sized opening over the reservoir, which leads to a lift that goes down through the main tower, and finally, a broken air vent cover in the mountain side, that’s how we got Keeley’s holoform in so that she could get us an internal map, if you really wanted to know.”

“Keeley?” Optimus asked.

“Ira’s Companion minicon.” Kia responded, not taking her gaze off the map.

“Of course it would be that one’s pet.” Ironhide grumbled.

“Yah mean one of the psycho things that tried to grab me?” Jazz exclaimed. “They were yours!?”

Aria gave the smallest mechs holoform a curt nod. “Yeah, sorry about that, they can be a bit mischievous, Hera’s mine and Wrens, she’s the biggest, and Kia’s got Nibbler… He’s probably the one that bit you, he has a habit of trying to get anything he sees in his mouth, like Kia’s hand when she’s not being careful!” Aria explained, practically grinng like a cat that killed a canary by the end, giggling to with every word she spoke.

She got a pointed look from her companion for that one.

“Anyway, the point is, there’s only three entrances, two of which are heavily guarded, and the last can fit at most a small dog into.” Arien remarked, before turning her gaze to the three Autobots expectantly.

Optimus’ holoform leaned forwards to further examine the model. “Then the only way in would be through the lower entrance?”

Aria and Kia nodded, before Aria added. “But your forms are too big for the tunnels between the chambers, unless you’re happy with crawling Prime. Non pas que je dérange la vue.” She remarked, her language suddenly shifting to a completely separate one, earning an amused yet incredulous look from Kia, as the layout shifted to highlight the narrow tunnels in red, revealing the network below the dam.

Optimus’ holoform raised its gaze to send them an enquiring look, but it was Ironhide who spoke. “You’re leading up to something here femme.”

“Of course I am, we have allies willing to help you get access to the Cube. We were just waiting to bring up that little fact.” Aria responded, pressing something else as a cluster of human profiles appeared over the model.

After a cursory glance over the faces, the three Autobots turned their gazes back to Aria and Kia, Jazz being the one to speak first. “So, if we say yes, those humans are gonna go in through tha
“Theoretically, yes, all of them already have positions working for us, as undercover operatives within Sector Seven, among other branches of the Government, but mainly the one holding the Allspark and Primes’ old sparring buddy. Pour l’instant.”

Ironhide leant forwards. “You’ve known we were coming for a long time, explain yourselves, or I drop this holoform and use my cannons to talk for me, ‘cause I’ve got a nasty feeling you freaks are nothin’ more than con scum diverting our path just so you cons can get ahold of the cube!”

Another silence fell as Optimus sent his weapons specialist an unimpressed look.

The two femmes holoforms didn’t even bat an eyelash as Aria dropped her chin back into her palm.

“Care to elaborate why you think we work for those threats to our very livelihood?”

Ironhide scowled. “You want to rule this planet.”

The response came only a moment later as Aria let off what could only be called a bark of a laugh, banging her fist thumb down into the table a few times as she shook her head from side to side, Kia too laughed, but it was more of a singular snicker she kept to herself.

“Doesn’t every human worth their salt!? Ha! Besides, we’re more than on our way to that goal even without those barbaric fools!” Aria shot back wide grin not leaving her face as she wafted her hand at them. “Me and Wren have been set for world domination since we were born. Same with Kia, and Ira if you stretch it.”

“What?” Was Ironhide’s oh so greatly calculated response.

“Moving on~” Aria shot right back playfully in a song like tone, her name was starting to make more sense, it sounded like a chorus of bells, each word ending with a slight reverberation, waving off the conversation and pulling the Prime back out of his thoughts, Aria turned her attention back to the holographic screen.

“Our operatives are led by Winston, real nice guy, massive softie, but you didn’t hear that from me. Anyway, he and his team will set up an emergency that calls for the evacuation of the dam, that should give you a big enough window to enter, a dam structural failure if you want me to be precise, the humans will all evacuate upstream, and you’ll be able to slip inside whilst Ira temporarily takes all of the dams non essential systems offline, so security feeds, electrical locks on the doors, that kind of stuff, but old Megzy’s gonna be kept on Ice so if you really wanted to, you could, you know, just cut his head clean off~. Or something along those lines. Would literally remove the head of your whole war issue. Though from what we’ve been able to intercept from the one called Star...scream? In his radio chatter, he’s more than happy to take over fully with their boss being a no-show.” Aria explained, giving a nonplussed shrug of her shoulders.

Optimus leant forwards, watching the hologram as red, blue and yellow lines all moved through the dam’s layout. “What is the third group? Going through the vent?”

“That’s gonna be Keeley, she’s Ira’s link to the dams system, it’s completely isolated, and Keeley can get in, connect, and Ira can work from here through her, her getting in and connecting to the systems first is key to this being a clean in and out.” Kia responded.

The Prime nodded. “If all goes to plan. I want an explanation from you, a real one. Who are you, what are you, where are you from. How you know the things you know. Am I undertsood?”
The two exchanged looks, before they nodded, each stepping away from the table and walking up to the Prime, each offering a hand to shake, Aria’s left, Kia’s right.

“You’ll have to make this same deal with Wren and Ira in the morning. Though they will likely be in far less agreeable moods. This is so that we do not say anything they do not want you to know, understood?” Kia responded.

He looked between them, and took each of their hands to shake.

Aria smirked. “We are ladies of our word, with the deal made, we bid you all, a good night, there are rooms for your holoforms if you wish to sleep in luxury as we do. But we understand if you do not wish to take that hospitality, the same to your scout and your medic, the later is likely going to especially need it after dealing with my twin…. This whole time she’s been quite… ratty shall we say?” The smirk shifted to a small smile before they let go a brushed passed, patting Optimus’ holoform on the shoulder before she walked out of the room.

The sound of a door then opening and closing reached them before he could so much as turn to see which door they had left through.

Turning his attention to Kia, who’d pulled her own hand away during his moment of distraction, he found her too already walking out of sight.

Another door opened and closed, and the hologram of the dam shut off.

Taking a moment to let his holoform go through the surprisingly realistic motion of letting out a sigh, he regarded his two mechs.

Ironhide was scowling, Jazz honestly looked more intrigued at the situation than he’d expected.

“Prime, this is a bad idea.” Ironhide growled out.

“Mech, it’s the only one we’ve got. On an normal cycle ah bet they’re all real sweetsparks, we just put them in ah bad position. An’ they promised tah explain when all this scraps blown ova. So relax mah mech.” Was Jazz’s response. “What say you Optimus?”

The Prime sat there for a good while, resting his jaw in the bridge between thumb and forefinger for a few moments, mulling over everything he now knew, the questions he held that had yet to be answered, the plan, and the strange urge to check upon the injured twin, Aria showed no harm or difficulty with her form, and always lead with her left hand, left foot when she was present in her holoform….

The damage was on the right pede, Wren’s side of their body he had gathered.

Rising from his seated position he look to his two mechs. “Ironhide, Jazz, we will reconvene the next cycle, per their suggestion, you may retire if you wish, I intend to check on Ratchet and his patient.”

Neither of his mechs tried to stop him when he left the room upon his decision.

Though he did pause at the sight of his scout sleeping on the other sofa that lay opposite to the one his charge slept on in the unlit living room, a large blanket covering the majority of the young scout, the human female being equally covered.

It would seem his scout still needed some rest.
Turning his attention back to the elevator at the far end of the corridor, he made his way there, the doors sliding open in front of him before he even pressed the call button.

The doors closed the moment he had gotten out of their way, the elevator already dropping downwards before he could turn.

Pre-programmed he predicted.

He could just turn off the holoform, the thought only then occurring to him.

He decided to go against it, he was already almost there.

The elevator pinged it’s destination not a few moments later, the doors sliding open to reveal the large hangar beyond.

As he disabled his holoform and began the transformation process out of his vehicle mode, Optimus regarded his medic, who was seemingly having just finished his check up. “How is Wren old friend?”

Ratchet, to his credit, only sent the Prime a half murderous look. “She is stable, I did what I could to repair their pede with the tools and materials I had and they could provide, it’s braced so they’re walking should be greatly improved, but that brace will have to remain there for some time to come until the internal systems seal the strut back together, and I’ve forbidden them from any strenuous activity, if they fly they must land with their left pede first, to take pressure off their right, which seems to be their leading one, hence the continued strain. At present, they are recharging. How went the meeting?” The medic then enquired after his explanation.

Optimus paused for a moment. “It was certainly interesting, and it would seem that we have a plan to execute in the coming cycles to obtain the Allspark with hopefully as few casualties as possible.” He remarked. “I merely wished to check on Wren before I recharged.” He explained.

Ratchet nodded. “Very well, recharge well Optimus… is there a reason the others have not returned?” Then added, taking note of the fact that Bumblebee, Jazz and Ironhide had not returned with their Prime.

Optimus glanced to the elevator himself. “It would seem they decided to take up the offer of our hosts hospitality, though Ironhide may try to deny it.” He answered, glancing at the CMO he decided to elaborate. “They offered us human rooms for our holoforms.”

Ratchet’s response was to give his Prime a look of absolute disbelief. “After the mess that occurred down here?” He enquired, giving a wide gesture with his servo towards the door that Ira had disappeared behind.

Optimus merely shook his helm.

“It would seem, old friend, they are quite forgiving of Ironhide’s transgression for the most part.”

__________

**Oh Prime doesn't even know the half of it.**

**Welp, that's all from me, thanks for reading!**

**Moon**
Alright! new chapter up and ready to go! Not going to say much, other than that I hope you all enjoy this chapter!

Chapter 9

There were three things that woke Mikaela up the next morning.

One was the smell of sizzling eggs and bacon.

The second was the quiet smooth jazz coming from somewhere in the room, accompanied by soft humming.

The other was the heavy warm weight covering her that seemed to keep trying to nuzzle closer.

It was only when she felt something sharp nestle against her skull through her hair that she decided that enough was enough and opened her eyes.

Only to find the mass to be a large, small horse sized mechanical bird, black white and grey in colouration, hogging the majority of the sofa with one wing seemingly wrapping around her to hold her close to the surprisingly warm metal feathers as what she guessed was it’s head rested on hers, whilst the other wing was tucked to their side.

Deciding against moving, lest she startled the thing covering her. She peered out towards the other sofa after spotting a yellow and black form there.

Sure enough, there was Bumblebee’s human form, one arm thrown over the armrest, one leg on the floor, and mouth wide open in silent snores.

Then she realised he too had a companion.

A slightly smaller, black, brown, cream and red faced metal bird who was just curled up on his chest and staring out the floor to ceiling panoramic windows, clearly awake.

And with a turn of his head, his large gold eyes locking on her, acknowledged her wakefulness with a squawk over his shoulder.

Not a moment later a whispered voice hissed back, replacing the soft humming. “Shush Nibbler! Don’t wake our guests!”

Apparently though, the squark had brought her own companion to alertness, as the sharp thing she assumed was its beak lifted from her head and a set of bright sea green glass eyes appeared in front of her almost immediately after.

Then it turned towards the hissed voice, stretching it’s neck a good way, revealing the cabling hidden under the mass of feathers, it too squawked, this one sounding more insistent.

More… happy?

“Hera! Shhhhh! Let them sleep!” The voice hissed again in a whisper that sounded slightly strained.
The creature dubbed Hera just squawked again and bounced its head up and down, seeming to get more excited as it moved to stand around her.

Not a moment later she caught sight of the talons clutching the sofa not an inch away from her arm. They looked like meat hooks.

Really big, serrated meat hooks.

“Hera! Really! You’ll wake them!”

“Um… I’m already awake.” She mumbled, deciding to finally bring attention to herself.

There was a moment of silence as what sounded like the gas of one of the cookers being turned off before the voice materialised as a form of a grey and white unkempt haired woman peering over at her from the other end of the couch, and oddly enough they were wearing sunglasses, really dark sunglasses, where they hung over or something? Could they be hungover? It was way too early to be questioning her hosts fashion sense...

“Oh… so you are… okay… hungry?”

“Urr yeah? Um… Aria? This is the Aria half right?” Mikaela responded back, but struggled to move anywhere with Hera on top of her. “Can… can you tell her to get off?”

Aria blinked at her after giving a quick nod to confirm that she was right about guessing which half of the set she was. “Mmmm, Hera, off.”

The response was for the metallic bird of prey to give the white and grey haired woman a full blown incredulous look.

For a moment she was left wondering how such a feat occurred.

Then she remember the human form of a giant alien robot was still out cold on the other sofa and decided heightened facial expressions were now snugly within the norm of crazy shit she’d seen within the last twenty four hours.

“Don’t give me that look young lady, she’s up now so get off.” Aria responded to Hera’s look.

Apparently she was familiar enough with the bird to reach out and outright yank some of the poor creature's tail feathers so as to make her stance clear.

Turns out that was all that was needed to convince Hera to spread her large, ridiculously large wings out and with a few quick beats that threatened to knock away literally everything in the room, relocated herself to the floor between the sofas where she puffed up in indignation.

“Oh hush you, you've slept enough you lazy thing.” Was Aria’s response before beckoning Mikaela to follow her into the kitchen, Hera already tailing after the older woman, her grievance apparently already forgotten.

Knowing there was to be no bartering a few minutes more sleep given how awake she already felt, Mikaela managed to get herself upright, groaning under her breath at how stiff she felt from sleeping as awkwardly as she had on the admittedly really comfy couch.

After a few quick stretches to try and loosen some of the tension out of her body, she turned to walk into the kitchen away from the waking city below.
Aria was already back at one of the stoves, the fire already going again under the pan as the bacon sizzled and eggs spat as they were thoroughly scrambled.

Coming up to stand next to the woman she peered over her shoulder, already feeling her stomach begin to growl.

Just to the side she spotted a plate of bread next to the six slot toaster which sat against the wall in all its chrome black glory.

This was just making her even more hungry.

That’s when she noticed the enquiring look Aria was sending her out of the corner of her eye.

“So…” She began, but fell short of thinking of something to say.

“Hmm?”

“Um… where’s your sister?”

“Oh Wren? Still sleeping, Ratchet’s brace kept her up for a good while so I’m letting her sleep in.”

“How… how do you do that? You’re one brain right?”

The first answer she got was a chuckle. “No, no, we’re not, and yet, we are at the same time, we may share a body, but we are fully capable of functioning on our own… back before we got these projections and were, you know, fully human, that meant we moved half of our body each, me controlling the left, Wren controlling the right, simple as. But that meant that ‘functioning’ with only one of us awake doesn’t really work, given we need the other to be awake too to do things like walk and such without dragging an unresponsive other half along the floor by one arm and a leg. That make sense?” There was an almost strained chuckle at the end of that admittance, she barely caught it as Aria tossed the pan slightly, throwing up the eggs and bacon for a moment to help move them around as her other hand worked to add a dash of salt and pepper to the pan.

She responded with an honest shrug.

“Hmm, most people don’t get it right off the bat, but I’ll put it this way, with these projections, or holoforms, as they’re called, we can operate separately if one of us is still asleep. It wasn’t easy getting used to, having to learn how to control the other side of our bodies our sibling would normally control, but we manage in the name of us being able to multitask and pull off fun little tricks like that one last night… oh! I forgot to ask! Did you enjoy the show? Well, what small chunk of it you saw because of Ira’s interruption but, did you like what you did get to see?” She outright giggled then, like a little girl who’d just spoken some dirty little secret she wasn’t supposed to. There even seemed to be a sparkle within those sea green eyes of hers as she glanced over her shoulder at the teen, sunglasses pushed up to her forehead, but under that, she could’ve sworn she saw hesitation, veiled behind the bright eyes that were looking directly at her.

Mikaela worried her bottom lip as she tentatively leant against the marble topped island that sat in the middle of the kitchen area. “It was… pretty cool. Bumblebee was trying to ask me questions through the start of it though.” She admitted, shrugging. “Honestly I’m not sure… it was kinda surreal. Everything is I guess… I mean, I met you like, the day before yesterday and now I’m trying to process alien robots, giant bird robots that used to be humans from another reality where I’m nothing but a… fictional character… oh god… that just hit me…” She muttered, her head dropping to stare at the floor below her as it all began to really sink in.

She… she was fictional… did that mean the only people in this universe that were actually real
were these people? The twins and their two friends and what she guessed where they’re pets?

Was this what it felt like to have an mid life crisis?

A plate of steaming hot bacon and scrambled eggs appearing not five inches from her face knocked her out of that spiral and her head snapped back up to stare at the strange woman holding the plate out to her.

“Try not to dwell on it too much with an empty stomach.” Was Aria’s response as Mikaela numbly took the plate and shuffled her ass back so that she could, after a bit of co-ordination, climb onto one of the padded raised seats and place her plate down.

All the while Aria was rummaging around in what looked like the cutlery draw before pulling out a knife and fork, quickly bumping the draw closed again with her hip before Mikaela could look inside.

“Here, enjoy… hopefully it tastes good… me and Wren may cook a lot… but, eggs and bacon was kind of an, on the fly thing, I just wanted you to have something to eat at least.”

Mikaela looked at her, watching as Aria rubbed the back of her neck with her left hand. “Thank you. For the food, everything else I have no idea what to think of yet, so, thanks for now I guess?”

Aria stared at her with a completely blank face for all of a second before the strangest noise left her closed lips and suddenly very puffed up cheeks.

Then she exploded into a fit of giggles as she doubled over herself.

Suddenly finding herself overcome by the infectious giggles, she was quick to follow.

Soon enough the two were in absolute hysterics for seemingly no reason whatsoever.

Still busting whatever kind of gut her projection had, Aria braced herself on the table and gestured to her with the hand she wasn’t currently using to prevent her from meeting the floor. “We’ve introduced you to giant alien robots, time travel and multiple dimensions in which one of said dimensions you’re a fictional character! And that’s your reaction!? Thanks!? I thought you’d start screaming at me and demanding answers now you weren’t so tired!” She exclaimed, gesturing with her free arm now in a wide semi circle at the world at large around them both.

Mikaela, still trying to contain her own spontaneous fit of giggles tried to shrug her shoulders, but it ended up with her nearly falling off the high chair due to over compensating. “Give me a bit and I might just start!”

When a response didn’t come, she managed to calm her own giggles and unscrew her tightly shut eyes, surprised to find the woman’s forehead being cradled in her hands with her elbows braced on the table. “A-aria?”

“It… it just hit me… everything… oh ancestors… oh fuck, oh fuck… we’re fucked… what have we done?! Oh Primus… oh good somehow non-fictional god of an alien race of giant robotic organisms… I LEFT THE STOVE ON! I LEFT THE STOVE ON FOR TWO YEARS! THE GAS BILLS GONNA BE MURDER!”

And then she was gone from the kitchen area, making a beeline for what Mikaela could only guess was her room, the door of said room being slammed open with such force and ferocity that the bang actually seemed to finally wake Bumblebee’s sleeping holoform, who, with his sofa companion, both crashed to the carpet between the sofas with a noticeable ‘thud’.
Which was quickly replaced by Aria shouting into the room. “WREN! WE LEFT THE STOVE ON IN LONDON!”

“What? Aria! What the fuck are you gripping about!” Came the voice of someone who’d clearly been equally rudely awakened like Bumblebee, who was currently trying to not panic with all the shouting going on and trying not to freak out about the giant feathered creature now in his lap and trying to eat his holoforms hand as he tried to use the same hand to push the thing off.

“The stove! There’s been a turkey slow roasting for two years in the oven! Oh Primus it’s a culinary disaster!”

“...It is too early for this.” Was the resigned response, the tone easily distinguished as one belonging to someone tired of the Universes shit.

Clearly the Universe wasn’t finished as a second door slammed open and storming out of said room in nothing but a hastily wrapped towel for modesty, was Kia.

“¡Qué diablos está pasando?!”

“J’ai laissé le poêle sur!”

“¡Entonces apágalo!”

“Le poêle à Mayfair!”

“¡Tienes diez años para volver y arreglarlo! Deja de enloquecer!”

“Non! Que la Turquie est ruinée!”

She was completely lost, and a pleading look from Bumblebee proved they were just as lost as the other.

Hera and Nibbler didn’t seem fussed at all about the current situation, how she knew that even she couldn’t fathom, they just looked, wholly passed this whole thing happening.

This would’ve continued had the last door suddenly not slammed open and what she could only call a being of pure rage and lividity stormed out holding a tankard which quickly had the contents inside chucked at the other two in the room by the head of seemingly matted short red head.

The startled shouts from said two receivers of the cold tankard of water seemed to put an end to the whole situation as it covered them and the tiled floor around them.

“Tá déileáil le géarchéim existential Aria ann. Anois stoptar gach duine suas! Tá sé ró-luath don chineál seo cac a tharraingt!”

With that declaration that she had no hope in hell of understanding, Ira stormed right back into her room, the door slamming behind her.

Feeling a tap on her shoulder, she turns her head to find Bumblebee standing a bit behind her, hand still partially out, but his gaze flicking between her and the corridor with an imploring look, apparently begging for an explanation.

All she could do really was respond with a shrug.

Tranquillity Nevada
The underpass that Frenzy found himself tied to by his pede was an abandoned mess, but compared to the conditions he’d had to deal with not a joor before, it was a significant improvement.

Specifically because he was actually on solid ground and not dangling from that flying mechs talons by his helm.

A bit of poking around had revealed that the fragging mechs talons had actually pierced some minor energon lines, causing his helm to give off a dull throbbing.

When they’d come into land the mech hadn’t even bothered to try and hide himself from the admittedly sparse human life in this area.

Clearly the mech had no care for if humanity discovered him or not because he was just fragging standing there the second joints of his massive wings resting against his hipplates and the majority of the feathers curled in behind him, as if he was trying to close them like he would a servo.

His minicon had been sent off somewhere to ‘catch’ him something.

Whatever that was, Frenzy could care less for.

He’d already messaged Barricade his location, given this mech had somehow known the general location that his temporary partner was in, he just hoped that the former Enforcer would show up soon.

If this mech started ranting and raving again about how ‘filthy’ his already pristine metal feathers looked, he was going to put himself out of his misery.

On top of all that, his servo, the one that this mech seemed to have a great vendetta towards, had stabbed, was really starting to fragging itch, apparently there was a secondary part of that damn virus that was there to make sure he couldn’t damn well forget it.

Why the frag did he agree to go on this mission to Earth? He and his siblings had already been separated from Soundwave, then he had to stupidly abandon them thinking he’d be able to make it on his own.

Now look where that had gotten him… tied to the support structure of an underpass by his pede and a freak of a mech holding him captive until his temporary partner showed up and, maybe bartered well enough to get him free, all after getting literally sucked out of a plane and into the open air only to be caught by another of these freaks who seemed to be appearing from every damn fragging shadow!

That was when he heard the sound of Police Sirens in the distance, and quickly growing louder with their approach.

Turning his helm up he went to give the mech a smug look, Barricade was not going to put up with this mechs scrap, and would hopefully pummel the freak into the ground.

Oh now wasn’t that a thought?

That attempt at a smug smirk faltered however at the practically psychotic look upon his captors features.

He honestly hadn’t thought his spark could sink lower.

This mech had an ace in the hole, and he knew it.
This was not good.

“Ah, like a loyal dog, they return to collect their favourite toy.” The mech mumbled his voice suddenly pitching sideways into a gleeful sounding noise not out of place coming from Laserbeak or Buzzsaw.

He watched with what was probably an unhealthy level of concern as Barricade skidded into view, transforming almost immediately and drawing his weapon to brandish at the freak.

Barricade growled. “You’re a scrapped mech.” He spat, allowing his weapon to spin up to its full speed.

The mech was unperturbed. “Oh please, that little trinket is supposed to scare me?”

Then something happened that Frenzy honestly didn’t think possible.

With dual sharp motions of his wings, large, scythe like blades shot out from the underside of the feathers, shedding a few in the process with how suddenly the gleaning, crimson tinted blades shot out.

Then the mech was hunching himself, wings flared out to bare the paler brown undersides fully and the blades which hung from the undersides.

One of the mechs pedes scrapped against the ground, the three frontal talons screeching and sparking against the concrete, the back raised off the ground.

Barricade scowled, red optics narrowing as he moved into a battle ready stance.

Then, they were charging.

The avian mechs massive strides ate up the distance far faster than Barricade’s own pedes could, and Frenzy watched, unable to look away from what was to quickly become a bloodshed.

Only, it didn’t.

For at the last moment, almost too quick to catch even with their optics, the avian mech flipped himself forwards onto the platted struts that held up the wings and used those to vault over Barricade, leaving the mech to stumble as his attempted swipe met thin air and the mechs talons landed dual blows against his back strut, very nearly knocking him off his pedes as they hooked and tore a chunk of metal armour from the former enforcers back plates.

In the time it took for Barricade to turn around, the mech was already leaning against one of the underpasses struts, regarding the former enforcer with a look that couldn’t be discerned due to the how pitch black the mechs visor was.

“Hmmm, a little too brash with those attacks, you’ll never stand a chance against Ira with that form, let alone my sister or the twin freaks.” The mech remarked. “Which is significant given they’re your real enemy.” The remark ended with a knowing cackle as he held one wing up to hide his lower faceplates from view, as if that would mask the sound of his amusement at Barricade’s inability to land a hit.

Barricade growled under his vents, fists clenching, clearly thinking along the same lines as Frenzy.

“You have a lot of gaul freak.” Barricade hissed, practically spitting each word with his ire.
The avian mechs response was actually quite the sight, the elongated protrusions that lay along the sides of his helm flared up, as did his armour, it was a strange sight, one Frenzy assumed was supposed to display aggravation.

But then, it all settled back down with a taunting swagger of the avian mechs wide shoulder platting. “Oh really? Name calling your best shot at winning this war?” They remarked. “Bad move.” The smirk was telling of the mechs amusement.

Barricade didn’t fall for the goad this time though.

“Oh really? Prove it then.”

Their gazes seemed to lock for a moment, before the avian mech shrugged. “I know where your precious cube is.”

Okay, so that may of really peaked his interest.

This mech knew where the Allspark was?

Barricade seemed to be equally surprised by this statement, but he remained sceptical.

“Prove it.”

The avian mech snorted. “My aren’t you a parrot. Such valuable information, I’m only willing to trade for. What are you going to offer me? And it has to be worth my while of course.” He responded, smirk remaining in place, as he reared up now, towering over them both.

Oh so that’s how it’s gonna be? This fragging mech wanted to make a trade for the Allspark’s location, really should of seen that coming, he hardly acted like the charitable type after all.

“What do you wish to trade then?” Barricade spat out, getting impatient.

“Two things, one, I join your ranks. Living like this, solo that is, isn’t fun, two, I get to skin my sister alive… or whatever you aliens have that describes the mutilation of the outer layer of a person that results in their demise from pure agony~. Because I would love to turn that perra into some lovely book covers to read at my leisure before tossing upon a roaring fire.”

Frenzy actually felt a chill go down his strut at his words, how he seemed to relish in the motion of murdering his own sister.

This mech wasn’t fooling around.

Then again there was also a high chance this mech was completely out of his processor, he didn’t even know what protoform flaying was? That was a go-to decepticon torture method… not that this mech was a decepticon.

Barricade seemed to think on it for a moment, before he nodded. “I’ll need to… run this through Starscream.”

The mech snorted, pushing off the pillar and stretching his right wing out, the main strut almost reaching Barricade even from the distance they stood apart, a testament to the mechs wingspan.

“Fernando De La Estrada. A pleasure comrade.”

Barricade paused, regarding the limb.
“Oh come now, you know I have no hand to give you to shake, my wing will have to do.”

Barricade snarled under his vents, but relented and grasped the bowed limb with his own servo, giving one quick shake before having to jump back, the blade nestled away which seemed attached to the main strut having suddenly sprang back out, nearly slicing the mechs digits clean off like the metal feathers now decorating the ground.

Fernando chuckled at his own stunt, the smirk growing ever larger. “I’m going to enjoy this.”

A now familiar cry from above drew Frenzy and Barricade’s attention up.

Frenzy recognised the strange miniature version of its master almost immediately, though it took a moment for him to realise what the bloody mass it was carrying was.

A sheep, an organic domesticated species of this world with one of its legs missing and leaving only a bloody stump.

“Ah, it would seem I’m having Lamb for Lunch. Care to join me mechs? I can toss you each a bone once I’m done.”

Pentagon General Grant’s private office

Jamerson gulped as he stood before his father, whose face was nothing but an impassable stone wall.

At his left stood Flint, his right, Maggie.

Next to his father, an Agent by the name of Banacheck.

“Sir…” Flint tried to speak up, to break the tense silence.

“Silence Agent.” His father shot Flint down without even breaking eye contact with him, his time worn eyes unflinching.

Flint promptly shut up.

“Grant.” Jamerson tried not to flinch, last name basis, great, he was in deep shit.

“This is a serious situation we have here, potentially caused by the fact you seemed to decide that it was not in the best interests of the USA to keep full track on a group you seem to be claiming, to be highly advanced mechanical beings capable of flight that have been residing on this planet without our knowledge for a number of years. Enabling them to learn our ways, our technology, everything, by foolishly using a device they gave you. You had better have a perfect god damn excuse for this lest I be forced to have you fired this moment.”

He knew that was coming.

But he knows his father very well, he isn’t finished.

“However, due to your… experience, and what you have told us, I must admit I doubt any of us would’ve actually believed you were it not for Mr Banachek’s evidence here, and what has happened only earlier this night. So instead of firing you, you and Mrs Madsen and her… ‘advisor’ will be relocated to S7’s base of operation. There’s a plane waiting for you, hopefully you’ll be able to do more for them.” His father continued, as he’d expected.
What he hadn’t expected, was the relocation.

Then it dawned on him, his father was finally putting him back out in the field.

He would have hugged them man if he wasn’t afraid of pushing it.

“Thank you sir, I won’t let you down.”

Flint then piped up again. “Er, sir? What role do I play in all of this?”

“You’ll be going with them, this is very sensitive information we can’t risk you being picked off on a normal mission and have information like this pulled from you. You’ll be safer with S7.” Was his father’s response.

That was understandable reasoning when he thought about it, wouldn’t want the Russians finding out about the fact the hacker apparently just a big a thorn in their side was actually a giant metal bird who could crush heads with a toe clench. And she was the smallest of the three.

Maggie spoke up then. “Then me and Glen are going too?”

His father nodded. “Yes, given you’re now the SecDef’s advisor, and he’s… your advisor, you’ll both be going with Jamerson and Flint here to advise Mr Keller during his time there… Your flight leaves in six hours, you will be escorted to your homes so that you can prepare for the journey, dismissed.”

“Wait, one more thing.” Jamerson finally spoke up. “What did you mean, by earlier this night?”

His father's gaze met his again before his father turned to the silent agent, who just gave a nod. “Son… ten hours ago, Airforce One was attacked. At least ten good men are dead and there is irreparable damage to the fuselage.” He admitted, opening a folder on his desk to reveal a collection of pictures.

The first was of the underside of the massive jet, six massive gashes running vertically down the hull like someone had released Wolverine upon it, revealing the severed inner workings beyond.

He heard Maggie gasp and Flint mutter a curse under his breath that got him a foul look from his father. “It’s a miracle she landed with the damage done, there is also the fact that… the rear cargo door was hacked… as quickly as the second hack in Qatar… there were men in the hold… they were the ten whose bodies have yet to be recovered, they were at thirty thousand feet, survival has been listed as impossible.” The solemn tone he used was haunting, one the man reserved for his fallen brethren.

Then his features hardened and he pulled one picture in particular and held it out for them to see, it was over exposed by a bright flash, used to get a better view of the gashes.

Jamerson felt his stomach drop at the all too familiar reddish orange paint and the small metal feathers caught in the jagged metal surrounding.

“Ira… that’s her colour… there’s no doubt in my mind sir… she’s the one who’s been doing this… and that means, by my guess, Kia and the Twins are still on planet… I’m sorry… if I’d known even an inkling more of their intentions I would not of remained silent…”

“I know son, but that time for regret is passed, now, we must do all we can to locate these things, and make sure they cannot do us any more harm… Dismissed.”
The three stepped back out, and seemed to in tandem let of a joint sigh of relief.

“Holy shit, this is not what I signed up for.” Flint muttered. “Dude your dad is scary.” He remarked.

“Wait, that was your father? Oh god now I’m seeing the resemblance.” Maggie spoke, looking Jamerson up and down quickly. Apparently she hadn’t put that together after the multiple times his father called him ‘son’.

“It doesn’t matter… what does is the fact I’m partially responsible for the deaths of ten men.” He responded, already feeling somehow even worse at the new revelation, honestly could this get any worse?

Oh, right, secret branch of the military… those are never the good guys in movies… and he had the fun of going to work with them… joy.

And there we go! Things are starting to ramp up! Fernando is with the cons, not a fun day for anyone, and Aria remembered she’d left the stove on back in London.

Hope you all enjoyed this most recent chapter! Until next time!

Moon
Alright! Off on holiday for a week so I really can't stall on posting this any longer. Hope you all enjoy this most recent chapter! And have a good day okay?

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Cosmopolitan top floor

“Mikaela where are you.”

The moment she’d picked up her mobile she knew she’d be in for it from her dad, his worried voice only proved it.

“Over at a friends house. Like I told you.”

“Yeah well I called all your friends and none of them said you were there.”

It took her a moment to realise where he must’ve gotten those numbers from. “You used my old address book?”

“Well what else could I have used? It’s ten, you said you’d be back by nine.”

Right, she had said that, hadn’t she? Well she wasn’t exactly expecting to collapse, wake up then promptly be moved to one of the comfiest sofas she’s ever slept on, which was saying something unfortunately.

“I know daddy, but I ended up not feeling good last night and I ended up sleeping in to recover, my friends are insisting I stay cause they live way closer to the nearest doctor than we do.”

Immediately her fathers worry shifted gear. “You’re sick? Honey you should of called! I would of come pick you up right away!”

“No it’s fine daddy, Wren and Aria are gonna fly be back in a few hours.”

She heard someone freeze halfway through saying something behind her, looking back to the rest of the room she spotted Aria gritting her teeth in a wince, the human projections of the other aliens looking between the two of them with perplexed expressions.

“Fly you back?! Mikaela where the hell are you?!”

Oh, shit.

“Err… Vegas…”

“VEGAS?! I swear young lady if I find out you were gambling I'll…”

Before she could hear the rest the phone was snatched away by a frowning Wren.

“Sir, Mikaela didn’t do anything illegal, we invited her to watch a show with us at the Cosmopolitan, she ended up having a nasty reaction so some lobster so we insisted she stay here and recover longer than her predetermined stay. Do not fret, the chef responsible has been suitably warned after the mistake and she has been compensated.” At that Wren pulled a literal wad of money out from somewhere on her body and put it in place of where Mikaela’s phone had been not moments prior.
She heard her dad reply but didn’t hear what he was saying, looking back towards the others she saw Bumblebee and Jazz exchange an odd look, but the other three were back to being too busy discussing something with Aria and Kia to pay them any mind.

Where had Wren come from anyway? Last she knew the woman had been trying to get some extra sleep in. And why was she really giving her all of this money? Pulling the wad down she had the startling realisation that they weren’t merely tens, but hundreds, and far more than she honestly thought she’d ever see in her life.

“I am Wren Orichiono, we befriended Mikaela when we were on a business trip in Tranquility. Yes we, I have a sister, Aria. Yes we invited her to the cosmopolitan, because we own it. Understand sir that Mikaela is in the safest of hands possible here, she will be home within the next three hours, if that is what she wants, we have a helicopter ready to go on the roof. Yes we’ll give a more complete explanation of how your daughter managed to befriend us and why we decided to invite her over at a later day. Oh, and your welcome for the bail.”

Wait… what?!

Mikaela felt her jaw drop as Wren glanced at her with a raised eyebrow and smirk as if to say ‘what? You didn’t put two and two together?’ Before the woman promptly hung up and handed the cellular device back.

Wren seemed to pause then, thinking of something as she regarded Mikaela. “A word of advice, invest in Touch screens, they’re far superior to flip phones, and if you invest enough, in a few short years, you’ll be living larger than you ever thought possible. Apple and Samsung will be the biggest profit draws, but watch out for when the Samsung phones start smoking, sell all your shares there before the value drops”

She went to sit down on the sofa Bumblebee had slept on the night before, not really sure what to say back to the black themed woman who made her own way over to the kitchen, peering into one of the fridges and pulling out what looked like a premade fruit salad with whipped cream on top.

Looking back down at the wad of cash in her hand she gulped, was this the ‘compensation’? An added touch to make sure the white lies were believed?

Had they really been the ones to bail her dad?

It made sense, if she hadn’t agreed off the bat to get the glasses, they could of dangled that over her head.

Would they of done that though?

A tap on her shoulder jolted her from those thoughts and caused her gaze to shift from the wad of cash and up to the one in front of her.

Bumblebee, her ‘guardian’ as she had overheard earlier, was in a half kneel, warm smile mixed with a look of concern on his features.

Pulling out the very same notepad she’d given him they night before, he scribbled out something on a page with a pen he pulled from the same pocket the notepad came from.

“You ok?”

She nodded. “Yeah… just…” She looked at the wad of cash again. “So much has happened so quickly.”
He scribbled something else down.

‘You wanna talk about it? Aria said there’s a balcony on the floor below with a really good view.’

The idea of getting some fresh air certainly sounded, or really looked like a good idea.

After a moment of contemplation and a glance at all the ‘adults’ talking, she decided there was nothing to lose.

Also it was starting to get really weird being surrounded by people who looked human, but that she knew for certain were all aliens. Or trans-dimensional beings, but that was a whole thing in and of its own.

“Yeah… that sounds like a good idea.”

He responded with a smile and an offering off his hand.

Being courteous she decided to take it and let him help her up.

They had to walk passed Wren to get to the elevator, the woman having moved to lean against one of the corridor walls, seemingly chewing the spoon in her mouth as she regarded something on a device she’d pulled out of her pocket with the hand not currently holding the already half eaten bowl of fruit and cream.

Was that a touch screen? She’d ask later if she could.

After a brief glance at them from behind their heavily tinted sunglasses, Wren went back to reading whatever she had been looking at, as if giving them permission to go.

Needing no other encouragement they entered the lift and Bumblebee pressed the button for the floor below.

Stepping out they found themselves in a corridor, but unlike the floor above, the corridor seemed to span the entire length of the floor, with doors lining each side, reminding Mikaela of the fact they were in fact, still in one of the most luxurious hotels in the US.

At the end of the corridor though, was a set of double doors leading out to the apparent balcony.

A tug on her hand drew her gaze to Bumblebee, leading her to realise she’d never actually let go of the hand he’d offered.

Apparently he didn’t mind, more focused on gesturing with his head to the glass double doors as if to say ‘We going?’.

Maybe holding hands wasn’t a couple dominated gesture of his species.

They were aliens, she had to remind herself, no matter how realistic these projections looked and felt.

She nodded despite her internal musings. “Yeah, sure, let’s go.”

The corridor wasn’t really long, and it branched off a few times leading to more door filled corridors, but they kept going straight, quickly passing through the glass doors and out onto the fenced balcony and into the warm breeze that lingered high above the ground.

Finally pulling her hand out of his, she walked ahead as he focused on the surrounding view.
After just a peek at the ground she pulled her gaze back up, focusing on the horizon and not the ridiculously far drop she should of expected had she ever really been a building over four stories tall before.

Letting off a sigh she pushed herself back on her arms so that she could rest her forehead on the metal railing, already it was getting warmed by the sun, but that’s just what happens this time of year.

She felt him tap her shoulder again, and she lifted her gaze to regard him, finding he’d already scribbled something else down the edges of the pages ruffling in the wind.

‘It’s a lot, isn’t it? Us being aliens?’

She laughed under her breath at that.

“Oh yeah… not three days ago I was watching Alien again with dad… and we joked about how terrifying it would be to meet an alien. Though to be honest, the aliens in that film were a hella lot more scary looking.”

He nodded at that, writing again on the notepad after flipping to a new page.

‘Good to know. What about me?’

“You? Well…” What should she say? The only time she’s seen what he really looks like, it was for at most a few seconds on that video the twins sent her, and given how shaky the image had been, she’d not gotten much… could she even tell them what the twins had told her? What Kia had told her? That they were all fictional characters as far as these strange women were concerned? No… no they already had enough to deal with, existential crisis wasn’t something she wanted to add to anyone’s plate, no matter how recently they met. So, to answer him, she just said the first thing that came to mind. “You’re cute.”

Probably not the best thing to say to an alien you’d only just met the day before, but it seems to work in making him both flattered, and a bit hurt in regards to his pride, which he quickly tries to fix by puffing out his chest like a Turkey.

Then his mouth was opening and closing, as if he was trying to speak.

But nothing came out and his features fell.

“You… you really can't speak can you?”

He shook his head, pulling down the zipper of the yellow with black striped leather jacket that had been zipped up to his chin.

The projected flesh which was revealed made her stomach roil in discomfort.

It was an old but gruesome wound, like a wild animal had sunk its teeth in and pulled.

There was silence between them for a moment before he pulled at his collar, folding it down, apparently set on not hiding the injury now that she knew it was there.

“Did… does it still hurt.”

He responded with a shake of his hand, as if to say 'so so’.

She bit her lower lip before speaking again. “Can I ask what happened?”
He nodded, moving to rest his own crossed elbows on the railing, before uncrossing them and pulling the notepad and pen back out of where he’d earlier tucked them into his pocket.

‘Megatron’ Was the first word he scribbled down.

“Megatron? What’s that?”

He gave her a surprised look.

“You don’t know?”

“No… honestly… all I know is you’re aliens… the harpies used to be humans… and that I’m honestly way out of my league even being in the same building as you.” She replied, ducking her head, what was she even good for now? They’d needed her to act as bait, that was done, the Autobots were here… she could hear the chopper now that she thought about it, the low thum of an idling engine coming from above proving Wren’s earlier statement.

He tapped her shoulder to draw her attention back to the page. ‘Don’t cut yourself short. Everyone is special in their own way, what do you love to do?’

She smiled at that, albeit it was a bit on the forced and saddened side. “I… fix cars… my daddy taught me how… before he got thrown in jail… for stealing cars… I still tinker a lot… Trent refused to let me have a look at his beef wagon though, said it was perfectly fine and that he didn’t want a ‘girl’ looking at his engine… for fucks sake anyone with a set of ears could tell the drive shaft was more than one leg in the junkyard, same with the carburetor…” She looked up to gauge his expression, but found that he was smiling, and scribbling something new down.

Why did she even care what he thought? He probably wasn’t going to be on Earth long… once they had what they needed, they’d be gone… and she’d live her whole life knowing a little known secret about the universe… she wouldn’t tell anyone, they’d call her mad.

So… why was she so set on knowing what he thought?

‘I think that’s really cool! Not the sire being arrested bit… but if you have a talent, you should be respected for it! … Who’s ‘Trent’?’ The look he gave her was one of perplexed confusion, as if emphasising the last point in particular with his expression.

She couldn’t help the quiet, breathy chuckle it brought from her, funnily enough, even now she had no regret for dumping Trent, if anything, she felt… oddly liberated, free to do what she wanted.

“He was my Boyfriend, emphasis on was… I think you saw him, at the lake?” She knew he understood when he started scribbling again, showing her after a few quick moments.

“You mean the hairless Orangutan? I thought he’d escaped from a nearby lab and was harassing you. Would of transformed and rushed to your aid if you hadn’t taken care of him yourself probably.”

Hairless Orangutan? Okay, that got a laugh out of her, nearly a downright cackle.

She missed the bright smile on his features at seeing her previous solemn and thought filled expression being replaced by amusement he caused, he never got to do this anymore, just act his age and try to have fun with someone, even if he’d only met this human last night, he liked her, she was fun, and she didn’t distance herself when she found out about his injury… wait, he was supposed to be telling her about it, she did ask, and the conversation had gone a bit off track.
‘Back to the story of my war wound please?’

“Yeah, ha… kay… write away Bee.”

‘Will do’

So, he did, he ended up actually telling her basically everything, simplified, but it still ate up the rest of the pad, leaving him with only random spots back through the notepad to try to squeeze more conversation out, he honestly didn’t want this to end yet.

Eventually though, her hand moved to rest over the one bearing the pen. “Alright, I think the notepads dead, I have another in my rucksack if you want?”

Oh that was more than welcome, he nodded his head rapidly in agreement.

She led the way back inside, leaving him to take one last look at the world beyond.

Earth really was a nice place, he was glad he got to make a new friend on it.

Hopefully he got to stay as her guardian.

He wasn’t sure he was ready to say goodbye to this one like all the others he’d met during his long time on this planet trying to find the Cube.

When they returned to the level above, the atmosphere was completely different, and it sent a shiver down his holoforms pseudo spine at the chilled looks passing between the ‘Harpies’ as Mikaela told him they called themselves, given their avian forms, he felt it fit them well, but that was not what held his focus now.

It was Ira, who had apparently finally emerged during their time away, who spoke, but alas, he’d never managed to grasp the language she spoke then.

“Они убили его.”

That was when he noticed someone else had joined them, and had placed a laptop on the island in the kitchen for the others to see, it took him a moment to realise that it was the man who’d taken Mikaela from the lake in the white SUV, he wasn’t wearing the suit anymore, but a checkered navy and pale green shirt, with hawaiian shorts, and no shoes?

The man spoke then. “It apparently happened in the early hours of this morning… they’re all dead.”

Okay… that wasn’t a good thing to say.

The twins were exchanging concerned looks between each other, Kia’s expression was a stony neutral scowl.

Ira? Well, she looked livid.

“Yah mean ah hung under Airforce 1, fah fuckin’ nothin’?! Tha’ kid still get’s killed?! His whole family too?! God damnit! I didn’ let them ge’ one byte ah information an’ they still fin’ him?!”

“Ira.” The singular word from Wren stops the younger redhead dead. “That is not the only thing we should be concerned about here. Take a look, in the corner… see those gouges on the only still standing wall?!” Wren was pointing at something on the screen now with one sharp black nail.
Ira looked again, as did the rest of them.

It seemed to dawn on the red head then what the twin was implying.

“Oh fah fuckin’ sake! There’s ah fourth Harpy runnin’ abou’?!”

“One who knew that Sam was likely the owner of the glasses, and lead the cons to him.”

That was when Mikaela finally spoke up. “Sam? Like that dorky kid I got the glasses from?”

Aria was the one who looked her right in the eyes and nodded. Then, she spoke. “He, his mother, and father were all found murdered in the rubble of their home this morning, as is a good chunk of their neighbours, who it would seem, went to see what had happened… death toll is currently at twenty six… Either blasted to pieces by a high powered ordanace, or simply crushed into the pavement until their skulls were smashed like eggs.”

He wasn’t even looking at her and he knew she’d locked up, going wide eyed, and dropped jawed, the same expression currently on his own features, with a healthy dose of disgust rolling in his tanks.

He’d been the boys guardian not two days ago.

Wren looked to Mikaela with an empathetic look. “I think… it would be better if you stayed here Mikaela, at least until after the Allspark has been obtained and these ‘Decepticons’ seen too, if the cons… and what we assume is another Harpy… knew his location without the access to the Potus mainframe… then you returning to Tranquility could be like putting a target on your back… especially given that the boy likely told them exactly who he gave the glasses to before they killed him.”

The Autobots all turned to regard the two of them, and he decided it was probably best to lead her forwards into the group, so that they could have a look too at what the man, Winston he thinks, had brought to the others attention whilst they were gone.

Picking up on this, Kia reached out and spun the laptop around so as to give them a better look.

It was a news article, with the image at the top of the shambles of what he knew had been a really nice place to live.

Like they said, the only wall standing left of the building, bore four large gouges, three above, one below, with the center of the gouges being completely torn out within the grip of whatever had damaged the wall.

He glanced again at his charge, her eyes were blown wide in horror, a hand clasped over her mouth.

Already she was seeing the repercussions of them coming to Earth along with the Decepticons.

He was honestly surprised to see her gaze had hardened though, and her other hand clenched into fists.

When she spoke, it was with a sudden conviction. “Whatever it takes, I want to help. I want to stay and fight.”

There was a long, heavy pause as Harpy’s and Autobots alike regarded her, he himself regarded her with a look of shock with a helping of pride.
It was broken by a sharp clap, jolting all attention to a beaming Aria. “Brilliant! Wren will be your trainer, you start next week.”

Kia huffed. “And how come I ca…. GAH!” Before she had even finished, Wren was behind her, and with one too quick to catch movement, she had Kia’s face pressed against the island, arms trapped between the two.

“That’s why.” Wren purred before letting the other Harpy go, who in turn pushed herself up like nothing had happened, the two exchanged a smirk as Kia brushed off non existent dust from the cream pleated shirt she wore.

“Fair enough, fair enough. That okay with you chica? Wren being you’re trainer?”

He looked again to his charge, and found she looked a little surprised, before she shrugged and smiled. “Sounds good to me.”

The twins seemed to exchange a look before Aria responded. “Well then, looks like we have a few things to do. Wren?”

“I have a few calls to make, I’ll be back to continue this discussion in a while, thank you for bringing this to our attention Winston, Kia, I suggest you get your teams on high alert, Ira, go check in on the surveillance teams, if there’s another Harpy roaming America, we can’t run the risk of being caught off guard.”

Ira gave Wren a mock salute. “Righ’ away boss…” before pushing off the table and heading towards him and his charge.

Both he and Mikaela stepped aside to let the red head through, and Bumblebee wouldn’t deny he shuddered slightly when her nails dragged ever so lightly across his holoforms jacket. Reminding him of how dangerous this one in particular was.

Which made him question, if Ira could knock a Cybertronian into stasis with just a touch… what could the others do?

He doubted it was anything pleasant, but knew they’d likely find out eventually.

He turned back to regard his comrades, Optimus’ expression was as stone faced as ever, Ratchet was sending Wren the ‘medic look’, Jazz was sitting on the Sofa trying to get the TV to work without having to ask anyone how to do that, and Ironhide was still looking intently at the news website, namely the image of what was left of the Witwicky residence.

He honestly felt terrible, he hadn’t been there to protect them, they were completely innocent… the terror they must of experienced as they were taken from the plain of existence… No one deserved it… but so many had...

There was no silver lining here, and the somber mood that had fallen was suffocating.

He reached out and grabbed Mikaela’s hand again, and pulled her back towards the elevator, he had to get her out of this environment, he left his old charge, unknowingly leaving the boy to the wrath of the Decepticons, blinded by the need to obtain the glasses which were being used to lure his team away.

He couldn’t allow that to happen again, he had to make up for the sudden weight of guilt that had so suddenly buried itself in his spark.
Mikaela didn’t resist his pull towards the elevator that Ira herself had just disappeared through, her own expression a mix of haunted and uncertainty.

As they waited for the lift, he looked back to the kitchen, and saw something odd.

It was Aria, she’d turned away from the screen, hand clasped over her mouth so tight that her sharp nails dug into her pale skin, as if she was trying not to be sick.

But her eyes portrayed something else, a deep and calculative thought, as if she was meticulously going through herself every second of the Witwicky murder.

Something about that look didn’t sit right with him.

But the elevator was now open before them, and he was stepping in.

It was only as the doors began to close that he saw Aria change pose, as she turned to face Kia.

He only heard the first word she said before the doors closed in front of him.

“Fernando...”

Hoover Dam

They were sitting in a briefing room, under an amount of concrete that the man across from them seemed incredibly proud of for some reason.

Glen was half asleep as well as looked like he was gradually returning from the grave after they hit a spot of turbulence in the helicopter that left the poor teen going green at the gills.

Maggie was looking at the ominous looking marks in the wall, claw marks, he was certain of the fact that those marks, easily a meter long each, were claw marks, too uniform and blade like to be ‘structural fatigue’ as the man had said, did the guy not realise he’d spent days in the presence of beings who’s talons were easily three times thicker alone than whatever left those marks?

Finally there was Flint, who’d had to step out an hour ago when news came from the Pentagon that his mother was spitting fire down the line wanting to know why the fresh hell her son wasn’t picking up the phone and that she would skin every man who worked with the Government in a very unpleasant area if she found out her only son was dead.

He’d come back only five minutes ago and explained that he’d forgotten to tell his mother he’d been relocated from one side of America to the other and hadn’t terminated his landline, or really had the chance to organise any kind of details about the move, so there was about seven hundred curse filled voicemails waiting for him to get through when he got home.

Considering all of this, his own attention was rapt on the man sitting across from himself and his.. What? Motley crew of misfits? Really there was no better term for them, the son of a General who might of accidentally fucked up the world, an Australian signals analysis, her hacker buddy who knows about Ira, and Flint… Flint was just… Flint.

Motley crew, without a doubt.

Back on topic, the man across from them was currently nose deep in a manilla folder someone else had brought in about two minutes ago before leaving before he could catch anything remarkable in regards to the delivery guys appearance, sans the guy was dark skinned, built like a tank and had
horn rimmed glasses perched on his nose.

Deciding that he was sick of just sitting there in complete silence, he spoke. “So, are we actually gonna be getting that brief or what?”

The man looked up from the folder, and then tossed the folder at him.

It settled in front of them, open, revealing an assortment of crime scene like pictures.

Who was he kidding, it was a crime scene.

“Twenty Six American citizens in Tranquility California, not four hours drive from here, with no traffic, all murdered in the early hours of this morning, the homes raised the ground, the only survivor in the vicinity being a Chihuahua with a cast on its leg. The damage is consistent with high power weaponry that we simply as a species do not have possession of, i.e. what you don’t see in those pictures, doesn’t exist. And you know the kicker kiddo?” The man listed off, before pausing, watching horror sink into all of their faces, save Flint who’s expression had more turned to shock, the man was looking directly at him. “They found this, on the remaining wall of the house at the center of the carnage.” He pulled away one picture to reveal another.

What he saw made his stomach drop.

He was right… the claw marks in the wall were tiny compared to what had taken out a good chunk of that brick wall.

“Look familiar to you? Rough estimates suggest the culprit was easily twenty foot or more. We need to know more about these ‘saviours’ of yours. Before they kill anyone else.”

Jamerson gulped. “They… they were a bit on the aggressive side, namely Ira and Kia… but the twins kept me safe…”

“They needed you, you were their key into our files, our secrets, of course they’d keep you alive.”

The man responded.

Jamerson nodded. “Fair enough… but it… I owe them my life… no, I don’t owe them anything, they betrayed my trust with that device. I’ll tell you everything I could get from my stay with them.”

The man smirked. “Perfect, and hopefully soon, we can add them to our… shall we say, collection?”

Maggie seemed to especially perk up at that, as did Flint for that matter Glen was still going through the pictures in the folder and turning ever more sickly looking.

“Collection?” Maggie parroted.

The mans smirk grew wider. “How about I show you? Really break the glass ceiling in your minds in regards to what we’re dealing with here.”

Before anyone could respond, the man that had been in his father’s office, that he only just now realised he’d forgotten the name of, entered.

“Simmons, the survivors of the Qatar attack and subsequent attack are inbound, fifteen minutes till arrival.”
The newly named man on the other side of the table, Simmons, regarded the other man with an even larger smirk. “Perfect! Sorry kids! Tour is delayed till the rest of the tour group arrives!”

This man was odd.

This whole situation was odd.

No, this situation was dangerous, and he couldn’t risk letting his guard down.

He’d let them in once, and it possibly cost the Government all of its hard kept secrets.

He couldn’t let something like that happen again.

He couldn’t let his country down.

He doubted he’d be able to survive another look of disappointment from his father.

He didn’t see the perplexed look of Maggie, or the still queasy Glen, and he didn’t see the intrigued look on Flint’s face as he rose from his seat.

“There were survivors? This day really is getting interesting.”

And that's it for now! Hope you enjoyed and I hope you have a good day!
Chapter 11

Woo! New chapter! Not much to say other than I hope you all enjoy!

Starscream’s temper was practically at its end.

Barricade could see it from a klik away as the seeker fumed.

The target of that ire responded to the obvious aggression was a smirk so proud of itself he had the good sense to punch the mech responsible for it.

“Chill padre, if anythin’ the kid not havin’ tha glasses jus’ prooves mah point.” Fernando spoke up, wings folded across his chassis and draping down to the concrete floor as he reclined along a pile of abandoned rolls of carpet.

Starscream’s seething features seemed to only turn more heated as the seeker ground his denta, causing them to screech against one another. “And what? …. Pray tell is that?”

“Tha’ Kia an her perras. Ah here, and fuckin’ up tha plot.”

Starscreams scowl somehow managed to intensify.

Fernando huffed. “They have th’ glasses. No’ tha’ we need them, cause you know, I know where the Cube is.”

Barricade put his two sense in with a growl, Frenzy was perched on his shoulder plating, rubbing still at his itchy servo.

The minicon had lamented them with his harrowing experience on the human governments plane, and confirmed the fact that ‘Fernando’ wasn’t the only one of his weird kind on the planet.

Apparently the minicon had come out of the experience more than a little lucky if the feathered mech was to be believed, touting, ‘Better the Irish nut-job than the British banshees.’

Whatever that had meant.

Regardless of the feathered mechs claims of Frenzy being lucky, the minicon was still worse for wear, his servo alone was causing him to develop a bit of a tick in his optic that matched each of the limbs twitchings.

Fernando had offered to just slice the limb off at the shoulder joint, ‘just amputate it, humans do it to their pets all the time’.

Frenzy had promptly chosen to hide in Barricade’s subspace for a good hour after that.

Now the minicon was back out, and glaring death at this mech who’d just waltzed in on everything, claiming some of the highest fragging tales like they were facts.

It was all an aggravating mess, yet somehow the mech had managed to piss Starscream off enough with what seemed to be a type of reverse-psychology, he’d managed to get Starscream to call in all other Cons on this planets continent, including Blackout, who had apparently only just reached the state of Florida from his failed mission in Qatar.
Apparently Fernando also thought that was Ira. ‘She once flipped off the Pope, in his face, she wouldn’t hesitate to flip off an alien she’d bested’.

His train of thought was finally brought back to the present due to the sudden rush of motion in front of them, Starscream had taken a swipe at Fernando, only to have the feathered mech to vault backwards and out of the way of the seekers swipe like it had belonged to some frail human.

“Ha! Padre! With a swing like that, Kia alone could have yah head on ah silver platter before you knew they were in this state!” The mech called, now perched at the top of the pile of rolled up carpets, joints beant so that he could rest his wings against them,

Barricade scowled. “You certainly have quite an opinion of her.”

Fernando huffed, waving the mech off and looking off to the side like he was posing for some dramatic picture, he hated mechs like this honestly, waste of space and resources.

“Of course! All little brothers hate their big sisters! I just have the added bonus of the fact that stupid fucking perra killed dad in cold blood!”

Okay, that was new, he went to make a remark on that but he was cut off by Fernando as he performed a dramatic false faint and long, agonised sigh.

“All because those fucking European perras put ideas in her head! Told her she shouldn’t let dad marry her off to that third cousin! Gah those fucking perras… fucking up everything… I was supposed to inherit the family business! Once she was married and out of the way it all would of been mine! But no! She had to go and get one of our best firing squads to take him out in his favourite cherry red lambo!”

Something in the back of Barricade’s helm twitched, he knew that... cherry red lambo... cherry... lambo... where had he heard it before?

His internal translator gave him the Cybertronian equivalent… and something in his processor seized.

It… couldn’t be...

The avian mech continued to rant, ignorant to the sudden shift in the former Kaonian enforcer.

Frenzy was sending him a look as well, but the minicons features were hard to discern since he took that new alt mode, the stereo, apparently he hasn’t found anything he’s liked better yet, which would give him a decent face.

Even with all that, Frenzy seemed to have come to a similar conclusion, and was in a similar state of disbelief.

Old memories flickered trying to come back to the forefront of his consciousness , but out of reflex he pushed them all back.

He focused his attention on Frenzy, who’s shaking had suddenly expanded beyond his servo, but this was not the virus that afflicted him, and so, carefully he offered a digit for the minicon to cling to.

Frenzy took the offered digit like a lifeline, clinging tight to it, Barricade could only watch, the little minicon had never properly learned how to push back memories without the help of his fellow cassettes, so for now, he’d have to weather through.
Some day, they’d find Soundwave and reunite the minicon with his real guardian.

For now though, the minicon was stuck with him. And if that meant anything to the cruiser, it meant never letting this mad avian mech near the minicon again, Frenzy was in enough trouble already, what with that virus wrecking havoc of his servos motor control, and now, this.

Starscream decided to cut the mech off again his voice as shrill as it was, cutting Barricade out of his internal musings. “Well then! Where is the Cube?!”

Fernando rolled his helm. “I’ll tell you when all yah padres get here, wouldn’t want you freaks to be outgunned, would we?”

Either this mech had some processor left, or he was getting a serious rise out of getting under all of their armour.

He had a feeling it was actually both.

Realising he was better off taking Frenzy on a pointless patrol of the area, over staying here with these two, Barricade rose back up, nudging Frenzy enough for the minicon to let go and move away long enough to Transform and let Frenzy back into his passenger seat, if Barricade’s seat belt over the minicon was slightly tighter than usual, neither of them mentioned it.

They had a day or so to wait until Bonecrusher and the others arrived, and he was not risking losing his own still rising temper around this mech any more than he had to.

Frenzy seemed to have a similar position as the former enforcer, sinking as far into the leather upholstery as possible with a rattling vent.

It didn’t stop Fernando noticing their departure. “Hey! Bring me back a snack would yah! That sheep wasn’t worth shit and I’m hungry!”

Barricade chose to ignore the demand as he sped away.

Once out of audio range, he muttered to himself. “What a disgusting creature.”

Frenzy just nodded in agreement, optics lost in a thousand klik stare out of the tinted front window.

Las Vegas

Mikaela looked up from the magazine she’d had thrown at her by Ira about half an hour ago, she’d quickly accepted the form of entertainment whilst the rest of the group discussed among themselves things she’d honestly rather stay out of, a heist on a Government Facility, no matter how the Harpy’s spun their plan, remained something she didn’t want any more part in.

She’d also needed the distraction, the knowledge that so many people were suddenly dead… it was weighing heavy on her conscience.

She’d looked up upon realising the room had fallen strangely quiet, and found that her hosts were all no longer present once again, and the Aliens were all looking at her.

Not the un-interested looks she’d received by them at passing glance over the last few hours save Bumblebee after they returned from their second bit of fresh air.

No, now they were all just staring at her from the kitchen table, deathly silent.
Going to speak, she found her voice caught in her throat, so instead, tried to be as subtle as possible in clearing it, it seemed to have a preferable affect anyway, as it seemed to snap the group out of their staring and back to reality.

The holoform she’d guessed was the leader of the group, what with how he held himself, pushed off the table and stepped towards her.

Mikaela found herself frozen to her spot on the sofa until he was directly in front of her, kneeling, and offering his hand out palm up.

Now in the sun’s rays from the windows, she found the mans black hair to hold the faintest blue hue, only noticeable when you’re looking directly at it.

It suited him, along the the heavy faded red leather jacket, greying white plain shirt underneath and the torn, well worn blue jeans and black combat boots.

“Optimus Prime.”

Blinking out of her quick observation along with an equally quick shake of the head, she finally managed to get a word out.

“Huh?”

“My designation, it is Optimus Prime, I do not believe we have been formerly introduced yet.”

“Oh.” He certainly had a unique voice, deep with a light reverberation, it reminded her of Aria and Wren oddly, well more Aria with that odd ringing quality her half of their voices had, Wren’s was too… monotone, like a broken bell trying to chime, hollow.

The holoform nodded, tilting his head along with his still offered hand. “And you?”

Realising what he wanted out of this situation she accepted his hand, and felt only the lightest charged feeling, making the fine hairs on her hand stand up slightly, the projection other than that, felt so life like, it even had an artificial pulse! She wasn’t sure whether to consider it a marvel of science, or insanely creepy. “Um, Mikaela, Mikaela Barnes.”

Bright blue eyes wrinkled at the edges with the mans… Optimus’ smile. “A pleasure to meet you Miss Barnes. Permit me to introduce the rest of my unit?”

Well that was incredibly formal of him.

“Um, you… may?” She replied, waving her free hand as he let go of her other, moving to stand again and move to the side to allow the other four to step over.

The first to step forward was a holoform with a significantly darker skin tone, wearing a sleek white jacket with a blue and red stripe running down either side of the zip, which was open to reveal a skin tight sports shirt underneath made up of a semi-transparent net material, like really conservative fishnets… the ensemble look was added to by the black dress pants and silver converse.

His hair, was equally diverse from the others, the mass of dreadlocks were pulled backwards and fastened by a thick silver band at the back of the head, with the fringe being made up of stray loose curls that framed the bright blue, aviator sunglasses he wore.

Then the man bowed, with an over exaggerated wave right out of one of the Pirates of the
“Well ain’ you tha prettiest li’l femme on this whole rock? Names Jazz, First Lieutenant to Optimus Prime.”

She doubted she could stop the light flush of her cheeks as she took to offered hand. “Nice to… meet you too… um Jazz?”

“Yes?”

“Are you trying to be Louisianan, or Jamaican?”

The holoform was apparently caught up short by that as he turned to Optimus and promptly hissed out. “I didn’t know there was a difference!”

She snorted out a laugh behind her clenched fist at that one, he was an Alien, who’d only arrived yesterday, she couldn’t blame him for not knowing the different origins in the accent and as a result, getting them mashed together in his attempt to come of as human as possible.

The holoform deflated for a moment before shaking it off and giving her a bright smile. “Well anyway! How are yah feeling? All of this must be weighing pretty heavy on your li’l helm righ’?”

She frowned slightly, glancing down at her lap before sighing. “If I can be honest?” She glanced up to see all of them nod, urging her on. “I’m scared… confused… I have this weight in my gut and a whisper in my ear that I’ve done something horribly wrong… Sam, and all his family and neighbours… they’re all dead because I bought the glasses… I don’t blame the Harpy’s… they were trying to help you guys… they had no idea that someone else might of known that Sam owned the glasses… but I was the one who led Bumblebee away… leaving him vulnerable…” She stopped when a weight came down on her shoulder.

Looking to the source she found that Bumblebee had sat down next to her, his wide, expressive eyes filled with a guilty sorrow all his own.

She couldn’t help herself, she turned and pulled him into a tight hug.

They broke apart almost as quickly as the hug began, Bumblebee’s hand returning to its place on her shoulder as he glanced at one of the other men who’d yet to be introduced, becoming the scowling man forwards.

After an incredibly over-exaggerated eye roll the man stepped forwards.

The man honestly looked like he was more well built than a tank with all the muscles she spotted *rippling* with the two steps he took to stand before her. The black leather biker jacket and crimson red low neck shirt underneath seemed to strain to contain the man’s musculature, and it was a similar story for the torn jeans that looked like just trying to get them on had shredded them.

She was hesitant to take the hand he offered her, but after a nudge from Bumblebee she accepted the man's hand.

“Ironhide.” He announced, his gruff voice seemed to have a faint hint of an accent, but she couldn’t place it.
She just numbly nodded, surprised to find that he didn’t crush her hand with his grip like she’d been half expecting.

Apparently Ironhide found some humour in this and patted her on the shoulder with his other hand. “So long as you’re not a con, you don’t have to fear about me crushing your skull like a scraplet.”

She decided to not ask what one of those was, just nodding and watching as the last of the group, who honestly looked like he’d had very little sleep whatsoever recently shoved at Ironhide’s side.

It got the other man to step aside.

Then the man, with the salt and pepper hair was offering his hand, he didn’t look old persee, just, stressed, and that stressed had made him look a bit like a mad scientist.

And now that image wasn’t getting out of her head.

She took the offered hand as he introduced himself.

“Ratchet, chief medical officer.”

So a doctor, explained in an odd way the colour scheme of his attire, white shirt, the cuffs and other details all an ominous blood red. Large mune slung over his shoulder that seemed to weigh a good tone with how sagged the fabric was.

“Ratchet, nice to meet you.” The handshake was promptly ended and she suddenly found herself being scowled at by the holoform.

“How much do you know about these… femmes?”

“Err, not much… they just had me bring the glasses… and I fainted when I saw Kia... you know, her actual form… just after Ira knocked out Bumblebee, so I don’t even know what the other three look like. Winston’s the guy I’ve spent the most time with, he’s nice.” She replied. “Aria and Wren were the ones who approached me, well, more sent a formal invitation for me to come all the way here to Vegas to meet them… I don’t have much to say about any of them to be honest.” She admitted, twiddling her thumbs together.

As if sensing the lull in conversation, the elevator pinged.

All attention went to the corridor that led to the elevator as Kia came strutting into view, wearing an entirely new ensemble, still staying to the cream with rouge highlights colour scheme, only now the dress she wore was a single piece, cream with a stunning embroidery of a collection of blood red roses just before the eyebrow raising slit that only ended at the top of her left thigh, the upper half only held in place by the fabric wrapped around her neck. Mikaela swore if the woman bent over everything would be on display.

There was also the fact that there wasn’t a back to the dress until after her shoulder blades, something that Mikaela only noticed as Kia came into view for a few moments before the woman turned to face them, pushing up the wide brim black lace and velvet sun hat she was wearing so her bright gold eyes could regard them.

“Mikaela, you’re father is being picked up by my boys as we speak. Once he has been brought here, we want the both of you to go down into the bunker, you’ll be safe down there, probably. The rest of you. Do whatever you need to get ready. Due to the attack in Tranquility we’ve brought forwards the raid to the next night shift where we have our boys and girls inside. That’s in fourteen hours. It takes fifty minutes to get from here to the dam by road. But if we want to be fully set up
whilst taking time to make sure we’re not detected. We will have to leave here with an extra two
hours in advance at the least. Understood? Ira has already sent Keeley ahead to locate and enter the
vent so that she can access the isolated internal systems and transmit them directly to Ira. Ira will
be setting up in the bunker as well so we advise you don’t disrupt her. Myself, Aria and Wren, will
go with you under the cover of darkness so that we’re not spotted in the air once Ira’s dampened
their radar capabilities. Am I clear?”

There was a heavy pause, Ironhide huffed and muttered something that she couldn’t catch but felt
like it was unsavoury.

Thankfully Optimus quickly silenced him with a look before turning back to Kia. “Thank you. For
all of your aid in this, I and my mechs will get ready to depart… Bumblebee?” Optimus had turned
back to looked towards her and her guardian, who still sat next to her on the sofa.

She felt his holoform’s grip tighten on her shoulder, glancing over she found his expression
conflicted, bright blue eyes flicking between her, Optimus and Kia.

She reached up and patted the hand on her shoulder. “Go, I’ll be safe here. You’ve probably seen
how fortified they’ve made this place. Go with them.”

Bumblebee seemed to take a moment more to convince himself of something, before shaking his
head, reaching into his pocket and pulling out her notebook and pen, scribbling down his answer.

‘Staying here.’

A look of surprise went through all of the adult holoforms, Kia including, who raised an eyebrow
before shrugging and gaining the faintest of smiles. “Alright. Hold the fort for us then.” Kia then
looked to the other four. “You have a few hours to do as you wish before we move out, so don’t
stay cooped up in here.” With that, she was walking away, heading to where Mikaela had figured
her room was, pausing long enough to pet the helm of Nibbler, who’d raised his head from where
he and Hera had been sleeping, having apparently taken up the other sofa with their combined
feathery bulk whilst she and Bumblebee had been having their second breather.

The two mechanical birds weren't really doing anything, save Nibbler’s head lift, so she’d mostly
ignored them and let them be.

Though right after that thought went through her mind Nibbler’s head suddenly shot out, beak
wide.

It bit down on thin air not a moment after Kia’s hand left the spot.

“Ah, ah, ah. You’ve already had your lunch.” Kia chastised, before continuing on her path and out
of sight.

It was only when the sound of a door closing came from out of sight that Optimus spoke, regarding
Bumblebee. “You are certain of this?”

Bumblebee nodded, scribbling something else down.

‘I can’t fail in protecting my charge again.’

She’d had a feeling that was why.

“Very well Bumblebee, but be alert, we may need backup.” Optimus spoke, giving the yellow and
black themed holoform a nod, and an oddly proud smile, if a bit melancholic in its delivery.
That seemed to be the final word on the matter, as the four standing holoforms all just… vanished, flickering out of existence as their physical projections faded away to nothingness, leaving only empty air in their wake.

Spinning her gaze back to Bumblebee she turned enough to sit cross legged on the sofa.

“You didn’t have to do that.” She pushed, placing the palms of her hands down inside the gap between her crossed legs and hips.

Bumblebee shrugged, causing those oddly gravity defying locks of blonde and black to bounce, looked like they weren’t quite obeying the laws of physics.

He was scribbling something else into the notebook now.

‘I don’t trust them with your prolonged safety.’

“Really?”

‘Yes.’

“Really?”

‘Please don’t continue to repeat yourself. We’re talking about a group that included one that knocked me unconscious.’

“Okay, fair enough, but at least give them a chance? Winston puts his faith in them, and he’s nice enough?”

‘The guy with the laptop?’

“Yes the guy with the laptop.”

‘He was the one who picked you up at the lake.’

“Yes he was. He’s one of Kia’s employees. Winston said as much when she joined us for the flight to Vegas.”

‘I still don’t trust them. Don’t know enough about them. Want to find out more.’

“Like, spy on them?”

‘I’m a scout, it’s what I do.’

“You know, it’s wrong to go rifling through your hosts privacy.”

‘I know. But this is war.’

“Not with them, they don’t want to fight, haven’t you noticed that? They’re taking the path of least conflict from where I’m seeing this.”

‘Fine, stop giving me that look, but come on! Tell me this all isn’t setting off a few alarms in your helm?!!’

Something told Mikaela this was going to go on for a while. But really, she had to agree with him on that one.
And that's all for now! Hope you all enjoyed! And see you all next time!

Moon
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Decided to re-design the Harpies look, image should be at the bottom.

Jamerson looked around from his new spot in a room that was far too small for the number of people currently crammed inside.

There was himself of course, Flint, Maggie, Glen, The secretary of Defense himself, the survivors of the Qatar base attack, who’d they’d all been introduced to a few hours prior, which consisted of William Lennox, Robert Epps, Jorge ‘Fig’ as he preferred to be called, who was laying on a stretcher with a massive puncture wound through his left kidney, and a few others and of course Simmons and Banacheck.

And at the centre of the room, taking up a good chunk of the space, was a large glass box with it’s own little door.

He could only guess what that was for given that this room had a notably, and worryingly, higher amount of damage to the exterior walls, looking very much like claw marks.

And bullet holes.

Glen had even only a few moments ago, made the mistake to joke that one set in particular were from Wolverine, evidently from his now cowed state, the others in the room, Jamerson included, weren’t having that.

Then again, Fig had laughed too, much to his own pain given he’d pulled at his patched up injury.

“Alright! Anyone got any digital devices? We need to show you what our crown jewel can do!” Simmons called, clapping his hands together.

Jamerson was almost immediately pulling out the memory stick that had been given to him by the Harpies, if this box could somehow bust it, he’d be more than happy. So, without much hesitation, he tossed it to Simmons, the techs had already done all they could to crack the thing, and had failed, so it was as good as dead space at this point.

Simmons caught it without even looking in his direction, looking over the tiny storage device, he whistled as he ran his thumb over it, twisting it about in his hold. “Oooh, this the little bugger?” He asked, but all Jamerson answered with, was with a nod. “Good quality, durable build. 64 gigabytes of storage? Not surprised you used it. Welp, never put tech from an NBE in here before.” With that, he was opening the little door in the box, and placing the little metal memory stick inside.

“Goggles on everyone, don’t want any of you going blind now.” Banacheck called out, urging everyone to pull the heavy goggles over their faces.

Jamerson had only just finished putting on his when Simmons gestured for Banacheck to pull an ridiculously oversized switch on the wall.

Once it was pulled down, a low thrum built within the room, the air becoming charged with static,
making the hair on his arms stick up on end.

“We take the energy from the Cube, and funnel it into that box right there. And what happens next… well, best to see for yourself huh?” Simmons seemed to joke.

A tiny mechanical arm dropped down to the memory stick, hovering over it for a moment before there was an impossibly bright flash, causing him to flinch back, as did the others, despite the thick tint of the goggles.

Once it was over, he pulled the goggles off, just in time to watch the memory stick shake, memory sticks didn’t shake.

“What the…. Jesus Christ!” He heard William shout as the memory stick suddenly erupted into a flurry of different parts, reforming almost instantly into an absolutely tiny little spider like creature with a singular green orb staring out at Maggie.

“Holy shit.” Muttered the woman, hand clutched over her chest.

The thing stayed perfectly still, whilst the singular orb swivelled around on the little cable it was attached to, taking in them all.

Then, it shifted back, within a moment turning back into the memory stick.

Simmons eyebrows lifted in a display of mild surprise. “Hmm, normally they put up more of a fight than that. Probably too small or something.” The agent remarked, picking up a small remote with a singular red button that his thumb hovered over.

The near silence that had fallen in the room was shattered not a moment later by a ear splittingly loud siren that erupted from the speaker built into the wall.

So sudden was it that Simmons actually dropped the remote in his sudden need to cover his ears, like the rest of those in the room to try and drown out the volume.

‘DANGER! DANGER! MASSIVE STRUCTURAL FAILURE DETECTED IN THE MAIN DAM SUPPORT! EVACUATE! EVACUATE! EVACUATE! EVACUATE! PROTOCOL 5.9.ALPHA, ALL PERSONNEL MUST EVACUATE TO HIGHER GROUND. DO NOT USE THE ELEVATORS. THIS IS NOT A DRILL. THIS IS AN EMERGENCY, ALL NON-ESSENTIAL POWER IS TO BE SHUT DOWN TO PREVENT RISK OF ELECTROCUTION.’ A booming voice called over the wailing siren.

So loud was it that he barely made out Banacheck shouting for them all to leave the room.

Somehow in the rush he ended up being one of the two pushing Fig’s Stretcher.

The room was evacuated in moments, leaving the little memory stick trapped in the box to unfurl back out, it’s optic bouncing in mirth as it moved to the side of the box, and with a sharpened leg tip, cut a hole through the glass, pushing the cut circle out, the little memory stick clambered out, quickly scaling the side of the box and up to the vent above, where it easily slipped through the grate and into the waiting talons of it’s overseer.

Keen fluctuating eyes watched as the doors shut on their own, the sirens still wailing above.

Keeley sent a ping to her master, pausing long enough to, with one talon still on the ground, push the memory stick mini-mini bot into her holoforms plumage, where it quickly took hold, it would be safe there.
Shuffling back down the vent away from the room, Keeley returned to the panel she’d torn off from inside the vent, it was a simple meter, but the dam was connected by a singular isolated network, so it was all she needed to give her master full rein over the dam.

That included the alarm system, and the other meters that were displaying this false information.

~Oh what fun games we play. The humans, our puppets, bound to their strings. Oh how we make them dance for our glee.~ She cooed, looking at the little cable she’d plugged into the meter, which was in turn stretching all the way back to where her true form rested, just outside of the broken vent, where she was transmitting control of the entire dam to her master.

The sirens continued to blare their warning, they’d wait until there was no more personnel leaving the dam before the other Harpies and their ‘guests’ moved in from their hiding places, the security cameras already showing little to no life anywhere in the da… Ira had spotted something… there was a group of humans trying to hide themselves… at the order of a very recognisable human.

“Yah know what tah do.” Her master’s command came over their bond.

She gave a little chitter in reply, shuffling back down towards where the moderately sized group was trying to hide, the mini-mini bot providing her with full facial scans with each, which she promptly sent back to her master.

She would make sure they didn’t interfere. Personally.

Even if she had to fly her full frame into the building, wasn’t like anyone was going to see her use the front door now...

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Downstream of the dam

It was perplexing really, Optimus mused, turning his attention again to Aria and Wren, who had landed a few minutes ago behind the same boulder he’d taken to hiding behind close to the edge of the gorge.

Dusk had finally fallen only a short while ago, replacing the brightness of the day with the colder inky blackness, the stars high above and the only just visible crescent of the moon being the only light around them.

He and his Autobots had left ahead of the Harpies, who had remained in their holoforms with their true frames hidden away.

It had raised an interesting question for him to add to the pile of ever growing inquires he planned to make.

Were they unhappy with these forms?

It was obvious that they’d spent the majority of their lives as humans before this ‘Space time anomaly’ occurred, melding them with the same species as their avian companions, and Cybertronians at the same time, creating the strange amalgamations they were now.

Something nudging his side cut off the Prime’s thought process as the twins shifted beside him, though it was already too dark to make out what part of the silhouette poked him.

Though the slight reflection of his own optics managed to catch their visor as it turned to him.
“Keeley is taking care of some stragglers, but Ira’s given us the all clear. Signal your mechs, we’re going in.” Wren stated, before pushing themselves upwards with the last spanse of their wing support.

They were already clambering over the boulder before he could nod, that same grinding sound reaching his audios when their right pede was moved, despite the brace and Ratchet’s attempts, the noise at least had only been quieted, not completely silenced.

Clearly there was still more for his CMO to begrudgingly do. He knew Ratchet wasn’t going to leave the injury as it is, it just wasn’t what Ratchet did.

Which meant that he’d likely have to insist that they remain in contact at least once the Allspark is secure. Or otherwise taken care of…

He hadn’t had the time to address the issue with his unit…

“Prime?” Aria’s call from a little ways ahead alerted him to the reality he hadn’t actually moved, nor let the rest of his mechs know to move in.

Ironhide and Ratchet were with Kia, while Jazz hid elsewhere.

Sending off a simple confirmation that it was time to move in to the three mechs, Optimus made quick work of swinging each pede over the boulder and stepping up to where Aria and Wren now stood, half turned to him, but helm turned towards the spotlit damn, giving him only the silhouette of the back of their helm.

It was strange watching those odd protrusions twitch and flutter, the majority of the movement being on the left side, Aria, whilst those on the right remained mostly low against the rest of the helm, Wren.

“They’re moving in.” He voiced, watching as they nodded and began walking, their frame hunching forwards and wings flaring out somewhat for balance as their frame shifted, their right pede grinded and what he now realised were actually surprisingly long tail feathers, dragged slightly along the ground behind them, knocking pebbles and dust as they went. He couldn’t actually see them, but the sounds were telling enough.

It was out before he even knew he was thinking it. “Is there something wrong with your frame structure?”

Almost immediately his processor ground to a halt as their helm snapped back around to him, the paleness of their faceplates lighting up below their visor as they tilted their helm up to look, no, glare at him, he didn’t need to see them to know their optics had narrowed at him under their pitch black visor.

“You really better watch that mouth Prime. A loose tongue is one easily sliced off.” They snarled, leaning up closer so he could make out the parted lip-plates and the curved metal blades hidden behind.

His frame leant back in instinctual reflex, as his vocaliser tried to spit out an apology with his processor still struggling to catch back up with the present.

“That… that came out wrong. I am deeply sorry.” He finally managed to get out after a few failed attempts.

All he got was a huff back from them, before they were moving towards the dam again.
Then they speak.

“It’s hardly like you’re the first person to ask. Only difference is you’re not holding a scalpel to our skull.”

He paused in his own steps again. Muttering under his vents so quietly he couldn’t even hear it, but he knew he said it.

“What?”

Nothing else was spoken between them until they finally stepped into the spot lit concrete at the base of the dam, where Ironhide, Jazz, Ratchet, and Kia were already waiting for them.

Finally he could see Aria and Wren standing in the light, it was odd really, but not something he could so easily focus on when Kia started talking.

“We have an hour at most before they all start heading back. So look lively mechs.” The darker brown, cream and rouge femme remarked, already walking again, followed by Aria and Wren, towards the main entrance, which was noticeably short compared to his own height.

It would seem they were right, he was going to have to stoop quite a bit at least if he wanted to get through the tunnel himself.

It would also seem that their ‘hosts’ for lack of a better word at present, where far more anatomically adapted to entering the tunnel given the fact he was pretty certain his main strut would snap in half if he tried to curve himself that far forwards so as to rest the main strut of his non-existent wings to the ground, and begin walking on all fours down the tunnel like it was just another perfectly natural way of getting about for them, which for all he again knew, was in fact the truth of the matter.

With a single gesture, for his own mechs to follow him, he moved to lower himself into a crawl, an undignified position, but the scrape of his audio arrays on the top of the curved tunnels roof signified the necessity of it.

They were like this for a ways before he felt it, the Allspark, it was a feeling difficult to describe, but he recognised it like none other.

It was calling out.

The urge to rush to it was indescribable, but at the same time, he found himself stuck behind the Harpies, who were going towards a separate chamber, away from the Allspark.

That was when it dawned on him where they were being led to first.

Megatron.

Maybe convincing everyone to hide in this cramped storage room was a bad idea.

An opinion that only really dawned on Jamerson when after about ten minutes the sirens died down, as did the calls on the intercom.

Hushed whispered went between Glen and Maggie, the Secretary of freaking defence was sending him unamused looks from where he was crouched on the floor, along with Simmons and Banacheck, Flint was jittery, checking his watch every twenty seconds, with the pulse on his
temples actually visible, apparently he was still waiting for the damn to fail and his imminent death to finally arrive.

Which was fair by him, Jamerson had gone on a hunch, not fact, yes they’d all seen his memory stick turn into a little demon from hell, the pictures and the news reports of that suburb in California being wrecked five ways to Sunday, but clearly not everyone was fully convinced as they all sat/crouched as close together as possible, even Fig had forced himself off his stretcher so they could push it down the corridor to avoid taking up unnecessary room and draw less attention to the door.

The real reason for his concern was the realisation that the only way out was through the door they had entered through, and with his ear pressed to the cold steel, he could hear something coming towards them.

Namely, something which scrapped against the concrete.

He’d already told everyone to shush, and felt his heart nearly stop when the steps finally reached in front of the door, and stopped.

Then, breaking the silence, a little chirp.

Now everyone was frozen still. Lennox was even aiming his gun at the door along with Epps.

The silence was palpable, the sudden tension so thick it was near suffocating.

Broken when something slipped between the thin gap of the doors, it was too dark to see what, but the telling clack of the lock breaking was enough to cease every heartbeat in that room.

What came next was the grind of the left door being pulled open from out of sight.

Jamerson gulped, waving to the others to stay down, lifting his ear away from the right door he pushed himself up, and peered out.

Almost immediately, he found himself eye to glass glowing orb.

Letting off a startled shout he backpedaled into the door, hissing at the sudden pain up his back at the impact.

Keeley. It was Keeley, he realised as she chittered, the bird, in its upright position, being level to his own height of 6’5.

Finally after a few moments of the mechanical bird obtaining a look of ‘are you broken’, possibly defying the laws of nature in the process but that had gone out the window a while ago for him, he found his tongue and tried to use it. “God damnit Keeley you nearly gave me a heart attack!” He exclaimed, gesturing to her in general. “I knew you lot had something to do with this!” He continued, his previously shocked features morphing into jubilation.

But when reality caught back up to him, he felt his gut drop.

Keeley was here… which meant that Ira was likely here… and where Ira was it was a safe bet to say so were Arien and Kia.

“Good God.”

His head nearly snapped clear off his neck with how fast his head turned, finding none other than
Mr John Keller standing next to him looking at Keeley with a mix of horror and intrigue.

Gulping he gestured to Keeley, not daring to risk his fingers getting too close. “Sir… this is Keeley.”

Mr Keller blinked a few times before he spoke. “Is this the leader?”

He almost laughed, it might of been the adrenalin, or the stress, or whatever, but the fact he nearly punched himself in the mouth to stop himself from laughing at the Secretary of Defence suggested he might just be ready to book himself a nice place in a padded cell.

A few of the others had also worked up the courage to poke their heads out, including Maggie and Lennox who were staring at Keeley in jaw dropped silence.

Keeley just clicked her beak, that lethally sharp set of metal blades not a foot from his head.

God she could kill all of them and they’d not be able to do shit.

She was looking at the Secretary, head tilted to the side and metal feathers ruffled up a bit, making her look somewhat… cute… Out of all of them, he’d spent the most time with Hera, what with Arien looking after him and keeping the others away from him, so he wasn’t really sure what Keeley’s whole deal was.

At least it wasn’t Kia who’d found them, she didn’t hide the fact she wanted him dead.

Which made the fact that she was likely here all the more worrying…

Maybe Arien would keep him safe again for old times sake?

Probably not.

He felt a tug on his shirt sleeve, turning he found Simmons had now joined him at the door, and was trying to pull him back away from Keeley with fear in his eyes.

Fear was in all of their eyes.

And Keeley could see it. She was smirking, he knew she was.

Like she knew a horribly dirty secret that was going to get them all killed.

Then, she was stepping towards them, form lowering to balance out with her tail feathers spread wide in their wedge shape.

He backed up into the room, causing the others to do the same.

Keeley somehow managed to scowl at him snapping her beak before promptly pushing him out of the way like he was a dead bundle of tumbleweed by sheer fact that she was bigger than him and wanted him out of the way.

“Hey!” He exclaimed, but she completely ignored him, eyes locked on… Maggie?

The blonde analysts eyes were blown wide in fear as she tried to step back away from Keeley, who was clearly set on getting right up into the analysts personal space.

The men around her all tried to keep out of Keeley’s way, pinning themselves to the wall as her ridiculously sharp talons scraped the concrete floor.
Maggie honestly had nowhere to go, and her back was to the back wall before he could really think of anything he could do.

Keeley was set on Maggie, and he knew there was nothing he could do really.

Keeley reared up again, feathers ruffling before she pushed the curve of her beak into Maggie’s shoulder, causing the woman to completely lock up.

That was when he spotted it, the little spider crab thing that had been his memory stick clamber between the two and onto Maggie's shoulder.

She evidently felt the little thing, given her flinch when it’s sharp legs dug into her skin like needles.

The micro bot swayed for a moment as Keeley pulled away and clicked at it.

It seemed to activate the micro bot or something, as, before Maggie could even throw the thing off her shoulder, it had climbed the side of her neck and was hovering over her ear.

He heard the sound of a gun’s safety click off from somewhere in the room and felt his stomach just give up and drop to the core of the planet.

Evidently Keeley heard it to.

The bird’s neck and head snapped around to stare at Simmons, the man being the one to draw his gun.

Before anything else could happen, Maggie screamed.

All attention snapped back to Maggie. There was blood, and a good bit of it.

Glen, who had been the closest to her, quickly became visibly sick from the gore.

Maggie was screaming for good reason.

That damn thing had just sliced half her ear off.

Keeley was just starring as the blonde tried to rip the thing off, but it’s hold was absolute.

He watched in horror as the little pest transformed, half embedding itself into the flesh of her shredded ear.

The deed was done, her shoulder and half of her face covered in a splattering of her own blood as she stared out at them in horror, hand numbly touching the pest that had just merged with her.

He honestly felt like being sick himself, as did the others around him from the looks of it, Glen was the only one who’d actually lost his what? Breakfast? Lunch? Whatever the kid had last eaten, it had joined the remains of Maggie’s ear on the floor.

Then, Keeley clicked, and Maggie was staring at the bird instead.

“What?”

Keeley clicked again, swaying from side to side, sending her wedged tail feathers swaying themselves, brushing against the floor.
Maggie’s eyes went from Keeley to him and the rest of the men in the room, at least half of them had drawn guns now, not just Simmons.

Keeley tilted her head to look back at him.

He’d never thought it would be possible, but that damn thing was smirking at him.

Whatever had just happened, she’d won, and she knew it.

Maggie… well, she was clearly more than a little shaken by what had just happened, one hand still cradling her ear, and in turn, the sentient machine that had just… whatever the fuck it just did he didn’t want to know.

Then Keeley started really clicking, well, it was more than just clicking, it sounded more like she was talking, in bird.

God he needed his head examined.

But something else was happening, Maggie’s eyes were widening, not in fear, but in awe.

“I… I can really understand you…” She stuttered out.

That got one hell of an excited trill out of Keeley, the giant bird was practically bouncing on her haunches, swaying from side to side still, and overall looking like someone happy drunk and having no idea where they were and not caring.

“By god... Did you know it could do that?” Mr Keller suddenly spoke up, looking at Simmons and Banacheck.

Banacheck didn’t answer, Simmons just wildly gestured in Keeley and Maggie’s general direction with a look of ‘You expect us to know?!’.

When all of this was over, he was going to take that vacation he’d been putting off and get stone faced drunk and just try to forget all of this crazy shit.

Lennox and his crew looked equally as done with this as him. Lennox apparently wished to voice is own opinion on the matter.

“Sir, we fought with a giant metal scorpion in the desert and it’s tail was still alive after we severed it. I think anything is possible right now.”

Glen, who was still recovering from his spell, let off a pained chuckle, gesturing to Keeley. “You never answered us… this the leader?”

Keeley squawked at him.

Maggie took that que to translate. “No. She’s Ira’s companion. She’s smallest of the group.” The very statement had an almost chilling effect on all those around him, as they took that information in, staring at Keeley, who stood before them easily the size of a small pony.

Maggie looked to him, almost pleading with him when she spoke again. “Just how big… are they?”

He responded truthfully. “Given that Ira carried Keeley on her chest… I’d say really big… Arien’s the biggest out of all of them… I’d say… twenty seven, twenty eight feet tall, and I’ve only seen them stooped over in a cave.”
He swore Glen looked like he was about to clean pass out at that, and he wasn’t the only one.

He heard Simmons whisper something to Banacheck.

“They haven’t even seen NBE-1 yet.”

Why wasn’t that statement reassuring?

Cosmopolitan

They were out on the balcony again, it was a nice, quiet place, which it currently was not, given the fact that his charges sire had arrived not half an hour ago and was still accusing him of kidnapping his daughter among other similar accusations.

He’d already burnt through a whole note pad trying to explain is innocence whilst his charge made her own, valiant, but futile, attempts to calm her sire down.

They’d been having another talk, just watching the world roll by beneath them, when they’d spotted a sleek grey helicopter approaching the hotel, at first he’d fretted it was a Deception, but the almost scripted appearance of a timid hotel staff member, allowed him to calm down somewhat knowing that it was merely his charges sire being dropped off, and that the man would be lead down to them.

Apparently the reason it has taken him so long to be dropped off was because he’d demanded a fully signed legal contract stating he wasn't being abducted, and that wasn't something those sent to pick him up could just pull out of their collective asses.

Back to the present, her father was still going, a vein dangerously pulsing on the side of his head as he continued to shout and him.

His hand had fallen still, much like how his charge had stopped trying to plead their case, apparently the new somehow agreed strategy was to just let him burn himself out and watch out for any kind of signs of a medical emergency that this level of high stress could cause.

Finally he could give Ratchet a retort when the CMO had a go at him for ‘wasting time’ watching medical dramas.

Evidently them stopping led to his charges sire stopping as well.

There was a tenuous silence for a few moments and all of a sudden he had the sudden wish that one of the Harpies were here, Wren preferably, she seemed to be the most level headed of the lot… which was weird given who she seemed to be sharing a body with.

He figured that out of all of their hosts, it would be the black themed one who could handle this situation best.

Whilst he was still lost in his own thoughts, his charge began trying to explain what had happened to her sire.

Not four words in and she was struggling.

He couldn’t fault her, even he would have trouble explaining this situation to someone, let alone a sire who’d been worrying themself sick.

Evidently however, her sire wasn’t really paying attention given that he’d pulled her into quite the
impressively tight hug.

He stepped back to lean against the balcony barrier, elbows resting behind him on the metal, notepad held in his left hand, pen in his right, attention towards the far dark horizon to try and give the two privacy as they fully embraced one another.

By some stroke of fate, it likely saved their lives.

For only in the night would his holoforms eyes have spotted the fire of a missiles propulsion system hurtling directly towards them.

Notepad and pen were forgotten as he rushed forwards, mouth open in a silent shout, he collided with both, knocking them off balance before dragging each to the doors back into the building.

Already the haunting shrill whistle was audible, and the two humans were recovering from the initial shock, running to keep up with his vice like hold.

They only made it a few metres before the side of the building was hit, and a deafening explosion rang out through the building.

WOO! Cliffhanger!

I know people hate it when writers do this sometimes but please, no hate.

It took so long to update because chapter 15 proved to be a massive pain in the arse to get right, and it's nearly 7,000 words long.

Hopefully, given I've already stated chapter 16 the next update will not take as long.

But I am now in my second year of University and Adulting takes up a lot of my time not studying.

Anyway, hope you all enjoyed! Until next time!

Moon

Se below for the re-designs
Chapter 13

Chapter 16 has to be a record for the fastest written chapter I've done in a year, only took just over a month to update this one!

Now there's a scene in this chapter that one could argue is a bit un-realistic, one, dealing with a franchise of transforming aliens, and two, if you have any doubts, pleas go look up this very informative video on the Youtube channel Today I Found Out, namely their video on the chemical Chlorine Trifluoride.

With that said, I hope you all enjoy.

It was surreal.

There he stood, under the frozen gaze of Megatron, warlord and tyrant of the Decepticons.

Long ago he would of held a very different title, but those cycles had long past.

They’d entered only a few minutes before, after a bit of an awkward shuffle to let him through to the front, as apparently, the humans had decided that the door to this hanger wasn’t electronic and had to be sealed shut with a foot thick metal door.

His blade had quickly fixed that issue after he’d been let through to the front by the Harpies practically flattening themselves to the walls and ceiling of the tunnel. The doors thick platting was only now starting to return to it’s normal temperature.

Scampering about around him now, barely paying him or his mechs even a glance, where the Harpies human teams, apparently they’d been able to infiltrate the government base here with quite a number of humans allied to them and not the ruling powers of this nation.

Two of them stood among the three enigmas, speaking in hushed words that he gave them the privacy to speak in.

Ironhide stood to his left, Ratchet to his right running a scan over Megatron’s frozen frame.

Jazz was standing a ways away looking over some of the machinery the humans had used to monitor Megatron.

Finally he spoke. “After all these millenia… to find Megatron in such a state… it…” He cut himself off, glancing towards Aria, Wren and Kia, the two conjoined where staring directly at him, even with that visor of theirs he knew they were, their expression as impossible to crack as cast iron.

He looked to Ratchet just as the CMO finished his scans. “Ratchet?”

“Hmm… the spark signature is faint… but it’s there… everything else is completely gone, immobilised by the ice.” Ratchet replied, still going over the results himself.

So he was still alive in there.

He looked to Ironhide, the weapons specialist looked uncomfortable, shifting in his spot ever so slightly with the low humm of his weapons systems idling.
Tense, for good reason.

They were deep beneath the surface now, possibly under hundreds of metric tons of water, with his frozen nemesis before them, and enigmas lurking in the shadows watching them.

Judging them.

He could feel their gaze upon his side, he dared not turn back to look at them again, now in the shadows, in their hunched states they gave off the unnerving aura of scavengers or looming manifestations of death itself, waiting for one of them to spontaneous drop offline for them to feast.

Like Ira had that skinned animal the night before.

He tried to dislodge that memory, focusing back on Megatron.

He was standing at a crossroads now.

He could kill Megatron… it wouldn’t end the war… but it would weaken the Decepticons significantly…

But that meant killing a mech whom couldn’t defend themselves… even if it was Megatron.

He’d always hoped that the mech before him would redeem himself, finally go back to the Megatronus he once knew, realise that the decisions he’d made all that time ago, no matter how justified he’d once been on his path… had driven their once thriving people to near ruin.

He still remembered what his old friend had once been like, a revolutionary, a figure for the oppressed to stand by, at times a gentle spark even.

He also remembered when everything went so horribly, terribly wrong.

The war had changed both of them, the losses to each side were painful, and left wounds that never fully healed.

But if he struck him down now… he was giving up. He was giving up all he’d stood for… fought for… he was giving up on a promise he once made, all those eons ago, to do everything he could to make Megatron see reason again.

With clenched servos, he took a step back. “I will not murder a mech who cannot defend themselves…” He declared.

His voice echoed back at him through the cavern.

Jazz looked over to him, a blank expression on his features.

Ironhide and Ratchet just nodded.

One of the Harpies hissed.

It was a chilling sound, guttural and piercing, unnatural within their amalgamations and inner workings.

It was Aria and Wren who stepped out of the darkness.

It was those two who’s lower features had opened to bare the wickedly sharp blades hidden within their mouth.
Then, they spoke.

“No.”

Another step, left pede, the right, braced made a noise of complaint.

“No.”

Right pede, the braced limb, it practically screamed itself, the metal groaning and protesting the weight they were applying with the forceful step, now in bright light and no longer thrashing, it somehow looked worse. The thin appendage buckled and warped from those rusty spikes that had so horrifically torn it apart.

“No~ooohohoh!~” Left pede, a cackle broke free, mixing with their words, crazed, lighter, Aria.

Right pede, practically slammed into the ground, he could see the pain shoot up, how it caused the protrusions on the sides of their helm to flare out and the armour on their right side to rattle and flare.

They were directly in front of him, he’d turned to face them.

It was sudden, a split second shift and suddenly they had crowded him, wings flared out so wide, one went right, past Megatron, the other knocking into a scaffolding set up a ways back away from the tyrant.

It was when they were right in his face plates he saw it.

The faintest green glow under their visor.

That momentary distraction, the singular moment where he wasn’t paying full attention, that was when they struck.

When they screamed.

He couldn’t even make out if there were words, the sound so loud it shook his very plating, forced Ratchet to take a step back, made Ironhide draw his leviathan cannons.

Jazz was out of his view.

Then it quieted down, the scream ended, ‘no’… they’re screamed ‘no’ this time as well.

Driving it home in his processor.

They were venting now, the sheer force behind that scream having taxed them somehow.

A glance down for only a moment made him realise he’d been pushed back, all fifteen tons of him.

Their vents were laboured for only a few moments, their helm bowed down, their form lowered back into its normal position.

It was then he spotted something else.

They were shaking.

He wasn’t sure what to do, but apparently the lapse in his decision was long enough for them to
pull themselves back together.

Almost too quickly to catch, the aura was gone, replaced by one that emanated calm.

Their wings came together before them, the main struts clanging together.

Finally they looked back up at him, being at chassis height on him it wasn’t too much of a crane up, but it was enough.

Enough to reveal the pity in their smile.

“Oh~ Optimus Prime~… You don’t give a man who’d kill you without the bat of an eye... Mercy! Giving someone mercy gets you stabbed in the back seven ways to Sunday!” Aria cooed, their shared frame swaying ever so slightly from side to side.

“What you’re supposed to do.” Wren suddenly pressed, wings stretching out and clamping down around his right arm, it wasn’t a crushing hold, but the long black struts held his arm tight regardless. “Is get this giant sword of yours this alt mode you picked provides, which we saw you use not five minutes ago to open that door…”

“And cleave this frozen son of a bitches head clean off! Execution style if you want! There’s a pretty decent chance he won’t feel anything!” Aria added, they were starting to bounce, the pitying smile blurring into something else, something decidedly less sane.

“Don’t give him the chance to kill you instead!” They called together, in that strange tone of their distinct voices melding together.

He considered what they said for a moment, as their helm tilted to the side in expectation.

But his scowl remained and he shook his helm. “ Again, I will not end a mech who cannot defend himself.”

Evidently that was not what they wanted to here, as they matched his own scowl with a shake of their helm. “Why are we not surprised.” Wren muttered, before turning to look at Megatron.

“Don’t you realise what the humans are doing?”

He hadn’t considered that.

But his resolve held. “If the humans do not want us on their planet, then we will leave, but the Allspark must be dealt with first.”

He held his ground. “I did not say we would leave you behind. You may not be Cybertronian in origin, but that does not mean we will not take you with us if it become too dangerous for you to stay here.”

“Then what are we going to eat?”

“Eat?”

“You saw Ira last night, we need to ingest biological matter, preferably protein, to survive, we can’t just live off those weird blue crystals we’ve been mining. You take us to space, and we’ll starve to death.”

He’d enquire into what exactly he had a suspicion those ‘blue crystals’ were referring to later. “A hurdle to deal with if such action is required, but my position still stands, I will not strike down Megatron when he is in a state like this.”

He could of sworn that the following body language meant they had rolled their optics at him.

“Very well then… if we can’t convince any of you to do it, we might as well leave him, they’ll kill him eventually.” Wren remarked, turning to the side as Aria began gesturing with their left wing back towards the tunnel entrance.

“Kia went ahead to check on the Allspark. Might as well not leave her waiting.” Aria added.

That was true, at some point in their discussion the other Harpy had departed with a small percentage of the humans that were with them.

The rest of which where now flocking around Arien’s pedes and tail feathers.

After a moment's hesitation he began moving, walking past them, following the wide breadth of their wing towards the tunnel, being mindful not to have a human to end up under his pede.

Ratchet moved to follow, and Jazz, but Ironhide hesitated in his peripheral view.

The weapons specialist was sending the twin Harpies a foul look. “You’re on thin crystal femme.”

The remark earned him a snarl from the two.

“The correct terms, are thin ice, and ladies. We’re plural you arse.”

“Right, only Cybertronian known to be ‘plural’ was Blitzwing, and he was a Con experiment.”

It would seem Ironhide was vocalising his own concerns from when he first met the twins.

“And how, pray tell, does that equate to us?”

“You’re not natural. How the frag am I supposed to trust something like that.”

“By pulling your face out of your arse, that’s how. Now get moving. Kia isn’t someone we trust alone for too long. Normally ends up with someone in a body bag. You wanna have her all alone with your precious relic?” They were taunting his weapons specialist with that last jab, their voice tinted with fake sweetness.

He hoped that was just a bad joke.

His weapons specialist clearly wasn’t having any of this, already he was moving to make another
remark.

“Ironhide, we can delay no longer.” He called, his voice echoing slightly off the walls.

It wasn’t hard to catch the smug little smirk that appeared on the twins lower faceplates as Ironhide gave in, sending the two another foul look before falling in line behind Ratchet.

It was only when he turned to check that the twins had followed in behind that he realised his mistake.

They hadn’t followed behind Ironhide, the sound of their pede steps going elsewhere… towards Megatron.

He turned in time to watch their right wing rise high into the air. For lethal curved scythes to spring out from under the well kept white with black spotted under feathers.

It was over before he could even call out.

The wing came down in an arch, with such force the now exposed blades sung.

They sank deep, and cleaved the helm of his sworn enemy from his shoulders.

It was only with the deafening clang of the tyrants frozen helm hitting the concrete that time started to flow again.

There was a long moment of silence as all those present held themselves.

The twins glanced their visor towards them, that smug little smirk was bigger now, wide even, baring the wicked blades hidden behind.

“You…” He heard Ratchet mutter.

They just shrugged, stepping away from the now decapitated warlord. “No offense, but we had no intention of letting him live.” Wren declared.

“Don’t be too pissy about it, kay? Think of it as us doing you a solid, now, you don’t have any guilt! And we couldn’t give a rats arse!” Aria cooed, left wing flicking out as the scythes on the right folded back out of view, hiding the weapons they apparently had back away…

Then they nodded to one of the humans, who he promptly recognised as Winston, the man’s stature standing out even among his own species.

“Shields up! Masks on!” The man shouted, pulling out a device and flipping the cover off the top to reveal a large red button, the rest of the humans were quick to do as told, the twins raising their wings up in front of them like a shield, without even thinking about it, he raised his own arm up to shield his optics, preparing for whatever was to come.

What followed next would likely stay with him for a very long time.

There was a round of miniature explosions around the base of the now helmless tyrant, and a number more from the rafters above.

An odd, yellowish green liquid was splattered across Megatron’s pedes, and rained down from above the helmless frame.

Then, it ignited.
Within moments, the fire had consumed half of the tyrant’s frame, and was quickly spreading all across.

The smoke billowed around the tyrant, the support structure holding the mech up failing not long after.

The deed now done, the twins and the humans turned towards them, illuminated from behind by the burning form of a now collapsing corpse.

Then, Aria kicked Megatron’s helm towards him, their wings lowered again to reveal the proud smile.

“Chlorine Trifluoride, mixed with one of Ira’s home remedies, powerful stuff, can burn through anything, including Alien armour. Doubt you’d like it if the humans knew about this, hmm?” Wren remarked.

Neither he, nor any of his mechs replied, each of them staring at the burning husk of a mech and the decapitated helm with varying mixes of horror, anger and numbness.

He found himself caught somewhere in the middle, just staring at these monochrome femmes.

“What? You really thought we were just going to leave him?” Aria remarked, letting off a single huffing laugh at them. “We know humans, hell we are humans as far as we’re concerned, and you can trust us with this. If we’d left him to be picked apart, now that the Government knows explicitly there’s more of ‘us’, they wouldn’t of hesitated to learn how to kill all of us from him. And as much as we hate being these... mechanical monstrosities, we’d rather find our way home, than be nothing but scrap metal at the hands of our own kind.”

“We’re not soldiers who’d just follow your orders Optimus Prime. He was a major threat to our continued lives. Now, he’s not. And these Decepti… whatever they’re called, are no longer as much of a threat. The humans as well, won’t be able to find the kinks in all of our armour now without him. Ira’s already destroyed all of their digital files, and one of our teams is currently burning the physical archives to ash.” Wren continued, now walking past him towards the tunnel.

“And now. We’re going to get our answers. Well some of them at least… We hope.” Aria added, bracing one wing strut onto the ground as they moved to enter the tunnel.

Jazz was the one who spoke then. “Answers?”

They turned their helm to look at him, it was somewhat disconcerting how far their helm was able to twist around, unnatural even, like Ironhide had said before.

“You heard us. We want answers. And given that this, oh so precious relic of yours, is what brought Kia and Nibbler to this world, it stands to reason that coming in contact with it, may yield the reason why, or, if we’re lucky, send at least one of us back, which is the preferred option.” They remarked.

The Allspark? They were claiming that the life giving relic was what brought two of their group here? This all felt highly suspicious.

“That’s impossible.” Ironhide growled out, again vocalising his own inner musings.

They shrugged. “Maybe so. But this cube is the only item we’ve been able to identify and locate out of those that brought us here. Besides, pretty sure that before you met us, you thought something like us was impossible to exist, and yet, here we are.” Aria remarked.
“By that you mean?” He asked.

Before they could reply, a gunshot rung out from behind them.

The projectile shot past himself and his mechs, and struck home, smashing through one of the odd protrusions on the left side of the Harpies helm, severing the metal piece with the force.

The clang it would of created, was drowned out by the shrill screech that erupted from the struck femmes not a moment later, wing coming up as they suddenly lost balance, sending them to the ground on their side with a loud crash, landing harshly on their right side after their pedes had snapped out of reflex, launching their falling form to the side to skid along the ground in a shower of sparks.

Before he could fully turn to see who fired the shot, they were pushing themselves back up.

Livid, was not an fitting description for how furious they now were.

“COMMENT OSES-TU!” Wren all but roared once they were fully upright, wing flaring out in fury, pointing to the tunnel on the opposite side of the chamber.

The humans, still wearing their gas masks, armed themselves, pulling the large rifles which had been held across their backs into their holds, and rushing towards the opposite tunnel, the front line drawing their shields as all of one more shot left the tunnel before another commotion seemed to erupt in the near completely blacked out tunnel.

His attention was almost immediately brought back to the Harpies as they let off a pained groan, left wing coming up to shield their helm.

“Son of a bitch that hurts.” Aria cursed, their form buckling downwards where they stood, wings rising to entomb them, hiding them from view as they seemed to start rocking.

Beneath them, a steadily growing pool of a sickly blue with violet hued liquid.

Energon, tainted energon.

The severed protrusion now rested on the ground, a small trickle of the liquid pooling out of the severed end.

Ratchet was already moving to tend to the newly re-injured femmes, but they pushed him away as they seemed to regain themselves again, rising up to tower over the medic, lipplates parted into a silent snarl as the blades within ground against one another.

Optimus turned his own attention to the humans already being frog marched back across the chamber, their heads forced down and arms held in the tight holds of the Harpies human squadron.

Following behind all of them, Ira’s companion, Keeley.

Clamped within her beak was the jacket of an especially livid human, right hand bruised and cut apart, clasped within Keeley’s left talon, causing her to hobble forwards somewhat, was a handgun, the offending weapon that had just been used, the barrel still smoking slightly.

The expression on the man quickly morphed into terror as the man seemed to finally take in his own towering form and that of his mechs.

Though Megatron’s somehow still burning husk illuminating the chamber likely added to that.
“Bloody hell there is more of them.” He heard one of the men curse.

The human held by Keeley hissed at them. “Apparently so Sir…”

He went to address the humans, but Wren beat him to it.

“Jamerson. Long time no see. How’s your leg?” It was chilling how calm her voice was as they stepped forwards, their damaged pede grinding and groaning in complaint at the motion.

The human, Jamerson in question glared back. “Better than yours you wench.”

It seems they knew each other. Notably not on good terms.

The monochrome femmes just snorted at the human before Wren continued. “Of all the, after Hera saved you? After we splinted your broken leg? Let you eat our food? Let you sleep in our nest? Gave you a gift and helped you reunite with civilisation? After all we did for you, you shoot part of Aria’s ear off?!” She snapped at him, the snarl on their lipplates returning. “My you are just personifying the stereotype of Americans being ungrateful arses.”

But the human didn’t back down, Keeley had dropped him by now, leaving him to crumple to the ground as the smallest companion instead moved to the only female of the group, who cowered from her, and seemed to be clutching one of her ears… there was a lot of blood on her shoulder and face he realised then, had she been injured? It looked somewhat fresh but the blood was already drying into her top so it didn’t seem to be life threatening for now…

He turned his attention back to the human the twins was addressing, his mechs as well caught by the sheer oddness of their situation.

Even as they stood there, the previously roaring fire that was Megatron was dying out, the remains of the mech now pooling and flowing over the sides of the platform he’d once been held on, though what light remained from the fire still out did the red emergency lights that hung from the chambers ceiling, bathing them all in a flickering red hue.

“You tricked me. Used me. You stole every document belonging to the US Government!” The human snapped back.

They laughed at that, it was practically a cackle, the twins rolled their shoulder plating and flared their wings out enough to have the group of humans step back, reacting to the intimidation tactic.

“Oh now that’s just insulting, we didn’t steal… them…” They suddenly trailed off, visible expression going blank as they slowly turned to look at himself and his mechs. “We need to move.”

Those four words gave him a very bad feeling. Turning to his own mechs he ordered them to move out, the twins already having strode past him, giving their own order to their human teams to bring the newly acquired group with them.

The sudden haste worried him, but for now he had to focus, they could spare no more time being distracted.

The Allspark held precedent.

Cosmopolitan
Smoke and ash billowed around them, already he could hear the screams of humans from seemingly every direction, some of terror, some of fear, others the final death rattle that would haunt him for some time.

His holoform was running down the corridor now, after finally getting both his charge and her sire to rise from the now burning ground, walls and ceiling also already catching from the quickly spreading blaze behind them, they had to get to the basement, his charges would hopefully be safe there whilst he went to try and find out who had fired the missile that had destroyed part of the hotel.

Already his charge was coughing, rasping for breath as he pressed the call button for the elevator. Only to be jerked to the left by his charges Sire, who’d grabbed hold of his arm and was making a beeline for the stairway a few metres over. “There’s no time to wait! We need to get out of here!”

But the stairs didn’t lead to the safety of the bunker.

He tried to pull back, towards the lift, only to be pushed, this time by Mikaela, she was pushing at his side.

“Bee! It’s too dangerous to take the lift! We need to take the stairs!” She pleaded, eyes welling with tears from the heat.

It seemed he didn’t really have a choice and nodded, following the pull of her sire and kicking the door to stairway open.

What was before them was a spiral staircase, running straight down through the very core of the building.

If either of the humans tripped in their haste, the injuries they could sustain were not something he was willing to consider.

Then, before he could think a way to do this, the building shook again, another explosion.

Almost immediately the doorway a few floors beneath them burst out, spraying fire out into the stairway, causing smoke to billow up towards them.

He heard Mikaela gasp, her grip on his jacket tightening.

“Come on Miki we have to go!” Her sire suddenly shouted, pulling his jacket off and holding it to her. “Put this over your face, we’re going down okay?”

He wanted to call the man mad, but he knew that there simply wasn’t another option at this point, he couldn’t reach them where they were in his actual form, so he had to help them as best as he could like this.

He only hoped it would be enough to keep both his charge and her sire alive.

He’d already failed the Witwicky’s, he wasn’t going to fail again if he had anything to say about it.

The fire was already catching up on them, as the building continued to shake, groaning as another explosion rocked somewhere below, the screams of the humans who’d been staying in the hotel now reaching a fever pitch.

It was deafening, the smoke was blinding, and his charges were already growing weak.
He had to get them down.

Now.

It was then that an idea struck him, they didn’t have to take the stairs… the was the gap, at the centre of the staircase, a large enough circle for them all to fit down.

He just had to catch their fall a few times to slow their dissent.

He just hoped both Mikaela and her sire forgave him.

Reaching out, he grabbed a hold of her sire first, with little to no effort he managed to hoist the protesting man over his shoulder.

Turning to Mikaela, he saw her hesitate, she’d likely caught onto what he was planning to do.

She shook her head, taking a step back, towards the already on fire corridor.

He implored her with his gaze, hand reaching out further, begging her to trust him.

The silence between them was broken with a laugh as a heat warped silhouette appeared in the flames behind Mikaela.

“Aww… the little Peras scared~ How cute~”

Before he could close the gap, to lunge forwards and grab a hold of his charge, she’d been yanked back, a hand around her throat, nearly choking her, towards the fire and the figure that had walked out of it.

Bright near golden eyes locked on his, and for a moment he thought it was Kia.

But the masculine jaw, short cut hair and crazed smirk, shattered that illusion, as a knife was drawn and held to Mikaela’s throat.

“Hope you don’t mind. But I need some insurance. And this little doll will be perfect~”

Mikaela’s sire was thrashing against his back, but his hold held strong, frozen in place with horror as Mikaela locked gaze with him.

He’d not seen someone so genuinely afraid for their life in millenia… and that scared him… more than he ever would normally admit.

More than ever he wished he had his voice, to tell her she’d be alright, to beg this aggressor to release her, trade his own life even.

He couldn’t fail again… not like this.

But it was in vain, the aggressors smirk only widened as the knife cut flesh, and Mikaela’s eyes widened as a thin sliver of blood pooled on the knife’s edge.

“One step, and I’ll be needing a new human shield~ That wimpy boy I tried before screamed to much, and I didn’t hesitate to stomp his skull into the asphalt.~ So stay right there you alien freak .”

And just like that, he pulled Mikaela back into the fire.
He heard her sire scream for her, but it merely echoed in the distance.

He’d failed… he couldn’t do anything.

The pounding of fists against his hologram’s back jolted him back to reality, to the man he still had to save.

Already the end of the corridor was starting to collapse into the floor below.

It was now or never, he had to save her sire first, and he had to pray she’d still be alive when he found her next.

Turning to the stairs again, he broke into a sprint, and with one arm holding the still thrashing man over his shoulder in place, he jumped.

The screams of all the humans drowned out the one from his charge.

Almost instantly the floors were rushing past him, he caught glimpses of other humans, fleeing for their own lives, but he was already in free fall, his hologram’s hands catching only a few railings in his dissent, slowing them just enough so that when he hit the ground, the metal floor only buckled slightly, and Mikaela’s sire wasn’t immediately dead from the impact.

Though the sudden rush had knocked the human unconscious.

It was better than being dead.

Wasting no time, he bolted out of the door at the end of the stairs, finding himself in a scene of chaos, as more humans pushed passed him from the stairway, ignoring him entirely in their mad dash for the outside, where fire and burning building materials rained down from above, smashing into the concrete, striking some of those fleeing whilst broken glass rained down on others, entire panes crashing to the ground, killing more from the impact.

He even watched on as one man was trampled under the stampede, alive or not he couldn’t tell.

Then he heard it, that same tell tale sound of transformation, and the even louder chorus of horrified screams from outside as another explosion ripped through the building.

Something was yanking on his free arm.

Looking down, he found a young boy, eyes wide and tearful, cheeks covered in soot and ash and clothes somewhat singed, his breathing already raspy from smoke inhalation.

“I… can’t find my mommy.”

He felt himself lock up again, the chilling feeling that suddenly sunk into him.

As he took in the boys dirty blonde hair, and the startling blue of his irises.

Without hesitation, he knelt, and with his free arm, hoisted the boy up, and held him to his chest.

The boy latched on tight, body shaking in terror as he tucked his face into the hologram’s shoulder, numb to the faint sensation of the artificial form the young boy was being held by.

He was running before he even realised it, rushing for the front desk, where one of the staff was still trying to shout over the chaos, begging the panicked crowd to evacuate.
He caught her attention, and he recognised her, it was the shy one, who’d showed him the neutral insignia, and led him up to that private booth the night before.

She recognised him too, and accepted his silent plea, pushing the waist high door that lead behind the desk open for him to get through, revealing the trap door behind, an expensive looking rug having been kicked aside to reveal it.

“Oh I’ll take the boy! I’ll climb down after!” She shouted over the crowd, he nodded, she couldn’t carry the still unconscious man on his shoulder, but the boy was lighter, and he needed at least one hand free to climb down.

The moment the receptionist closed the trap door over them, everything was plunged into darkness, the only sound still remaining being their shoes and hands against the ladder, the whimper of the boy, and the receptionists whispers trying to console him.

It was in that moment that he could finally feel his own spark, racing in his actual form where it still rested in vehicle form, useless, hidden away.

That was when he heard the crackle of a radio, which was clipped to the receptionists hip, or at least, had been, she now held it to her lips.

“I have Mr Bee, and two others, Mrs Halloran… please tell me you’ve almost arrived.”

All that replied was static.

“Fuck my life.” The receptionist cursed, shoving the clip of the radio back on her hip and continuing her climb down the ladder.

Honestly those three words perfectly summed up everything that had just happened in the last half an hour.

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Welp, another chapter done and dusted, hope you all enjoyed, until next time!

Moon.

Edit - Did a little something after the fact for this chapter.
Woo! Chapter 17 is finally done, I have projects to complete for the next few weeks so writing will likely be slower than usual. Hope you all enjoy!

Chapter 14

The moment they’d shifted into the same position that allowed them to walk down the tunnel with the aid of their wings, the twins had bolted into the darkness, ordering their human forces to bring the detained humans with them.

He’d hesitated to follow, to give his mechs the order to move out.

But there wasn’t anything to stay in this chamber for, Megatron’s now nearly completely melted husk was all but unrecognisable, sans the severed helm that still rested on it’s side, features still locked in a murderous snarl, one human team was already using a hoist attached to a flatbed truck they had to take the head away… had the situation not been so pressing, he would of enquired into where they were taking it, but he had a suspicion these humans wouldn’t even react if he spoke directly to them.

Sans their leader, they seemed almost… lifeless...

With that in processor, he ordered his mechs to follow, with their cover effectively blown by the now detained humans being led into the tunnel, he transformed down into his vehicle form and revved his engine to get the humans attention.

Opening the drivers side door, he spoke through the radio. “I am not opposed to giving lifts so that you are not left behind.”

The humans were evidently hesitant, but when Jazz joined him in opening his vehicle form to them as well, a few broke away from the larger group, glancing a few times at the black tunnel before them where the sounds of their leaders mad dash for the Allspark chamber could be heard echoing.

Even he had to marvel at how quickly they were apparently moving.

Which meant they could not delay much longer.

He ended up with two of the human soldiers, with one of the detainees, the oldest of the group, sitting between the two soldiers.

He didn’t wait for the rest of the humans to decide, gunning his own engine and accelerating into the dark tunnel himself, lighting the way with the array of lights that adorned his cab.

The two soldiers were resolutely silent, but the elderly man decided to speak. “You’re a real alien?”

“Correct Mr…?” He answered.

“Keller, John Keller, Secretary of Defence. And currently a man in desperate need of answers as to what the hell is going on here.”

“Then it would seem that we are in similar positions. I, am Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots,
we are a faction of the larger race, Cybertronian, we have been locked in a eon long conflict with our counterparts, the Decepticons… The leader of which you likely saw being slowly melted into a pile of slag. We came to your world seeking the Allspark, an ancient relic of our kind that has the power to create new Cybertronian life from inanimate machinations. An ability we cannot let fall into the servos of the Decepticons. For they will use it to raise an army to level all sentient races in the universe. Starting with Earth.”

“Sounds like you have your priorities straight… but… what of the… lady that was with you? The one who had… wings? … And… had their ear? Their ear shot off?”

“Aria and Wren. They are an enigma to us. They are the ocherstators of this operation alongside two allies, one of whom is already waiting in the chamber holding the Allspark, and the last of the group is elsewhere, they led us here. They promised to provide the answers that we seek once the Allspark is dealt with... “

“I recognise that kind of talk, you plan to destroy this… this source of life? You’d make that sacrifice?”

“I have no other choice… I sent it to the stars to be lost, so it could not be used... but with it now located, and with the Decepticons likely closing in. It must be destroyed… I will not have a gift from the Creator be used for destruction.”

It pained him to say it, to come to terms with what he had to do… it mixed with the near intoxicating pull that was Allsparks call to him, getting more and more powerful the closer he got to where the ancient relic was.

There were other… more intimate methods of creation, but it would likely take many tens of millions of years to return their kind to the population it once was… and with this war seemingly never ending, that seemed to be afar off and fading hope.

A silence remained for only a few moments, as a light appeared before him, quickly getting brighter, larger, the chamber entrance fast approaching. He had to stop himself from transforming outright, he had humans in his cabin, one of which being an important official of the nation they were currently in.

It wouldn’t do well if relations between this nation and his Autobots started with him accidentally ending the life of one of their officials.

So, once he entered the chamber, he worked to keep his gaze off the cube, just long enough for the three humans to disembark and be far enough away for him to safely transform.

When his gaze finally landed on the Allspark… all he felt was horror.

“What… what… have you done !?” He rasped out.

There stood Kia, the chamber around them was empty of the relic, platforms and walkways hung in the air, some buckling and one already having snapped free of its moorings on the chambers side.

Held between the two smaller arms of the Harpies minicon companion, the Allspark.

The sigh of relief he let out then at realising the cube had merely been shrunk down took some of the sudden weight that had been dropped on his shoulder plating back off, but it lasted for a mere moment before he realised exactly what he was seeing.

This Harpy, this unknown factor they knew so little about, was holding the most sacred relic of his
And it’s was badly damaged, pieces missing, they looked like simple chips, but at full size they would of been massive gouges down the sides of the life giving relic…

Had the humans done such extensive damage?

It was Kia’s voice that responded as the humans surrounding him and the Harpies present tried to hide in the shadows of the surrounding machinery. “What do you mean? ‘What have you done?’ Are you referring to the fact I touched it out of curiosity and this little fucker went and broke the laws of physics, or were you referring to the amount of experimentation done of this little fucker that’s led to a stockpile of dead babies they’ve been creating over the last few decades since they cracked the code and started turning coffee machines into said baby aliens?”

Everything from his processor to the hydraulics in his pedes froze stiff. Babies, a term for the newly born of the human race… similar to...

“S-sparklings?”

The twins were looking to him now, tense, and standing directly between him and the Harpies own human soldiers.

Kia stood behind them in turn, though her silence was broken with the rattle of her own frame and the screeching sparks of her bladed denta as they grinded against one another, the minicon attached to her chassis that held the cube even tucked it closer to them, as if they were trying to comfort someone in distress.

The silence was only broken when Keller spoke up. “The experiment they showed us? The one that brought that memory stick to life?”

He turned his gaze slowly to the high ranking official, his internals twisting at the implication of what the man had just said as it darted around within his processor alongside what Kia had already said.

The humans…. Had created Cybertronian life…. Using the Allspark...

Jazz transformed behind him, along with Ironhide and Ratchet.

The humans who’d come with them, were quick to hide, sensing the rising tension within, the rest of the detained group especially looked weary, looking to the humans that were with the Harpies.

The silent humans gave them no heed, their faces completely neutral, hidden by the gas-masks they wore, it would have been a concerning feature to add to the list of future enquiries, but, again, the present time was not for that.

The present was this tense standoff.

Ahead of him, the enigmas and their forces… heavily armed… in both weapons and secrets they could use against him and his mechs.

All around them, those who desecrated their most beloved relic…

And that very relic, in the hold of one of the enigmas.

“Where… where are the sparklings?” Ratchet finally spoke, taking a step forwards, the hope and
fear mingling within his vocaliser paining his Prime.

Aria and Wren rose higher in their stance reaching his own helm in height as their joints stretched out, their wings folded tight to their side, and tail feathers flared across the ground behind them, the damaged protrusion twitching uselessly as the rest flared out.

They nodded their head to the only female in the detained group, the one who’s shoulder and the side of her face was covered in dried blood.

“Maggie Madsen over there, has the only one that is... still alive.” Wren announced.

Still alive…

Optimus wasn’t sure how, but his internals twisted ever more.

One.

One sparkling was still alive.

But there had been others...

He and his mechs turned in near complete unison to the woman, whose blood stained face paled, stepping back behind one of the ones dressed in military garb, but the man dared not draw a weapon, if he even had one.

The woman was grasping the side of her head now, panic in her gaze, the other detained humans glanced to her, even the one who’d fired the shot at Arien.

Slowly, he began to move, not daring to take a step and frighten the humans, he slowly turned, and lowered himself onto one knee joint, and then the other, bracing himself on the ground, he held the women's terrified gaze as he slowly reached out his other servo to her.

The man she was standing behind tried to step in the way, but quickly backed down at the unimpressed look he sent the human, he wasn’t going to harm the woman.

Maggie, Maggie Madsen was her name.

Already she looked set to collapse, but after a few tense moments, she stepped forwards, the hand not holding the side of her head reaching out, but the hand shook, the entire limb really.

Terror, sheer unbridled terror was all that existed in her gaze.

“Please… do not fear me.” He implored slowly, trying to make his voice sound as calm, and soothing as possible, unfurling his digits further so that they rested on the ground, offering his servo as a platform for her to step onto.

Finally Miss Madsen stepped up into his palm, dropping to her knees and just staring up at him, mouth hanging open with the hand not bracing the side of her head reaching out, but the hand shook, the entire limb really.

Terror helped in a way, as he rose back up to his full height, keeping her at optic height, she stayed in place.

There was a moment of silence as his other servo slowly came up, entering her view and causing her to tense. “May I see Miss Madsen?” He requested. “Please… if what has been said is true…”
That seemed to be all he needed to say, as her other hand finally left it’s death grip like hold on the side of her head.

With a care he doubted he’d ever actually had to use before, he pushed the hair, stuck together by the drying blood, just out of the way with the tip of his index digi.

It was tiny.

The black metal stood out against the tanned skin and stained blonde hair, half of her ear was missing, replaced with the tiny mechanical being.

By Primus he wondered if it even had a complete spark, there was little to nothing there it was so small, in the gaps of the black metal he could barely make out tiny wires and chips, and a singular green light, an optic perhaps?

He wasn’t sure what he’d been expecting, but it wasn’t this…

Almost at once he remembered that there were others surrounding them, his mechs, the humans, both groups, and the Harpies.

He turned his helm to the later. How had they known of this little one? Ratchet was already muttering that it was too small to pick up on his scanners.

But his imploring gaze went unheeded, their own attention focused resolutely on the Allspark held to Kia’s chassis.

He followed their gaze back to the beloved relic.

The moment of silence held.

New life, forged by the Allspark, was in his servo… the Decepticons had yet to show themselves…

No… he couldn’t allow more life to be brought into this war than already likely had by just the fact that the cube was on this planet…

This tiny, miniscule little sparkling… would in all likelihood, be the last sparkling ever created by the Allspark… the cube had to be destroyed…

He turned his gaze back to Miss Madsen, the knots in his system growing tighter before he could even speak. “It seems, they have chosen you… I know you likely have mixed reactions to them… but please… keep them safe…”

She finally spoke in response. “Why?”

Admitting it only hurt more. “We are about to destroy one of the most vital relics to our species survival… to save your planet from becoming overrun by a Decepticon army… it is a sacrifice we must make. Making this… little one… potentially the last Cybertronian brought into existence.”

He caught a muttered whisper from the group of detained humans.

“And you wanted to fry the thing.”

He sent a warning look to the rest of the group.

Mr Keller spoke again then. “Surely there’s another way?”
He could only shake his helm, carefully turning to pass Miss Madsen to Jazz, the first Lieutenant cradling the woman in his two much smaller servos.

Turning to the relic, he let his sword engage, the glowing red hot blade helping to illuminate the red lit room.

The Harpies reacted to him drawing the weapon poorly, their protrusions flared, their frames hunching as they each let off a scathing warning hiss, the twins standing between him and the Allspark still held in the grasp of Kia’s minicon, letting of a low warbling tone.

He had to get it from them, he held out the servo that he still had in its root form. “The Cube. Now. We cannot delay it… it’s destruction any longer…”

He heard Ratchet mutter something to Ironhide behind him, their tones concerned, they were catching on to what he had to do…

In the moment of thought the twins had moved, and suddenly he was being pushed back by their wing struts, the force behind them surprising him as he looked to the two black struts, at this distance, in the red hue of the emergency lights, he could make them out easier, the strange almost organic tiny ridges that ran across them, breaking up what, at a distance would of been a solid looking strut...

He looked back up to Arien themselves then, who now stood between him and the Allspark, Wren’s wing pushing against the left side of his chassis, pushing his blade bearing arm back even further.

“Now, let’s not be hasty. Kia still has to do her thing.” Their completely calm, monotone voice was jarring from the current atmosphere, their visible features completely neutral, a stark contrast from the aggression not moments prior.

But the odd protrusions, albeit one shot in half, were much at work, flaring, bobbing, falling flat before flaring outwards all over again, the motions quick… the patterns each time sometimes different, sometimes the same…

Kia’s did the same as they loomed behind Arien, but they had stepped back, put more distance between them...

That was when it finally clicked what those protrusions were for.

Silent conversation.

They’d been speaking one thing, showing another he and his mechs had no hope of deciphering.

“You..”

“Yes, us. You know. The ones who showed you how to get here. So step back, big, boy. We’ve got some pressing questions that need answers. And you breaking this little relic ain’t exactly helping us, is it?” Aria snapped back, the normally bubbly tone harsh, volatile, so she was the one harbouring the aggression.

One pede had already stepped back.

Their gaze, even hidden by the blackout visor they wore was like a physical shackle, keeping him in place as he watched Kia move over their shoulder plating.
The sound of a cannon firing up reminded him of his own mechs behind him, narrowing his optics he took the step back, bolstered by the knowledge he had backing from his mechs. “The cube needs to be destroyed, before the Decepticons arrive.”

“We have plenty of time. Given they’re all currently hard at work firebombing and shooting air to air missiles at the Cosmopolitan. You know, that place myself and Wren own.” Aria snapped back again, the plates that made up their faceplates baring the dangerously sharp blades beyond in a display of anger, it caused him to pause and listen, the name rung a bell for a moment before he remembered, their home, the Harpies home was under attack...

Aria took his moment of hesitance to continue. “We are hefting a pretty fucking massive bill for your little war.” They pressed further, stepping up to him, the wings still pushing against his chassis pushing against him with more force, but he didn’t let them push him back again, but he could hear the minute groaning of the metal plating of his chassis, and on their struts.

“So the least you could do, is be a fucking gentleman, and put your titanium arse in reverse. Because right now? Our patience is slim to none. Ira is out there in Vegas trying her damned best to get those flying mechanical monkeys off our property but we can’t go and join her in defending our home yet, because this! Is the only clue we have to why we were sent here in her bloody first place!” They gestured with a jerk of their helm to Kia behind them.

“So how about we stop bickering, let Kia do her thing, and then, in a somewhat orderly fashion, part ways and never cross paths again! Hmm?” They’re helm tilted to the side in invitation, but at the same time he couldn’t help but feel they were mocking him. “Doesn’t that sound lovely? Us never having to see you again, and you never having to see us again? Yes? Good. Kia, get to it, we’ll keep these brutes out of your hair if they try anything.” They announced, standing their ground against him.

He tried to push forwards again, but they pushed back just as much.

“Don’t.” Wren spoke up in warning.

Glancing down he realised they were rooted in place, their talons sliced deep into the concrete, they had the advantage in a battle of pushing, one damaged as it was, his own pedes were broad and heavy yes, but they had no real way of gripping the ground like they did.

Finally he stepped back, only one step, but it was enough for the contact between his chassis and their wing struts to end.

“Arien?” Kia suddenly spoke up, there was a waver in their tone, worried, looking over the twins shoulder plating again he realised the shorter Harpy was acting… odd.

Odder than he’d previously seen at least.

They were swaying, from side to side, their protrusions flared out to the sides and upwards, their lipplates parted ever so slightly, their rouge faceplates frozen in that position until they spoke again. “She’s speaking to me. She doesn’t want to go.”He glanced to Ratchet to check if the CMO had heard the same as he, given the CMO’s expression of perplexion, he assumed his audios hadn’t failed him.

A frown had formed on the twins lipplates as well. “She? What is she saying?”

“She doesn’t want to be destroyed… she wants… me….”

“Kia if you go into the fucking light over an alien relic, your mother is going to murder us.” That
sounded like a comment that required some external context. But the dark brown femme didn’t reply this time, they simply continued to rock, as if within a trance.

“Kia?” Wren called out from behind him, the alarm in their tone evident.

“Kia what are you…” Aria spoke up over Wren, their own alarm rising.

“I… I don’t know… Arien… I’m scarred… but she wants me to protect her…” Kia whispered back.

He caught a muttered curse from Ironhide, the red and black mech moving to take a lumbering step forwards, cannon charged and at the ready.

Out of pure reflex his servo snapped out, catching his weapon specialist by the shoulder plates, his own optics still locked on what was transpiring before him.

The monochrome twins were becoming visibly agitated, swaying from side to side, protrusions flared out to their full stretch, revealing the intricate mechanisms that pushed and pulled at the six protrusions, the damaged one sparking and jerking compared to the smooth motions of its counterparts.

But it was the other Harpy who held his attention now.

Somehow even more so as the Allspark began to twist, the cube warping and buckling in an almost… organic motion… as an amber glow started to form within the cracks of the ancient relics metal.

That light became corporeal, forming into tendrils that flickered and waved in the air for a moment, before each made contact with one of the metal plates of the Harpies chassis.

He expected screaming, agonising pain, to see the Harpy buckle.

But none of this happened.

Instead, the corporeal tendrils began routing for cracks in the Harpy’s chassis, digging in, taking hold.

The monochrome twins said something, calling their allies name, but it had no effect now, Kia was unresponsive, helm tilting back, visor going skywards, their visor, that impassive pitch black glass flickering, the glass itself becoming like a broken monitor, filled with static, before suddenly erupting into a blinding white as a strangled noise left their mouth.

The sudden flash knocked his optics out of focus, forcing him and his mechs sans Jazz to flinch back, the mechs visor protecting his own optics from the bright flash.

Still, there was no screaming, no pain, by now there was little left of the Allspark still in the smaller limbs of her attached minicon.

Then it was done, the last of the glow slipping between the cracks, the light now emanating from the femmes chassis like there was a fire roaring behind the plates of metal.

Then, even that glowing light died down.

It had all taken a few brief moments, but it had felt like time itself had been stretched out, holding them locked in place by an invisible force that had prevented them from intervening.
Intervening in what should of been the immediate snuffing of the Harpy’s spark.

But she stood there, swaying in place for a moment as the bright white of the visor dulled and then shifted back to the pitch black glass of before, their frame slumping somewhat.

A moment later, time seemed to finally start moving again, motion began around him, the twins moved forwards, propelling themselves in almost slow motion in front of him with a single stride to come up against their ally, who seemed to have begun collapsing, falling downwards, where it not for the wing strut that caught them, they would of simply crashed to the floor like dead weight.

Finally, his audios seemed to start working, just in time to hear the panicked mutterings of the Harpy twins as they tried to wake their ally.

“-ia! Kia! Wake up! Wake up damnit!” Wren, it was Wren shouting.

Kia remained limp in their hold, but their armour wasn’t losing colour, so the likelihood was, whatever had just happened, hadn’t been immediately fatal.

Would the same of happened to him?

He was likely to never know now.

Ratchet moved passed him, then Ironhide, but it was only the later who got a reaction from him, after spotting the still charged canons.

On pure reflex he managed to grab his weapons specialist and jerk the mech back, who’s helm snapped up to look at Optimus, snarl on his scarred faceplates.

No words were exchanged, with his gaze alone he implored his weapons specialist to have a few more shavings of patience.

Clearly something had gone wrong.

Now wasn’t the time to start shooting a pseudo ally.

But, one thing was for certain in this moment of uncertainty… he could no longer feel the pull of the Allspark.

Las Vegas

Projectiles screamed past her, some tearing between the fibres of her wings, the limbs giving another sharp beat to perform another pin head turn, right wing tip sailing upwards in a graceful arch and left tip plummeting down to perform a hairpin turn that put the one chasing her in the billowing black smoke to shame.

A moment later, talons met fuselage, and tore deep, the talon tips lighting up with the splattering of energon that coated them from similar strikes.

Under the energon, circuitry fired off, projecting, smashing against the firewalls of the the jet she had just struck.

There was little yield, but the defenses were weakening, hopefully one more strike and she’d send the bastard plummeting, as she had with the other one.

The strike had taken but a moment, the force of the impact pushing the two of them apart, giving her time to spread her wings wide and get shot upwards on the powerful thermal created by the
burning hellscape that was the Cosmopolitan, the massive hotel was now almost completely ablaze, a towering torch that lit the night sky, turning it a fiery red as the screaming population below, locals, tourists and trained professionals tried fruitlessly to fight the blaze created by the indinderary weaponry that had shelled the hotel from seemingly all angles.

In the toxic fumes, she was protected, her wings carrying her high on the burning air, in the darkness of the smog she had the advantage, even as the edges of her feathers and armour warped from the heat, as her internal systems cried out from the heat that shot through her with the force of an erupting geyser.

She was getting tired, the smoke was blinding her too, her wild multifaceted optics darting around, helm swiveling, she had decided against her beast form, for she had no visor to display the readings coming in from her protrusions in that form.

The screams below were cut out by the louder, higher pitched scream of the jet engines of the one she was currently in a dog fight with, they were below, the up draft had carried her far above where he thought she was.

A smirk twisted her features into a feral wild expression, her wings beat again, before being pulled taught, tail feathers flared wide to right her, unlike him, she was deathly silent, she had the advantage, and she was using it to its full capacity.

She was dropping now, hurtling downwards, protrusions flared wide, picking up everything, narrowing in, a shift, a twist, and she was locked on, even as the searing wind screamed past, she cut through it.

A moment later, she threw herself backwards, and flared her wings out behind, the sudden drag forcing the struts to open wide, her heat warped feathers catching the howling winds and billowing out like the sails of a mighty ship, the scythes hidden between snapping out like that of a praying mantis the moment before the killing strike, their lethal points gleaming in the burning embers around them, the only sound coming from the air whipping past the sharp edges, generating a shrill whistle that sung above the cacophony of the building below collapsing like a house of cards.

A spark beat later, the blades met fuselage, and tore deep, the shrill song cut off and replaced by the screech and spark of metals colliding, and an eruption of engeron and fire as the fuel ignited, tearing open the side of the one she’d struck.

The guttural scream that followed from the one struck made her smirk become a sadistic grin, cheshire in it’s width and insanity, all as half burnt engeron splattered bright across her burnt orange chassis and grey-white plating.

The blades continued downwards, gravity separating the two as she continued to plummet.

But it was for only a singular moment more that she fell further, before her wings snapped back out, blades tucked back away by the spring mechanisms that bound them.

The burning heat of the building caught the wide breadth of their wings and sent her spiraling upwards again in a deceptively agile glide, all as the jet she’d struck plummeted downwards past her, roaring as its engines seized, it’s parts bleeding profusely from that final strike.

There were none left… the thrill showed no sign of easing, whatever this body counted as adrenaline, was coursing through her like a physical, corporeal, maddening force, even as only they remained in the sky above the burning man-made precipice.
The building beneath her burned like a hellish beacon, illuminating her from beneath, heralding her as a harbinger of death.

And oh what carnage has she wrought upon the attackers of her domain.

Her talons and wing blades shone bright with spilt energon, her flight feathers stained and sticking together, but the heat kept her airborne.

One might joke that it was by sheer determination that she remained airborne even after the duration of the fight, even with the endless holes in her wings from the rounds that had hit marks, even with the seizing of joints from strenuous overuse, from the brutally sharp turns, the jarring rises, the impacts of talons meeting plating, when they’d landed their own blows on her aching frame, from the toxic clouds of smog that filled her vents that left her systems dangerously hot.

It wasn’t determination, it was rage, pure unbridled rage, and a heavy dealing of euphoria and thrill, a numbing, confusing mix that had driven her wild, burning like an overfed fire, roaring so high it encompasses her very essence in it’s hold.

And she loved it.

She never got to have such fun anymore.

And now, now she had had her fun, and bested two ancient aliens in aerial combat, aliens who had been born for the sky, whilst she had been born to walk the land, a very state she knew they had likely mocked in their eons of existence.

She had bested them, the sky, this burning canvas, was her domain.

Throwing her head back, she unleashed a sound so inhuman, so shrill and triumphant, that it froze the hearts and minds of the many far below, who looked up into the encompassing darkness of the billowing inferno, and witnessed the demonic shadow within, lit by an eerie faint blue glow as the beast continued to crack the heavens themselves with the haunting scream of victory as the military jet that had just escaped from the smoke, struggled away towards the horizon, it’s helicopter counterpart lifeless where it had crashed into the ground, it’s rear rotor torn free, and primary blades shorne to pieces, the single screen inside still online flickering for a few more moments, bearing a winged shield, before falling black itself.

I loved writing the bit for Ira, well I loved writing all of this chapter, but her’s definitely got me in a fighting spirit as I wrote it way back when. Welp, until next time!

Moon
Chapter 15

Twelve days... It took me twelve days to write chapter 18... that has to be some sort of record for me these days. Welp, not got much else to say, hope you all enjoy!

Kia remained lifeless for a few long, tense minutes.

The humans, even those in the gas masks, had migrated to the walls of the cavern, keeping their distance from the Cybertronians and Harpies.

Their caution was well founded, the monochrome twins were acting… volatile, looming over their companion, a low, shrill hiss coming from their vocaliser every time Ratchet so much as moved towards anything on their companions frame that they seemed to deem as not something the medic should not be touching, the variables of which seemed to have no set criteria.

Already a faux kick had left a new set of gouges in the concrete after he’d gone to tilt the downed femmes helm to the side by pulling on one of the protrusions.

So far the CMO had only been able to perform the most basic of scans, anything that tried to scan past the outer level of armour seemed to set the monochrome twins off, and they’d give him another faux charge, protrusions flared and those wicked hooked denta bared, ready to bite.

Ratchet’s patience was well known for being thin, but he seemed to be holding himself together fairly well, especially after performing a quick scan on the monochrome twins themselves, after having first noticed the shift in behaviour.

He’d called over to his Prime then. His scan revealing that part of their processor had shifted, warping their mentality for the time being, the evidence of which being the aggressive, defensive nature they were displaying, a subconscious alteration to their personality that seemed to of even caught them off guard.

It was not just those three that had them concerned though, the three Harpies minicon companions, all three of them, had taken to the air, and were lazily circling above, their own predatory optics trained on them, pinning them in place.

It caused the chamber to be filled with a sense of unease, one that seemed to of even finally cowed Ironhide’s temper into easing.

Conversation had all but died after Ratchet’s announcement of the Harpies altered mental state, the only ones still talking in hushed tones being Jazz and the human, Maggie Madsen, the smaller mech had followed the humans to the side of the chamber, and had begun speaking to the woman in hushed tones, introducing them all properly to the humans, before focusing more on the tiny sparkling that had sliced part of the woman's ear off.

She was still evidently shaken by the whole ordeal, all the humans were, the one who had shot at the twins stayed close to her, a cloth from one of the remaining staff of the base wrapped tight around his hand, the white cloth already blotched with red.

Jazz had actually activated his holoform at some point, it had startled the humans, and the warble of fear from the rotund dark skinned male had been loud enough for the twins helm to of snapped around, it had been a sickeningly twisted angle, looking directly behind them as their protrusions
flared out, making their helm look notably larger.

Optimus was certain he’d seen Ironhide flinch, despite not being the one under the direct gaze of the monochrome twins at that time.

But it had had the effect the twins had seemingly wanted, the human male, cowed by the sudden attention, had since remained deathly silent, even after the twins helm had shifted back around to focus on Ratchet and their downed companion.

The near silence was like a stated rule, not to be broken.

By some mercy of Primus, Kia’s rousing was sudden, her frame lurching forwards with a half formed scream, one wing snapping out as the other was bent into an unnatural position to support her now seated form as her vents laboured to cool down her frame from the sudden burst of heat that had emanated from her.

It seemed to snap their companions out of their haze too, their helm shaking from side to side before calibrating and moving forwards to offer their own wings to help their friend rise. “Kia? … What… happened?” The concern in the twins combined voices had only strengthened after their initial panic, and even as the struts edges caught against one another, and Kia was hauled up to her shaky pedes, the femme didn’t reply, swaying slightly from side to side, wings hanging low to their sides as their helm drooped.

Optimus felt himself lean in closer, if only by a fraction, the smaller of the two Harpies seemed to be mumbling, helm swaying from side to side like a slow shake of the helm, their own wings had latched onto their companion for support, the long metallic feathers obscuring her as she bowed forwards in on herself, seeming to desperately clinging onto the solid state of their companion.

It would seem though, that even the twins couldn’t make out what they were saying as they tried to keep their companion upright, though with their limited dexterity, that seemed to be a losing battle. “C’mon Kia. Kia, stay with us… damnit what are you rambling on about?!” Aria’s voice was a myriad of things, stress, panic, alarm and desperation.

“Qu'est-ce que ça t'a fait?” Wren seemed to add, but the meaning was lost to him in that moment.

Ratchet was standing close by still, carefully running a few scans on the three femmes, but he suddenly seemed to stop himself and look to Optimus with an expression passed alarm. “Optimus… all traces of the Allspark… are gone.”

All heads and helms seemed to turn, even the Harpies looked to the medic, their protrusions lowered and small frowns on their features.

Kia then looked down at herself, seemingly steadying herself as she let go of her companion and taking a step back, wings instead coming up to rub against her chassis. “But… she’s in there… I-I heard her…” Her voice was quiet, soft as a breeze, yet weighed heavy with exhaustion, before a moment of realisation came and they turned sharply, too quickly really, back to their companion, their balance thrown off for a moment as they made bodily contact with the twins, who seemed to reflexively try to hold them.

The words that came next, were heavy with dread. “Arien… We... We have to find all the relics… they kept… chanting and chanting… the relics… the relics… all them… all of the ones that brought us here…”

The sound of aggravation that came from the twins was sharp, when they spoke, their joined tone
was desperate, pleading. “Then we’re stuck here… it was the fluke that we found this one! Surely it has the power to send you back! Did they at least tell you that when this was all other we could go back?! Go home?! Kia! Answer us please! If we find these things… can we go home?! It’s… it’s been too long already…” They were getting riled up, platting flaring out and posture becoming tense, somehow even more desperate as they tried to process this new information.

Even with their optics obscured by their pitch black visor, when Kia looked up to them, even he could see the look of absolute devastation on her features. “I… I don’t know… I couldn’t see anything… I couldn’t breathe let alone talk… scream… I couldn’t… do anything… Aria… Wren… I…” They shook their helm, trailing off.

The twins let out a vent and with their wing, patted their companion on the shoulder platting. “We’ll figure this out… we’re not mad… but we need to get moving… the other humans will be returning soon.”

The twins turned to them then, Aria’s wing strut sliding under Kia’s wing, supporting their companion on their shaking pedes. “Ira has already dealt with the two Decepticons attacking the Cosmopolitan… the building is a complete loss. You know your way to the bunker, Bumblebee might still be there, if not he’ll hopefully be in the surrounding area.”

They were saying goodbye.

These were departing pleasantries.

Stepping forwards he finally spoke. “You mentioned other relics, would in not make sense to stay in contact to provide aid to one another in finding them?”

The twins chuffed out a vent at that. “Maybe. But not now. Though if we’re permitted to make a suggestion, move to Europe, we have more power there, if you’re ever in trouble, we can pull a few strings to clean up any messes you make.”

That, was an exceedingly generous offer.

Ratchet seemed to notice this too, and spoke up. “There’s a catch there.”

Kia snorted from her place being propped up by their companions. “But of course… Wren?”

The twins nodded and Wren spoke this time. “Protection. The Decepticons as you call them, should of had no way of knowing where we were based. Fernando is working with them, he knows our preferred places of residence, he knows our mode of operation, he knows how we do what we do. And he has ever intention of killing all of us. Ira was able to see off the two attacking the Hotel, but she’s taken heavy damage, we’re not built for war and conflict, we are built for kinetic flight, we’re… brittle.” Wren lifted her mangled braced pede for a moment as an example before tentatively setting it back down. “We’re not built for sustained conflict. You are.”

Ironhide stepped up to his side then. “You mentioned this Fernando before, who is he?”

Kia chuckled. “My younger brother, and he’s been gunning for my head ever since I took over the family empire from our home Earth.”

Ratchet turned to him then. “The Allspark is inside her Prime, dormant it may be, it is in there… we can’t risk the Decepticons discovering that the Allspark isn’t still missing… let alone allow them to kill her, or worse, figure out how to use her as a conduit for the Allsparks power.”

A low hum came from the twins. “Hadn’t thought of that added incentive… What do you say,
“Optimus Prime?” Aria called out. “We scratch your back, you scratch ours, it’s a mutually beneficial agreement. We make sure the human Governments keep their greasy hands off you, and you be our dashing knights in shining armour?”

There really wasn’t another option to this situation, so, he nodded. “Very well, until such a day when seeing each other is necessary, may I suggest that you at least obtain Ratchet’s com signal, so that he may monitor from a distance, all four of you.”

That would be his condition, they’d searched for the Allspark for so long, they couldn’t let it slip away again without knowing that it’s new vessel was safe.

The three femmes regarded each other for a moment before Kia nodded.

Ratchet sent him a confirmation over their own com-link to let him know the connection had been made.

They were turning to the tunnel that would lead the three out into the open air, the three minicons already circling lower in preparation for their departure.

Yet the twins turned their helm back to them, again the twist being one of a disconcerting degree. “A further word of advice, don’t stick around, get to either Mexico, or Canada, from there we can have a plane ready to go within a day of arrival at any international airport. The US Government is not going to take kindly to what we’ve done this night.”

“You’re damn right about that!” One of the humans suddenly popped up from their place by the wall.

Their presence suddenly being brought back to attention was a bit jarring, all frames turning to regard the man dressed in black garb and black hat, he seemed ready to burst. “Heads are going to roll for this! Namely yours!”

Kia snorted at that, before her expression hardened. “Winston, you know what to do.”

One of the humans wearing the gas mask stepped forwards, and pulled the assault rifle from their back, with practiced ease the safety was flipped off.

The reaction from the detained humans was almost instant, each reacting to the motion towards them in fear.

Jazz reacted first, grabbing hold of Mrs Madsen in his actual form, and holding the startled woman close to his chassis, Optimus knew he was trying to protect the sparkling that had fused with her organic form.

The rest of the humans, had no such foreign aid, and were each quickly grabbed by the rest of the humans who’s faces were obscured, and seemed to being split up.

Caught in their own surprise, he and his mechs could only watch as the armoured members and Mr Keller were separated from the Government agents and the few remaining Scientists who’d not even made a noise during the whole fiasco.

Only then did he speak. “What are you doing?”

Kia turned her helm to him, expression eerily blank. “Witnesses are loose ends.”

Whatever was supposed to happen after that statement, was too fast for them to fully catch.
Needles were drawn from the pockets of the units with red crosses on their shoulders, the caps popped, and the thin needles stuck directly into the back of the detained humans necks.

Soon enough, each one was unconscious and being hefted over the shoulders of one of the humans, the previous split now being shown by the different units as they moved to stand by the Harpies.

The only one left was Mrs Madsen, who seemed to be frozen in place on her knees in Jazz’s servos.

There was a long beat of silence then, before the twins turned to their humans. “Move out. You all know the location of the emergency rendezvous.”

The humans not carrying their unconscious brethren seemed to salute, right hand banging twice against their shoulder armour before they began moving, marching towards the tunnel exit at an heightened pace.

Only once the last few had entered the tunnel, did the twins release Kia, shifting onto all fours again before easily slipping into the tunnel, Kia going first, the twins taking up the end.

A few moments later, the black and white tail feathers of the twins disappeared into the darkness, leaving only the sound of the large group leaving echoing back into the chamber.

All of his mechs were looking to him now, waiting for his call on the matter.

That focus was broken by the human currently perched in Jazz’s servo. “Glen? They… They even took Glen… And I didn’t do anything...”

He looked closely at the human woman then, hunched over, arms wrapped around herself, like that alone could hold her together.

The melancholy he felt then was heavy, letting out a low vent, he gestured for his mechs to move out.

There was nothing left for them here.

All they had, was a little sparkling that had merged with this human woman.

And many, many unanswered questions.

The Harpies had promised to answer them once this was all over.

Evidently, with the apparent destruction of the Cosmopolitan, that notion was firmly off the table.

All they could do now, was follow the advice of these enigmas, and hope for the best.

Jazz set Mrs Madsen down before transforming into his alt mode, opening his passenger side door for the woman, who tentatively slipped inside.

With their new charges safely within Jazz, Optimus made his own move for the tunnel, transforming down into his own alt mode, his front lights illuminating the dark tunnel beyond as he drove onwards.

“Jazz? How is Mrs Madsen?” He sent to his first lieutenant.

“Not to good Prime, she’s pretty shook up, probably needs to ingest something to make up for all the blood she lost when the sparkling got her audio disk.”
Hmm, that was a good point, they would have to find suitable sustenance for their new charge sooner rather than later.

Hopefully Bumblebee’s wider experience with the humans would be able to help them with that issue.

Eventually, they reached the exit to the tunnel.

The base of the damn was where the electricity generated by the massive structure was sent out towards the human cities.

A place he quickly realised, was the location of a tense standoff.

The Harpies were still there, Kia behind the twins, being held back, their human forces having drawn their arms to something ahead and being obstructed by the Harpies large wingspans.

The humans they’d had knocked unconscious at least, seemed to have been surrounded in a separate protective circle just within their sight from his position at the end of the tunnel.

Out of sight of whatever the twins were blocking from view.

Only as his engine shifted to idle, did he properly hear the sharp discourse occurring before them.

“She’s a pretty little thing hmm? The blonde I snatched her from didn’t even try to stop me once I had a knife to her throat!” It was a mech who was speaking, one he didn’t recognise the vocal range of, though what he did know was that it was that same uncanny way the Harpies voices were off.

It was another Avian.

Slowly he allowed his own transformation to take place, finally reaching a height where he could look over the monochrome twins raised wings.

What he saw caused his spark to seize for a moment.

This new mech was smaller, more Ratchet’s height.

But size was irrelevant when the mechs secondary limbs held Mikaela, one talon in particular being pressed directly into her neck.

Even from this distance he could see the sliver of blood that ran down her neck and stained her charred blouse.

The rest of his unit transformed behind him, without even thinking he held out a servo to hold them back, they couldn’t see what he could.

The silence that followed the mechs statement held for a few moments longer before he seemed to become even more irate, flaring out a wing of his own in a display, trying to bait a reaction. “Well? Huh… still as frigid a bitch always huh Aria? Or was it Wren? I can’t remember, which one of you is the real one again?”

He was fairly certain he heard the concrete between the twins talons crack, but he didn’t dare check and take his optics off where Mikaela was holding herself stiff, eyes locked on his, filled with terror and pleading him to help.

He could only return a look of sympathy, there was nothing he could do, he couldn’t risk the mech
slicing her head off.

He wouldn’t forgive himself if his actions led to a young life like hers being snuffed by his kinds war.

“Aaaah~ Still a sore spot huh peras? Still don’t like it when people call you out?”

Kia finally spoke up them, pushing herself harder against their companions extended wing.

“Fernando… I swear I would kill you where you stand if…”

“Ah ah ah! I’m not done speaking with Aria, wait… no… it was Wren your mother and father wanted, Aria is the one they tried to…”

“Watch your tongue Fernando.” Wren suddenly spat out, the words laced with hatred and venom.

Optimus felt himself recoil slightly, even though the words hadn’t been directed at him, the compulsion to move away was powerful.

There was bad energon between those before himself and his unit and it was moments from reaching it’s ignition point, with Mikaela caught in the middle of it.

His inner building panic was ignored by those before him as Fernando seemed to take pride in Wren’s reaction. “Oh? What? Just because we’re on a new Earth doesn’t mean I’m going to forget the kind of freak you are, or what you did to me!”

“How are you even here Fernando? You disappeared six months before we were sent here.” Aria snapped, ignoring the mechs accusation.

Were it not for the familiarly pitch black visor the mech wore, Optimus was certain he’d have seen the mechs optics narrow as he leaned forwards for a moment. “Like I’d tell you. Stop pretending there’s two knocking around in there you peras.”

He heard Ratchet mutter something under his vents but couldn’t pick exactly what his CMO was saying.

“Enough of this. What are you even doing here Fernando? Your ‘buddies’ turned tail and ran after Ira took out the two fliers, and now you’re standing here, in the middle of a stand off you’ve got no chance of winning. Personally, there’s a thousand different things we could be doing right now, but of course, your stupid, bitter, arse has gone and parked itself in a no win situation for itself.” Wren snapped.

Fernando snorted at the assumption. “Oh? And why do you say that?”

He could hear the smirk in their voice when Wren spoke this time. “Contrairement à vous, nous ne prenons pas de risques. Amélie, Ana, les cibles sont marquées!”

He didn’t understand the meaning himself, but in the moment it seemed to take the mech before them to realise whatever it was that Wren said, the deed was already done.

There were two flashes, one from each side of the dam.

It happened faster than any of his unit could properly react.

One moment there was a tense standoff a moment from breaking.

The next, two bullets, one from each side of the dam, smashed through the joints of the thin limbs
that had been holding Mikaela.

Then his vision was cut off as the twins wings rose suddenly upwards, and with a single down beat they were lunging forwards, right pede snapping out to send them into a spin, one wing snapping out again to catch the falling human as the rest of their frame became a hurtling projectile, shoulder platting crashing into the mechs chassis and sending both of them to the ground.

After that, chaos.

At some point in the ensuing mess of flailing talons trying to tear through plating, and wings flapping in all directions trying to right themselves, Mikaela was jettisoned, sent skipping across the ground away from the two brawling frames as talons raked against plating and incomprehensible screeches filled the night air.

In the chaos he barely noticed Ratchet dart away to collect Mikaela from where she lay motionless some distance away from the currently occurring fight.

Kia was lunging the moment she seemed to notice Ratchet take Mikaela safely out of harm's way, springing forwards, using the curve of their wing struts to fling themselves forwards to crash down on top of the already confusing mass of monochrome and brown limbs.

He didn’t dare take his optics off the fight, shifting forwards just as many times as he shifted back as one of the six wings of the involved frames flailed in a random direction, the brutal scythes hidden between the feathers glinting in the overhelm spotlights.

Tainted energon splattered across the ground indiscriminately, some even splashing against his red and blue paintjob.

And then, almost as quickly as it started, it was ended, the mechs frame kicked away in what seemed to be a combined effort from the three femmes.

The mech scrambled on the ground for a moment, cracked visor falling partially away as what was left of his smaller limbs dropped from the middle of his torso, crashing to the ground between his taloned pedes.

His load lightened his helm snapped up, Optimus caught golden optics dart around before the mech suddenly turned tail, wings flapping for a moment desperately before he was airborne and flying as fast as he could, mangled plating streaked with the faint glow of his own tainted energon.

The three femmes continued to lay on the ground for a few moments, their own frames worse for wear.

The twins helm craned towards them for a moment, their own visor was cracked, but seemed to be holding, with a groan they pushed themselves upright, though seemed to have some trouble getting upright.

Finally finding his pedes were no longer rooted to the ground he moved forwards, hoping to help them up as he offered his servo out to them.

They seemed to be caught off guard, helm snatching up higher to regard them before they seemed to huff out a vent and push the end of their wing strut into his offered servo.

They were light, easy to haul upright, though he held on for a few moments to be certain they wouldn’t fall, before turning to offer his other servo to Kia, who accepted after only a brief moment of hesitation.
Only then did he speak. “What… just happened?”

Aria was the one who answered. “Could you be more specific? The world's still spinning a bit after Fernando kicked my side of our head.” There was pain in her tone, one wing strut folding so it could come up and press against the evident dent in the already damaged protrusion. “Got me right were that guy shot me…”

Ratchet, the dutiful Medic he was, joined them then, running a cursory scan of them whilst his other servo, cradling Mikaela was held out to Optimus.

Optimus, to his credit, only hesitated a moment for fear of harming the already banged up human before carefully picking her up between his digits and placing her within his open servo.

Her legs hung limply off the side, but besides her apparent unconscious state, she seemed to be alright.

“Hmm… mostly cosmetic injuries, and your internal gyroscopes are already re-stabilising…” Ratchet muttered from his position next to the Prime.

The Harpies seemed to appreciate that, the twins turning their attention to Mikaela then as Kia turned her focus to the humans that were already returning to her side.

“Is… Is she alright?” It was odd really, watching as the twins hunched over slightly to peer into his now partially closed servo.

Ratchet answered before he could. “A minor concussion from the fall, and the cut on her throat isn’t deep, all I can suggest is that she rest and recuperate from her ordeal.”

The twins nodded at that, moving back and shifting their posture back into a straighter, taller position. “Thank you…” Wren replied, before the two sighed. “Keep her safe, Fernando knows he can use her to get to us now… if he gets his hands on her again, he won’t hesitate to use her as a human shield.”

They turned then, looking out towards the endless night beyond the reach of the surrounding lights.

A final goodbye then.

He looked to Kia and the humans who served them, the later group were all boarding vehicles now, bringing the still unconscious humans with them before driving away and into the darkness.

Leaving only themselves, Mrs Madsen who remained with Jazz and Ironhide, and the Harpies.

He opened his mouth to speak, only for a pained chitter to cut him off.

Attention quickly shifted, landing on the piece that had dropped off Fernando before his retreat.

It was moving, sluggish, but moving, it’s plates shifting slowly as feathers bloomed across its frame.

Before the transformation was even complete, Kia was stepping forwards, her own minicon dropping from it’s place tucked away between the plating on her back, the Avian minicon beating its wings to carry itself to the other, evidently badly injured, Avian minicon that now lay strewn out on the concrete.
The bullet wounds on the minicons legs had almost torn them clean off, it was in a sorry sight really.

Nibbler chittered as he landed besides the downed minicon, whatever it was saying was caught the downed ones attention at least before they seemed to knock their beaks together in greeting.

It was strangely melancholic really.

Ratchet made his own slow approach now, weary of the reaction that could be brought out from the Harpies.

This time however, there seemed to be no aggression, merely quiet chitters as the group stepped back away from the downed companion.

A glance to his side revealed that the twins had moved away from the general group, resting their weight on one of the buildings as they held their damaged pede just off the ground.

Even from this distance he could see the limb had taken another painful blow in the fight to get Mikaela away from Fernando, sparks jumped from exposed wiring and the talons twitched in spasm, Ratchet seemed to of missed it.

Seeming to sense his gaze, their helm turned to focus on him.

The visor hid their optics as always, but their lipplates seemed to shift upwards into a small pained smile as they shook their helm, trying to brush off his growing concern.

He only frowned at their attempt to dissuade his concern, and turned to walk over to them.

Seeing this they in turn seemed to huff out a reserved sigh before pushing off the building, placing the damaged limb back on the ground, but it was obvious the limb wasn’t bearing any of their weight now, even with the brace.

Once Ratchet had seen to the injured minicon he’d see if he could try and fix the new damage.

He stopped a few strides away from them before he spoke. “You took another hit to your pede.”

They seemed to find humour in his statement, taking a moment to almost comically react to the injury, looking down, gasping and hopping up onto the unharmed pede for a moment before dropping the damaged limb back down, still not bearing weight. “Oh? Wow, we didn’t even notice.” Aria chirped, though the sarcasm in their tone was evident. “Wren will be fine.”

Aria was speaking for her sister.

Taking a moment to ponder this he spoke again. “Wren? Could you give me an internal diagnostic? It seems a main relay cable has been severed.”

It would explain the lack of weight being put on it, with the cable severed, the signals being sent back up to the processor would be reading different to what they could see with their optics.

Causing a hesitation to put weight on a limb reported to not currently be there outside of the smaller relay cables, which couldn’t override such a reading.

At least, that’s what his admittedly limited understanding of relay cables told him.

Regardless, he got no answer from the other twin.
Besides an irritated huff, their frame shifting back again to rest against the building, only then did Aria speak. “She’s fine. Fernando put her in a bad mood... “

It was a warning, and a way out of the original conversation.

They weren’t acknowledging the injury.

Perhaps there was a better way of getting around this. “You likely saved Mrs Barnes’ life, if you are willing to stay long enough, I’m certain Bumblebee would like to thank you.”

“There’s no need for that, we didn’t do it for her.”

His confused silence seemed to urge an answer to their own statement. “We... we didn’t want her blood on our hands... Fernando using her as a human shield would of inevitably led to exactly that. He slaughtered the Witwicky’s because they weren’t what he wanted, he’d eventually of taken her head off too... or done worse...”

They weren’t looking at him now, their attention back on the night sky. “We can’t stay around here much longer, the evacuation of the dam is going to be ending soon, the staff will likely be heading back already. Take your men, take Mikaela, take Maggie, take the little one, and Freedom, take them, and get out of here, we’re moving out now to meet with Ira and then heading to Europe.”

More goodbyes then.

Cautiously he reached out and placed a servo on their wide shoulder plating. “Why did you really do all of this?”

They regarded him for a moment before Aria answered. “We want to go home. We don’t want to be freaks... we... there’s things back home that...”

“Twins! We need to move!”

The shout from Kia cut the explanation.

The monochrome femmes shrugged off his servo and stepped away, the limp evident as their wings began to stretch out.

Even from this distance he could see the concern on the smaller femmes features as her own wings stretched out, the original three companions doing the same around the smaller femmes pedes.

He caught Ratchet’s gaze, and the medic nodded, making his own way over to the larger harpy, the injured companion passed to Ironhide.

“Wait, I need to check the brace.” Ratchet called out.

Thankfully that seemed to work in preventing the two from taking off, their helm swivelling around to regard the medic.

“We don’t have...”

“Yes we do, it will be quick.” Ratchet interrupted, lowering himself into a one leg crouch to look over the damaged pede, one servo reaching out and grasping higher up the limb to hold them in place as he inspected the damage.

Realising this, the two seemed to sag, reserved to their fate of being delayed even further in their departure.
It took only a few moments to shake his helm. “You’re not flying on this.”

That was evidently not what they wanted to hear, Aria snapping back. “The hell we aren’t! We need to get to Europe!”

Ratchet didn’t reply verbally, merely scowling at them before carefully touching the plating just above the severed relay cable.

The pained hiss was unmissable, no matter how hard they gritted their denta.

“You land on this leg again, and you will lose it, and if you fly away now, how in Primus’ name will I be able to help you?” Ratchet pressed.

Optimus decided to step away from this, not wishing to crowd the twins into a decision they would have to make.

One they likely would hate.

He in turn turned his attention to Kia, who was looking over the scene unfolding with a look he couldn’t properly decipher. When he was close enough, she spoke. “This wasn’t supposed to happen.”

He nodded before he answered. “We will take care of them. I promise you that.”

They seemed to recoil slightly at his answer, as if surprised he’d suggest such a thing. “After all we’ve done? We not exactly on the best of terms…”

“Irregardless, they are injured, an injury brought about by saving Mrs Barnes life, Bumblebee’s charge, in turn, we will keep the both of them safe.” Motion behind the femme drew his attention down to the twins companion, Hera.

It was startling how sentient these beast behaved, he watched for a moment as the smaller Harpy Eagle watched on as Ratchet debated further with their master, there was concern in her pale grey optics. “This one can come with us as well if that’s what’s decided as best.”

Kia shrugged. “That’s not my call, Nibbler is mine, Ironhide has already agreed to take on Freedom, it’s between Hera and the twins if they decide to stick together.”

So the new one was designated Freedom? There didn’t seem to be any rhyme or reason regarding the naming of their companions.

Noise from behind brought the conversation to an end as they both looked to see the source.

Ratchet was propping the twins up, taking the majority of their weight with Wren’s wing draped over the CMO’s other shoulder plate, keeping the damaged pede between them off the ground as the two came over, Ratchet doing his best to support the hobbling femmes.

The twins frame language was that of defeat, helm lowered and good pede visibly shaking with the effort to carry their weight and move forwards.

He looked to Ironhide and Jazz, his weapon specialist had moved Freedom to rest across his broad shoulder plating, whilst Jazz continued to hold Mrs Madsen close to his chassis.

Neither looked thrilled by what had been silently decided, but both knew just as well that this was what had to be done.
“You two going to be okay?”

There was no verbal answer to the smaller femmes question, but the low sigh the twins released was more than enough.

Now the big question, how were they going to transport them?

Kia seemed to of read his thought process. “I’ve already called for a trailer, if you fold up you should be able to fit inside.”

The twins did not appear thrilled by that notion, but didn’t object.

Kia and the smaller avians didn’t stay much longer, the group launching off the base of the damn with powerful wing beats that whipped up the dust around them, soon after disappearing into the darkness of the inky black sky.

And with them, the Allspark slipped from their servos once more.

His gaze remained heavenward for a moment, trying to spot the black silhouette as it caused the stars to flicker in and out of view.

No luck.

In that moment he truly thought he had failed.

Looking back down to the human teen lying unconscious in his servo, he felt himself conflicted.

Was this really where they were supposed to be?

He could only hope that things got better.

But when did his desires ever come true?

The fight he once felt to free Cybertron from tyranny was long gone, now, all they could do was survive.

Cybertron was lost to them, what was their to fight for other than survival?

In that moment, he thought back to Cybertron before the war.

Brief flickers of bright optics and warm smiles, long gone voices cheering each other on once they had felled the Senate…

Of all those once joyul faces and happy voices, so, so very few were left… scattered to the stars, or standing around him, waiting for orders.

Or worse… lost to the long snuffed Well of All Sparks.

He looked to the injured twins, still being propped up by Ratchet, who’s features were cold and tone as sharp as his own blade.

Primus truly had a foul sense of humour if this had been the course he wanted for his creations.

“Autobots, roll out.”

Somewhere in the endless cosmos
The small planet they’d found themselves upon was desolate, not a single vein of energon to seek out, with chilling winds that threatened to send them into permanent shut down if they didn't huddle close.

Curses to those who’d abandoned them here had long died away, their reserves too low now, their attention focused on their bonds with one another, constantly checking to make sure they were all still online.

Ravage shook from the winds that buffeted him, it was his turn to shield his brothers and sisters from the howling winds that reached for them within the cave they huddled in.

It was hopeless, but they held out, their bond with their brother Frenzy too strained by distance to transmit their distress.

Their bond with their sire, deathly silent.

It had been silent for deca vorns now…

But, that was not to last much longer.

It was as the planets dying star, so far away that it was merely a speck, was at its zenith, they felt it.

Their sire’s presence was one that would of caused them to leap for joy in the vorns before, but with their reserves so low, all they could do was try and reach for him, calling out for him to find them, to save them.

Their call was headed.

They heard him land, heard his approach.

Ravage lifted his helm ever so slightly, optics online for the first time in vorns.

Faded red optics met pained bright reds.

He had not the strength to call out, none of them did, but they sent their joy and happiness across the bond as their sire reached into the shallow notch in the cliff face, pulling each free and holding them against his warm, oh so warm chassis.

The moment of silence, was broken by a voice they had not heard since the early stages of the war.

“'I’m… so.. Sorry… I’m so sorry… please… please return…” They had not even the energy to feel shocked their sire had spoken, what had happened to his vow of silence? What had possibly caused him to break it?!

With what little strength they had left, they returned to their alt modes, letting their sire carefully return them to their docking stations.

They felt his comforting warmth all around them, and felt the energon they so desperately needed enter them.

The shake in their sires voice, one so unused, pained them more than the cold ever could. “Frenzy… where is Frenzy?”

Laserbeak was the one to reply. Frenzy was the only one that Barricade took with him to chase after the Allspark, leaving them with a group of cons, who’d abandoned them here, denoting them as ‘useless without Soundwave’. 
They felt the anger the response brought out of their sire, not towards them, but what surprised them… was the defeat they felt from him.

What they couldn’t see, was what their sire was looking at.

Clasped between two digits, a tiny piece of organic flora, it’s yellow head whipping around in winds it was never supposed to survive in.

Carefully the cherished piece of organic flora was tucked within his subspace, and his attention shifted to his new mission.

He had to get to Earth, he could still feel his son was online, but he knew that might not be for much longer.

He had to move fast, transforming into his flight capable alt mode felt strange, he’d not used it in so long the very feeling of transforming felt somewhat alien.

But a comfort he did find was one that popped up on his hud, a tiny picture of the one who’d given him that little flower just before he’d walked away.

Their words, filled with excitement and love rung in his helm. They’d promised a surprise when he got home.

He hated the fact he’d never see them again.

Hated he would never hold them again.

Hated the fact that he’d never know that surprise.

Hated the fact he’d left them behind.

Loathed himself for failing his promise.

But he had to…

Better to know they still lived, mourning him, than to of seen them die because they had loved him.

He’d never forgive himself if he had lost them just as he had… the memory of the one who’d first held his spark tore at him anew just thinking of them.

His cassettes all felt his pain, their own seeping out and mingling in their bond, trying to find out why now, after all this time, he thought of the one they lost.

He soothed their worries as best as he could, before focusing back on the present, on what he had to do.

His engines maxed and he rocketed upwards, leaving the planet behind.

Hurtling with the planets wind, torn pieces of an alien material, forgotten by the wearer who would likely never fit them again.

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*Soundwave, Soundwave, Soundwave... he's gonna have quite the tale to tell, eventually.*

*Welp, that's all for this chapter, hope you all enjoyed! Until next time!*
Moon
Chapter 16

Chapter 20 is already underway, so I'm posting chapter 16 now, had a lot of fun with this one and I hope you all enjoy.

Mikaela awoke suddenly, the side of her head throbbing and the sting of something across her neck causing her to panic for a moment before she realised where she was.

Not in the hands of that crazy alien, but within the cab of a truck, one that was driving down an empty highway.

Tentatively she turned to see the driver.

It took a moment, but relief flowed through her once she recognised the man, or really, holoform of one Optimus Prime, even in the low light those glowing blue eyes were impossible to miss.

His attention was on the road ahead.

Carefully she reached up to her neck, feeling the blood trails that had long since dried, she didn’t want to probe her head though, not wanting to agitate the already painful throbbing.

Silence held for a few minutes before she managed to think of something to say. “What… what happened?”

She swore she felt the truck swerve for a moment as the holoform snapped out of whatever trance he’d been in, head snapping around, apparently surprised she was awake. “Ah Miss Barnes. I’m sorry, Ratchet thought you’d remain unconscious for a few more hours yet, do you need anything to drink? We picked up some supplies for you that Bumblebee suggested you would require?”

Lifting one hand from the wheel for a moment he rustled the plastic bag she hadn’t noticed sitting between them.

Slowly she reached over and pulled the plastic bag handles out of the way, revealing five water bottles, four packs of ham sandwiches and what looked like a packet of pain medication.

It was only as she looked over the food and water that she realised just how long she’d gone without, her stomach twisting into a vicious knot to prove that very point as she grasped one of the bottles of water, snapped the seal off and proceeded to chug down half the bottle, only stopping when she nearly inhaled some of it.

Coughing fit mercifully avoided she turned her attention to the painkillers, she recognised the brand, it was one she’d used before, so, popping two of the little white sugar coated tablets out of their tin foil and plastic packaging she tossed them back, followed by tearing the wrapping off one of the Ham sandwiches and taking as big a bite her mouth would allow.

The relief she felt was immense, she was fairly certain the last time she’d eaten was when Aria had appeared to make her a bit of lunch, a delicious soup from Vietnam she’d apparently picked up on her and her twins travels.

Once the sandwich had been demolished, her attention returned back to Optimus, questions were already kicking off in her head and she needed answers. “What happened?” She asked again.

Optimus glanced to her out of the corner of his eye for a moment before turning his attention back
to the road and speaking. “The twins had snipers set up on the dam as a precaution, they were able to shoot through the limbs holding you. The twins then rushed your captor and managed to toss you out of immediate danger as they engaged in a brawl that Kia joined to ‘send him packing.’” He answered.

“Oh.” She replied, looking back over herself, not really feeling much surprise seeing that her jacket, trousers and top were thoroughly shredded, the bare skin beneath rubbed red and raw and in places, even in the low light, she could tell the cuts were healing over.

How had she not noticed that sooner?

Really it didn’t feel like she should worry about it, her own attention drifting the the rolling road ahead, barren desert stretched on for miles on either side, and there didn’t seem to be a single soul sharing the road.

Well, except for the group she could see following them in the rear-view mirror, the other aliens then.

It... It was so strange, sitting there, in what she was pretty certain was an aliens body.

She’d seen the clip that the twins had sent her after all, she’d seen Kia, apparently, though that memory was hazy from her fainting immediately after. Her memory was too foggy from the time that psycho had had her.

She had a vague idea of what he actually looked like, towering, imposing, blue with red flames, and obviously, being made of metal.

Glancing to the holoform sitting in the driver’s seat, she found that all but the blue with red flames and made of metal, fit the description of this projection just as well.

Aliens really did have some funky technology.

Or, counter thought, whatever strange parallel reality the Harpies were apparently from, was a lot more technologically advanced.

Either worked in enabling her to marvel at how the man next to her was even able to exist.

Feeling that the silence was creeping in again, she blurted out another question. “Did, did you find that thing you were looking for?”

He glanced to her again, and the look he gave her was difficult to decipher, but, he did answer. “The Allspark... one of the primary source of life and energon, the fuel and lifeblood of my kind... merged with the Harpy Kia, and fell dormant. On top of that, the Orichiono’s decided to take it upon themselves to decapitate the frozen body of the Decepticon Tyrant and Warlord Megatron, and then melt his corpse to slag to prevent your government from discovering what our armour is weak... to... wait...” He paused, his gaze narrowing at the road as something seemed to dawn on him. “What did they do with his head?”

That wasn’t something someone normally asks themselves.

She let his full explanation sink in for a bit.

The Allspark was apparently a pretty damn big thing, and it had... merged with Kia... did that mean it was attached to her? Or had it merged with her on an alternate plain of reality or something?
She didn’t have the foggiest idea, so, she just spat out the first response that she could think of. “So… was you coming here… all for nothing? Are you gonna be leaving soon?”

He shook his head. “No, the Allspark has joined with Kia and fallen dormant, as a result, we struck a deal of sorts with the Harpies. They provide us the necessities of a place to rest and hide from human eyes, and we be within easy reach if the Decepticons were to attack, we cannot risk the Decepticons getting their servos on Kia and by proxy the Allspark. For if they find a way to re-activate it, they will, and without hesitation turn every single machine on this planet into a Decepticon… they would have access to a near infinite source of soldiers if we fail… and we and all of humanity would fall.”

That, that was not good. She didn’t need a heart monitor to tell her her heart had just decided they were running a marathon at what his statement suggested.

Of course, he wasn’t done with his warnings of doom and gloom.

“There is also the fact that it seems the twins and Ira are also possibly linked to ancient relics from our homeworld, suggesting they too may become vessels of relics with potentially even greater importance… though what those relics are they seem uncertain of. Which means that we must remain as vigilant as possible from here on out.”

Ok, that was too much for her to handle after all the other bullshit she’d been through the last few days.

Deciding to try and change the conversation she asked. “So, where are we going now?”

“Mexico, the twins size and inability to transform means we cannot just drive over to a plane and board it, apparently we would not all fit with them in my trailer. So, we will be taking a privately chartered boat to Europe, our destination being a place called ‘Monaco’.” He answered.

Twins? Trailer? Inability to transform?

Looking behind her she realised that Optimus was in fact pulling a trailer the painted grey metal glinting in the highway lights.

Did he mean that Aria and Wren were in there?

Why?

“Why can’t they fly themselves there?”

“Their pede, which was already damaged in a prior incident, was further damaged in the fight to free you from Fernando. Ratchet judged that they would not be able to safely land on the limb until he could properly repair all of the damage done, so, they are grounded and traveling with us.”

So they got themselves hurt saving her when they’d already been hurt? The notion caused a knot to form in her gut, her next question was out before she even realised she was talking. “How did they get hurt in the first place?”

“From what I could gather, they landed in a human poaching trap in the Amazon, the iron rebar impaled and for lack of a better term, mangled their right pede, it is a gruesome injury. The initial deal between us and the Harpies was that Ratchet would see to the injury and do what he could to fix it, and then they would lead us to the Allspark, evidently however, plans have taken quite a dramatic shift in the past few hours.”
So they’d been injured by humans, and then they’d risked their leg for her safety? A random teen?

No… she wasn’t a random teen… she was a character in a film franchise… but Kia had said they’d do all they could to fix the ‘plot’… what did that truly mean for her?

It had already cost Sam Wit… whatever his last name was and his families lives… how long until her and her dad’s where on the chopping block?

She’d already almost died yesterday, a check of the clocked proved to her it was early morning, what was in store for her now that she was so tied up in this alien conflict?

“You’re heart rate has increased, that is a sign of distress for your kind correct?”

Jolting at the sudden declaration she nearly snapped her neck as turned to face the holoform. “What?”

He didn’t even take his eyes off the road. “Your heart rate, I can feel your pulse through the leather.”

Oh…

Oh god she really was sitting in an alien.

And he could feel her fucking pulse?!

That was it, that was the last straw, she’d been through too much, her mind had been blown out of the water too many times.

Were it not so dark already, she would have noticed that she was blacking out.

Optimus picked up on the sudden drop in alertness and tried to rouse her, at first with words, then he took a hand off the wheel again and poked her, then lightly shook her shoulder, then a more violent shake until he gave up and sent a com to his Unit alerting them to the fact he needed them to pull off at the next junction.

They all sent back to confirmation, Ironhide grumbling at the end that the sire of Mrs Barnes was leaking oral fluid on his interior, but it went mostly ignored.

The next junction was in less than a mile, which he was more than thankful for.

Soon enough he was pulling into a truck stop packed full with Semi models similar to his own, only the vast majority looked a lot… boxier than his own.

He wasn’t sure he was using the correct term there but his translator program was already struggling to keep up at times.

The ‘English Language’ Had so many breaks in it’s own rules and other such nonsense it was causing his spark and processor to become aggravated.

He almost chuckled, always a Data clerk at Spark...

Snapping back to attention he realised he’d somehow known to slow down at one of the few empty truck parking spots.

It was a tight squeeze given the one on the left was slightly over the dividing line, but he had enough turning radius to line up perfectly.
Wasting no more time he popped open his driver side door and had his holoform drop out.

Turning he nearly jolted his whole frame forwards as he found himself face to face with Aria’s holoform.

“She passed out, move.” They demanded, not waiting for him to do what they wanted and instead shoving him out of the way before clambering up onto his driver seat.

Well… a former human would hopefully know how best to treat a fellow human… right?

A flash of white and red drew his attention to Ratchet, who, large shoulder bag at his side, was speed walking up to him, and proceeded to shove him out of the way as well.

Then came Bumblebee, the poor mech had been worried sick for his charge after Fernando grabbed her at the Cosmopolitan, he held the scout back however, yes he understood that the young mech was desperate to see how his charge was, but right now they had to give Ratchet space to work.

“No, no, no! What are you doing? Don’t lie her down like that! We have to put her in the recovery… recovery position! Oh for the love of, get out of my way!”

He couldn’t see inside his cabin at the moment persee, but he felt his CMO’s holoform get shoved out of the way as the white themed twin placed Mrs Barnes into the ‘recovery position’.

Before he knew it said twin had pushed herself back over Ratchet and was snapping her fingers to get his attention. “Smelling salts, they might sell them inside the store over there, here.” They tossed a odd thin plastic rectangle at him, he managed to catch the projectile and looked over the piece in curiosity.

“Just slide the card’s black strip through the card reader and it’ll deal with paying for the salts if you find them, if not, get her a cup of coffee… actually, get me and Wren some too, I’ll have an extra black latte and she’ll have a mocha latte with cream, get Mikaela something you think sounds nice... a Macchiato or something.”

He wasn’t sure if he was supposed to know what those words meant, or if it was better just to nod and hope he got this request right.

He decided on the later.

He caught sight of Ironhide, Jazz and Mrs Madsen standing together a ways away in the normal parking area, Jazz seemed to be holding the woman up somewhat in their own journey to the brightly lit store that seemed like such a drastic contradiction to the endless darkness and hundreds of thousands of stars above it felt unnerving.

He still remembered in his own sparkling vorns, when he marveled at the mere sight of a picture of an alien species.

And now here he was, walking into a ‘Seven Eleven’ on a planet so excessively alien yet strangely similar to the Cybertron he knew in his younglinghood.

The man behind the counter looked disheveled, and only half alert, not even reacting to the chime of the bell as the sliding doors opened and he entered, Ironhide, Jazz and Mrs Madsen were already up one of the Isles, the lady picking up a number of small packages.

Turning his attention back to the man behind the counter he asked. “Excuse me good sir, do you
sell smelling salts?” What even were those? To his understanding the mineral humans called ‘salt’ did not have an odour.

The man shook his head slowly.

Option two then. “Then do you sell Coffee?”

The man nodded and pointed to a machine just of to the side from the counter. “Ah I see, thank you.”

Stepping over he felt an odd sense of dread fill him.

The screen lit up. ‘What would you like to drink?’

He didn’t want to drink anything himself, but he assumed the message wasn’t exactly aimed at an Alien like him, so he pressed the button labeled ‘Latte’.

Then he was asked if he wanted ‘milk’ a quick search revealed it was… the lactations of a ‘bovine’ sweet Primus humans actually drank that? And put it in their food and drinks?

Organics truly baffled him.

A tap on his shoulder jolted him once more from his musings.

Turning he found Bumblebee again, the scouts gaze was focused with pinpoint accuracy at the tiled floor.

Before he could speak, a single written message came over their shared com-link, and all Optimus could do was utter out. “You have a what in your back seat?”

Las Vegas

The Cosmopolitan proceeded to blaze into the early morning, the heat so unbearable the entire strip was practically desolate, save those trying to get a better picture of the blazing husk on their mobile phones.

A police cruiser rolled to a stop just outside the quarantine zone, it’s engine cutting out as the driver stepped out, their greying black hair pulled back into a loose ponytail under their cap, which they knocked up higher on their head with the flick of a finger as they let off a low whistle at the mangled, melted husk of what was one of the most high end hotels on the strip. “Droga… you think they all got out in time partner?” The officer remarked, glancing over to said partner who was busy sliding out of the passenger side door.

The man who rose from the patrol car turned his attention to his long time partner, his tone monotone as ever as he replied. “Highly unlikely, early reports suggest that the building was hit repeatedly by high explosives, and that the building caught alight quickly, likely significant damage was done to the internal sprinkler system, other reports are suggesting that there is a worryingly high body count in what they can seen of the lobby alone, apparently there was a stampede to get out.”

The female officer hissed under her breath, their partner glanced to her for a moment before turning his attention back on the building. “The local fire department have deemed the building too unstable to look for possible survivors, so attention is focused on surviving witnesses and the helicopter that crashed on the Eastern side of the building.” He rattled off, looking around them
before his attention focused on where the remains of the grounded helicopter could be seen.

His partner nodded along to his statements before reaching up to pat him on the shoulder. “Well, the chief sent us to help, better see what we can do…”

Her partner nodded, and the two set forwards.

It was half an hour before they found a credible witness.

A number of people who’d apparently come out to see what was going on had apparently seen a ‘demon’ in the smoke not long after the chopper had reportedly gone down.

Her partner thanked them, and then once they were out of earshot made note of their intoxication.

The german woman’s English wasn’t the best, but she was able to get across what she had seen and heard.

She’d heard a high pitched whistle, had looked up to see the source, and from a mile away from the Hotel, had watched something large strike one of the top floors and detonate, blowing out a large chunk of the building and causing flaming material to rain down on the city street below.

“Something with an explosive payload then… those floors were normal hotel rooms, many of which were booked out to tourist families at the time…” Her partner muttered, jotting down what the woman had told them before she’d gone off, apparently after seeing the initial strike she’d gone back inside the casino she had left to call the police about what had happened, and had only a few minutes before finally coming back out of the casino.

Over the next few hours they worked alongside the local police department and a good chunk of fellow drafts from across the state to get as many witness testimonies as possible.

Then something changed.

Black vans began appearing on the surrounding streets, their blackout windows obscuring those inside.

She felt her partner tense before he nudged her. “FBI has arrived, they’re taking over the investigation.”

That was their cue to step back, she was able to get the local chief’s attention, passing their collected data over, before both slowly made their way back to their police car.

As she let the engine come back on, she glanced over to where the helicopter was cordoned off, taking the initiative she steered them past it.

Her partner, picking up on what she was doing, did his thing, before giving his partner a slow nod.

It wasn’t until they’d left the city behind that her partner’s form flickered out of existence that she spoke. “So… what’d you find?”

“It… it was one of my kind… I think… there was no evidence of someone having been in the cockpit when it crashed… it was piloting itself…” The radio replied, she felt her seat lower a bit.

Pursing her lips she let go of the wheel with one hand to pat the now empty passenger seat. “Well… at least we know you’re not the only one on Earth…”

“Yes… but… is… if that was one of my kind… does that mean… I was like them? If… If I had my
memories… would I have…”

“Hey, hey, none of that, I know you better than my own wardrobe. I know you wouldn’t of done such a horrid thing. Let’s focus on the positives, they’re dead now.”

“Which means that something else killed them… something that left these.” The centre of the dashboard split apart, revealing a screen behind.

She glanced at it, and watched as the 3D model of the downed chopper materialised, the back rotor and the underside highlighted and then enlarged, showing the deep gouges left in both parts.

“Those look like…”

“Claw marks? Just like the ones left on the underside of Air Force One not even a week ago.”

“Which you think means…”

“Whatever attacked Air Force One, slaughtered the helicopter attacking the hotel, and reportedly also damaged a military jet that had been flying between the buildings and has not been seen since…”

“But why the hotel? Why kill so many?”

“Annie, if I had the answers to all of this I would tell you… but it’s evident this was no mere ‘terrorist attack’ like the news is already reporting. This is something else.”

“Something you want to get to the bottom of?”

“…”

“What’s wrong?”

“I don’t want you to get hurt…”

“Prowl…”

“Please, listen to me before you try and argue… you saw what they did… I… I don’t want to lose the one of the very, very few people I can trust on this planet.”

She felt her heart twist at his admission, the fear in his tone was painful, but she knew she had to reassure him. “Prowl, I may be passed my prime, but, that doesn’t mean I’m not gonna stand by your side every step of the way. We’ve been in enough shoot-outs over the years to surely have proved that to you, right?”

“Yes but this is something different! Kevlar can stop bullets, but incendiary missiles?!”

“Prowl.” Her tone was warning, but he wasn’t done.

“Don’t, we both know you’re not immortal Annie, I don’t want to say goodbye to you because of my stupid search…”

“Prowl!” She snapped, he went silent. “Trying to reunite with your kind isn’t stupid . Wanting to know who you are isn’t stupid . And of course I know you’ll outlive me, likely by thousands if not millions of years, but please, don’t try and stop me from helping you. You know that’s a fight you won’t win.”
Her partner fell silent for a few moments before the seat belt pulled across her chest tightened a bit
the only hug he dared give her with his actual form.

She felt her stress ease, knowing he had conceded, she knew he’d try and convince her again to
step out of harm's way, but he’d been trying the same tune since as long as she’d known him as
sentient.

So far, she’d stubbornly not moved an inch.

But, she could tell it was different now.

She wasn’t young anymore, and this, this attack, it changed the game entirely.

They’d report in with their own chief back in Jasper, hopefully Sheriff Rodriguez would let them
have the day off.

After all, nothing ever happened in Jasper Nevada.

Miles away, a different police cruiser was racing down a separate highway, engine roaring as he
shot down the empty stretch.

Anger churned his tank, replacing the energon that should of been there, had he had access to
Energon.

Nested within was his charge, the little minicon was tucked away in his back seat, the shake of his
servo had spread, now the entire limb shock without the minicons control.

That damn freak had abandoned them, vanished after the first strike and not been seen since.

His anger wasn’t the only thing racing around inside him, making it hard to focus on the road
ahead.

There was also an unhealthy level of fear.

Whatever that… that thing had been… it had been able to take out Blackout in a single strike.

Starscream, the fragging coward he was, was still online, but online was a debatable term given the
condition he’d last seen the second in command in.

At first everything seemed to of gone so well.

The plan had been simple, fire bomb the human hotel the freak had claimed would be the other
freaks hiding spot, and wait for the Autobots to engage them, wipe out the mechs in their
confusion, and then head for the Allspark.

Only no Autobots showed up, other than Bumblebee, the damn scout had rushed out of the
building’s underground parking, but hadn’t stuck around, racing away in the chaos.

He’d been ordered by Starscream to make chase.

He’d barely gotten a block after the Autobot Scout when something else arrived.

He’d heard it first over the shared com-link.

That shrill cry that rattled the glass of his cab even at the distance he was at.
He didn’t dare turn back, but the distraction was enough for him to lose the scout in the mass chaos erupting around the building as flaming debris had rained down over everything, every explosion that landed sending molten shrapnel in every direction.

Blackout was struck first, by whatever that creature had been.

The mech was doomed the moment that thing got his rear rotor.

He’d not been stupid enough to stick around after that, racing as fast as he could down the first road that wasn’t jammed full of humans try to do the same.

He hadn’t survived the war this long by fighting unwinnable fights.

And so, here he was, racing as fast as he could to put as much distance as possible between himself and whatever had attacked his comrades.

He was in such a panic he didn’t realise he was being followed.

It was only when Frenzy muttered they were being followed that he thought to check his scanners.

Sure enough, two airborne hostiles, one ahead of the other, were heading directly towards him at a cruising altitude of only a few hundred metres off the ground.

He felt Frenzy huddle even tighter into himself in terror as he tried to put on more speed, at this rate he’d burn through his reserves before they caught him.

He’d have to slow to conserve fuel, but that would mean they would catch up, and he was in no condition to fight off two when only one offlined Blackout and sent Starscream packing.

He had to stop now.

“Frenzy, stay close.”

The minicon didn’t have time to respond before he applied his brakes and cut out his engine, his tires squealed as his momentum propelled him further along the highway, the rubber of his tires burning up into a thick cloud of smoke.

Eventually though, he managed to come to a full stop, and slowly transformed, the empty highway giving him no cover from the forms continuing their approach, sporadically blocking out the dwindling stars and approaching glow of the planets star.

There was no denying they were heading right for him now.

Frenzy hid within his armour as the avian femmes landed, their talons gouging into the asphalt as their wings whipped up torrents of air to stabilise them on the ground.

They shook for a moment, the larger of the two recovering first, the smaller bending over, hacking out a cloud of smoke and ash that was swiftly blown away on the breeze.

The smaller ones frame was singed, the metal warped by incomprehensible heat, the black visor that obscured her optics cracked, a piece even then falling to the asphalt, revealing a screwed up optic beneath that flickered open to reveal a seemingly fluctuating optic, it’s colours dancing across the spectrum.

The one from the hotel.
The smallest one had taken out Blackout…

The larger one stood between him and their ailed comrade, they had a few dents here and there, a single minor energon line seemed to of torn open underneath the femmes chassis plating, leaving a slow trickle of faintly glowing purple tinted fluid to leak out.

It was the larger one who spoke. “Barricade, correct?” Their tone was cold, their expression neutral.

He simply nodded, keeping his weapon systems on idle.

Only with his nod did their expression break into a smirk. “Excellent. We have a proposition for you.”

He went to shut down anything that they were going to say, but the smaller of the two fell into another coughing fit, the joints in their pedes buckling and sending them down to one knee joint.

The only reaction from the larger was to spread out one of their wide wings to obscure their comrade from view.

Once the coughing fit seemed to subside he replied. “You must be fragged in the helm if you think I’d side with an Autobot.”

A pained laugh came from the smaller hidden femme, followed swiftly by an equally pained groan.

Again they went ignored by the larger femme. “We are not Autobots. My request, if you accept, is simple. Monitor my brother, Fernando, and report everything directly to me. Oh and if he does something stupid, do try and at least keep him alive. As much as I’d love to see him buried six feet under, I’m not in a situation where that would be desirable yet.”

Ah, so this one was the older sister, and apparently she wanted her brother offline too.

He snorted. “What’s in it for me?”

Their smirk widened at his remark, their faceplates were a strange red colour, but far away was he from insulting the femme who from his previous experience, likely had an advantage over him. “Ira deactivates the virus she put in that little bot you have with you, and when we get around to purging the Decepticons from this planet, we’ll spare the both of you.”

That forced him to pause.

He felt Frenzy continue to rattle within the gap in his plating.

He didn’t deny they likely could perform such a slaughter, if the one behind this one was able to nearly take out Starscream and offline Blackout in such quick succession… From what he could see, the only damage to them had been caused by the heat, not his fellow Decepticon, save a few nicks where smaller bullets seemed to of pinged off the the armour.

And yet. “You want me to become a traitor to the Decepticon cause?”

The larger femme huffed. “After tonight, it’s in quiet the pathetic shambles really. All things considered.” She remarked. “Siding with us is your best option in the long run. So long as you prove both useful, and, loyal .” The last word was pressed, the femme seeming to rise up somehow even higher.
He tried not to show that the small method of intimidation was effective, it was unnerving enough to have this femme outright tower over him by nearly twice his height.

He glanced around them, he could transform, could gun it down the highway and get away.

But they would likely follow, dog him until he ran out of fuel and had no other option than to let them drag him off… or worse, offline him then and there for proving to be not worth their time.

The femme nodded. “Oh! Where are our manners.” They stretched out their wing. “Kia De La Estrada, and this is my comrade, Ira Halloran.” Their other wing finally shifted again away from their downed companion. “Taking a page out of Icarus’ book, she flew too close to the flames and got herself badly burned. Any other day of the year she’d not be caught dead like this until she’s crashed at least six bars.”

“…Fu…ck… you…” The downed red, white and orange femme groaned from where she was, whatever bite in her tone there likely normally was, was significantly lacking.

Barricade held himself silent for a few moments, pondering his options.

Perhaps there was a third option? He’d have to test the Energon though first. “I want to have a period of deliberation with myself before I agree to this, am I able to request that?”

He watched as the slight tilt of the larger femmes helm, shifted further to the side as they somehow managed to rise up higher on their pedes, as if pondering his suggestion herself.

“Hmmmm, and you’d tell us your decision?” There was humour in her tone, hopefully that meant she was at least humouring his request.

He nodded. “If you give me a rendezvous point to meet at in… five cycles… and I show up, I will accept… if not, then consider that me turning you down.”

“And if you use that rendezvous point to stage a trap with what’s left of the Decepticons?” Kia shot back.

He’d already thought of that.

Hopefully Frenzy wouldn’t loathe him too much for what he was about to do.

Before the minicon could escape, he reached inside and in the minicons surprise and current limited ability, what with the virus coursing through him, he offered the hissing minicon out. “Soundwave would personally have my helm removed if Frenzy was offline… if I stage a trap, which I wouldn’t, you’ll be morally justified in offlineing Frenzy, and sealing my fate at the servos of Soundwave if you don’t offline me yourself.”

He heard the one designated Ira mutter something in a different human language, but he hadn’t the care to translate it as the more pressingly capable femme let off another sound of contemplation as she regarded the minicon thrashing in his servo like a trapped scraplet.

Then, after a few moments of pause, the femme smirked and their wing stretched out, not to take the minicon, not that they likely could with the massive wings that replaced their arms, but to instead bump against the servo hanging to his side.

“Keep the minicon, Ira will tend to his virus once she’s recovered, and you’ve joined us. The rendezvous will be… oooh…. Where to rendezvous… ah! We’re on Route 93 at the moment, follow this highway to Kingman, then take the 40 East through Arizona, head South at
Albuquerque onto Route 25, until you get to San Antonio, from there take the 380 East, then head for the 208 and…”

“Fah fuck’s sake Kia! Just tell him where tah go! Yah ain’ ah bloomin’ satnav!” Ira snapped, before breaking out into a whole new coughing fit.

Kia just huffed at this, but apparently took their companions advice. “Grape Creek, just outside of San Angelo. Be there in five days at midnight with the intention of joining, or don’t show up at all. There, happy Ira?”

Their companion had nothing else to say, so Kia turned back to him, and nudged his servo with her wing again. “Are we going to shake on that? Or not?”

Snapping back to the present he gave a dull nod and carefully wrapped his digits around the strut, it was oddly textured, grooves and ridges running across the wide conical strut. After a moment, the motion of shaking servos was performed and he let go.

The femme stepped back, and without seemingly a single care, delivered a minor kick to the side of their companion with the back of their odd pede. “You’ve had your rest, get up.”

A rolling hiss came from the downed femme as she used her own wing struts to push off the ground, forcing her back fully up onto her hind pedes.

It’s the first time he actually gets a chance to look over this one.

Covered in armour that curved and flared like sharp ridges, built light from what he could see, only one layer of platting, leaving a good chunk of the protoform beneath exposed, the other femme seemed to have less of their protoform exposed in comparison.

Overall they looked just as unnatural as that Fernando mech.

Which in a way made sense since Kia was apparently his older sibling.

Frenzy continued to thrash in his grip as the avian built femmes stepped back further before each one unfurled their wings.

In a few powerful beats, that whipped up a cloud of dust that billowed out around them, they were airborne, and soon enough, disappearing into the horizon.

Leaving him to stand there for a while longer, Frenzy even stilled after a time, allowing him to carefully tuck the minicon back inside as he shifted back into his vehicle and continued on his way down the highway.

He waited for the minicon to explode at him, to lash out to tear into his interior.

But the little mech just curled up in the back seat, servo gripping their other still shaking arm, it had spread farther, already causing a rattle in his chassis.

He had five days to make it to Grape Creek…

If he didn’t accept… he didn’t want to think of what would happen to Frenzy.

They’d boxed him into this… yes he knew it was his best shot at making it off this planet online… but what was gonna be the long term cost? Was there going to be one?

Or was he going to be found out and slagged by his own side?
He jolted slightly when he heard the little minicon stutter out something.

He heard what he said, but didn’t reply.

How was he supposed to reply to the mech calling out for a bot long gone.

The utter brought up painful memories for himself as well.

After a while, Frenzy stuttered out the old designation again, it was only after hearing it again that he spoke. “She’s not coming Frenzy… we both know that. Nor is Soundwave…”

There was something unspoken then, something they both knew.

Something neither of them were either willing to accept, or move on from.

The high way ahead of them remained empty, the human population having likely shut down and stored themselves away in their residences given what he was leaving behind.

Even from this distance, he could see a glow in the distance, where darkness still clung to the Horizon.

It had all gone wrong so quickly, and now…

Now it was a whole new game.

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**Woo! Things are gonna get interesting from here on out! So many ideas I'm really looking forwards to writing!**

**Hope you all enjoyed this latest edition, until next time!**

**Moon**

**A piece I did myself for the scene on the highway**
Chapter 17

'Looks fearfully at chapter 20' How... how did I write all of that in just eleven days?! Oh well, not really gonna complain, it feels good to crank out an almost 5,000 word chapter in under two weeks again. This chapter here was a lot of fun for me to write, and I hope you all enjoy!

“No.”

“Aria.”

“I said, no, I’m am not dealing with this.” She snapped, hands carding through her white and grey hair as they continued this back and forth.

Optimus wanted to press again, but realised this wasn’t the time.

They would keep this back and forth going right into the next night at this rate, and this issue needed to be dealt with, so he instead regarded Bumblebee’s back seats again.

Laying across the leather were two humans, an adult female and a young infant, their bodies mostly covered by a blanket Bumblebee had apparently picked up on the way to meet up with them to give them some extra warmth after the two had both slipped unconscious after their eventful night.

The adult wasn’t so much the issue, it was the child that had caused Aria to throw up the red flag and vehemently refuse to deal with the situation, though she gave no strong reason as to why.

Which was a bit of an issue because, out of the current head count, she was really the only one who could help.

Ratchet was still tending to Mrs Madsen and the sparkling, the only living sparkling taking precedence over a single human infant. Ironhide was in a foul mood, and Jazz, they really didn’t want the mech getting attached to the child and leading it to being drawn into their war, enough of that had already happened in the last day and a half, he was certainly not ready for any more death on his conscience, especially with the human news reports coming in every few minutes from Las Vegas.

Bumblebee stood next to him, tentatively glancing between him, Aria, and his stowaways.

He regarded Aria’s holoform for a few more moments, his gaze catching on the streak of red running down the left side of her neck, even her holoforms ear showed it had been shot, though with how he hair had been styled, he couldn’t see how the damage was represented in this form. Leaving only what was slowly turning the high white collar of her padded coat a maroon red, visible.

Either she hadn’t noticed, or simply didn’t care, either way, her current demeanor was somewhere between hostile, and exhausted.

The amount she was rubbing her left eye was enough to tell that.

But this was a time sensitive situation, by the next night, they would of crossed into the next state.

“Mrs Orichiono, please.” He implored her.
She replied with a long groan, pressed the pads of her fingers under the sunglasses she wore and rubbed at her eyes before hissing at him. “Fine. Just, shut up.”

A withering glare was shot to his scout as she stepped up to his back seats door.

The door swung open a little too fast, the metal of the door banging against the front driver side doors plating.

The sound was sharp, and jolted the woman inside awake.

“Ha!” The woman exclaimed, her hold still on the child as she spun to face the origin of the sound.

Bright blue eyes widened in sheer terror as she took in the holoform standing before her.

Optimus felt himself tense, ready to take action.

Aria stood ramrod straight before the open door, scowl as fierce as a storm making up her expression.

Whatever the woman tried to say died on her tongue as she scrambled out of his scout front first, rolling onto the ground between him and Aria.

She still clutched the boy to her chest, who merely whimpered in his sleep against her chest.

And then the woman was kneeling, pressing her head to the ground as she shook violently as she tried to get out whatever she was trying to say.

Clearly that was not what Aria wanted, snapping two fingers together, the woman froze stiff, a ragged breath passing her lips before falling deathly silent as she pressed herself even further to the ground, the blanket still hanging off her lower back and the back seat.

There was a beat of silence before Aria spoke, her tone unflinching and sharp. “Louise Garner.”

“Please don’t kill me!” The woman erupted upwards, her tear tracked face smearing mascara with dirt and soot.

The woman froze again a moment later, eyes going wide and breath becoming ragged.

He hadn’t even taken a step forwards to try and soothe the woman before Aria had reached down, grabbed the woman, apparently named Louise Garner, by the shoulder and hauled her to her feet.

Louise flinched, and then gasped as the padded white coat Aria wore was draped over her shoulders in place of the blanket, and the arms it had previously been around, grabbed the front of her two piece suit and began resetting the collar.

“Louise Garner. You are one of our top employees from our former hotel the Cosmopolitan. Impeccable attendance record, highly regarded by staff and frequent guests alike, a trusted employee who has kept mine, my sister, and our friends secret so well for so long. That is you, correct?” The woman nodded slowly though otherwise remained frozen in place. “Why in the name of Satan himself, do you think I would I kill you then?” She purred before she gave one last pull to straighten the front of the women's waist coat. “Your uniform? You were in a dangerous situation and performed to the best of your abilities, we’re not going to kill you over something you couldn’t avoid. Perhaps you believe that leaving your post to help Bumblebee here, Mr Barnes, and this boy get out safely? The building was coming down around you, we aren’t going to fault you for that. We’re not monsters.”
He watched as the woman seemed to lose some of the tension, only for it to snap back as she was pulled into a tight hug, and something was whispered into her ear, something his holoform was not able to catch.

Aria pulled away after a few moments and took a long breath. “The child will be in your care until a relative is either located, or a suitable adoptive family. Understood?”

“Yes Miss Orichiono.”

“Good, now, go get yourself something to eat.” She reached into her pocket and passed her the same card she’d given him to get the coffee that nor sat in a group on his scouts hood.

The woman made herself scarce, heading straight for the Seven Eleven.

Something seemed to dawn on Aria only then however, as she proceeded to call after the woman. “And get us a couple of Sirloins!” The shout seemed to reach Mrs Garner as she turned her head to nod before continuing her speed walk towards the brightly lit building.

Only once she was out of earshot, Aria turned to the cups of coffee, pulled the plastic lid off one, and took a test sip, only to pull it back away and put the lid back on.

Her expression was sour, but made no comment as she set the coffee cup down and sighed, running a hand through her hair again before changing focus to the pale grey sleeveless top she’d been wearing under the coat.

Or more accurately, the blood now pooling against it.

A look of annoyance crossed her features before the holoform simply flickered out of existence.

Optimus glanced to Bumblebee then, the scout looking just as confused by the situation as he felt.

He turned his attention back to the coffee she’d requested he get, picking one up, he noted it was still warm…

Surely it couldn’t hurt to try?

Lifting the cup to his own lips he took a taster sip.

And spat the contents directly onto the tarmac of the parking lot.

Vile, absolutely vile.

He saw Bumblebee reaching to grab one of the others, the scouts own curiosity getting the better of him.

Acting on pure reflex he managed to snag the young mechs arm just before he could grab one. “Don’t.”

Bumblebee took the hint and nodded, though still proceeded to pick them all up and tilt his enquirement on what to do about them.

Thinking for a moment he decided to pick up the cup he knew he’d had made set without any alterations, that was the one for Mikaela, perhaps it was a human thing to enjoy something that tasted of burning. How had they even managed to pull that off to begin with?

He nodded himself, giving Bumblebee the silent go ahead to go and check on Mikaela, it was no
secret the scout had been worried sick for his charge, and had been barely holding back on just rushing to check on her.

Her own sire was still out cold on his passenger seat after all, apparently Mr Barnes was well, just taking his time coming back around to the land of the living.

And suddenly, Optimus found himself standing alone.

He found his gaze turning to his trailer, the container that currently hid the Harpies bipedal form from the outside world.

He doubted they were in a talking mood.

But it wouldn’t hurt to get a better look at the damage they had sustained…

His doubts that this was a good idea where already creeping to the forefront of his processor thick and fast by the time he reached the small human side door that was handley part of the left side, behind his own driver side door.

He doubted they would become any more hostile than they already were if he told them he just wished to check on them.

Ratchet remained preoccupied with the sparkling after all.

Taking a moment to steady his holoform, he reached up and knocked on the metal door, the sound rung out across the car-park and despite being a hardened war veteran, he flinched for a moment at the sound of groaning metal that came from within not a moment after.

A low non-verbal sound from inside was what he took as a cue they were at least somewhat still online.

Turning the handle he opened the door, taking a moment to take in the pitch black within the trailer.

Every instinct inside was telling him not to go in.

But he could feel their gaze on him now, daring him to turn away, to back out.

Even if he couldn’t see them, he could feel the challenge in their gaze.

He was not a mech who backed down from such a challenge.

There was a step up into the trailer that he ascended with ease.

He pulled the door closed behind him, and it was only as the last sliver of light was cut off that Aria spoke. “Can we help… you?” Her voice was strained, more so than even before, the weight of her exhaustion was heavy and their entire frame seemed to be sluggish in its motions.

Turning to the sound of her voice he caught the silhouette of their helm twisting ever so slightly to the side as it rose off the uneven floor.

And that was when he spotted the muted glow of died energon that was spattered across the side of her helm that had been turned to regard him from their previous position curled away from him.

A glance further down the trailer revealed a similar muted glow against the metal of the trailer, but the actually injury was hidden by the black mass that was their form.
Taking a moment to find himself he replied. “I thought I’d check on you. All things considered, I thought you’d appreciate us showing some degree of concern regarding your well being.”

The burst of hot air that blasted over him nearly knocked him down as they huffed and shifted, before hissing and shifting back the other way with a mutter of something he couldn’t catch but sounded much like an apology.

“We’re doing just fine.” Aria replied after a few more moments of pause.

He wasn’t making any progress addressing Aria. “Wren? How are you holding up?”

No response.

“She’s sleeping.” Aria stated, there was an irritation in their tone, unimpressed with his attempt to get around her.

Before he could reply, a low vibration came from their frame and their helm dropped to the floor of the trailer just in front of him.

In the darkness, he could see a faint glow illuminating what was visible of their faceplates, it seemed to flicker every few seconds as their helm tilted to the right before finally coming to rest at an admittedly very uncomfortable looking angle considering how the rest of their frame seemed to be laying.

Another burst of air, slower this time, whatever systems they did have inside them seemed to be slowing down as well.

They were clearly on the cusp of recharge at this point.

Taking a gamble, he shuffled against the side of the trailer, and eased himself down to the ground against it.

His actual form was not meters away, he could provide them company while they rested.

It was likely their only escape at present from the injuries they’d suffered.

He’d spent millenia in war… he knew what a blessing it was to recharge after receiving a wound that, while not fatal, was still maddening to deal with.

But now it wasn’t he who was injured, but the twins, even before the Golden age of Cybertron had begun falling apart he’d found himself enjoying the platonic company of others while he rested.

Hopefully the twins would allow him at least to try and offer the crystal branch this way, so to speak.

Besides the minute rustle of the metal feathers, and the slow rise and fall of their overall frame, they seemed unaffected by his continued presence.

Likely because they seemed to of both fully slipped into recharge by this point, the faint glow coming from their hidden optics all but gone.

All that was left was the mute glow of their stained energon, the pale violet it leaked barely lighting the metal around what injuries he could see.

Besides the obvious two, now that he could take the time to look, there were numerous other cuts on their frame, mostly small gashes, running together most of them.
From the fight at the base of the dam most likely.

Voices began whispering behind his audios in the silence that surrounded him.

He should of tried to do something… he’d just stood there, watching the Harpies fight off the other Avian mech.

As much as Kia had held a strong stance afterward, there was no escaping the notion she too had suffered some damage.

They had the twins though, the femmes worst hit by the fighting…

And by the negligence of a select few humans.

He wouldn’t say it out loud, but to discover the origin of such a gruesome injury, as the one that had practically crippled the twins, to be that of the humans who to him otherwise, despite some failings, seemed capable of a great many things, had left him with a sense that perhaps…

Perhaps humanity was not safe to make full contact with.

Now that he sat there, in the darkness, his processor was becoming active, churning up scenarios were this could all go horribly wrong.

The Harpies warnings had been clear enough.

_They_ were the aliens on this world.

_They_ were the ones who did not understand how it worked.

_They_ were the few at the disadvantage against the many. A many that was seven billion strong against his four and a sparkling.

And their newfound allies were begrudging in their allegiance at best.

It was not a good scenario.

That was without considering what had become of the Allspark, the ancient relic of their home, now lying dormant within the frame of a femme whose intentions were as opaque as her visor.

As he found himself slipping into his musings, he didn’t even realise he was beginning to slip into recharge as well.

So many eons fretting over the war and his soldiers had left him with such a trait that, even with his processor working at full speed, it could just as quickly fall into recharge.

Before he even knew it, he was balancing precariously on the edge, it took only a few moments more to fall completely over said edge.

He hadn’t even realised how exhausted he’d been himself.

Even as he slipped away, his holoform remained, slumping over further against the wall.

Unbeknownst to him, the glow of optics flickered back online some time later.

Their pitch black visor split at its central point and slipped away, bathing the holoform in a blue green hue as the Harpies regarded the holoform.
The door to the side of the truck creaked open, and the visor snapped back into place just in time for a few packets of sirloin steak were tossed inside.

Louise followed after, the white jacket still on her as she shuffled slowly into the dark and began opening the first of the packets. Though with Aria’s holoform deactivated, the generated blood had vanished, hiding any trace of it’s previous dirtied state.

The Harpies sluggishly shuffled forwards, and opened their mouth wide enough for the small bio-lights within to signal what Louise had to do.

For a few short minute, steak after steak was swallowed whole, the tiny meal barely doing anything in the long run, but it settled their tanks for the time.

Aria whispered a small thanks after the woman after she’d picked up the now empty packets.

Louise turned to face the giant mechanical beings, she took a breath, and performed the Triage Salute, two claps against the left shoulder with the right hand, and a slight bow of the head. “No my lady. Thank you. You saved my life. Feeding you in a time of need is what I am here to do for you.”

In the darkness, it was impossible to see the smirk that had formed on their features. “A good start… but I have an funny feeling you will do more than just feed us from this day forwards… Though Wren is not currently awake, I believe she will have no complaint of what I am to do right now.”

Louise seemed to catch what the white themed twin was implying, her blue eyes widening and her body going ramrod. “My lady?”

“Consider yourself promoted. From this day forward you will go by…” A small knowing smile formed on her features then as the regarded the woman, brunette hair cut short, thin athletic figure, and the slightest twang of a British National who’d lived in Las Vegas for five years. “Lena Oxton.”

The newly renamed woman bowed and performed the salute again her terror slipping away as she accepted the new position given to her.

She could not afford to be timid now.

She had to become brave.

One had to be when they stood as one of the Harpies Elites.

Afterall, within the day, her old life will be completely erased.

Those who know of her will be told she had perished in the collapse of the Cosmopolitan, the victim of a suspect heinous terrorist attack, another face on the memorial walls that would likely crop up if they hadn’t already.

It was similar for all Elites, though they so far had just been declared missing people, presumed dead, and the searches for their bodies called of as a result of lack of evidence to point authorities in any good direction.

One couldn’t have the baggage of their old lives when serving the Harpies.

It got in the way.
And if there was one thing that the Harpies were truly brutally efficient over, it was eliminating what got in their way.

Which made her somewhat lucky in the matter she had little of a life to speak of, especially after the Harpies had personally ‘removed’ her husband from the equation a year ago so that she no longer had to waste money on makeup to cover his...

There was a small clatter on the ground as the Harpies shifted, Lena understood what had just been created for her, they’d be solid projections for now, but they’d work just as well.

Shuffling forwards she picked up the two hand guns, feeling their weight in her hands to get a good feel of them.

Only when she placed them in the holsters the white twin generated around her hips did Aria speak again. “Remember, there are those in this world who will want you dead to clear the path to us. You will receive full weapons training from Ana and Amelie, and hand to hand combat from Winston, but until then, you will have your wits, instincts, and our orders to keep yourself alive, follow them like a fool would a holy scripture, and you’ll be just fine.”

Lena nodded and performed the salute again, only now however, did she add the new part of the salute that only Elites were permitted to, though it was optional, she felt it right. “For the might of the Triage.”

She did not need to see that Aria was smiling to know she was.

After a few minutes, their helm slumped down again and they finally slipped into recharge in the knowledge they had at least one loyal ally to guard them.

It was as the Sun hung high in the midday sky that they moved out from the parking lot.

Lena Oxton had moved to Prime’s cab with the young boy, who’s name was Leroy, whilst Mikaela, who’d finally woken up, had been dragged by both her father and Bumblebee’s holoform to his alt mode, and now rode with her guardian.

For a few hours, Lena contented herself with keeping Leroy entertained and getting him to eat and drink a few things, the boy seemed to be handling the trauma from the night before well enough, but it was obvious he was more than a little out of it after everything.

Optimus almost spoke a few times, but struggled to think of something to say.

It wasn’t difficult to spot the loaded holsters now half hidden under the white high collar jacket she still wore.

She also seemed… different… her timid stature was all but gone.

Erased even.

A very disconcerting prospect.

He continued to lead the procession of his small group.

The highway was filled with traffic now, cars cutting between his unit as they were slowly spread further apart by the laws of the road, as a Semi he was not permitted in the fastest lane like the rest of his unit, so he did his best to remain in the slowest lane for their convenience.
Every gaze Mrs Garner took at his dashboards clock however made him worry, twitch slightly, and when they were behind another semi, even move into the second lane to overtake the slower moving vehicle.

Finally after he overtook a vehicle designated for luxury camping, he broke the silence. “Mrs Gar-”

“Oxton. It’s Lena Oxton.”

Leroy looked up from where he was playing with her fingers.

His holoforms attention jerked away from the road for a moment before he remembered himself and set his focus ahead, it certainly wouldn’t do to cause a scene by crashing.

“I… I don’t understand.”

“Louise Garner was announced as deceased. Crushed in the collapse of the Cosmopolitan. My name is Lena Oxton now.”

“Ah… I see.”

“No. No you don’t.” She didn’t elaborate further, and went back to making strange noises at Leroy, which seemed to get a laugh out of the boy as she pressed her finger quickly against his nose.

Were all humans this cryptic?

Or did he just have foul luck?

He sent said enquiry to Ratchet, the medic replied soon after that he did indeed seem to have foul luck.

He decided against commenting back, and focused on the road ahead, he had a general idea of where they were heading, the city Monterrey, at least, that had been where Aria told him to go, apparently Kia had contacts in Mexico that would get them across the border and all the way to the city, but beyond that, they had to travel alone again to the coast, only when they were in Monterrey would the location of the boat would be revealed, to decreases chances of ambush apparently.

Aria had been quite certain that they’d run into trouble.

‘Word spreads fast no matter how tight a grip you have on their throats.’

He chose to not question too deeply the implication there.

The human term of walking on thin ice felt very apt considering their current situation.

It was as the sun was starting to head for the distant horizon, bathing the sky in a menagerie of warm colours that he felt the trailer he was hitched to shift, and a low warble came from inside, with the traffic on the highway thinning, he was able to easily pick up the noise.

He felt Lena stiffen for a moment before glancing to his holoform and announcing. “They’re hungry. We need to stop at the next gas station.”

Taking that as more of an order than a recommendation, he opted to turn off at the next junction that advertised a place for he and his crew to rest up for the night, hopefully with the intention of re-aligning to function on the same time frame as the human populace.

Sure enough, the was an area designated for his kind of alt mode put apart from where the rest of
his unit came to a stop. Almost immediately he caught a flash of white and grey making a beeline for the gas station out of his rear view mirror.

Lena evidently noticed her departing boss as well, considering how quickly she pressed the now sleeping Leroy into his un-expectant arms and near vaulted out of his passenger side to chase after the white themed twin the moment his door was open wide enough for her.

He felt his holoforms teeth grit against one another as he held the young boy, the edges of his clothing were charred in places, cut in others, and clearly nowhere near clean…

The next town they passed he was going to request they get the boy at least a few changes of clothes.

And possibly somehow a shower.

_____________

Fishlake National Forest Utah

The throbbing in his head was a horrid feeling to return to conscious with.

Cracking his eyes open proved ineffective, the darkness around him near absolute sans the odd slightly darker mass shifting around him with the sounds of others also seemingly stirring.

Jamerson shook his head again, trying to get rid of the pain in his head, noting that he was strewn across a hard mat, and his legs were stuck under someone else, pinning him with their larger bulk.

Almost as if sensing that those around him and himself were awake or at least coming too, the doors to the outside world were flung open, blinding them with the light of the outside world.

Two men, heavily built, peered at them, their expressions neutral and rifles on their back.

They didn’t say anything, just stepped back out of the way, taking the doors with them.

He heard someone whimper behind him, probably that teen, Glen.

A few began to shift, but no one was in a hurry to move.

Something not lost on the two.

They stepped out of sight, and were promptly replaced with the frightfully familiar visage of Ira, the size of her head’s adornments prevented her from pushing her head into the structure they were in, but having the psycho peering at them, a feral smirk on her features, was enough to chill his blood.

Ira’s voice was just as he remembered it, heavily accented, Irish, and teetering on that edge that put those who heard it on just as much of an edge. “Oooh~ Jamerson ~ Yah little cocky bitch. Get yah sorry ass ou’ here.”

He felt the weight on his legs shift, he glanced long enough to spy Glen pinning himself to the back and trying to be as small as possible.

He didn’t blame him.

“Don’ ma’e me fuckin’ wait~” The warning was blatant.
Pushing himself up on his legs he found himself with limited head room, forcing him to stoop his head forwards a bit before shuffling out.

Only when he reached the end did he realise he’d been in a semi trucks trailer, and the ramp leading down to where Ira was now standing at full height, Kia was standing just to her side, made his gut twist with just the scowl on her lips alone.

But at this point, he either did as was told, and probably die quickly, or try and run. Something told him the death that he would get for that would be anything but swift.

The talons tearing into the dry Earth was enough of a reason to opt for the quick death.

He didn’t feel like having his head slowly crushed.

Their expressions remained neutral for only a moment, before Kia turned her gaze to Ira. “We should kill him now. He hurt Aria.”

Ira hummed low in agreement, but shook her helm. “Can’, as much as ah wanna gut him and knit his intestines inta ah hat, Aria made it clear he’s hers to deal with.” She smirked as she turned her attention back on him. “Honestly, ah just hope she lets me watch whateva she decides tah do with yah, she always finds tha most creative ways tah put someone out of tha picture~”

It was only as he stared up at her more did he notice that Ira was injured herself.

Trickles of a violet hued liquid seemed to pool and dribble sluggishly down from cuts all over her upper and lower body, the armour she wore was warped in places, and there seemed to be no end to the feathers that slowly fluttered the ground around where she stood, the tiny bristles warped, likely no longer good for producing lift.

Kia was in a better condition, but that on a scale comparing her with Ira wasn’t saying all that much.

Kia humming herself drew his attention back to the present. “True… he’ll try to escape…”

“Unless we have him put unda again.”

It was at this point he noticed that they were missing a certain Monochrome… Harpy. “Where’s the twins?”

The two’s conversation stalled as they turned their attention back to him.

Ira huffed before answering. “Living the high life. Which means~ You’re not gonna have them stepping in our way~”

Not a moment later, in a movement so fast he barely had time to lurch his head back, a woefully sharp blade, coated with a fading blue splatter, was pressed against his throat, not breaking skin, but had he not moved, it certainly would of taken his head clean off.

He heard a round of gasps come from inside the trailer, the others watching, terrified and frozen in place.

Not wanting the attention of the Harpies put on them they all kept to the shadows of the dimly lit trailer.

He couldn’t blame him, his heart was racing in his chest, the blood pounding in ears difficult to
As soon as it had come, the blade was tucked back into the extended wing that had swung at him, he’d nearly been blown over with the motion he realised, maybe that had been what had saved him.

Kia watched on, her expression seemingly indifferent to the actions of her companion.

A chitter from next to one of her talons drew his attention down, slowly, now well aware how easily these Harpies could take his life if he got something wrong.

Hera…

The mechanical Harpy eagle was looking at him, curiosity evident in her gaze as she turned her attention up to the Harpies and chittered again.

Kia spared the eagle a gaze, before nodding, giving the smaller entity the permission she’d been seeking.

Hera jumped forwards then, before shifting into a slow walk, her tail feathers brushing the ground as her wings spread out a bit for balance.

He held his breath as she came to stand before him, rising up to her full height, towering over him.

The motion again was too quick.

Her beak banged straight into his ribs, he swore he heard something crack, before the force sent him sprawling to the ground.

Hera reared high, wings flaring out and flapping as she screeched at him.

Groaning at the pain now coming from his chest, he looked up at her, waiting for the next blow.

It didn’t come, Hera just huffed, ruffled her feathers, turned, and walked back over the Kia.

The smirks on the Harpies features were of the cat catching the canary kind.

Only emphasised when Ira spoke. “Tha’ was fah shootin’ her momma’s ear yah cunt.”

He held his tongue, no way in hell was he gonna apologise for that.

They all deserved far worse, and he knew he’d try and do worse if he had a fucking gun on him, but considering his hand, having been now bandaged, he was in no way able to shoot.

To top that off, he probably had the odd broken rib now.

Just great.

“Winston, take him back to the truck, bring out Glen this time.”

Glen? Why would they want to do with that kid?

The hulking man stepped over to him and seemingly without issue, hoisted him up and off the ground by a swing of his shoulder, he guessed the man was Winston.

He was less than ceremoniously dropped back into the trailer as two other men seemed to drag Glen out of the dark, the teen rambling nonsense and seemingly close to fainting from sheer terror.
He watched on as Glen was deposited directly in front of Ira.

Ira shifted, there was a flash of light and then…

A woman appeared before the teen.

She looked just as banged up as Ira, burn marks covered her in places where cuts and bruises didn’t, her attire torn in places, and hair wild and singed in places.

Was this a…

“Glen Whitmann?”

The poor kid couldn’t of gone more ramrod straight if he tried.

He couldn’t see the projection of Ira from his place, how long had they been able to do this? Make those projections that looked so human?

Glen seemed to whimper and nod at her.

“You know who ah am don’cha? Come on. Say mah name, get it righ’, an ah’ll let yah live.”

Poor kid was shaking like a leaf.

He saw a flash of metal in the light of the setting sun behind them, a shiv knife.

“IRA! Y-you’re Ira Halloran!”

The knife disappeared and she patted him a few times on the cheek with her other hand. “Good boy. You’ll be comin’ with me when we split.”

Split?

Ira pushed Glen out of the way and stalked forwards, the aviator sunglasses she wore focused on them in the trailer.

“Tha rest ah yah have tah joy of being either sent to tha twins, or with Kia. But for now, you all get tah stick together. We still have some things tah do here in tha States.”

He watched as the men from before grabbed Glen under the arms and dragged the frozen stiff teen back to the trailer, and pushing him back inside.

The doors were slammed back shut not a moment later, the vision of the human Ira flickering out of existence being the last thing he saw.

The silence that followed was deafening, only broken by laboured breathing and muttered questions he didn’t bother to try and hear.

They were fucked, they were all so royally fucked.

And that was when music began to play.

Jasper Nevada.

The police station was quiet, the only receptionist was busy writing something down in her note
In the Sheriff’s office, Maria Rodriguez looked at her two deputies over her interlocked fingers, elbows resting pensively on the desk as Prowl finished giving his verbal report, the one that was strictly off the record.

Lord knew no one would believe what he said outside this little sound proof room.

And if they did, well, there was only so much she could do to keep him safe.

Of course Rodriguez knew exactly what Prowl was, she was the only person other than Annie that the Amnesiac alien robot trusted with his true identity. What little of it he knew at least.

Such thoughts were ones she’d pondered over many a slow day, but right now, right now there was certainly a more pressing matter to address.

“You’re absolutely certain that whatever, or whoever it was, that just destroyed the Cosmopolitan Hotel, came from wherever you did?”

The news had been wall to wall coverage of the attack, the death toll just kept on going up and up.

Of course it would… so many people had reportedly been crushed in the stampede alone.

Many likely were killed by the initial attacks, overs as the buildings main tower collapsed… and lord knew a few had reportedly been hit by falling glass and other debris.

Prowl nodded, expression riddled with seemingly a hundred and one different emotions.

Not good, poor kid had too much on his mind.

“Prowl. You may be one of them, but that does not mean you are anything like them. You and Annie are some of the best Deputies I’ve ever had. Don’t you ever forget that.”

They both nodded.

Rodriguez ran a hand through her hair, the odd strand was starting to grey, she was what now? Fifty five? She should call up some of her old friends to check, she never bothered to remember anymore.

Breaking the hold her fingers had on each other she lent back into her chair. “So.. we have a few ways of moving forwards. Prowl, it’s really up to you though. We either put our noses to the ground and start looking for clues, whilst maintaining our jobs here... or... I let you two have a few months ‘vacation’ to widen your range.”

Prowl and Annie looked to each other for a moment before Prowl spoke. “It’s only one lead, and likely impossible to track, I say we keep our eyes out for other possible clues, see if they’re making a pattern, and then go from there.”

Rodriguez nodded at this. “Very well, dismissed.”

The two nodded before stepping back out of the office, leaving their Sheriff to sigh and sink further into her chair.

Her attention drifted to the picture frame sitting on her desk, facing her.

It was of her and her three best friends, the absolute nutters.
A ghost of a smile formed on her features as the door to her office slid shut.

With no one to see, she stretched, groaning as she felt those oh so delicious pops roll down her back.

She felt stiff, she always felt stiff these days.

Cracking her eyes back open, she glanced back to the picture, Selena and Narissa, the sisters, each hanging off one of her shoulders, Narissa’s wild short cut hair covering her upper face, but her toothy grin was more than enough, Selena had flinched at the flash the camera had released, squinting her eyes shut with a grimace.

Her eyes, and that of their other friend, Sophia, were suffering the unfortunate curse of red-eye.

There was other pictures of them all together… true… but it just felt right to have this one be the one on her desk.

They had all been having such fun, the sisters had just slid back off the stage, they’d been hired to perform at the bar, along with a friend of theirs, Molly, hence why they’d all been there, Sophia had already bested two blokes in a drinking game, and she’d just gotten done punching one of the sour losers square in the face.

Perfect time for a picture.

Of course a full on brawl had broken out not three seconds later, you could even see one of the assholes in the background charging at them, but still, perfect time.

She honestly couldn’t remember who won the fight, probably them.

They rarely got to see each other any more, Sophia was off in Russia teaching English to teenagers, Selena and Narissa were… oh who knew what those two were up to, probably having a blast somewhere or other with Molly.

And here she was, sitting at her desk, keeping a watchful over the Amnesiac Second in Command of the Autobots.

The phone on her desk rang, the caller id bringing a smile to her face as she answered, listening to the voice coming over the line, a small knowing smirk bloomed on her features.

“I know, I saw the news. Be careful out there.”

Buckle up everyone, things are gonna start getting interesting 'rubs hands together in glee'.

Oh and for anyone interested, I recently finished some original character designs for some characters I plan to introduce further into the story, you can find them on me deviantart account 'Moonlightdeer739', i absolutely adore all four of them and I've been working on that piece since mid December so I'd really appreciate anyone interested checking them out, eventually I'll post their designs here in the story too, but by that point I may of done a few more things of them.

Welp until next time, see yah!

Moon
Chapter 18

Welp. that's chapter 21 written up, so it's time for you all to get this one!

Grape Creek

The small forested area he found himself in was eerily silent, sans the odd call of the nocturnal birds.

He barely paid them mind, he was nearly completely out of his energon reserves…

Two cycles of driving, and then three of having to hide from locals would do that he figured.

Frenzy refused to talk to him, had since he tried to offer the little mech as collateral.

His processor was sluggish, rolling to one side, then the other like some over charged fool…

When was the last time he’d topped up his tanks?

Like, really had a full tank?

His four optics cycled closed, taking a moment to just… think.

So long he’d been running on rations… having a full cube to enjoy was a distant memory.

Looking back at the past always hurt…

It always reminded him of what he’d never get back.

The early days of the war always felt like a warm up to the main event… when everything became so much more personal, and no longer were either side shooting to win a battle of ideals, but to wipe out those now considered the ‘other’.

He was young then, young and stupid.

He’d flirted with danger, now… he was tired…

He wanted it to end… the fighting had gone long enough… taken from him… them… far too many…

Maybe he’d finally find peace one cycle.

But the far future wasn’t why he was laying propped against an organic flora.

No… he was here, waiting for the arrival of the ones who wanted to use him.

He’d avoided turning on his com-link to message Starscream, or any of the other Cons…

He couldn’t risk them finding out he was planning to defect… he didn’t need one of those slaggers managing to signal the DJD…

Primus he did not want those maniacs coming after him… He’d made a promise long ago to a bot he’d cared for more than he’d ever probably admit, that he’d survive the war, they’d shared that promise… but war didn’t care for promises… they’d been offlined on a mission that went
horribly… horribly wrong.

One day he’d see them again in the Well… get to hold them close and share that morbid sense of humour that they’d shared… until then, he had a promise to maintain.

At the rate things seemed to be going on this organic planet, his best shot of continued survival was not with the Cons… but with these… femmes.

His audios caught something then, the flapping of wings far larger than the birds around him, and the howl of wind forced aside.

Craning his helm up he spied only one, Kia.

Her landing was quick, whipping up the leaf litter that surrounded him.

Talons gripped the ground, and her frame rose high over where he was slumped.

There was a heavy silence as she seemed to look him over, that black visor impassive as the smaller pair of arms, those were new, slipped into her subspace, and drew an impressive chunk of raw energon…

Raw… energon…

It took a moment for him to properly realise what he was looking at.

The thing was easily the size of his fist!

The smaller arms tossed it at him then, landing between where his pedes had spread apart.

“Eat. Given you’re here I’m assuming you’ve decided to agree to our deal?”

He nodded slowly, lurching the upper half of his frame forwards to snag the chunk before slumping back, though he took a moment to break off a piece and place it down next to where Frenzy was curled up, poor mech was not doing well now, his entire frame locked in a permanent shake.

The mech scrambled for the chunk, barely keeping hold of it long enough to shear a piece off.

He couldn’t hide his wince, he loathed ingesting raw energon, the points always had a habit of catching when they went down, it was why processed energon was a thing after all, besides being a more refined and potent version of the raw energy source.

But he didn’t have much of a choice, it was this, or run completely out of fuel.

Biting a large chunk of, he grimaced as it eventually went down into his nearly empty tanks, the raw energon spitting and sparking inside as his systems began trying to convert it.

All the while the Harpy remained locked still, the previous wounds she seemed to of received were healing over now, though the dents in her thin armour remained.

The rock base of the chunk was tossed aside as he rose to stand, nudging Frenzy with his pede to get up.

The minicon hissed at him, but clambered up into his armour regardless, one of these cycles the minicon was gonna pick the wrong spot and get crushed in one of his transformations.
Kia stepped back enough to give him room to properly rise to his own full height.

He reached her chassis.

A wing was extended out to him.

He hesitated, remembering how Fernando’s wings had hidden those scythes, he wasn’t going to risk his servo.

Kia seemed to pick up on the hesitance, and pulled her wing back away. “You do not need to revoke yourself from the Decepticons to work for me. I just need you to keep me updated on my brother… he has a nasty habit of making enemies he has no way of beating alone… the number of times I’ve had to save his stupid ass I swear…” She muttered the last part.

Barricade huffed but nodded. “I figured as much… regarding your brother that is… I’m a bit surprised you want me to remain a Decepticon after saying I had to be loyal.”

Kia shrugged. “We don’t plan to fight the Decepticons, unless provoked, and if a fight does break out, I won’t be mad if you shoot at me the odd time to maintain your cover.”

Ah, so that’s how this was going to work. “Limited direct contact then?”

Kia nodded, and a com-link request pinged to life on his HUD, activating it he realised it was a private channel, perfect.

Kia stepped back again, back into the gap between the trees, after spreading her wings she gave him a simple nod. “I expect a report once a week, but if anything happens that requires immediate contact, do not hesitate. It wouldn’t be good to lose you. And I’d like to keep my head when we return home, with that ass still alive.”

And with that, she kicked off the ground, wings beating to take her higher and higher, further and further until she disappeared back into the darkness of the planets night.

Looks like he was a double agent now.

Now to get in contact with Starscream and figure out where that slagger was.

Something flashed on the ground, turning his attention down it looked like some form of storage device, lowering himself to pick it up, he found a tag was attached to it. ‘Virus cure’.

Ah, so they held up that part of the bargain too…

Getting Frenzy’s attention was easy, getting him to actually download the antivirus was a whole different matter.

Eventually the minicon obeyed.

Almost instantly the rattling stopped, the virus cleared from his systems, no trace remaining to be worried about.

With that done, his transformed down, grimacing as he felt the raw energon in his tanks bounce around, hadn’t felt that feeling in a long while.

Mexico the city of Monterrey
The hanger they were all parked in was one meant for aircraft.

They’d pulled in the night before, and the vast majority of them had settled for the night.

Few raised a brow or optic ridge as an entire dead cow was taken into the trailer.

Nor when the same trolly used was dragged back out with only a few of the bones of the animal remaining.

But now, with the new day upon them, and finally a safe place for them to transform back to their bipedal modes, Ratchet finally made his move on the trailer, which the twin Harpies had remained in through the night.

“Prime, help me with this.” The medic demanded, waiting for two of the humans who’d been waiting to host them to open the large doors at the back of the trailer.

The light in the hanger flooded into the dark interior, revealing for the first time in days the prone form of the Harpies.

Or more accurately, their tail feathers, the fibres stained with the violet hued energon.

The damaged pede was hidden beneath.

The Harpies grumbled something as they shifted, getting into the trailer had been a rush of movements, and clearly they’d been left in an uncomfortable position.

One that needed external aid to get out of.

Thankfully his reach was great enough to snag the perilously narrow abdominal platting of the Harpies.

Pulling them out was not a pleasant experience for anyone.

A number of times the twins reacted instinctively, letting out high shrill calls as their damaged right pede was shifted afoul.

Clearly putting on a brave face was no longer of high priority.

Another thing Optimus noted was how light they were.

Despite their towering structure, they likely weighed no more than two tones, and that was being generous considering how easy it was to set them down, even despite their struggles and complaints.

The moment he let go they shifted, wings sprawling out in an attempt to right themselves at least somewhat, their helm, held on their long neck, twisted round to observe the damage themselves.

Optimus felt his spark twist at the sight now laid out in the bright lights of the hanger.

The severed main line was already sealed on both ends of where it had been cut, the area surrounding partly charred from the electrical current that had sparked across it, the plating that had, even when warped, covered the area, was hanging off with only a single catch holding it to the frame beneath.

Ratchet didn’t hesitate to get to work, shooing him away towards the other side of the hanger.
There he found himself speaking with Ironhide, who now held the recovering Freedom precariously in the crook of his arm, the avian had been seen to by Ratchet’s holoform a few days prior, given the lower risk of being discovered working on the flat bed that was a part of his weapon specialists new alt mode.

The mech obviously still had his reservations over the entire situation they had found themselves in, but had admitted that going along with the Harpies was likely their best shot whilst on this planet.

It was obvious they had power here, enough to protect them from their own former kind at least.

There was also an underlining admission that Freedom had grown on the mech somewhat.

The creature was obviously not in the best condition, besides the injuries he’d suffered the avian seemed to be suffering from some psychological holdings, Aria had commented that Fernando was inept at best and had starved Freedom for the smallest mistakes before, leaving the poor creature unnaturally timid despite his species.

Speaking of which, Wren had still not made a re-appearance.

Even now it was Aria that was snapping at Ratchet as the mech moved the limb around, trying to find somewhere to start on the alien layout of the pede.

“Fucking hell would you stop that⁈”

A resounding clang answered the irate twin.

And now the femmes sported a new dent on their helm. “I am doing my best, so keep quiet while I work.”

He got a half hearted kick to the leg from Aria for that.

But the twin seemed to relent, and Ratchet set fully to work trying to attached the severed line.

Turning his attention back to Ironhide, Jazz, Bumblebee, and the human companions, the later of which were sitting around where Bumblebee had sat himself down against one of the walls, the scouts holoform was already out and scribbling down word after word on the notebook that one of the unnamed humans had brought for him.

Maggie seemed to of warmed up to them as time progressed and she was filled in fully on the situation.

Mr Barnes was tentative, cautious, and kept side eyeing Bumblebee and the rest of his mechs.

Overall, the air within the hanger was tense.

Broken with the sudden return of one Lena Oxton.

The woman was panting as she bolted through one of the doors, paper clutched tightly in hand.

“My Ladies! My ladies!” She called.

The Harpies reacted almost immediately, Aria’s holoform coming into existence just as Mrs Oxton came to a halt, passing the paper to her.

The contents were read and the paper was crunched up in her hands. “Thank you Lena…” Her
attention turned to him. “Three hours, that’s as much time as we can afford to stay here. Puerto de Altamira, a small cargo based port, that’s where the boat is.”

The previous tenuous calm was broken, his gaze slipping to Ratchet, who was muttering a curse under his vents, and seemed to be hastening his efforts to repair as much of the damage to Wren’s pede that he could manage in the now constrained time they had before they would have to depart again.

Within two hours, they were departing the hangar again, their tanks churning with the sudden arrival of a small shipment of raw energon, Aria made no attempt to explain how it had come into their possession, but the fact they were no longer running low was at least appreciated by his unit, and curiosity from their human companions.

Lena and Leroy were once again with him, the boy was becoming more lively each day, and with that, needing more and more to keep him entertained, at some point Lena had found a toy car for the boy to play with, running other his dashboard numerous times while trying to mimic the roar of his own engine.

It was normally a cute endeavour, the Prime had to admit, but now, it felt like even the boy realised something had changed.

They could all feel it, their previous guards, the swarm of white SUV’s that had led them to Monterrey, vanished as they left the cities borders, breaking away down roads that led back to the city.

One of the drivers even gave him a wave before turning off.

Now, they were on their own again, in territory that was apparently hostile to the Harpies.

Two and a half hours into the journey, Ironhide announced they had a tail.

One tail quickly became two, then three, and onwards until the highway they were racing down seemed to empty out, all save the vehicles following them, no set brand this time, but all bearing the same intent.

Lena was tense, and Leroy had fallen silent in her lap, face buried into her stomach as her hand drifted to one of the guns holstered at her hip.

“Prime, ah don’ mean tha pressure you or nothin’, but ah really think we’re gonna have tah gun it... we can last longer than them, we need tah get tah this boat.” Jazz’s voice coming over his internal com-link confirmed his already growing suspicion.

He really hadn’t wanted to draw attention, but that was already out of the question.

“Autobots, rendezvous at the Puerto de Altamira, shake as many of our followers off as you can.”

Confirmations came back, and at once they scattered at the next junction, Bumblebee and Jazz continued to gun it down the open highway, Ratchet, having changed his alt mode not long before crossing the US/Mexico border for a civilian vehicle, broke off next, and then Ironhide at the next junction.

One of the tails broke off each time, but it was obvious that most were still after him, and the cargo he was hauling.

Finding another highway wasn’t difficult, and soon enough he was cutting and weaving around the
human driven vehicles that seemed to surround him on all sides, their horns blaring as he roared ahead.

Thankfully this alt mode had none of the normal limitations to speed that this vehicle normally had, the needle on his speedometer had already long passed the numbers on it.

Engine roaring and energon pumping through his systems like nothing else, he continued to race forwards

Two hours later, the last of his tails finally broke away.

The sigh of relief that left Lena was one he agreed with entirely.

No conflict had broken out, and all were accounted for.

Their haste had also put them ahead on time.

Just before sun down, he was pulling into the port, similar trucks forming a que, each carrying a large cargo container.

Bumblebee joined the line not long after, followed by the rest of the unit, Ratchet arriving last just as he reached the security barrier.

The man inside merely glanced over his frame before waving them through.

Odd, but he was not going to complain.

Lena nudged him a short time later as he rolled further into the port, she pointed ahead, and he finally laid optics on the vessel.

Giant was not an appropriate descriptor.

The vessel was a massive thing indeed, a Yacht a quick search revealed, with a notably large forward deck, he could probably lie down on it and have room to spare.

The amber lights of the port bathed the white plating of the ship in an orange glow, the lights inside allowing him to make out at least four main levels above the water line, not counting what looked like the bridge at the top.

He honestly wasn’t surprised, he doubted the Harpies would allow themselves to be transported in anything less than luxury.

The main ramp was down and waiting, boarding went off without a hitch, even with his trailer, the rest of his unit following soon after.

Not minutes after Ratchet had killed his engines, the ramps were lifted, sealing them within the vehicle hold of the ship.

Motion began with the blare of an air horn above.

Lena and Leroy slipped out of his passenger door not longer after.

Just as the human sized door on the trailer popped open.

To his surprise, after Aria had stepped down, she offered her hand back to the darkness, and helped Wren’s holoform down.
The black themed twin looked haggard, her gaze glassy as she lent on her twin for support as Aria led them towards what seemed to be a lift up to the higher decks.

Following suit, he joined Lena, Leroy and the twins inside, just as the doors closed behind him, the rest of his unit would take the next one if they so desired.

The lift doors opened again a short time later, revealing a sprawling lounge filled with grey leather sofas, tables, chairs, and even a mounted screen on the wall that was floor to ceiling panoramic glass looking out towards the Gulf of Mexico.

The twins moved passed him, Aria letting her twin down onto one of the sofas, where she seemed to slump over fully.

Leroy was passed into his hold a moment later as Lena rushed to the sides of the twins.

Opting to give them room, he moved to look out at the view before him, some of the windows were actually doors, that slid open at his approach, granting entrance to the open sea air beyond.

A sharp curse however drew his attention back inside.

From this new angle, he could finally get a good look at Wren.

She was wearing a dress, the bottom cutting off at her knees.

Her left leg was fine, the right…

Primus it was no wonder she hadn’t use her holoform in public.

The leg ended half way down the shin, the end was a mass of fluctuating pixels, trying to form something but seemingly not knowing how.

The main relay line still needed work.

The bell of the elevator chimed again and Ratchet, Ironhide and Mr Barnes stepped out, followed shortly after by Maggie and Jazz.

Seeing that the black themed twins holoform was engaged, Ratchet moved over, trying to get her attention.

Wren’s expression was still strained, features warped into a pained wince as she clutched to the limb just above where the pixels began breaking apart and fluctuating.

Soon enough Mikaela and Bumblebee joined them.

Everyone being accounted for seemed to of been something of a signal, for not two minutes later the double doors that likely led further into the ship burst open and what seemed to be a small army of crew streamed through.

Two of which each proceeded to lead them all, sans the twins and Ratchet, to the rooms that had been set up for their holoforms.

This was something that the Harpies were apparently doing to get them more accustomed to living on Earth.

Leroy was handed back to Lena some time before they were all lead into their own rooms.
He assumed they were all basically the same, large bed, port hole viewing ports to allow light in, a vanity in the corner, wardrobe built into the wall, ensuite bathroom, and a plasma TV screen mounted on the wall opposite to the bed.

The door slid closed behind him, leaving him to stand alone in the room for a moment before opting to take a seat on the bed.

It wasn’t going to hurt to try and unwind for a while, his frame was still wound tight from the pseudo chase to the port.

The bed gave to his weight, the silken quilt soft under his touch as he reclined.

Staring at the ceiling he found himself quickly falling to his thoughts.

They were destined for the Eurasian Continent, fleeing the Americas like wanted fugitives.

The guests of beings claiming to have been brought here by a space time anomaly… they still had to specify what they had meant by that particular statement.

It was around this time he noticed a soft sound coming from the speakers built into the TV, it was soft, orchestral he believed, he’d ask Jazz later, the mech had been spending the last few days keeping Maggie occupied by seemingly exploring every facet of the Earth’s vast musical culture.

The music strangely reminded him of the first time he had seen the Harpies, on the shared video link Bumblebee had sent to them all within the Cosmopolitan, the show that the twin Harpies had been putting on before the scout and his charge had been taken away by Ira.

When they had split their holoform… both of Wren’s legs had been visible at the times when the dress would flare one way or the other due to a drastic motion to match the beats of the song…

Her right leg had shown no damage…

Or had it? The signal had been warped by distance and the seemingly uncontrolled nature that was the Humans way of sending out signals of seemingly every frequency they could create within and outside of reason.

The relay line being severed was a different issue to a primarily physical wound… but Aria’s bleeding ear had proved that such damage was shown on a Holoform when it was fully functioning.

This holoform technology seemed incomplete, rudimentary, yet at the same time, it worked well enough for him to press his fingers together, and feel what skin felt like to skin… or at least, he assumed this is what skin felt like… bumpy, slightly warm, malleable, and of course, fragile.

A fragility that had stayed with the Harpies, the twins had admitted themselves that they were brittle.

It all brought up images of shattered glass and crystal…

Shattered crystal… yes… that was a good way of describing the Harpies.

Easily broken, yet forged by intense pressure and heat, before slowly cooling, forming the beings they are now.

And of course, perilously sharp at their broken edges, physical and otherwise.
It was not difficult to tell that they had… that something was amiss with all of them. They weren’t shattered glass though, glass was common… easily found all around… crystal was rarer, these four were not like the other humans they surrounded themselves with. They had a power that the others could only dream of obtaining.

What a strange group…

To leave such an impression on him, and so quickly.

His processor helpfully brought up the memory of Ira repeatedly slapping his weapons specialist across his shocked face plates whilst shouting bloody murder at him. Then one of the twins threatening to slice his glossa off… Kia seemed honestly to be the most reserved out of all of them… Yet somehow just thinking that felt like he was missing something. In all likelihood, he was just yet to witness something of equal caliber from the Bateleur. He could feel his spark becoming restless, the room felt too small, regardless of the fact it was actually quite spacious. Pushing his holoform back off the bed, he went for the door, perhaps some exploring would do him good, the journey to the Eurasian Continent would take some time, so it stood as reasonable to find out what this ship had to offer.

Back in the main lounge, Ratchet found himself coming up blank. There wasn’t room in the vehicle hold to transform, so the best he could do now was try and get a better idea of what was damaged on each twin and where, using their holoforms as a template. A task that was proving difficult to achieve.

For one thing, both outright refused to remove the articles of clothing they were wearing. Meaning he could only examine what was visible at present, and not the spots that were already staining parts of said attire a deep crimson, the bleeding was sluggish, but it needed to be tended too. They kept insisting he wait until they got to international waters. By Primus’ spark it wasn’t like he was asking them to open up their spark chamber…s?

And in that brief moment of thought, something struck him. Not literally, but a thought, one that quickly spiralled out of control, the heated rebuke to Aria’s irate claim of invasion of privacy falling from his holoforms glossa as a strained noise as all focus went to this new internal enquiry. Why was it only now he realised the true magnitude that the two beings before him implied?

They were clearly two separate entities, joint piloting a frame, when one was out of action, the other seemed unable to take full control, one half of their holoforms always had a slight delay to
it…

Oh but that was just the tip of this wasn’t it?

He’d heard of something like this… only once, muttered under the vents of his own mentor, a medic of truly noteworthy accolade. One whom seemed to of perfected the art of scaring the spark back into life with a few choice words and a look of pure murder.

It wasn’t a fluke his own berthside manners weren’t the best considering his mentor.

They had made claim that once, early in their career, they had been presented with what they referred to as an ‘anomaly’.

An anomaly that snuffed soon after, but one that shook the medical institutes to its core, one that was never allowed into the public’s conscience.

Split spark, same frame twins.

His mentor ended up siding with the Decepticons when the war broke out, going with their intended, a Kaonian they had meet whilst working in the backwards city at a clinic they’d set up.

They had told him of the sparkling(s), when forming, the sparks had not spread far enough apart, and a singular warped spark chamber had formed around them, followed by everything else.

The frame obviously wasn’t going to last, and their sparks snuffed out not long after delivery.

Apparently these two before him now weren’t full Cybertronian… could that of been their saving grace?

Or were they completely unrelated due to their Human origin?

Fingers being clicked in front of his optics jolted him back to present, Aria stood before him with a put off expression.

“Excuse us, but I believe we were having an argument.” Wren snapped from where she was now lying down along the sofa, her head craned at a somewhat unsettling angle to regard him.

What was it with these two and doing that?

The first thing out of his mouth was an eloquent. “I need to examine your spark chamber.”

The heavy pause that followed as both twins obtained expressions of pure purplexion was not a comforting experience.

Aria at least leant forwards and asked the question he could feel forming within the tension around them. “Our… what?”

And that was when it really, truly hit him.

These weren’t Cybertronians…

These were humans.

Tiny, organic creatures, who’s lifespan so far fit within their journey time to Earth.

Two tiny creatures, flung across time and possibly reality, into bodies literally alien to them.
Had said bodies mangled together with the codings of a third even more primitive flight capable race, and metaphorically thrust together with his own Prime and his unit, by a foul hand of fate.

They had no proper understanding of their limits, the twins flinging themselves across that chamber in the dam after that gunshot wound, their irate tempers, how hesitant they were to fight initially, before lunging into an outright brawl to save one human life.

A human life that had not existed for much less than their own.

By Primus below…

He could see it now, Ira’s near non-existent short fuse, Kia’s strained patience.

These beings were at the end of their ropes.

They were scared, doing all they could in their power to help them, to help themselves yes but that was fair given the sudden context that had struck him across the helm.

Compared to the rest of the Cybertronians online on this planet, they were wholly inexperienced, flung into a war without so much of a thought…

Slowly he walked passed Aria, and sat down next to where Wren was laying, and slowly rested a hand against her shoulder, even the projected musculature under the holoforms unnervingly accurate skin, tensed at his touch.

He did not miss the warning hiss from the white twin, a notably inhuman feature. He spotted her reflexively flinch back a moment after the hiss had left her, just on the peripheral of his vision.

He looked between the two slowly and muttered. “I’m sorry… I’m so sorry.”

The reaction was jarring, Aria jerked back as if she’d been physically struck, and Wren just stared at him through the pitch black sunglasses she still wore.

After a few moments of her head twitching from side to side and worrying her bottom lip on her teeth Aria spoke. “You… Your… what?”

He took a long slow breath, an odd thing, not like venting, yet, had the same effect of stabiling his sensory array a bit. “I’m sorry… This whole time I have been treating you like insubordinate soldiers… not as… civilian neutrals.”

The strained laugh that evolved into Aria’s reply felt like a physical blow to the spark. “You’re not the worst doctor we’ve ever had. If it makes you feel any better.”

Something flickered on both of their holoforms then, at first he didn’t notice anything different.

But then, he did.

And it made his internal systems roil.

Running down the side of Aria’s left cheek, a gouge, paler pink scar tissue, and it was not alone.

A glance at Wren revealed matching scars, and another both just above the right eye, poking out from the top of the sunglasses, Wren’s eye.

Aria poked her cheek. “A battle wound… you could say… mother… wanted to… to…” Whatever she was going to say died, replaced by a half chuckle and shake of her head. “It doesn’t matter…”
Like the flip of a switch the tone became icy, her left hand clenching at her side. “We killed her before she could try again… heh… heh... we killed all the bastards…”

She was shaking… visibly shaking.

Slowly he rose, and just as slowly, stepped back to her.

She flinched back, this time it was the black twin who hissed.

He couldn’t tell if Wren had flinched after the fact, but something told him she had.

All he did was open up his arms, and say. “Doctor patient confidentiality, no one else outside this room will ever know.”

At this distance, he could see her eyes, just through the tinted glass, they widened for a moment, as a small half gasp was pulled into her.

Slowly, as if fearful of harm… the phrase, once burned twice shy, came to mind, the white twin stepped forwards, head ducking to the side before she almost collapsed fully against him, her own arms going around his midsection as he carefully wrapped his own around her trembling shoulders.

Slowly, he began to rock the both of them side to side.

He said nothing as her breathing became more erratic, and as the feeling of liquid pooling against his shoulder became more and more noticeable, and her hold became tighter, fearing letting go.

He did not pull away until she did, her left hand coming up to wipe away the tear tracks with the palm of her hand. “Don’t you ever dare tell anyone I cried.” She muttered, whatever bite she could normally carry in her words gone as she moved past him and helped her twin to stand on her one working leg. “Her turn.”

He simply nodded and let the black twin drop against him.

There was no crying this time, just tight, near painful gripping.

It lasted a lot longer too, before Wren let go with one arm and began blindly searching for Aria, who was already at her side to help her back to the sofa.

They sat side by side then, the grey halves of their holoforms together.

Their expressions were neutral for a moment before Wren reached up, and pulled her sunglasses off, Aria following suit.

He found himself locked in place by two sets of shocking emerald green eyes, nestled against the pupil of each was a singular band of a paler, more blue tinted green, and for a moment he swore the thin bands pulsed, but that could of just been the lights.

In unison they spoke. “Thank you.” It was a whisper, but it knocked something in his spark.

It almost made him remember something he’d long since buried away.

Almost.

Somewhere in Texas
Ira sighed, her position perched on the perilous cliff she’d found herself on more reminiscent of a
keen predator than a human trying to enjoy the sunset.

Which was what she was trying to do.

But even this she couldn’t enjoy.

She couldn’t enjoy the beautiful sunset.

It wasn’t her sun…

It wasn’t her sun…

And as she stared out at the sun that wasn’t her sun… she felt the reality of the situation become
more and more painfully clear to her.

They were stuck.

They were probably never going home.

It wasn’t fair.

Nothing was ever fair.

Slowly she eased her wings to the ground and looked down over the cliff.

She’d given up trying to slip away long ago… it never seemed to work.

She had to wait… wait for death to finally come.

She had to live with the cards fate had dealt her.

Did she even want to go home?

That was a question she’d asked herself many… many times over the last two years.

She’d never been able to get a real answer out of herself…

What was there to really go back to?

A mother she’d long since cut ties with… whatever siblings she had that hadn’t done themselves in
one way or another… or fallen prey to their mother, whom she’d barely managed to escape by the
skin of her teeth...

And… a tombstone… the one granite slab, carved out and probably half overgrown by some damn
vegetation now… now she wasn’t there to go back every month and take care of it.

Keeley, the ever supportive little thing, seemed to sense where her emotions were going, and
pulled something from her subspace, and held it carefully between two talons for her.

Looking down, the setting sun glinted off the the opal band, and the piece of roughly cut ruby held
in the precious stones tiny teeth. The whole thing was handcrafted… she could still see the cut
marks glinting on both parts of the ring.

“A one of a kind ring… for the one of a kind woman I want to marry. If… you’ll be my wife?”

She tried to feel the happiness she’d felt when he’d asked her…
But all she felt was the hole in her chest… the one that had been a constant presence in her life for so long.

Keeley’s grip on the ring never waived like hers used to.

They’d agreed… their first daughter would be named Ruby… after the ring…

The sounds of flapping wings approaching cut off her thoughts, swiftly followed by the sounds and wind burst of Kia landing just behind her.

It didn’t take long for Kia to glance over her shoulder and spot the ring, whatever she would of said dying in her throat as her wing moved to rest against her other shoulder.

None of them were good at this comforting shit…

Keeley tucked the ring back away from her.

Taking it as a sign, Kia pulled her wing back away and spoke. “Come on… the twins ship is already heading for international waters, Barricade’s working for us, we have no more reason to hang around.”

Ira just nodded, pushing herself up and out of her crouch. “Yeah… I wanna be in Rome again at some point this century.”

There was a pause, a heavy pregnant pause.

“Ira… If you ever want to talk…”

“I’ never helped before, i’ won’t help now.” She snapped sullenly, cutting off the larger Harpy before spreading her wings. “Can’ believe i’ took yah almost ah full day tah get back.”

Kia huffed, but accepted the change of topic. “I sent you a text, got word there was some infighting breaking out, had to go clean it up.”

Ah, she had actually sent such a text. And her talons did have some newly splattered blood and entrails on them, lovely.

She huffed, this was why she kept her work force small, a lot easier to manage.

“Wha’ about Keller?”

“Already passed on to an escort, he’ll arrive back in Washington within a few days.”

“You installed the device?”

“Winston did, unless they think to scan his brain stem, they’ll never know.”

Spreading her wings out half way she gave a half nod to Kia, before pitching forwards and off the edge of the cliff.

She allowed herself to drop, just for a few seconds.

The ground rushing to meet her… she almost didn’t pull up…

Almost.
Welp, hope you all enjoyed.

Recently coloured a sketch I did, it’s basically how the Harpies look, note there are some differences in armour layout and style between each of the Harpies.

Thought you’d all like to see what the Harpies look like as a whole.
Woo! Another chapter done! Hope you all enjoy the little bits of world building I slipped into this one!

“All guests aboard the Gilded Falcon, please make your way to the main outdoors deck on level five. Repeat, all guests aboard the Gilded Falcon, please make your way to the main outdoors deck on level five.” The announcement coming of the speakers was a male voice, likely the Captain of the large vessel.

Optimus found his wanderings following the advice coming from the speakers around him, as well as following the signage along the corridors back towards the front of the ship.

By the time he stepped out onto the deck, night had finally fully fallen, the last vestiges of the sun’s rays blooming over the distant horizon in a dying sun burst across the few clouds that persisted.

It would seem he was one of the last to arrive.

The twins were laying next to each other on reclining deck chairs, a small table between them carrying half empty glasses of a fizzing liquid.

A number of the ship's crew, all wearing white and trimmed gold uniforms stood around, he would of mistaken them for statues were they all not breathing, none of their gazes seemed to be in the present, almost hazed over.

It also seemed like he was the last to arrive, the silence that had been held before broken as Ironhide turned on the twins. “Well, what’s all this about?”

Wren hummed low in her chest, reaching over to pick up one of the glasses to take a slow taunting sip before pulling it back away and speaking. “We thought you wanted your questions answered?”

Aria chuckled before taking over. “We figured that now would be a good time.”

He could feel his mechs collectively lock up.

Clearly he wasn’t the only one who’d thought that getting answers had been taken off the table.

The was a long pause, one that dragged just long enough for Wren to bring a hand up to her mouth and cough into before speaking. “Now don’t all jump at once.”

Almost all attention went to him.

Not a surprising action all things considered, so, after a few moments of contemplation he asked. “Who are you?”

Both twins flashed a quick smile before Aria replied. “Well… I, am Aria Rose Orichiono, and this is my twin…”

“Wren Eleanor Orichiono. We are the first born, and so heirs to the Orichiono fortune. On our home Earth of course.”

“Your… what?”
Attention shifted to Mrs Madsen, who was tucked up against Jazz’s holoform, she’d practically stuck herself to the mech the last few days.

Aria didn’t bat an optic before answering. “Our Earth, the one we’re from. The moment we got access to the internet we discovered this world... is drastically different from our own. Historical events went different, certain fashions never happened, a drastic variation in global and country populations, oh and the distinct lack of ABBA.” Out of all of them that last one seemed to earn the most annoyance from the Harpies tone.

Jazz spoke this time. “How’d yah end up here then? Yah said before it had tah do with tha relics right?”

The twins nodded in unison, and Wren answered, her voice became... distant. “Yes... We... Its... fuzzy... We remember the start of the day perfectly well... But once we stepped into the staff room at the London Zoo... the memories lose focus... All except the... Thing... Unlike the Allspark, we’ve yet to find any clue to its existence or name here... we... we picked it up... then... there, there was a flash, a sound and then... Nothing...” She slumped a bit in the shoulders at the admittance.

Aria took over then. “When we came too... we were falling... like... hurtling downwards towards this massive canopy... and of course we were both screaming... then... BANG!” She clapped her hands together so sharply it jolted him. “We seemed to hit every branch worth its salt on the way down... then, finally, we hit the ground, with one big THUD!” She stopped her foot against the deck for emphasis, before sighing and shaking her head. “We’d be lying if we said we didn’t pass out from the shock of it all.” She admitted, words starting to break into breathy chuckles as she continued, as if the terror of those moments had ensnared her again.

He glanced around at his mechs then, Ironhide and Jazz seemed to be lost in thought, Bumblebee was listening to Mikaela whispering something to him, and Ratchet seemed to be... Optimus wasn’t sure what exactly to call the expression on the medics holoform if he was to be honest with himself.

Wren took the pause to continue. “When we came around... we knew there was something wrong... besides the pain... our fingers... they felt like someone had wedged tree trunks between them... our legs felt... wrong... everything felt wrong... we felt too heavy... breathing felt wrong... when we moved our hands to see why they hurt so much... they weren’t hands... they were those wings... we... we didn’t take the sudden re-writing of our anatomy well...” She somehow managed to shrink back further, hands pressed together and fingers intertwined.

“We went from our part time job at the London Zoo... to crashing into the heart of the Amazon in a body that we had no idea how to use... thrown backwards in time and onto an Earth we knew little about outside of geography.”

“And with every passing day... we get more and more... used to this body... humans aren’t supposed to fly... but every time we did it... it felt too right... yet so wrong... humans aren’t supposed to eat an entire dead cow in a sitting... humans don’t have talons... humans are squishy... with beating hearts and stupidly overly complex brains...We’re rambling... we always ramble when we’re nervous... next question?” Wren chuckled bitterly, turning her attention back to them all at large.

Mikaela stepped forwards then, with her own question. “When are you from... you’ve commented the odd time about things to come... what do you mean by that?”

Aria chuckled, though her’s had a bite of mirth to it. “An excellent question... the day in our home
reality was… August 18th 2017. We woke here in the September of 2005, a twelve year time skip backwards. You’d be amazed at how much can change in that time. Enough time for your America to have three different Presidents…”

So that was what they meant by space time anomaly, thrown back in time and onto a completely different Earth.

Admittedly he’d of likely had no better a reaction than them.

Mikaela glanced around her quickly before asking a new question. “Our America? What about yours?”

There was a pause as a look of confusion went between the twins, but they seemed to realise what Mikaela meant after a moment Wren being the one to answer. “Oh! Ha, funny thing about that, America doesn’t exist anymore, as you know of it at least, the Eastern States were absorbed back into the unified commonwealth, the Northern States went to Canada, the Southern States were returned to Mexico, the the Central States were returned to the native population, after they lost WW3 in the 1970’s. Unlike in this reality, our ‘Cold War’, did not remain ‘cold’ for long after America declared war on Australia. They dropped a nuclear payload on the city of Melbourne and after that, gross slaughtering of innocents, the Commonwealth united as a coalition of governments instead of independent ones and dropped a bomb on Hawaii, before performing a mass invasion with the aid of the aforementioned Mexico and Canada, for all their ‘greatest country in the world’, they surrendered within six weeks of sustained combat. We learnt about it from our tutors when the topic of world history was at hand.”

Mikaela and Ms Madsen exchanged concerned looks, though the later seemed to of paled somewhat.

Ironhide shot one to him.

Taking a moment to collect himself he spoke again. “What is the plan from here on then? It is apparent that going our separate ways would at this point be detrimental to the goal that seems to of been put before us.”

Aria hummed under her breath. “In general there seems to be two options at present. Having taken that something like this might of happened, we have obtained three warehouses not too far from our individual residences. One for each of the cities we plan to set up fully in now that our Las Vegas post has been… burned to the ground. But there is also the possibility that in the long run, we expand within our properties to allow you to reside on our private property itself. We’ll likely use the same bunker building technique we did under the Cosmopolitan but on a larger scale so that you can freely move around inside…”

Wren cut in then. “In general it’s a good idea, you’d be stationed far closer and you’d be able to ‘keep a closer eye on us’ as Ironhide put it two days ago, yes we heard that.” She snapped at the end, sending a pointed look to the weapons specialist who’d gone to refute her. “But those projects will take time, so the nearby warehouses will be your temporary accommodation instead of permanent if you agree to this.”

He took a few moments before answering yes, that would be the preferable option, so long as everyone found a way to get along.

Ironhide certainly didn’t seem fond of the idea.

With no more pressing questions to ask though, the topic shifted.
Namely by way of Wren snapping her fingers and one of the statue like crew members glided to her side, bending at the hip to offer a silver platter with a small device as the only thing on it sitting innocently in the middle.

Picking up between two fingers Wren glanced around before her gaze seemed to lock on him. “Hold still Prime.”

“What-?” Was all he could get out before Wren pressed one of the buttons on the little device.

Not a moment later there was the sound of machinery coming to life and the groaning of metal moving.

It took a moment before he realised his actual form was being pushed upwards by something, him and the trailer.

That was when he spotted it, on the even larger deck below the one they were currently on, the wooden paneling had broken down the middle, his frame and the trailer carrying the twins were being pushed out into the open air.

“A little trick we had installed when the ship was still being built, we hate being cooped up below deck.”

After a few moments of pause and a glance to his mechs, he dropped his holoform and began the transformation process, being careful considering how close he was to a drop down into the Gulf of Mexico.

Once upright, he found that he now towered over the upper deck.

Another sound came then, glancing down he realised that there were catches running down the middle of the trailers rood, and they’d just detached from one another.

Slowly the two halves of the trailer split apart, revealing the Monochrome twins as they lay curled up on the trailers floor, their helm already craning all the way back to look at him through their cracked visor.

With a grunt they began to move, each wing sliding down and off the trailer with a groan coming from their vocalisor as they moved the limbs properly for the first time in days.

He couldn’t help but wince at the sound as they continued to try and loosen up their frame, stiff seemed to be a grand understatement considering how many mechanisms seemed to only now be coming back to life after so long of misuse.

He watched on, curious, as they continued to stretch out, the sounds they made throughout were… strange, grunts and clacking being the main two as they gritted their razor sharp denta.

Finally after what sounded like a very satisfying pop in the middle of their back strut, they seemed to go strutless, slumping back down on the trailer as their wings spread out, each tip dangling off the sides of the ship, a glance revealed the very tips were breaking the waters surface, lit by the lights from the ships portholes.

“Remind us to never agree to riding in a trailer again.” Wren murmured.

Slowly they regained themselves, and after a bit of shifting, their wing struts came down on the deck, and with a quick push, managed to partially flip themselves onto their back.
With that, their damaged pede was fully exposed to the open air.

He didn’t miss the gasp from Mikaela, she’d seen it before in the hanger, as had everyone else, but the gasp was enough to draw his own attention back to the gruesome wound.

A muttered curse of some sort left the twins lipplates as they tried to shift fully onto their back strut, folding their wings close to their sides before completing the full flip.

A moment later, their back came to rest against his leg.

Their gaze now directed back towards the assembled group Aria spoke. “Anything else to ask?”

Mr Barnes stepped forwards then, the man had mostly kept to himself on this journey, but now it seemed the man wanted the answers he’d been promised. “Yeah, what kind of damned reason did you have to drag my daughter into this mess?”

Attention shifted back to the twins, he couldn’t see their expression now, not with how their helm was resting against the top of his joint, but he felt those protrusions of theirs shift, the damaged one excluded, against his plating for a moment before Wren answered the man. “Simple, we needed the glasses to lure Bumblebee to Las Vegas, closer to the Allspark, so that the rest of them would be forced to change course so that we could more safely greet them than if they’d crashed into the heart of California. After coming to the realisation that the owner of the glasses at the time, one Samuel James Witwicky, was not mentally mature enough to deal with aliens and what not, we looked outwards, and after some debate, we chose Mikaela. It was never anything personal, but being able to bail you out of jail, certainly helped us win her over into helping us.”

Even if he couldn’t see their expression, he could hear the smug smirk in Aria’s voice as she followed right after Wren. “You’re welcome by the way~” The two chuckled at the man’s expression of shock as he sputtered incoherently.

The man’s previous bravado died entirely then, and he shuffled back towards his daughter.

He noted then that Ratchet’s holoform had already made it’s way down to continue working on the twins damaged pede.

Looking around he noted that the deck he found himself standing on was actually quite large, it could easily fit another of his mechs alongside himself and the twins, though the later two might have to fold their wings in somewhat just to prevent accidentally knocking someone overboard.

It would seem though, that this was why they’d waited until they had reached international waters.

They’d planned to go up to this deck to stretch and let Ratchet tend to them, he had simply been brought along because he had still been hitched to the trailer carrying them.

The main conversation died after Mr Barnes had stepped back, Ratchet muttered away as he worked, a few of the crew had brought out a whole tool box at some point, he’d waved them off but had quickly set to work identifying which tools did what and if they’d be of any use.

Surprisingly, the twins seemed to know enough to help his CMO on that part at least.

Ironhide had wandered off back inside, Jazz and Bumblebee had taken their charges up to the deck above to where there was apparently a bar from what he could spy through the tinted glass and the brief moments when the five had walked through the sliding glass doors.

Leaving him to watch over his CMO and the twins.
Slowly his helm tilted skywards, away from the ship and upwards to the cosmos, a thick bank of cloud had rolled in, the planets moon completely obscured.

“Careful~ we’re fairly certain your neck isn’t as flexible as ours.” Aria’s voice spoke up then, catching his attention away from the dark sky.

Glancing back down he found the twins had in fact completely rotated their helm and tilted it back to look back at him. “If you want, we can move.” Wren added.

He shook his helm. “No, no, this is fine, I barely noticed you.”

That was the truth really, he’d noted a few times how lightly built they were, they had to be for kinetic flight he supposed.

Their pede certainly wouldn’t be as mangaled if they’d been been put into the frame of a grounder.

That thought was quickly banished away, he knew that the Harpies condition was not of their own choosing, to suggest they’d of done better in a different frame would of more likely than not upset them.

An hour passed and the strange peace that had fallen between the four of them was only broken when a startled have formed shout lurched it’s way out of the twins vocaliser as they nearly buckled over.

A moment later they were hissing air out of their clenched denta as Ratchet’s holoform jumped out of the way as the talons on the Harpies right pede flexed and spassamed, coming back to life.

Apparently Ratchet had succeeded in fully re-attaching the main line.

It took a few moments, but finally a slow vent left the twins as the tension in their frame bled back out of them.

“Thank fuck…” Wren muttered, helm falling back against his pede as their chassis rose and fell in a way that was distinctly organic.

He glanced to his CMO’s holoform, the older mech seemed to be breathing a sigh of relief himself and dropping a large wrench back into the tool box.

He took a look closer at the still exposed main line, now it was more easy to see that the plating that had covered the area had been almost completely torn off, likely at the same time the line had been severed, now it revealed that Ratchet had managed to fasten the two ends back together with a primitive cylindrical clamp.

Ratchet patted the plating just above where it had been torn away. “This is a temporary fix, your still at risk of completely losing your pede if you land on it, this is just so you can actually feel said pede again.”

The twins gave a shallow nod before slumping their full weight back against his pede.

The call of their last name for the upper decks changed that.

One of the crew had apparently come to life and saluted them. “Ma’am’s! A small tropical storm has been building out in the Atlantic, permission to divert to prevent possible damage?”

The twin Harpies let off a low hum. “Keep the pre-set course, if it has worsened by the time we
leave the Gulf, we’ll alert the Captain to potentially change course.”

The crew member nodded and bowed.

When their head rose again, their expression had returned to the same glassy thousand klik stare as the rest of them before they turned and walked back into the main part of the ship.

Something wasn’t right with this picture.

He’d ask them to explain what had happened to the crew, but thought better of pressing such a matter, he doubted it would do any good regarding this tenuous deal they had with the Harpies.

They seemed to have an influence beyond authority over these humans.

Winston and Lena were the only two who seemed to maintain autonomy at all times.

He had yet to meet the two snipers who had injured Freedom to free Mikaela, so he was uncertain or which category they sat in.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sliding doors that some of his unit and their human charges had gone through opening again.

Mikaela stepped out, her attention on the twins resting against his pede.

Their own helm tilted to give the human their full attention.

After a moment of shifting on the spot, Mikaela spoke. “Could… could I speak with you? In private?”

The twins nodded and their holoforms flickered back into life not far in front of where the young human was standing.

Wren glanced down at her holoforms leg, the projection complete once more.

The black themed twin looked back over her shoulder to Ratchet. “Your patch is working, thank you.”

Aria made a gesture then to Mikaela and the teen nodded, turning to lead the two holoforms back inside.

Out of curiosity he looked back down towards the twins.

Their frame was slumped even more than before, and seemed to of gone into a kind of standby mode if the sudden lack of activity he could detect was anything to go by.

So that was why they had stashed their true forms away when they had been using their holoforms previously.

He turned his attention to Ratchets holoform when the projection banged on one of the metal plates on his pede. “Yes Ratchet?”

“There’s some things I wish to discuss with you in private too.”

Maggie glanced up from the drink she had been staring at to look over at where the twin… Harpies and the teen Mikaela walked past, heading deeper into the ship.
Jazz was trying to talk to her, but she’d been spacing out for a while now if she was being honest.

The memory stick shifted slightly in her ear, causing an involuntary shudder to go down her spine, that was never going to feel right.

Nor was hearing all of those voices she knew she wasn’t supposed to hear.

“Mags? Mags? You in there?” Jazz’s concerned voice finally cracked through her musings and she looked up to the holoform, for a solid projection of an alien, she had to admit, he looked pretty damn good, but at the moment, she wasn’t in the mood to ogle.

“Hmm… yeah… just thinking…”

She saw Jazz’s shoulders sag a bit, he’d been trying, really honestly trying to try and cheer her up, but moments where she cracked a smile the last few days were few and far between.

Her head was just full of too much stuff, and she couldn’t find a way to either sort through it all, or find a good enough distraction.

Reaching for her glass, tequila, strong stuff, but even as she knocked back another shots worth she barely noticed the burn.

Jazz was at a loss.

From the moment Prime had passed the shaken woman to him at the dam, he’d been dead set on getting her to feel better, but everything he tried, earth radio, jokes that admittedly didn’t translate too well, slag even trying to tell her about who they were seemed to not work.

One would think interacting with aliens would be the highlight of one's life, but she just seemed to be mentally shut down.

He glanced over his shoulder at Bumblebee as his charge took another shot.

The scout wasn’t paying attention, scribbling stuff down furiously on the latest notebook.

It brought a small smile to his holoform, at least he’d found a way to properly communicate without having to use the radio, it wasn’t his actual voice, but it was nice that he could better express himself now.

He noticed that Maggie called the bartender over again, a women, who’s expression was just as blank as the rest.

It was unsettling, reminded him of drones.

He turned his attention back to his charge.

She’d cleaned up well, now that all the blood was long gone, her blonde hair mixed well with her tan skin tone.

All the terms of which he’d had to look up a few days ago because he’d been struggling to properly describe her internally with Cybertronian terms.

He watched as she chugged the clear liquid before nearly slamming the glass back down on the bar.

She turned to him then, they were sitting next to one another on the bar stools, he’d joked earlier
that there used to be bars just like this on Cybertron, it hadn’t landed.

He raised an eyebrow as she seemed to consider something, he’d wait for her to finish her thought before he did anything else.

What he got for his patience was a muttered ‘Fuck it’ and both ends of his collar being grabbed.

For once in his long career as a special ops, he was caught off guard.

And then knocked right off his balance by her slamming her lips against his.

He heard Bumblebee drop his pen behind him, but in that moment his focus suddenly shot downwards to the woman currently kissing him.

After a moment she pulled away, leaving him to let his jaw drop a little as she pushed her hair back behind her ears.

Her features were a little flushed, and her expression suddenly so much more determined than what he’d seen of her before.

And apparently that was all that was needed to get his engine revving as she rubbed the side of her face and began to ramble off apologies.

That wouldn’t do, he’d caught a glimpse of something then, something that he knew was what was hidden behind her walls.

Slaggit he was gonna get another glimpse.

Carefully he reached out and cupped the side of her face, the words she’d been about to say dying away in that moment.

“Maggie, you don’ gotta apologise for nothin’.”

With that he leaned in and kissed her back, careful not to bang their noses together as he pressed his lips to hers.

She was quick to reciprocate, one arm going behind his neck and the other reaching to grab the collar of his jacket again.

The quick fleeting press of something against his lips caused his engine to give an even stronger rev, and his spark bounced around his chamber with this sudden kick of exuberance he was feeling.

Testing the waters he flicked his holoforms tongue out.

He felt more than heard her gasp before their tongues met and began a dance all of their own.

Bumblebee watched for all of a few seconds before deciding to give the two some much needed privacy, sliding off the bar stool as quietly as possible, a glance at the bartender revealing they were no longer there, good.

Taking their distraction as an advantage, he opted to go hunt down his own charge.

Just as he reached the door he’d seen Mikaela go down with their hosts, he heard Maggie muttered something about ‘her room’ followed by the sound of them getting down from their own room.

After a moment's hesitation he opted for going the long way to find his charge.
This proved to be a less than wise decision.

The corridors were all the same, the doors had numbers, but they seemed to be erratic, no rhyme or reason to their placement.

It was a maze he quickly got lost in.

Taking another corner, he found himself back in a corridor he’d already been in, he wanted to groan in frustration, but of course, couldn’t.

Reaching up he felt the scar tissue on his neck that had been created for his holoform, it was strange how accurate it was.

Whatever the Harpies had done to create these holoforms, it had certainly been well thought through.

“Kid?”

Ironhide’s voice snapped him out of his thoughts, and he turned to find the weapons specialist regarding him.

Bumblebee waved to the mech, reaching for his latest notebook he pulled it out and scribbled down a greeting and showed it to him.

“Yeah, yeah, what are you doing here?”

‘Looking for Mikaela’s room, Jazz was… getting to know his charge so I wanted to find her, she went off with the twins a while ago… I’ve gotten a bit lost.’

Ironhide’s chest seemed to rumble as he thought over the scouts predicament. “Take two lefts then a right, you should find it here.”

Bumblebee nodded, but then paused. ‘What are you doing here?’

Ironhide huffed. “Heard there was a gym somewhere on this ship with a built in ‘boxing ring’ wanted to give it a look.”

Feeling that the conversation had come to an end, Bumblebee moved to take the older mechs directions.

“Oh and Bee.”

Pausing he looked back with a curious tilt of his holoforms head.

The other mechs holoform looked like he’d heard something unpleasant. “Keep a close optic on your charge, none of this smells right.”

Bumblebee chose just to nod, letting Ironhide know his words were heeded, before turning back to his quest to find Mikaela.

Back on the deck, Optimus found himself frowning. “Old friend, you’re quite certain of this?”

Ratchet’s holoform nodded. “I won’t know unless they let me do a full frame scan, but we may be dealing with a condition so rare I’ve only heard it mentioned once.”
Optimus shook his helm in disbelief. He’d never even heard of such a thing. Split spark same frame? It sounded ludicrous.

And yet… the twins did seem to be just that.

After a few moments of pondering he spoke again. “Do you suspect any ill effects this might cause?”

Ratchet nodded. “Yes, for one thing, two sparks in one chamber doesn’t leave much room, and with their thin plating, they’re all the more likely for their sparks to be damaged in a fight. That’s the most obvious issue I can think of… “

Optimus nodded himself, he glanced down at where the twins remained slumped lifeless against him, ever since the incident with Kia and the Allspark at the damn, Ratchet had been hesitant to scan any deeper, at some point the medic would have to press the twins on the matter, but for now they had other things to deal with. After a few more moments of thought, he opted for diverting the topic somewhat. “You’re certain the Bot who told you of the first case was telling the truth?”

Ratchet almost laughed. He hesitated for a moment before replying. “Optimus, you truly doubt the words of my own mentor?”

He watched carefully as his Prime’s optics spiraled, that processor of his working to connect the dots.

He almost flinched when he saw the final line was drawn.

“Dust.”

The designation was practically vented out, a long laborious sound that ended sharply.

Even from human height it was impossible to miss that Optimus was no longer in the present.

He couldn’t blame the mech.

Dust had been close friends with two femmes, split spark twins, that Optimus had been close to before and in the early stages of the war.

They and another friend all perished together, Optimus hadn’t taken it well.

No one had taken the events of that cycle well.

And now he’d gone and drawn up those old memories for his Prime.

It wasn’t a secret he’d wanted a relationship with his mentors friends, Primus he couldn’t even bare dredge up their designations, the memories were too bitter sweet now.

And now Optimus was reliving them again, all because he’d brought up his mentor.

Dust had been a medic far beyond many others, he’d still yet to successfully perform some of the procedures she had.

The groaning of mechanisms brought him back to the present as Optimus slowly slid down, even in his state he was careful to move the twins so they instead rested slumped against his side.

The Prime’s gaze was distant and filled with a grief that Ratchet struggled to look at.
After a few more moments, a voice long passed began to speak, even now Ratchet recognised that unique quirk in their vocals, that soft hum that always drew out the ends of their words.

“*We’re not leaving... we can’t... we have to manually maintain the controls... get as many to evacuate as possible... please for the love of Primus. We’re only going to be able to delay the inevitable... Keep fighting the good fight Hunter, it was an honor fighting at your side. Till all are_*”

“Whoa! Whoa! *Let me speak my peace first S-!”*

The recording cut off and Ratchet could see that his Prime’s grief have manifested into slivers of lubricant just under his optics. “Optimus.”

“I never should of sent them on that mission....”

“Optimus...”

“I should of had the courage to tell them…. I should of…”

“OPTIMUS!”

The shout was enough to jolt the mech, his helm snapping down to look at him.

“We cannot change the past, and we can’t afford to become lost in it. We all lost bots we cared about, and for them, we have to keep fighting, one cycle this slagging war will finally end, and all their sparks will be able to rest at peace.”

“But the ones that are lost.”

That one statement hit his spark like a armour piercing round.

His holoform took a long rattling vent. “I know… old friend, I know.”

_________________________________________________________

**Whew, another chapter down 'looks at the story ahead', sweet mercy of Macedonia  what have I gotten myself into writing this... welp... I put this on myself, hope you all enjoyed this latest edition, until next time, see yah!**
Ok, chapter 23 has to a record for the fastest chapter I’ve written, in a very long time, three days, three days and I cranked out a whole chapter... whew... Anyway, hope you all enjoy this latest chapter!

“Explain to me why exactly you thought of it as higher priority to give the mechs functioning dicks, than it was to get our damn tastebuds right?!”

“Aria, darlin’, we both know yah couldn’ tell a modem from a TV remote if ah labele’ them, yah thin’ it’s fun tryin’ tah digitize ah brain an’ then tweak the code enough tah match yah specific chemical reaction to each individual taste on this damn plane’? Sometimes ah jus’ needed ah break from tha’ mess, so yes, ah completed tha’ par’ ah the program firs’, so fraggin’ sue me for wanting a break from codin’ all yah favourite dishes!”

“Alright, fair, how long until you arrive,? I doubt you’d want a repeat of you flight from Europe.”

“We’ll ah caugh’ up with yah by tonigh’, see yah then.”

“Understood, and Ira.”

“Yeah?”

“Take care of yourself.”

“Ahh shove it up yah ass.”

Sunlight peeking through the porthole was what roused Maggie from the light slumber she’d found herself in.

Groaning as the persistent light coaxed her into the waking world, she grimaced at the feel of the hangover she was now the less than proud owner of.

Served her right for trying to drink away her stresses.

Outside the hangover though… she did feel better, a lot better.

The soft silken sheet that was draped over her was warm, and with a incoherent mumble she rolled away from the light with the full intention of sleeping off the rest of her hangover.

The motion had her rolling half onto the body she hadn’t noticed next to her.

Suddenly much more awake she took in the mocha skinned man laying beside her, the sheet half down what looked and felt like rock hard pecs.

Slowly her gaze went up and she found herself looking on the peacefully resting features of Jazz’s holoform.
Feeling a dawning realisation creeping up on her, she slowly looked back at herself and lifted the sheets just enough to peer down at herself.

Naked as the day she was born no less.

A glance around the room revealed articles of clothing scattered everywhere, one of which being Jazz’s top somehow caught on one of the gold lined mahogany looking fan blades that hung down from the ceiling.

Her gaze moved back to her guardians holoform, she didn’t need to look to know he was naked too, the memories from last night gave little reason for why he would be wearing anything.

Alongside that realisation came what felt like a rush of adrenaline, that one, did not help her hangover, and two, made her realise something.

Last night had been the best sex of her life, and yes it was a dramatic statement, but a truthful one, and her partner in the act that she realised lasted well into the early morning, was an alien.

Tick that one off the bucket list.

She almost laughed then, but caught it before she risked waking her guardian.

She knew she got horny when she got drunk, but for once she honestly didn’t regret it.

She would without a doubt be sore once she tried to get up though.

Jazz had been an incredible lover, and after a glance back and over the headboard, she noted the impact markings left from where headboard had met wall repeatedly the night before.

Forget sore, she doubted she’d even be walking in a straight line after what they did last night.

Hopefully their hosts wouldn’t be upset about the damage to the wall.

Glancing back to Jazz she noted she’d left a few marks herself.

Apparently holoforms could show bite marks.

It was right around then that the ship seemed to dip on the waves and sunlight that had woken her jumped a bit.

Hitting Jazz right in the face, lighting up his darker skin in a warm glow.

She was fairly certain she was blushing now, yes she remembered last night, but it still felt embarrassing that she had propositioned him while as intoxicated as she had been.

Her cheeks were really feeling hot now, she ducked her head back down against the soft pillow and barely held in a groan of embarrassment.

She’d gone and drunk herself silly, and fucked an alien.

A really hot, really kind, possibly really skilled killing machine, transforming alien robot that could become a sports car at will.

It was official, human men were ruined for her, no man alive could compare to that.

She was so buried within her own musings she didn’t realise that Jazz was waking up.
It was only when an arm was thrown over her and she was pulled into a warm and very naked hug with Jazz’s holoform, his chin coming to rest against her bed head that she peeped out a noise of surprise.

A low sleep heavy chuckle answered the little noise. “Mornin’ sweetspark.”

Startled she opted not to trust her voice and just groaned quietly, opting to just enjoy the hug and deal with consequences later, reaching up to wrap an arm around his waist, good god those holoforms were accurate...

Jazz seemed content in his post slumber to snuggle, and she was fine with that.

But it was as he shifted to nuzzle the side of her head that it hit her.

Jazz, an alien, may have no concept of a one night stand.

And for all she knew, she’d just agreed to be his mate for life in his culture.

And there went her heart beat, hitting quite the tempo as the realisation of the fact she had no idea how badly a mess she might of fucked herself into, literally.

Yes Jazz was an amazing guy and a great lover, but she doubted her dad wouldn’t get the family shotgun if she brought home an alien robot.

A finger catching the underside of her jaw coaxed her up to lock eyes with Jazz, who's expression was one of concern and perplexion. “C'mon sweet spark, what's eatin’ at yah?”

Caught off guard she blurted out the first thing that came to mind. “Do you mate for life?”

Three blinks, he blinked three slow times as dead silence held them both.

Then his eyes seemed to widen in horror. “Yah do?! I thought yah got ‘married’ first!”

“What?! No!” She exclaimed back before catching herself. “Well sometimes, it’s more a cultural thing there.”

The horror in his expression seemed to only grow as he rolled back onto his back and pushed the palms of his hands into his face. “Prime’s gonna kill me.”

Maggie jolted at that and pushed herself up onto her knees, barely noticing that the sheets now pooled around her ass. “What? What do you mean?”

Jazz pulled his hands away from his face to look at her, surprisingly face only, before he spoke. “Ah though’ humans were pretty lax with their frag partners…”

Maggie couldn’t help herself, she snorted. “I… I think we’ve both gotten a bit confused.”

Jazz looked at her for a few moments before pushing himself up to lean against the headboard. “Oh? How so?”

Maggie pursed her lips for a moment, thinking over her response. “Well… this…” She made a quick gesture between their naked bodies. “Is pretty normally… letting off some steam that is.”

She almost missed the ‘thank Primus’ he muttered under his breath. She knew who ‘Primus’ was, apparently even hyper advanced races of alien robots had a God.
Maggie kept going. “So, you didn’t do anything wrong. And we both enjoyed it. Right?”

The doubt was creeping into her voice by the end, yes Jazz had been amazing, but had she been able to return the favour?

Apparently Jazz caught that, his expression becoming one of a frown as he shifted forwards, moving onto his own knees.

The mantra she had going about not looking down wasn’t working.

His voice brought he attention back to his face. “Sweet spark, you were incredible.”

It was a statement, said with such a conviction she couldn’t find it within herself to argue.

His lips pressing against hers and sending a bolt of electricity down her body was more than enough to seal that as resolute fact.

One kiss became two, then three, and soon enough she had her arms around his neck and she’d pulled him over her, the world outside the walls of the room vanished again not long after.

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The main dining hall had a much different air.

Where the humans dug in happily to the wide spread of food provided for the morning meal, the present Autobots and the twins holoforms all seemed to be in their own worlds.

Wren was holding an odd digital device, a portable interactive screen she merely referred to as a ‘tablet’, and seemed to be reading something of utmost importance of, it had an interesting resemblance to a data pad.

Aria was still half asleep, the edges of her holoform seemed to flicker as her focus wavered back into oblivion before snapping back for a moment to alertness.

Optimus seemed to not be in the present, staring out the wide span windows out to the Gulf beyond, expression unreadable.

The rest of the Autobots remained quiet, eyeing the spread before them with mild confusion and slight repulsion.

All except Bumblebee, who was too busy talking to Mikaela as she wolfed down another slice of toast.

Ratchet and Ironhide were locked in a debate over their com-link systems, with glances thrown across the table repeatedly to the rest of those present.

Though most seemed to land on their Prime, who’s attention remained elsewhere.

Lena and Leeroy were also present, the woman helping the young boy reach some of the assortment of fruits, breads, meats and cheese that were laid out in front of them.

A rapping at the open door that lead deeper into the ship drew the attention of some sitting at the table. One of the crew stood stoically, waiting to be addressed.

Wren looked over the lip of her tablet. “Yes?”

As if triggered by the reply the crew member spoke. “My ladies, Mrs Estrada reports an estimated
arrival time of eight hours, they are approaching the coast now.”

Wren nodded. “Is there anything else?”

“Yes My Lady, the construction crews have already begun the bunker process at the designated locations, estimated completion time, two months, barring any delays.”

“Good, dismissed.”

The crew member bowed and disappeared back down the corridor.

Wren took the moment of silence to reach out and grasp the glass of water that had been sitting before her to take a sip, attention already returned to the tablet.

Taking that as a cue, Mikaela went back to speaking with Bumblebee and her father, though kept their voices quiet.

Not long after Aria seemed to come into full waking and groaned, a sound echoed from where their frame shifted on the main deck.

“Morning all.” She grumbled out, her holoform looking like she’d just rolled out of a bush.

“Morning.” Was the chorus that replied.

Aria looked around at the table, then to the spread before them and scrunched up her nose, without a word she got up, patted her twin on the shoulder, and walked off.

No one really batted an eye, and went back to what they’d been doing previously.

Optimus’ holoform flickered out of existence not long after, no longer paying enough attention to the program to keep it running.

The day went by quietly, the twins kept to themselves, and everyone else followed suit.

Jazz and Maggie finally made an appearance around lunch, the later looking very disheveled and in a far better mood than previous days, the former just seemed to be very proud about something or other.

No one made a comment, but Wren did raise an eyebrow for half a second before looking back at her tablet.

The day continued it’s peaceful trend into the afternoon, when dark clouds began billowing on the far horizon and a shrill cry cracked open the silence like a thunderclap.

The twins bipedal form snapped to life at the sound, as did Optimus’, who’s attention went almost immediately down to the twin Harpies as they tried to push themselves up into a standing position.

Every part of them seemed to protest the sudden motion, hydraulics hissed and gears groaned in a distressing cacophony of noise, and that was before they even tried to move their damaged pede, the pained hiss that came when they tried causing him to flinch for a moment.

Taking a bit of initiative, Optimus bent down enough to hook his arm around their middle, and, mostly thanks to their light frame, hoisted them upright, eliciting a startled warble from them.

Their pedes scrambled, and the razor sharp talons of their left pede dug harshly into the deck, but
finally, with a bit of support from the Prime still holding them, they seemed to right them, Aria
taking the majority of their weight on her pede and leaning the rest onto the Primes supportive arm,
as Wren carefully held her own just off the decking.

Their attention went skyward as humans and holoforms alike quickly arrived.

Descending towards them were the forms of Kia and Ira, their wings spread wide to catch the wind
in their decent, talons extended ahead of them for landing.

Not a few moments later the two Harpies touched down on the ship in a cloud of whipped up
seaspray.

Ira landed on the roof of the bridge, leaving her towering over all, whilst Kia opted to landing on
the roof of one of the upper levels.

Each one folded in their wings and turned to regard their comrades down on the main deck, all four
bowing their helms in greeting before Kia spoke. “How’s the leg Wren?”

The twins looked down to the aforementioned mangled pede before Wren answered. “Well I can
feel the bastard again, so that accounts for something I guess.”

Ira seemed to be amused that the remark and shook herself for a moment.

It drew attention to her armour.

Even Optimus couldn’t quite hid his wince, the amount of heat warping was a distressing sight all
it’s own, mixed with the tattering of her wings and the marks left from bullets hitting her thin
armour, some piercing, others bouncing off. There was also the worrying tell of faded dried
energon running in narrow windswept streaks down her frame, as well as how much was splattered
across her chassis.

It brought back to the present that while they had been at the dam, Ira had fought off a Decepticon
attack.

“Bloody hell yah lookin’ a’ meh like ah’m tha walkin’ dead!” She huffed, having noticed their
attention on her. “Besides, ah’m already feelin’ a lot betta alrea’y.”

Kia spoke then. “Besides, there’s more pressing matters that need to be attended to.”

Not waiting for a reply or an inquest into what she had meant, the plating on her back seemed to
suddenly transform, dropping something to the roof behind her.

After a few more moments and a burst of grey white and black feathers erupting from the moving
seams, Hera rose, the Harpy Eagle chirped before taking wing and gliding down to the lower deck
to be reunited with their docks.

The twins huffed as a wing reached out to tentatively brush the side of the creatures helm. “Hi
there little one, get bored of Ira and Kia huh?”

Hera just trilled and with one strong jump vaulted herself upwards and transformed again.

Optimus had to pull his arm away as their lower chassis seemed to break apart, plating shifting to
allow the smaller Avian frame to wrap around their upper abdominal plating while wing and talon
alike merged into the secondary arms that both Kia and Ira had already.
Had he not been holding them Optimus would of likely missed the shiver that went down their frame, apparently not yet used to the docking procedure of a symbiote.

He had to remind himself what Ratchet had told him, human civilians, not Cybertronian Neutrals.

Ones who belonged to a race that’s symbiosis was molecular, not two separate individuals merging conscience to work together.

The twins had the added fun of it being three when put together.

Ratchet had made it quite clear that until he was able to run a full diagnostic on the Harpies, everything was speculation.

Finding a way to perform such an admittedly invasive scan on their hosts was going to be interesting, and preferably with the Harpies go ahead.

“Hold still.”

“Ah’ll hold still when yah stop pokin’ meh!”

“Ira.”

“... Oh fine. Jus’ hurry i’ up!”

Optimus watched from his height attributed vantage point as his CMO’s holoform continued to route around under one of Ira’s right shoulder plates for a ammunition round that had, during the attack on the Cosmopolitan, gotten jammed between armour and protoform.

Apparently the Harpy had been flying with a number of said rounds jammed between components for over a week.

Ratchet had had some choice words about that that the Prime would rather not repeat in pleasant company.

Once again time was against them, the thundering tropical storms winds were already hurtling across the deck, the storms rains already beginning to patter against their armour and the sides of the ship, the hull shifting more sharply with the churning waves.

Ratchet had only been able to dig out a few, and there were more still to hunt down.

He knew his CMO would loathe the idea of being stopped by the storm, but he could feel the twins becoming restless as the storm approached, and Kia’s gaze had not left the billowing clouds for more than an hour, those protrusions of hers flaring with every crack of thunder that reached them.

Flashes of lightning danced within the storm, a warning that danger was growing closer and closer.

It was difficult to gauge Ira’s personal reaction to the storm, her attention was primarily on his CMO.

It was with a pained yelp from Ira and a jerk from his CMO that announced the medics latest victory, a bubble of violet energon dribbled from the gap between the armour whilst the energon stained round was dropped to the decking.

It looked similar to the rounds used for a gatling gun, Energon had long become to scarce too be used in ammunition, forcing both sides to return to alloy based rounds for their weapons.
“Alrigh’ enough ah tha’, Prime, get yah ass below deck.” Ira suddenly snapped, shoving herself back up to her full height.

Jolted by the sheer fact someone had ordered him to do something, he stared blankly at the Red Kite Harpy.

Said Red Kite looked to the twins he was still holding up.

He barely had time to react as the twins suddenly lurched forwards, their wings coming out and the struts tips making contact and piercing through the decking with the force of each impact.

With one surprisingly quick motion they had lurched themselves across the deck, where Ira and Kia moved, extending their wings out to catch their larger companions.

The twins twisted their helm round to look back at him. “Head below deck Optimus, we don’t need you getting hit by Lightning. Captain! Full speed ahead!” Aria called up towards the bridge, Optimus caught a silhouette salute before he felt the ships engines started powering up even further, and the ship lurched forwards towards the storm even faster.

He went to object but the decking he was standing on was already lowering back down.

He was already half way back below deck when he called out. “What of you?”

The Harpies didn’t reply, just kept watching him to make sure that he didn’t try to clamber out as the decking slid shut over him.

Almost instantly he reactivated his holoform back on the deck.

Just in time to hear Ratchet let out a warning shout as the twins launched themselves into the air on their wings.

Just in time for a powerful gust from the storm to catch the broad underside of their wings and send them hurtling upwards into the air.

“YOU CAN’T LAND!” Ratchet’s holoform screamed upwards, but already they’d broken into the full force of the storm, and the winds howl was a truly deafening force.

Ira actually barked out a laugh. “Like tha’s eva stopped em! Come on Kia! Race yah tah tha top!”

Without any more hesitation her own wings snapped open and caught the wind, sending her back and shooting upwards.

Kia didn’t rise to the bait, instead regarding the rest of the group who’d amassed out in the rain. “Don’t worry, we’ll catch them.” Only then did their own wings stretch out again with another wind gust and they went rocketing upwards after the other Harpies already disappearing into the billowing black clouds.

Whatever Ratchet had been planning to shout up at them died in his processor and the CMO’s holoform just threw up his arms in defeat before storming back inside and out of the rain.

His own gaze remained focused on the sky, trying to spot glimpses of the Harpies as Kia slipped out of view completely.

A tap on his soaked jacket turned his gaze down to a beaming Lena.

Somewhat startled by her positivity he tilted his head to the side, giving her the cue to speak.
“Don’t worry, they’ve done this before. It’s perfectly safe for them. Just… don’t touch them for a while after they land.”

With that said her own gaze went skyward, the look of pure joy on her features somewhat alarming. “It’s amazing isn’t it? Being able to fly…”

Seeing an opportunity for some insight, he asked the woman a question. “Why do you follow them?”

Lena seemed to think that over for a few minutes before answering. “Their drive.”

He regarded them for a moment. “What do you mean?”

Lena pursed her lips for a moment before answering him. “They have a goal, to return home… you haven’t been around them long… not long enough for them to get attached. Once they’re attached to you, they’d fight God himself to keep you safe… And I can say that from… personal experience.” She admitted, left hand rubbing her right wrist in an almost subconscious motion. “All while going full force to their ultimate goal of returning home… so they can return to their own war.”

He came up short there. “War? Against who?”

She glanced to him out of the corner of her eye. “Not who… what…. You did hear them didn’t you? History went differently… there wasn’t NATO to keep America and Russia from fighting… no global treaties… when the bombs dropped… their world… it became sick… they’re all sick… the Harpies are together because they agreed to combine their influences and abilities to try and heal their world… To find a cure for the sickness… then… they wound up here… and they’ve done everything in their power to try and find a way back… they even snagged the attention of aliens for crying out loud!”

That, that was true.

After a few moments he asked another question. “How do you know this?”

Lena shrugged. “They told me… me, Winston and a few others… The twins even let us listen to their hearts.”

That stopped him again, hearts… the plural term for the organ that pumps blood through the humans body, also referred to as where the human ‘soul’ resides. “I’m sorry… did you mean?”

“I meant what I said… they have two hearts… even now. The sickness hit everyone differently, don’t ask Ira about it, Winston made that mistake and she went catatonic for four solid days.”

“No… Are you telling me that the twins… were born with two blood pumps? What you humans often refer to as the place where the ‘soul’ resides?”

Lena nodded, though looked a little alarmed at the terminology he used, heart probably would of been better.

He turned to look back up to the billowing clouds above. “Primus… Split spark… same frame… Mrs Oxton do you understand how impossible what you just told me is?”

She shrugged. “They’re from an Alternative reality and time-line, anything’s possible in the grand scheme of things.”
He couldn’t really argue with that.

He opted for changing the topic and bringing up what he learned with Ratchet later. “What are they doing up there?”

Lena smirked then. “Riding the lightning of course, whenever a storm would roll through Vegas, they’d take the chance to get a good charge, it gives them a boost.”

He nodded along to her explanation for a few moments before what she’d implied hit him… another thing to bring up with Ratchet.

She patted him on the shoulder. “Head inside, we won’t be seeing them again for a while.”

She took that as her own cue to depart, her human body already soaked to the bone.

He stayed out in the storm for a few more minutes, watching the lightning crash and roll among the clouds, some striking the water in the distance, others striking much closer to the Gilded Falcon.

The Harpies only returned when the storm was breaking on the horizon again, Ira landed first, letting off a triumphant screech as arcs of electricity jumped across her frame.

Kia’s landing was heavier, letting out an appreciative groan as she stretched.

They each gave themselves a moment to gain their bearings before turning and stretching out their wings.

The twins glided down, their right pede tucked up and their left reaching out for the decking.

Their landing into their companions outstretched wings took only a moment, but the sudden added weight of the twins caused both of the smaller Harpies to grunt as both the weight and their combined charge jumped between them.

All four were venting laboriously, exhausted from the work out they’d gotten riding the turbulence far above.

The twins let out an especially satisfied puff of hot air as their sagged against their friends, helm craning up to knock their helms together in a show of appreciation before they allowed themselves to sag downwards.

Having little strength left themselves, Ira and Kia sagged as well, soon enough becoming a tangle of exhausted wings, bodies and talons.

Ira let out a slow sigh, lifting her helm to bang the side of it against Wren’s shoulder.

Aria was the one who spoke, a wing shifting to rest over the Red Kite, shielding her smaller frame from the some of the rain that hammered against their frames. “How have you been holding up?”

Kia shifted closer, throwing her own wing over the Twins. “We’ve… managed.”

Ira nodded in agreement, shuffling closer against Aria and Wren to tuck her helm under their jaw, she didn’t fit, but it was as close as they could get with these forms.”We’re gonna be starvin’ in tha mornin’.”

All four seemed to let out both a sigh of exhaustion and groan of agreement at the same time, the
faint light reflecting on their rain soaked faceplates fading away as each one slipped into oblivion, too tired to even try and stay awake, even with the freezing rain continuing it’s deluge.

Peering out from within one of the higher floors, Ratchet found himself caught between being angry that his patients had gone against his warning of flying on their injured pede, and merely watching the Harpies bundle together into a pile on the main deck.

There was no illusion that they were close, he’d seen Ira and Kia catch the twins, how the cabling and pistons in their pedes had struggled to carry the extra weight for those short moments before the twins were able to mostly support their own weight on Aria’s pede.

He knew that this wouldn’t be the only time the Harpies would take to the air on this voyage, he just hoped he didn’t end up with all four Harpies being grounded and needing repairs.

It was obvious they were still learning their own limits.

So lost in his musings was the CMO that he didn’t notice Jazz walk over to him, the First Lieutenants stealth so ingrained that Ratchet didn’t even hear the mechs holoform coming up until he was tapped on the shoulder.

By sheer force of will and having spotted who it was in the reflection of the glass did he prevent himself from spinning and trying to punch Jazz in the face, he knew full well he’d be the one on the floor if he had acted on his first instinct. “Yes Jazz?”

Jazz seemed to be, for once, hesitant. “Me and Maggie are fragging.”

Honestly Ratchet had suspected as much, to actually hear it from Jazz was a bit of a surprise, given his previous observation subjects seemed to of all slipped into recharge, he turned to regard Jazz. “Jazz…”

“Already got tha ‘endangering ah charge with personal involvement’ from Optimus, I don’ need tah hear it twice in one cycle Ratch’. I wanna re-assure Maggie that, despite… how realistic tha holoforms are, ah ain’ gonna be gettin’ her carryin’. Bu’ she wan’s tah hear it from a medic.”

“Ah…” That was not where he thought the conversation would go, after a few moments of thought he glanced back to the Harpies. “May I suggest asking instead the ones who created the Program? I’d need to run a number of… tests… I doubt Mrs Madsen would be fully onboard with an ‘alien’ examining her. I am also yet to finish studying human anatomy.” He added for good measure.

Jazz sagged a bit at that, before reaching up rub at the back of his neck. “Damn… was hopin’ tah fix tha’… we both wanna keep… lettin’ off steam bu’ she’s worried… ah don’ wanna be tha cause ah tha’.”

Ratchet huffed out a vent of air from his holoform. “Considering the fact neither of you showed yourself until after lunch, I’m going to take it that you performed the act a number of times.”

Jazz’s holoform actually darkened with a blush at that statement. “Well yeah… she’s amazin’ so soft an’…”

“Spare me the details, please Jazz.” He interrupted, he did not need to know the details of the first lieutenants ‘activities’ with Mrs Madsen.

“Righ’, sorry Ratch’... but it really helped her unwin’ an’ ah don’ wanna her bein’ all upset again yah know?”
Ratchet hummed under his breath, he’d never had to have a charge like Jazz did, but he could understand the desire to try and make someone in your care feel better, that was one of the reasons he was a medic, even now after so many millennia of war. “Speak to the Harpies tomorrow, they’ll have a better answer than me in all likelihood.”

Jazz just nodded and turned to head back in the direction Ratchet assumed was Mrs Madsen’s room.

He should probably retire to his own.

He wouldn’t admit it outloud, but there was a certain appeal to sleeping and waking up in a bed so soft it made him feel like he was floating.

Welp, that's another chapter down, hope you all enjoyed the latest addition! Until next time, ta ta!

Moon
Chapter 21

Woo, ok, so Easter break happened, and I spam wrote two chapters in just shy of two weeks, and clean forgot to edit and post this one when I finished the first one... oh well. Hope you all enjoy this latest chapter!

California

“Ahhh~ The wayward scout finally shows himself.” Starscream snarled as Barricade rolled into the destitute hangar the Seeker was propped up in, Devastator and Bonecrusher were already there, their frames completely undamaged unlike their current leader.

Said Seeker was sporting a gruesome wound down the full length of his side, half of his wing seemed to be missing but in the dark of the hangar it was difficult to tell.

Transforming up into his bipedal mode Barricade scowled. “Considering your order to break off and chase down the Autobot scout, I’d have thought you’d of realised by now that the separation was not fully of my own doing.” Though already he was wishing he could just get back out to scouting, Primus knew he had quite the list of reasons to detest Starscream.

“Hmm… and seeing you don’t return with at least one severed frame part… he got away. How disappointing for you.”

Barricade huffed. “Says the mech who got his aft handed to him by a femme with kinetic flight.”

Starscream scowled. “And how prey tell would you know what attacked me and slew Blackout was a femme?”

Barricade shrugged. “Besides our obvious team up. You screaming over the com-links and I quote ‘DAMN YOU YOU BLASTED FEMME! STOP FLAPPING AROUND AND DIE!’ Was a pretty good giveaway you were getting your aft handed to you. Really Starscream? For the great Wing Lord of Vos, you sure lost that aerial fight.”

He knew that in any other state Starscream would of tried to slag him for saying that, but with, what he now recognised as Scalpel fiddling around still pulling parts of the seeker back together, the seeker couldn’t even get up let alone try and offline him.

He was just glad that Frenzy’s own hatred for Starscream had gotten the minicon to agree to not bring up the whole double agent deal he now had going, it wasn’t with an Autobot, but he doubted that that fact would appease any of the mechs around him now.

All three of them.

He made a bit of a show of looking around. “So… where’s the avian freak?”

Starscream growled. “‘Eating’ The fragger had the gaul to come back here and accuse me of not being able to fend off the ‘Irish whore’, as he so eloquently put it, the pile of slag took right back off and he hasn’t been spotted by either Bonecrusher or Devastator since, grounders… the whole lot of you aren’t worth the good one of my seekers could do.”

He wasn’t deaf, that was Devastators weapons systems coming online.
Starscream apparently wasn’t deaf either, the threat causing him to almost instantly try and take back his previous statement.

He for one, had no care for listening to the mech grovel, ever since Megatron had gone chasing after the Allspark Starscream had rarely done anything but try and glorify himself.

And to be perfectly honest, even watching the cons he managed to tick off enough knock some dents into the seeker was getting boring.

All the more reason to take that offer from the Avian femmes.

He wondered what Soundwave would think of Starscreams grand standing… after the TIC vanished off the battlefields of Helex the Decepticons certainly lost some of their tactical edge.

Megatron was more often than not blinded by rage and lust for spilled energon to really care much for coherent strategy.

And Starscream was no Soundwave.

Speaking of the missing TIC, Frenzy had been, for lack of a better word, quiet, which for Frenzy, was rather unusual. He’d been looking after the minicon long enough to realise the minicon had become lost in something.

The last leg of their journey to meet up with Starscream had been notably silent, only broken with his odd attempts to strike up conversation, that was promptly abandoned once he realised the minicon wasn’t even aware he was speaking.

It wasn’t the first time this had happened, the minicon was so small his processor sometimes struggled to keep up with certain things, causing him to redirect power to better process the data, leaving the minicon to be externally inert.

Just like his sire Soundwave in a way.

All of that suggested that the minicon was running something demanding, what that was exactly he had no clue, and he wouldn’t until Frenzy came back to the present, and even then the minicon might just not answer.

That was fine with him, as long as the minicon was back to his senses by the time he needed him to do something, he had no qualms.

Said Minicon was currently standing just by his left pede, staring off into nothing.

Unlike Frenzy he wasn’t blind to the growing tension in the hangar, so, without any complaint from Frenzy, picked the minicon back up and transformed back into his vehicle mode.

If Fernando wasn’t there to keep an optic on, and hadn’t been seen for some time, he had little chance of finding the Avian mech.

He was just a ground pounder after all wasn’t he?

So, he opted to scout out the area, Primus knew Devastator and Bonecrusher hadn’t bothered to case the area, either they had been smart enough to know a tank and military people mover would draw attention to the area, or they were too lazy to even consider doing something so beneath them as scouting.
Starscream had certainly been in no condition to do a fly around to check the area.

Scalpel was still a long way off putting all of the Seekers internals back into the right places.

It would seem that he had made the right call in allying himself with the Avian femmes.

He certainly prefered to have his internal systems remain internal.

He looked forwards to when Starscream discovered he’d lost to the smallest of the Avian femmes.

That expression would be worth it’s pixels in energon.

He was back in California now, it felt like a strange round trip.

Something told him he had better familiarise himself with the area.

He was doing just that for a good three hours before Frenzy suddenly lurched forwards in his back seat with a static laden shout.

Barricade, having not expected such a sudden noise or motion, jolted on his trajectory, and ended up veering down a road he hadn’t planned to go down.

After a few moments to get his spark to calm down he growled over the internal radio. “What the slag was that about?!?”

Frenzy was shaking, not the virus laden rattle as before, but a Primus below happy shake.

“Sire… I feel sire… He’s online. ”

Well… that was a development. “How far off is he?”

Frenzy’s expression darkened and he seemed to pout. “ETA, six orns… he’s on his way from the Omega 49 quadrant.”

That was, way out in the middle of nowhere.

What the slag had the mech been doing to wind up in a dying galaxy?

He knew for a fact he’d have a good few questions to force answers out of the TIC when the mech finally showed himself, mechs don’t just vanish off the battlefield and then reappear deca-vorns later in a dying Galaxy so far away his bond with his symbiotes can’t even feel him.

Now it was just a matter of waiting for the mech to show himself.

He knew Soundwave would come for Frenzy now.

Hopefully he hadn’t gotten himself slagged by then.

The Gilded Falcon somewhere in the Atlantic

Optimus found himself wandering the halls of the ship, seeking out the passing company of any he came across.

The morning sun was just breaking, and he had been up since long before.

Rest had been elusive the night before, his processor active in that middle ground that frustrated
him so.

Too alert slip away, but just tired enough to desire the elusive rest.

Now, with the night wasted by churning thoughts, he wandered, hoping to stumble upon another early riser.

The Harpies were all still strewn across the main deck, though it was impossible to tell if they were still in recharge, or just had all their focus on their holoforms.

He did not wish to earn their ire by waking them prematurely.

Even now small arcs of electricity jumped across the pile they’d formed after they had landed.

An odd uncomfortable looking pile, but a pile nonetheless.

That was when he caught the scent of something wafting on the air.

Curious he followed the scent trail.

He found himself looking into what seemed to be the ships kitchen.

The massive room was filled with cooking appliances he had little understanding of the function of.

But standing before one of the ovens was Aria’s holoform, her attention solely on the pan before her as she gave it another flip.

A circular piece of food flipped into the air and landed back in the pan.

Hoping not to startle the holoform, he knocked his holoforms hand against the door.

A knife was embedded in the door frame not a few inches from his shoulder a moment later.

They locked gazes then, Aria seemed to of reacted faster than even she had realised, having thrown the knife that had previously been sitting innocently next to her on the counter top.

Hoping to break the sudden tension caused by Aria nearly sending a knife through his holoform, Optimus cleared his throat and reached up to pull the knife from the wall, feeling a bite of concern in his spark when he realised just how deep the blade had embedded itself.

More than enough to end a humans life.

Turning back to face the white themed twin he offered the knife out. “You… threw this.”

Aria nodded, taking a few moments to calm herself, before turning off the flames of the cooker she was standing next to and walking over to him and accepting the knife back. “Right, sorry, didn’t hear you coming.” She admitted.

Going on a hunch, he reached forwards, and before the twin could flinch away, pulled her hair away from her damaged ear.

The cartilage had been torn to ribbons, the shell of the ear a tattered mess.

He could understand why she would wish to hide such a-
A slap across the face had his head jerking to the side.

Aria stepped back from him, a low hiss coming from her in warning before she seemed to realise herself and straightened, hand clasped over her shot ear. “Evidently, personal space is not something you Cybertronians are well versed in.” She snapped.

The bite in her voice made him step back as he tried to apologise. “I am sorry Mrs Orichi-”

“Aria, you refer to me as Aria, my lady doesn’t suit you, and Mrs Orichino was our mother, and may that woman continue to rot where we buried her.” She snapped, cutting his attempted apology off before turning back to the oven and pushing maybe a bit too hard whilst twisting a dial to re-ignite the hob.

He held his silence for a few more moments before trying to speak again. “I am sorry for my action, I was concerned that you had suffered hearing damage and had not yet been to Ratchet about it.”

Aria didn’t show any sign of listening to him, but he could tell she was tense now, her actions more aggressive as she flipped the thing in the pan again.

Finally the food item was slipped onto a plate folded a few times, a few sliced strawberries from a bowl placed on top, and she was walking back out of the kitchen.

He of course, followed.

He found she led him all the way to the back of the ship, where there was a small balcony, already set up with a table and four chairs.

Aria sat at the one furthest from the door, and after an expectant look, he sat at the one opposite.

For a while they sat in silence, the knife and fork that Aria had brought with her cutting up the food a piece at a time.

Outside of the quiet clinks of the metal against crockery, the churning of waves, and the odd distant cry of sea birds, there was silence.

With a final clatter the cutlery was laid aside and Aria leaned back.

The silence persisted, her gaze focused on the disappearing horizon.

“... I don’t know what to talk about with you.”

After a few moments of thought he spoke. “Mrs Oxton mentioned that your home reality is… unlike this one… could you elaborate further how?”

There was another long moment where Aria seemed to ponder over his request before letting off a sigh and turning to face him fully. “A better question would be what’s the same? We still breathe Oxygen… our hearts pump blood, brain does what it does… geography is mostly the same, sans… Hawaii, Australia… and chunk of the Amazons missing here… this world's gonna get pretty hot over the next few decades… serves them right for sticking with coal and oil after renewables became efficient…” She trailed off at his perplexed expression. “Comparing the similarities and differences of parallel realities is more Wren’s thing…”

There was a dejection in her tone that he couldn’t miss.
Frowning for a moment he tried to think of a way to recover the quickly dying conversation. “What was that you were… eating?”

“Crepe… one of the few things that’s fully programmed for this holoform… but even then there’s only so many flavours that have been programmed with this dish… honey… strawberries… sugar…” Her expression only seemed to worsen as she finished the short list. “… I miss cooking… the smells… the taste tests… feeling Wren try and understand how I pulled off certain dishes… she can’t cook to save our life… once nearly killed a man by accident!” She was rambling now, twiddling the fork in her left hand with her attention so focused on it it was as if it would reveal the secrets of the universe if she spun it fast enough.

He had a feeling that Aria wasn’t actually up for talking, so let her attention drift.

Perhaps just enjoying a moment of silence in somewhat pleasant company would be preferable to trying to make small talk.

Yes, he could manage that.

Back on the main deck, Ira was finally rousing, half buried under the twins larger frame she let off a noise of complaint realising she was effectively pinned.

Apparently a certain medic was also aware of this considering his holoform was standing directly in front of her visor, so close he probably could of crouched and peeked at her optics.

Her visor was already cracked, it just needed on more good knock to break the thing.

“Wha’ yah wan’?” She growled out, she was never in a good mood after waking up, sleep was a blessed escape from a reality she’d rather not give a flying fuck about, but she did, because Kia, the twins and Keeley were in it.

Ratchet seemed to notice her foul mood and sighed. “I was hoping to obtain a better grasp of you frames anatomy today… if I am to be your medic from now on I need to know how you function, unless you want me to accidentally cause you even more damage by performing on you whilst uninformed?”

Loathe was she to admit it but he had a point.

Rolling her optics she sighed. “Fine, but wait fah Kia tah wake up, she’ll sit still for yah.”

Like hell she was letting anyone turn her into a lab rat again.

She didn’t need any more reminders of that time before she was a Harpy in the Triage.

Ratchet pursed his lips but nodded and moved to step back away from the pile. “Hey, where d’yah thin’ yah goin’? Ah’m pinned here and yah loo’ like yah heads abou’ tah burs’… humour ah Harpy an le’ meh hear i’.” She knew for a fact she’d go just a bit more mad if she was left to her own thoughts whilst Arien had their ass pinning her to the deck.

Ratchet rolled his eyes and sat down cross legged on the deck.

Arien rumbled on top of her, helm shifting the bang against the side of her own helm.

Apparently at least one was up enough to want her to keep it down.

Probably Aria, they alternated between who slept like a log, she was fairly certain it was Wren’s
This time her optic roll was in good humour, the twins were always warm, like a giant somewhat too heavy blanket, so she was fine with being quiet if it meant at least one of the twins kept sleeping.

Ratchet seemed to be pondering something before he apparently decided on something. “Jazz has become ‘sexually’ intimate with Mrs Madsen.”

A very pig like snort came from the twins, Aria was definitely up, probably got her holoform somewhere on the ship, Wren would also never allow them to make such a noise, to much dignity in her to even consider it, Aria had no such withholdings.

Ira nodded and pursed her lipplates. “An’ yah poin’?”

Ratchet seemed to note her lack of surprise. “She’s concerned about if Jazz will be able to get her carrying.”

She stared at him for a moment, just letting that all sink in before smiling. “Yeahhh noooo. Ah’m good, bu’ no’ tha’ fuckin’ good. Tell her she ain’ go’ nothin’ tah worry abou’, unless she’s related tah tha Virgin Mary tha’ is… look i’ up ah ain’ go’ tah fucks tah give abou’ Christianity.”

For his suddenly vacant expression he was doing just that.

After a few moments he began to mutter about ‘impossibilities’ and ‘mass hallucination’

Aria snorted again.

They were both having a bit of fun now. “Human religion is fuckin’ weird, don’ bus’ yah head ova it.”

Ratchet seemed to just accept that as fact and move on.

“Another question then, what do you plan to do with Megatrons helm?”

She drew blank for a few moments before scowling. “Ah’m sorry… his what?”

Ratchet gestured to her living blanket. “They decapitated his frozen frame and then melted the rest of him down.”

It dawned on her then. “So that’s why you two wanted meh tah whip up three tones of mah Chlorine Trifluoride recipe!”

Aria hummed under her breath, talking didn’t work too well when only half of the face was awake.

She laughed at that. “But le’ meh guess… Kia called dibs on his helm as a trophy?”

Another hum of confirmation.

Ira turned back to Ratchet then. “Probably gonna have i’ mounte’ on tha wall a’ Kia’s place in Barcelona.”

Ratchet seemed to be somewhat put off at that idea.

Oh well, that was on him, Kia had taken far more grisly trophies before.
Some of which had even raised her eyebrows.

But that was something for another time, like hell were they gonna wake Kia up earlier than she wanted to, her sleep schedule was so whack it wasn’t unusual for her to stay up three days and nights straight.

Dealing with Nibbler was bad enough, two cranky Bateleurs was not something any of them enjoyed having to deal with.

Ratchet frowned. “So you have no ill intentions with his helm?”

Ira snorted herself. “Does turnin’ his face inta ah dartboard coun’?”

Apparently he had to look up what a dartboard was.

The medic seemed to sigh in resignation before moving to his next question. “When you are all awake, am I permitted to perform an internal scan so that I can better understand your anatomy? Understand the scan is rather… invasive, but it’s necessary if I’m to know if there’s anything distinctly different that I need to be aware of.”

That didn’t sound fun. “Yah mean yah have tah examine all ah us?”

Ratchet nodded.

She was going to refuse when a low noise came from the twins and Aria knocked their helm against her own.

Right, this was Ratchet, he was worried for his ability to perform if they ended up hurt.

It was a scan… not a scalpel he was going to use.

She could somewhat live with that, somewhat.

Hopefully the twins would be alright, she could feel how tense Aria’s side had become.

She didn’t have the whole story, but she’d once caught a rumour saying they once killed a whole team of doctors with their bare hands at age ten, and rumours like that weren’t something that came out of nowhere, though it was probably also highly exaggerated by years of whispered word of mouth.

Though they’d certainly been very hostile towards anyone wearing a red cross for all the time she’d known the twins.

Ratchet had so far been an exception to that rule, but that could easily change.

Wren wasn’t up, maybe she was the one with the vendetta.

Discussing anything medical had never really been an issue.

Sans when the twins got their pede mangled that is.

But that was a whole different issue.

Sighing she nodded her helm. “Eitha we say yes, or we risk endin’ up dea’… so… yes… bu’ if somethin’ don’ feel righ’ we’re callin’ it off, go’ it?”
Ratchet nodded, agreeing to the terms she laid out.

He was actually a pretty agreeable mech when he wasn’t mad.

Good to know.

Maybe she shouldn’t of thrown that tire at him when they first met?

Nah, that had been too much fun, she wasn’t going to regret that.

Now they just had to wait for Kia and Wren to wake up.

Considering the dead weight that was the right side of her blanket, and the truly impressive snore that Kia just let off, that wasn’t going to happen any time soon.

Sure enough it was another four hours before Wren finally roused.

Ira had long since activated her own holoform, opting to prop it against herself and use the tablet she had stored away in her subspace to keep working on a few of the holoforms programs still incomplete sections.

Holoforms, she’d long since realised, where a pain in the ass to program when you were having to take into accomodation they needed to run in an alien software language for their frames to actually generate them.

She thanked her luck that Wren had spent the three months after her injury decoding the Cybertronian dialect that ran in their own systems.

Without that she’d still be staring at the symbols with no clue in hell what each one meant.

Ratchet, who had stuck around but remained mostly quiet, had moved over some time earlier to sit next to her holoform.

At first she’d gone to hide her work, only to find her surprised when he asked how she’d learned ‘Iaconian Standard’ She just pointed at the twins and said honestly that Wren loved cracking codes in her free time and had taken the Cybertronian they had running in their own systems as a good challenge.

Ratchet seemed to regard the twins with a new sense of cautious respect.

Good, cautious respect was the right thing to have when it came to the twins.

Wren’s rousing was a subtle thing, something that those who hadn’t ended up sharing a bed more than a few times wouldn’t know how to pick up on.

But with the twins plastered over her back, she definitely felt it when Wren’s side of the body started coming fully online, the thrumming dual beats against her back fully synchronised and their venting evened out as they started to twitch and shift minutely.

Wren had become very careful when it came to waking up, the damage to her pede keeping her from doing any full stretches when she first woke up as the twins were want to do.

Rolling her head back she watched as the twins Helm finally lifted up on their long neck, jaws opening wide to let off a yawn, revealing the serrated beak inside before rolling said jaw from side to side to try and loosen the joints there. “Mornin’ Wren.”
The twins just hummed, Wren was always slow to rise, and clearly by the way she pressed down into her back and dropped their helm down against her spiked shoulder plating, said twin was not quite ready to get up.

Not that they really could on their own from this position, when Kia woke up she’d have to help the twins get up so that the twins were no longer pinning her.

She noticed that Ratchet was about to get up, probably to scold the twins for taking that flight in the storm with her and Kia.

Thinking fast she reached up and grabbed his sleeve, yanking him back down onto the decking. “Leave ’um, yah can tell ‘um off later when they’re both awa’e enough tah actually undastand wha’ yah sayin’.”

He seemed to ponder her suggestion for a moment before nodding.

Eventually Wren was awake enough to actually generate a holoform, and Aria re-appeared from somewhere in the ship then.

Followed by Ironhide’s holoform.

She was expecting tension, the weapons specialist hadn’t hid his distrust.

There was no such tension, only a begrudging respect in the weapons specialists gaze as he followed behind the twin.

All became clear when she realised what both were wearing.

Boxing gear, a set of gloves were tied and thrown over the white twins shoulder.

And Ironhide was rubbing at his holoforms jaw…

She almost laughed, almost, the look of victory in the white twins gaze was tell enough.

Ironhide had challenged Aria to a spar, and she’d gotten him in the jaw at least once.

Wren’s holoform was, compared to her twin, the definition of a paradox, both well rested and stricken with post waking exhaustion.

Aria raised an eyebrow at Wren before turning to go shoulder to shoulder with her twin and letting Wren drop head onto the others shoulder. “About time you finally woke up.”

“Mnhmhm… you were really… energised… wanted to know why…”

“Ironhide wanted to test out the boxing ring, got the idea in his head that he’d be able to box better than me.”

Ironhide walked over to her and Ratchet, muttering under his breath. “Damn femme has one fierce left hook.”

Ira snorted, lady like be damned. “Duh, yah thin’ it’s easy gettin’ tah a cruisin’ altitude of 15,000 feet with jazz hands alone?” Ironhide gave her a confused look.

She just rolled her eyes and looked back to the twins, seeing that they’d merged their holoform back into one, Wren’s side was drooping a bit, still flickering in and out, but Aria seemed to be set on keeping her up now, their combined gaze already on the horizon.
She would never say it aloud, but she envied them, their ability to just… talk, without anyone ever being able to eavesdrop.

They never told her and Kia what it was like, to be able to have a conversation within their shared skull, she had a feeling those cartoon personifications didn’t match.

Her and Kia would never have what the twins had, it was an impossible thing to aspire for, and not something she was sure she even wanted.

The twins had suffered for what they were, they never really talked about it… but she’d seen the incision scars when she was first programming the holoforms ‘accurate frame representation’ feature, which she’d done before she’d programmed the hair.

Speaking of hair, now she wasn’t one to diss anyone's style, but the checkerboard thing was always gonna be a bit jarring for her.

But that had been the Twins style since before she had met them, so who was she to judge, it was a passive aggressive rebellion that was also a visual show of their dual identity.

She didn’t actually know what their original hair colour even was come to think of it, never once, even when human, had she seen their roots as anything but black and white.

Her musings where cut off when a certain Weapons specialist dropped down on the other side of Ratchet, apparently joining the ‘lean against the Red Kite’ party she and Ratchet were having.

He was still rubbing his jaw.

“Yah can turn off tha pain receptors yah know?”

Ironhide jerked a moment before grumbling something before going blank for a a few moments.

Apparently he’d found what she had meant in the programs menu function and had finally disabled the feeling of pain.

Be funny when he found out it automatically turned back on once the program was booted up again.

Something told her he’d try to hide the pain in his jaw next time though, she wasn’t the best at reading passive features.

No actually that was a lie she was telling herself… she used to be very, very good at reading passive features.

It’s how she was even still alive right now.

But that was something she didn’t want to think about right now she decided, and put her attention back down to working on the holoforms.

Maybe she should focus on the taste receptors…

She glanced over to the twins again, it would definitely make Aria happy…

Yes it was tedious and repetitive, but sometimes you had to do that for the people you cared for.

It was three more hours before Kia woke.
By then most of the non-crew had migrated to the main deck, though kept close to the doors leading inside, both out of weariness and the fact that the combined pile up that was the Harpies took up most of said deck.

Mikaela kept close to her father and Bumblebee, Maggie and Jazz stood together, Maggie seemed to be stuck with a small blush and kept glancing down at where Jazz’s hand was wrapped around hers, probably marveling at the pulse she could feel run through it.

Ira normally wasn’t one to try and sprain herself patting herself on the back, but these holoforms… they felt like a crowning achievement, something that truly challenged her.

She hadn’t felt this thrill since…

Her good mood died almost instantly, biting into her upper lip to stop the noise of distress she knew at the least the twins would pick up on.

It was scary how attune they were to her smallest gestures.

It was because they cared.

Though if asked they’d phrase it differently. They’d invested too much in her, both physically and emotionally, to not care and worry for her tenuous well being.

Kia was more blunt, she said what she said, damn the consequences.

Which was fine in it’s own situations, but it didn’t give the Bateleur much room to be tender and understanding like the twins could be when no one was watching.

Her musings were cut off by a truly impressive string of Spanish curses from the Bateleur as she shook her helm from side to side, protrusions bouncing as she tried to stretch out.

She let her holoform lock so that she could lift her helm up and smirk at Kia. “A couple kinks in tha works?”

“Oh shut up.”

“Shuttin’ up.” She chirped back before focusing her attention back to her holoform and returning to work.

Soon after Kia managed to push herself up, releasing the parts of the twins they’d been pinning.

The twins let off a satisfied noise as their left pede and wing were finally freed.

The twins getting up was more of a roll off of her so that they could sit on the decking, even with the repairs, they were hesitant to walk under their own power alone again.

She let off her own very satisfied noise that may or may not of bordered on orgasmic when she felt the twins weight pull off her.

She deactivated her holoform and after a bit of stretching of her own, nearly jumped completely up, though she would take the fact to the grave that the sway of the ship nearly had her falling backwards into the Atlantic.

There was a pause, a tension in the air as those that stood looking up at them waited for what they planned to do.
The answer funnily enough, came from Kia, a low, unmistakable rumble cutting over the sounds of rolling ocean waves and the distant calls of sea birds.

The twins huffed and Wren made the decision. “You go get something to eat… I think we’ve all gone a bit too long without some meat.”

Their protrusions easily picked up on the shudders of some of the humans and holoforms below.

Ira doubted she’d ever get used to the amount of sensory data they provided, but they were certainly more useful than they were a hindrance.

With the declaration made she stretched her wings out, wincing as the pulleys, gears and cabling protested the motion.

Apparently she overdid herself again.

Certainly wouldn’t be the last time.

After a moment she leaned into the wind, and with two quick beats she kicked off the deck, a few of the humans and holoforms were nearly knocked off balance by the process, but no one was sent for a swim.

Kia followed soon behind her, and the two of them set out to scout for something, anything really, they could eat.

Back on the decking, the twins let off a contended noise, glancing at those gathered. “So, lovely weather we’re having?”

And that's this chapter done, Soundwave's on the radar, barely, the Harpies need a proper sleep schedule for once in their lives, and Ironhide learned off screen never to call Aria a 'light weight'.

Welp, chapter 25 is already written as well, but I'm going to hold off on posting chapter 22 right away, still need to do a final read through/edit on it before I even consider giving it the green light.

Until next time! Ta-

Wren: Forgetting something?

.... No?

Wren: 'scowls'

Oh! Right! Little heads up I probably should of been doing from the beginning, gore, there's gonna be gore, it's a transformers fic, it kind of comes with the territory I know, Wren just thought I should give you all the heads up... you good? Yeah she's good, ok, ta ta everyone!

Moon.
You know how I said I wrote two chapters before I even updated? Well this time it was doing on a massive writing binge and writing an entire chapter in under 24 hours, that was back on Thursday, it's Monday now and I'm finally done editing this one... I'm not sure where this sudden energy to write has come from these last few months, but it's starting to scare me.

Oh well, don't look a gift horse in the mouth and all that, on with the chapter!

Sharks…

They were eating Sharks.

One of which was a Great White…

The twins were eating that one.

Kia had flown in with it, dropped the already dead animal onto the deck, and then flown back out to keep hunting in the early afternoon sun.

Maggie felt her gut roil at the sound of those giant metal shears as they sliced through the giant predatory fish, blood already stained the deck from the three carcasses that had been dropped onto it.

Jazz and the Autobots looked no better off than Mikaela and her dad, their expressions a mix of horror and disgust.

She heard Mikaela gag when an overzealous Ira bit into the stomach of her caught shark, causing the stomach contents to burst out, splattering both deck and her own plating in a liberal amount of stuff that no one wanted to identify.

Kia and Ira were perched precariously on the sides of the ships deck, bent more than double with their wings out to balance them, one set of talons holding the sharks to the deck so they could easily tear chunks free, toss them up into the air, and swallow them in their waiting maw.

It gave the twins, who couldn’t stand, the room to kneel and pin their great white with their wing struts.

Their faces were already coated in blood and stray pieces of fish meat and there was only going to be more as they kept going.

They’d actually already moved the metal pieces that framed their faces back, allowing them to just… do what they were doing… she was fairly certain jaws weren’t supposed to go that far back without snapping clean off.

She glanced to Jazz. “Can… can you do that?”

Jazz shook his head, gaze locked in morbid horror as Kia pulled her lower jaw all the way back, leaving plenty of room for those razor sharp blades to slice her own catch. “Pit no…”

Not long after a happy trill burst from Ira as she lurched backwards.
Held in her mouth, dripping blood and stomach fluids, a license plate.

Mouth full all the Harpy could do was shake from side to side, bounce up and down and trill even louder to get the other Harpies attention.

The visors weren’t telling, but even the twins seemed to regard them with their face half buried in the great white’s chest cavity, letting off a low thrumming sound to state Ira had their attention.

Ira seemed to puff up her armour… somehow it felt like this was almost a game they were playing…

Ira threw her head back, again tossing her latest mouthful up into the air so that it could be ingested.

The license plate made a hollow clunking sound somewhere inside her not long after it disappeared into her waiting maw.

The whole thing was a nauseating display.

One that, no matter what, she couldn’t find the ability to look away.

She lent closer to Jazz. “At least they don’t have a taste for human…”

Apparently Ira heard her, the Harpies helm turning to regard her, there was something in the way they looked at her that send dread coiling in her stomach before she even spoke. “Nah, humans ah too greasy.”

And that was all the motivation she needed to drag Jazz’s holoform back inside. Missing the unimpressed looks from the other Harpies that they sent their companion.

Ratchet stood amoung those who remained, the concern he felt seemed to almost bleed out his holoform, his gaze dancing between the Harpies and the ever growing red stain on the main deck.

Everything was wrong with what he saw before him… before he’d been able to pass off Ira eating a whole skinned cow from the stress of the situation they’d been in making it seem trivial, as were the twins requests for meat and that whole cow they had in Monterey.

All of which had happened out of the view of his optics.

But now, with the afternoon sun upon the scene before them all, it was impossible not to accept what was before them.

The Harpies did not just sustain themselves on energon alone.

Mechanical in being, at least partially organic in diet.

So much was wrong with that he couldn’t even begin to imagine how it was their internal systems weren’t failing and offlining them.

Once they were done, he’d have to run that diagnostic scan.

He glanced to Ironhide then, his holoform stood beside him, if he was to be honest, the work Ira had done on these holoforms was certainly impressive, especially for a former human learning as she went.

The same could be said for Wren with her initial de-coding of their language.
He’d tell Optimus later, the mech would hopefully pull himself out of that small rut he’d found himself if the option of speaking with a linguist was put before him.

Once an archivist always an archivist.

His attention drifted back to the Harpies.

Something told him they wouldn’t be running out of new discoveries regarding these enigma’s any time soon.

Abandoned Decepticon Outpost - Omega 49 quadrant

The main doors of the Outpost staggered, their rollers long since rusted by the passage of time.

Undeterred by this, the servos pushing them apart pushed harder, eventually the rust gave way and the outpost was exposed to the atmosphere of its planet once more.

Soundwave stepped inside, his optics cycling as he looked around him…

It all felt surreal, the outpost had been abandoned when demand for soldiers increased on the front lines on Cybertron, this Quadrant wasn’t predicted to last much longer, existing within a dying Galaxy, hardly worth the soldiers.

But now… now it was the perfect place for him to stop.

His entire frame was aching, both from his transition, and his flight off the planet his creations had been left on to offline.

He’d hunt down the slaggers responsible eventually, but right now, his creations deserved answers.

It wasn’t hard to find the refueling hall, a communal area with an impressive amount of damage consistent with full scale brawling.

Mechs this far out in isolation, especially warframes, tended to go a bit… well the term ‘stir crazy’ fit very well.

Luckily the damage wasn’t enough that there wasn’t a place for him to sit.

In the dim lighting he settled himself down on one of the long abandoned benches, resting his arms on the table in front of him as he allowed his creations to detach and reform before him.

He was not surprised when they regarded him with trepidation, Ravage standing at the front of the group and corraling Buzzsaw, Laserbeak and Rumble back behind him, but Primus it hurt to see the fear hidden behind their optics.

He pulled in a long vent of the stagnant air around him, before letting it back out. “It was not… my intention to leave you.”

“Why... are you talking?”

He stopped short of continuing, looking to Rumble.

His youngling was shaking, servos clenched at his side and visor down, the black and red themed mechling wasn’t looking at him, facing down at his own pedes.
He went to try and formulate an answer but Rumble beat him to it again. “You broke your vow… You broke the promise you made to carrier… in her memory…”

The metaphorical shards of metal he’d been carrying in his spark for eons twisted, his spark writhing in pain for a few short moments.

His little ones winced, experiencing it through his bonds.

“I know… Circumstance forced my h… servo…”

His creations didn’t seem convinced.

So, he resigned himself to telling them what happened, carefully he began to pass along the bond his memories of the battle for Helex.

He’d sent them all to engage the Autobots, whilst he ran the primary communications back to Megatron in Kaon directly.

He replayed the memory with all the vivid details he could.

Mortar fire was already raining down on the battlefield ahead of them.

Preliminary scans had shown that the Autobots long range mortar fire couldn’t reach them.

They hadn’t expected the Autobots to of upgraded their ranged weapons.

The whistle of an incoming projectile had been the only warning.

A warning he hadn’t the time to properly react to.

The memory file cut off suddenly then with a burst of static.

Steadying himself he prepared himself for what he was going to show them next.

He could only imagine how they would react.

This part of the memory he would have to share fully over the bonds.

Taking one last vent to steady himself, he let his conscious slip out of the present and into the memory, taking his creations with him.

Sendai Japan

The noise of blaring horns and other such ruckus was an annoying clamour in his audios, worsening the already physical pain that seemed to be rolling across his entire frame like concussive emp blasts.

What slag makers were even using their horns so much?

His first action, before he’d even onlined his optics was to open up his connection to whatever cameras where in the area to find out.

Nothing.

Not nothing on the cameras, nothing, no link to the Decepticons mainframe, no communication hub, the only thing he was getting was… excessive random low frequency wavelengths that caused
his processor to ache.

His HUD wasn’t even the same, the sharp edges he’d become so used to were... fading... the lines
the lists... the tabs to open certain areas... they were fading... leaving him with... nothing... even
the random low frequency wavelengths were going silent.

Somewhere inside his frame a grunt left him, he’d tried to move, only to feel more of that stabbing
pain.

Where was he? The... the last thing he remembered was heading out to the front lines at Helex... the Autobots had been launching a full offensive on one of their weaker points.

What had happened?

Had he been injured? It felt like he’d been injured... maybe that was why the HUD was gone... the
medics were putting him into partial stassis...

Primus it had to be bad, that was only reserved for mechs they thought wouldn’t come back if they
went fully under...

There was a noise, closer than the horns, it sounded... off... no noise he’d heard before.

Something was touching him, there was a give in the spot, his protoform? Had he been stripped
out his outer armour?

Servos weren’t supposed to be warm...

The noise came again, louder, the touch on his shoulder strut becoming more of a shake.

What where those medics doing?!

“----y!”

Wait... he caught the end of that....

“H-y! -i-! Y-- -k?”

Yes, he was understanding the noise more now...

And it certainly wasn’t any Cybertronian dialect he’d heard before... He had to investigate... this
could be an assassin!

He tried to online his optics, but they didn’t flash on... there wasn’t a flicker so much as a blurry
haze, that took a few moments of wincing to start to clear.

When his optics fully came into focus, it wasn’t a medic that was looking at him...

Something in the back of his processor answered his sudden need to know what the thing shaking
him was.

Human.

Whatever the frag that was.

“Oh thank god... You’re actually alive...”
He let a gust of air out of his vents, wincing at the pain in his systems.

He looked at the ‘human’ again, it’s faceplates were somewhat disfigured, lines of jagged wounds long healed… topped with… fibres, grey and white fibres…

“Can you get up?”

Get up? He could barely move! What was this fragging organic on?!

The human took his silence as a negative and looked further down his frame.

He grabbed something and…. Cold! Cold! What had the fragging human just pulled away from him?!

“No stitches… well, at least someone didn’t take your organs, your lucky, I’ve found enough like you already dead in places like this.”

He grunted again, right arm strut lifting to bat away the humans hold on whatever had been lifted up… what he noticed seemed to be some sort of blue… fabric?

And then he saw his own arm… not arm strut… arm…

Pale cream, five… fingers… tipped with shiny nails…

By the pits… what had happened to him?

Barely having the courage to do so, he looked further down.

That wasn’t his frame… that wasn’t his frame!

By the infernal Pits what had happened to him?!

The human looked on with an air of concern. “Alright, time to get you out of the trash, that can’t be comfortable.”

Before he could stop them, they’d grabbed his extended arm and pulled, jerking him up and into a stumble, his legs giving out from under him.

He let out a startled noise of panic.

The human caught him easily. “Fuck kid… you’re skin and bones… you’re coming with me, and tomorrow I’m taking you the hospital, nice prosthetic by the way, surprised no one’s torn that off you yet."

Prosthetic, a replacement limb for one lost.

He looked where the human was looking.

His left arm wasn’t pale cream, it was his colours, deep blue and silver,

The plating was smooth if a bit scratched and dented.

In a moment of sheer perplexed awe he flexed each finger, the articulation was good, the motions a bit slow, but… almost like his old arm…

Was… was that all of himself he had left?
The one holding him threw his new cream coloured arm over their shoulder, both letting off a grunt as the old human took on his weight, and his own caused by the sudden shifting.

The world spun around him, but by some miracle he managed to take a step, then another, and another... somehow he even managed to take in what was around him.

An alleyway... leading out onto what seemed to be an empty street... someone was parked over there... just sitting at the edge of the road.

If he could coax them out of their vehicle mode... he might be able to get some answers...

When the human used his other hand, which he'd been using to brace his back, to place a key into the bots door... opening it... he had the sudden realisation that wasn't a bots alt mode... it was... it was just... a vehicle...

He was eased into what seemed to be the front passenger seat, and then strapped in, the man moving to sit in the driver's seat and using the same key to activate the engine, which rumbled in a pitiful comparison to any self respecting Cybertronians engine.

The man was quiet until they seemed to move onto a larger street, with other vehicles driven by these humans, with humans sparingly walking on the streets... going about their lives...

“So kid... you got a name?”

He glanced over at the man.

The man huffed out a breath of air. “Name’s Jack... Jack Morrison... I run the local hostel…”

He had no idea what this Jack meant by a 'hostel' but he found himself curious.

Jack glanced at him for a moment. “Your mute aren’t you? Don’t worry, I won’t judge, already got two at the Hostel who don’t talk, it’s not exactly rare these days for kids your age to be born without.”

He just nodded along.

“But do you have a name?”

After a moment, he shook his head... he doubted Soundwave was a normal des... name here...

“Can’t remember?”

He nodded, it didn’t feel quite right to lie to this man, he seemed to be well intentioned... but good intentions were used to cause people to drop their guards, and he was no fool and certainly not foolish enough to take such a risk.

“You’re taking the lack of memory well... don’t worry, we should be able to figure out who you are, arms that good are rare, if we can find a serial number, we can track the maker, they keep records of all their customers... I should know with how much I have to deal with them here…” Jack rambled, as if to emphasise his point his left leg jolted, revealing a flash of metal under the clothes he wore.

He remained silent, turning to look out at this strange... non metal world... it... something didn’t feel right... there was more colour than he’d ever seen outside of Iacon... the architecture of the buildings was alien, but had an interesting appeal... but all at the same time... there was, despite
the many changing hues in the sky as this world's star set, a strange darkness... he couldn't see it... he could feel it... and it unnerved him in a way that few things rarely managed too.

One thing was for certain... he had a lot to learn about this world... Something told him he was going to be stuck here... for a long time...

He cut the memory there, his spark was erratic in its chamber, jumping and twisting and rolling over and over... he grimaced, he almost missed only having a heart, that was surprisingly less treacherous and erratic.

His creations were silent, lost in their own thoughts, he did not pry over the bond, he wanted them to come to their own decisions.

Soon enough, Ravage stepped forwards and pressed his helm against his left arm. “You came back... you found a way back...”

He slowly nodded. “Yes... though I will admit... a part of me hates myself for leaving... but I... I could not take the risks staying would bring... and I missed you... all of you...”

He kept it from the bond his reasonings for wanting to stay, he did not want to upset them too much.

Laserbeak tilted her helm to the side, she had no true vocalisor, like Buzzsaw, but she spoke clearly across the bond. “Will you tell us about... breaking your vow?”

He nodded. “Yes... but not now... sharing memories... is taxing... I need to rest, and then, we stock up with whatever we can find here, and move on... we have to get to Earth...”

After a moment they all nodded, thought Rumble frowned. “How do you know it’s called Earth?”

He smiled behind his mask for a moment before it fell. “Because Rumble, that’s where I woke up. And that’s where Frenzy is, and if I know Earth, he’s in grave danger.”

The Gilded Falcon

Once again, tension had returned to the deck.

There was no doubt in Optimus’ processor now, those protrusions on the Harpies helms were a method of communication.

It was difficult not to tell from the fact that for the last fifteen minutes, the Harpies had become locked in what he could only imagine was a fierce debate.

Ratchet, who’s holoform stood beside his own, was growing impatient.

Thankfully his medic needed to wait no longer, as finally the debate ended, with what seemed to be a concession from the twins to Kia and Ira, who’d been pressing something.

Kia’s helm turned to them, and after some shifting, she lowered herself down and pulled her helm back, baring her dark brown near black chassis to the medic. “Do as you must Ratchet.”

Optimus was not blind to the looks of what he could guess as concern coming from Ira and the twins, their protrusions now lying flat and still against their helms, and the rest of the plating was being held taught to their frame, making them look smaller than they normally were.
Ratchet didn’t waste anymore time, he’d discovered Ira had already incorporated a scanning function into the holoforms, allowing the medic to perform his check without having to clamber over the rest of his unit and have his frame be lifted onto the deck.

The visible light that ran over Kia’s frame at large then was more just to show where the scan was going, the actual scan wasn’t on the visible light spectrum.

After a few moments, Kia started to shift, lipplates shifting back into a grimace as the scan passed over the spark chamber.

Ratchet abruptly ended the scan there, his expression an unmistakable scowl. “You need to open our spark chamber, now.”

Optimus felt his concern spike at his CMO’s tone, it was that one he used where he was holding back by only a few fibres from wrenching someone over the helm.

Kia seemed to take the order as non-negotiable, but seemed to hesitate, turning her attention down to her own chassis for a moment before looking back at the medic. “We… don’t know how?”

There was a beat of silence on the deck where Ratchet considered this before letting out a sigh. “I assumed as much… You’ve trapped your EM field inside, sparklings normally have their spark chambers opened briefly to check the condition of their spark after being brought online, it also releases the EM field… You however, have clearly never had your chamber opened, we need to fix that, it’s throwing off my scanner by being so dense in there.”

Optimus merely listened along to his medics reasoning, and Kia seemed to find it sound as well. “Alright… how does one open a spark chamber?”

Ratchet seemed to think over his response for a moment before replying. “Does your HUD have a ‘medical diagnostic’?”

“Sixth one down on the right.” Wren suddenly spoke up from behind Kia.

Optimus felt an eyebrow raise at that.

Kia nodded, and seemed to just that.

There was a sound of transformation, a few at first, but as the front of the Harpy’s chassis began to split open, a strangled gasp of pain seemed to escape her, and the seams slammed back shut, her frame almost instantly coiling in on itself to shy away.

Everyone jolted at the sudden turn of events, the twins loosed a noise half way between a sound of alarm and the designation of their stricken comrade, Ira did much the same, though shuffled closer, wing extending so the final strut came to rest on Kia’s flaring back plates. “Kia? Kia wha’ happen’?”

Kia barely replied, the low pained croon was testament enough though.

Ratchet had already moved forwards, ducking under the Harpy’s shaking helm to reach her chassis. “Kia. Tell me, what happened?”

He got his answer when he spotted the tainted energon dripping to the deck, oozing out from the seams. He ran a new scan, causing another more violent shudder to wrack her frame.

It was over a lot quicker though. “I can’t see what’s wrong. Kia I know it hurts, but I need you to
open your chamber.”

Optimus could barely see his old friends holoform now, cast in the shadow made by Kia’s frame, lit only by the slowly growing pool of energon which was already mixing with the dried shark blood and stray pieces that were still scattered across the main deck from the Harpies small feast earlier.

He turned his attention to the other Harpies, they were becoming stressed, protrusions flaring and bouncing and they were… making a sound, it sounded like wind being forced through an echo tunnel, a low whistle that was quickly becoming more and more insistent and high pitched.

And then, something changed, Kia shifted, and with a strangled noise of pain, the seams of her chassis split apart, the main armour of the chassis breaking at seams previously invisible and with them came a horrid cracking sound that was almost immediately drowned out as Kia threw her helm back and screamed.

Before any could react, the EM field that had been so coiled within the Harpy’s spark chamber exploded outwards, the force was akin to a physical blow, destabilizing the internal workings of both his holoform, and that of his real form below deck.

The blast was a singular wave, and when it passed, Kia slumped, venting laboured and haggard as the other Three Harpies, quicker than he was to recover, shuffled closer to their injured counterpart.

Once his holoforms optics were working again, he found himself looking upon a sight he would likely never loose from his memory banks.

What rested within the Spark chamber of the Bateleur Harpy was not just a spark.

Hovering in the centre, nestled within the corona of the golden spark, was a pump, one he could now hear as it’s rubber sides contracted and expanded, the hundreds of cables linked to it holding it in place as they in turn connected to the inside of the spark chamber.

He’d looked up what the human heart looked like, but that had not truly prepared him for what was before him.

Ratchet was already examining the open chamber as Kia’s frame continued to be wracked by waves of pain, causing her armour to rattle. The energon pooling from where her chassis had broken apart still trickled out, though it was already becoming sluggish, the puddles forming on the deck crystallizing into their solid state once again.

“Hmm… it seems that, being placed into an adult frame with biological traits… you had a network of smaller cable lines wrapped around your spark chamber, don’t fret, it’s not fatal… now I’m going to have to reconnect these… two and… redirect them through… what in the infernal pits?”

It was then that Optimus felt it too, a light, almost not there tug, far weaker but unmistakable.

Stepping forwards almost on Autopilot, he watched in awe as the severed lines began to move, reconnecting and redirecting themselves so that they shifted away from there the spark chamber had opened… the motions created by tiny wisps of amber energy that seemed to of leaked out of the spark that was in turn wrapped around the fuel pump.

It was unmistakable, the Allspark had partially returned from it’s dormant state to heal it’s vessel.

Soon, Kia’s shaking stopped, the pained expression on her visible faceplates falling away.
Not long after, the plating began to shift back, soon enough sealing the spark and fuel pump away once more, the energon staining her chassis already hardening into crystals.

After a few moments and a shake of her helm Kia spoke. “That… was… fucking agony…” She growled out, lifting a wing strut off the deck to rub tentatively at her stained chassis, her expression now a scowl as she glanced to the other two Harpies.

The twins, suddenly having attention back on them, shuffled towards the bow of the ship, helm dropped low to shield their own chassis.

Ira remained where she was, though the tension in her frame was palpable. “Ah’ll go nex’... if we have tah… lose whateva tha’ was… then ah little pain is somethin’ we have tah live with.”

He glanced for a moment to the twins, even with their visor he could tell they were less than enthused at the idea of going through what Kia had.

Ira apparently caught onto this, her helm turning to regard the largest of the Harpies. “Arien.”

The monochrome femmes protrusions flared out.

Ira flared hers in return before speaking again, letting her protrusions flutter. “They need tah understan’ yah condition. Ah’ll go firs’, bu’ yah have tah promise me, promise me righ’ now, you won’ lash ou’. I doubt’ Ratchet wan’s tah lose an arm.”

Something else was said with the protrusions, he wasn’t sure what, but it earned a low soft crooning sound as the twins accepted whatever had been said, shuffling back across the deck on their wingstrut and knees to knock their helm against their Red Kite comrade. “O-okay.” The twins seemed to speak as one on that one word, and their frame slumped slightly at the agreement being set.

Ira returned the knock, tucking her helm as much as she could under the twins jaw, pressing up with a low chuffing sound.

Kia let off a low long noise of her own, pushing up off her wing struts to turn in her crouch to regard them. “Correct me if I’m wrong, but wasn’t I the one who just had the inverted chest burster experience?”

The twins and Ira pulled away long enough to exchange a look between impassive visors and moving protrusions, both smirked and Ira moved over to Kia.

It was a strange thing to experience, to witness and be no true part of, words were spoken before him he had no understanding off, a literal double meaning to everything the Harpies did.

Ira moved into a similar crouch to Kia and raised her wings up to frame her, much like the underside of the twins wings, they were white with black spots. “C’mon then.”

Kia huffed and spread her own wings out, white against the struts before being replaced with the dark near black brown that kept on until the main flight feathers.

Ira pushed her wings under Kia’s and wrapped them down around the larger femmes short tail feathers, Kia wrapped hers around Ira’s back.

The hug lasted a few moments as they knocked their helms together before pulling back apart.

Ratchet, who was waiting as patiently as he could until then, cleared his throat. “Now that the EM
field has been released, I’d like to finish running my internal scan.”

Kia huffed but complied, waiting for Ira to back up back to where the twins were before dropping back down onto her knees and wing struts. “Alright, alright… Say… that thing… that was the Allspark? I felt it…”

Ratchet nodded, going back to running his scan. “Yes, though it’s already fallen back into dormancy. It was too weak for even my scanners to pick up upon.”

Kia didn’t verbally respond, but her helm turned, following her gaze Optimus felt his own optics fall upon the twins.

For once he had an idea of what might be turning within the Bateleur Harpy’s processor.

The twins tilted their helm ever so slightly to the side, protrusions fluttering.

Even now it wasn’t difficult to spy the mangled limb in the shadow their frame cast in the afternoon sun.

“Humour me Ratchet… it only started fixing the damage, after you said what you were going to have to do, correct?”

There was a pause in the air then, he turned to regard Kia again, her lipplates were pursed to the side, apparently musing over her thoughts as her protrusions bounced and shifted.

The twins and Ira were watching their comrade with what he could assume was rapt attention, and glancing to each other intermittently.

“That is… correct.”

“So, let’s say, in theory, if you were to point and say what you had to do to fix Wren’s foot, it would be brought out of dormancy again and do it?”

The question brought a new silence to the deck.

He couldn’t see Ratchet’s expression, he was occupied watching the twins lift themselves higher on their wing struts and good pede, lipplates falling slightly open as their vents pulled in a sharp gust of air.

“In theory… yes… that could work…”

Kia looked to Ira then.

Another silent conversation and Ira’s previously taut frame sagged somewhat as she nodded her helm.

Once Ratchet announced he was finished with Kia, Ira took a step back over, lowering herself down much like Kia had, bracing her wing struts on the blood and energon soaked decking to be within the reach of the CMO’s holoform.

As the smallest of the Harpies, Ira also had the least amount of armour surrounding her chassis.

That being said, the pained grimace and the slew of profanities he would never dare repeat in any kind of company were more than enough of a testament that the process of opening the spark chamber for the first time was a painful experience, if Kia’s own reaction to the process had not already been seared into his processor that is.
As did the sound of the decking cracking under the force of Ira’s talons.

But after a few moments, the spark and fuel pump of the Red Kite Harpy was bared, once again there was the initial burst from an overstressed EM field, but they were somewhat prepared for it this time.

Though that didn’t stop his own spark twisting at the sudden wave of negative emotions he was hit with.

Being able to discern one from another in the short time was practically impossible, and he thought against prying further as the EM field now with it’s stresses abated, settled tightly within the Red Kite’s spark chamber again, though much weaker now.

Ratchet took this as his sign to continue his checks.

He was soon finished, and glanced to Kia, who’d had her attention focused on the energon dripping from the sides of Ira’s open chassis, it wasn’t as much as Kia, but with Ira’s smaller frame, that was to be expected.

Kia was the one who spoke, getting Ira’s attention. “If this works, the pain should all go away, and the hypothesis will be confirmed.”

Ira just nodded, having gritted her razor sharp denta at some point, after a moment she lifted her helm from where she’d pressed it against the decking.

After a few vents to steady herself she rolled back onto her haunches with a hissing grimace, the plating around her spark chamber, for a moment, began sliding shut again before she seemed to override the process and force them back open.

The pale orange corona of the spark seemed almost erratic, twisting and flaring around the heart shaped fuel pump nestled within it.

Before the war, the baring of a spark was an intimate and cherished experienced shared between mates.

The war removed such things, many a life had been saved by medics forcing open chambers and placing the sparks of the injured into containment fields to be placed within a new frame if the old could not be recovered.

It had all but removed the notion of seeing a spark as an intimate experience.

Now he watched with a certain level of concern at just how erratic the spark seemed to be, the wisps bleeding off the corona flickered, jolting into jagged edges that warped and twisted in a way much unlike any spark he’d seen before.

Ratchet had already likely taken note of it and was planning to speak to Ira privately at some point later about it.

Is attention returned to the present when Kia bent almost double, Nibbler, who had, in his lack of focus, been relocated to his frontal position, easily grabbed Ratchet’s holoform by the waist, hoisting the medic up to around the right height as Kia rose herself to stand in front of her comrade.

From his position, he realised he had no good view of what was occurring.

He turned his attention instead to the twins, watching with an attention rapt on their comrades.
He had the urge to walk over to them and try to speak with them, but it felt like his every attempt so far had ended either badly, or started with a negative inflection.

But considering the rest of his unit, sans Ratchet, had left during the shark feeding, there was no one to speak with besides the twins.

So, resigning himself to the risk of making their opinion of him worse, he walked over.

They caught onto his approach almost instantly, helm swiveling around and down to face his holoform.

He waited until he was standing next to where their left wing strut met the deck before he spoke. “How are you feeling?”

The twins snorted, but Wren had the courtesy to answer. “Tense… Kia’s experience with… anatomy, is rather spotty, if it can even be considered experience… she’s good with a knife, but not a scalpel.”

He hummed under his breath. “A fair concern, but if this does work… you will likely no longer need that brace… I imagine that will be quite liberating for you.”

He barely caught it, but there was a few moments, brief moments when a smile flickered across their lower face plates. “Oh we’re looking forwards to that… I’m sick of causing us to fall…” Wren answered, though the ending was tainted with a bitterness that seemed to put the twins into an internal debate for a moment before Aria spoke. “Before the injury… it was… fun… taking off, landing, discovering how much we could carry with our talons… We might even be able to pick you up… Maybe.”

Wren followed up. “When we all first meet up, we found a cave, secluded, a river had carved it, as a result it was absolutely full of debris, took weeks to clean out… we’d barely finished carrying the last logs out when… when we found the trap.” They shifted then, protrusions flattening as they tucked their right pede up a bit more, they were holding it off the decking now, supported by their tripod stance. It was then that he noticed something, the brace that Ratchet had fashioned… it wasn’t there anymore, well, one band of metal of it remained, but the rest was gone.

He felt his own expression become one of a frown. “I see…”

Whatever he’d planned to say was interrupted with the sounds of Ira’s chassis sliding back into position and the smallest Harpy letting off a noise of relief. “Tha’ was tah weirdes’ thin’ ah have eva ha’ tah do.”

Kia said something, but he didn’t catch it, she was kneeling down to allow Nibbler to set Ratchet safely back onto the deck.

It was then that all of their attentions shifted to Aria and Wren once more.

Ira banged the connecting joint of her wing strut against her now resealed chassis. “Din’ hur’ a’ all. Tickles though.”

He could tell Aria and Wren were less than fully convinced.

Kia looked to Ratchet. “Which would be better for them? Open their chassis first to release the EM field, or work on their pede first…”

Ratchet looked to the twins then. “It is their decision to make there, though I have a feeling the
moment their pede is repaired they’ll be abandoning ship.”

The expression Aria and Wren sent his CMO’s holoform was one best described as scandalised.

Kia snorted out a laugh. “Spark chamber first it is then, come on twins, we let you go last, it’s your turn now.”

There was a hesitation there, with the spotlight on them, they ducked their helm again, and after a moment spoke. “What… what if there’s… only one?”

Even with how weak the two EM fields were that were leaking out from Ira and Kia, he could feel a stab of pain and empathetic sorrow, it was only a small burst, there and then gone again, but it had been there.

Ira stepped forwards, and with a care that seemed to be practiced, brought their wing strut into a position where Aria and Wren could rest their facial guard on. “Ah small chance, all thin’s considere’, bu’, even if tha’s tha case, i’ won’ change how we see yah both, now stop worrin’ an open up.” Ira pulled back away after the quick pep talk, nodding once to the twins, and then again to Kia.

There was a moment of pause as the monochrome femmes nodded and pushed themselves into a more upright stance, and then the process of opening their spark chamber began.

Already he could feel their EM field leaking out of the newly formed breaks in their armour.

Unlike with Kia and Ira, the two seemed to be taking their time, energon bubbled and spilled out from the opening edges, but strangely, there was no direct reaction, no shake running through their shared frame, no hisses of pain.

Instead, they glanced between Ira and Kia and huffed before Wren spoke with a smirk. “Wusses.”

Ira huffed, before in a tone he assumed was one of good humour. “If yah were anyone else, ah’d strangle yah for tha’.”

That got a laugh out of all the Harpies, an inside joke perhaps?

It took a few minutes for the twins spark chamber to open, at one point Aria muttered something about their controls getting crossed, whatever that meant.

From this angle he couldn’t easily see inside, but after a few steps to the left, he got a very good look at what was nestled within.

Sure enough, two sparks, each with a fuel pump nestled within, so entangled within the mess of fuel lines it was honestly difficult to make out the sparks nestled within.

The one nestled on the left side of their chamber pulsed an almost blinding white.

The one on the right, an eerie black, it’s wisp like corona leaking out from between the lines to mingle with it’s sibling.

Where the corona’s met, there was the odd thin swirl of green, red and blue.

The sparks were irrevocably merged, he heard Ira comment something about a ‘Ven diagram’.

The other concerning thing that he noticed was that, despite them being markedly larger than both Kia and Ira in frame size, their sparks were, on their own, smaller.
Ratchet was muttering a whole slew of medical jargon he had no hope of understanding, but ‘Statistically impossible’ and ‘I was right’. Confirmed that Ratchet’s theory of their condition was in fact sound.

Split spark, same frame twins.

What that meant for the future was to be handled later, the EM field belonging to Aria and Wren had already finished uncoiling.

Unlike the mess of emotions loosed by both Ira and Kia, which had been built up over the last two earth years, the twins EM field had been practically barren, an empty spanse of energy that once able, had merely bled out.

He suspected Ratchet would want to invest some time in looking into that as well.

This time he watched as Kia was lead through the process of re-sealing and re-directing the torn energon lines, his attention rapt on the thin tendrils of the soft flickers of orange light that seemed to squeeze out of the gaps within Kia’s chassis and into the twins chassis.

The first contact caused the larger femmes shared frame to jolt, before they seemed to ease into the contact and let it do as it was needed.

Soon enough the process was complete and attention turned down to their mangled limb.

The tension from before was gone, Ira had already stepped up, wing resting across the overlapping black plates that ran down the back of the twins frame.

After a few moments of shifting and one pained hiss from the twins, they were eased onto their back.

It was evidently not a position the twins were comfortable with, he had no doubt they would need assistance to right themselves.

Their venting came out strained, the plating around their abdomen opening just enough for him to spot the vent exhausts hidden underneath.

Ratchet asked where the brace had gone, Ira replied for the twins, saying it had been struck by lightning on their storm flight and, being the only part of their frames apparently not built to withstand the full force of the planets electrical might, had all but been melted clean off.

Another thing for Ratchet to explore.

Ratchet apparently took that as a good enough explanation, though also made sure to warn the twins against flying through lightning whilst wearing a brace, again.

It actually got a low set amused chuckle from the monochrome frames.

It was at that moment he realised something.

From their angle, with them lain strewn out on their back, he could peer under their visor, yes it had cracked during the fight with Fernando, but unlike Ira’s, no part, not even a small sliver of it had fallen away.

For a moment his spark jumped at the opportunity to discover just what colour was hidden beneath.
Only to realise their optics were closed.

He shook the head of his holoform, chastising himself for the sudden urge to spot the illusive optics.

He could not blame his curiosity, so far, he had only ever looked into either a visor, or a pair of sunglasses with such a powerful tint that seeing within was all but impossible.

It was frustrating, Jazz’s visor was similar in a way, but the mech only used in during combat.

But that was something to ponder at a later time.

Now, his focus shifted, falling upon the mangled limb that, if all went well, would soon no longer be in the sordid state it is in now.

He could almost imagine what kind of relief Wren would experience, but he’d never been in the situation they had been in for the past two earth years.

He didn’t really pay attention to what exactly Ratchet was coaxing Kia through, too focused on watching those little flickering wisps of the Allspark dance across the mangled pede, slipping beneath the broken armour as it carefully, painfully slowly, began to undo the damage done to the old wound.

The gaping holes on the pede, torn by the rebar spikes began to be filled in once more, the struts within he could hear shifting back into place… Primus how had they walked on it?

He’d thought that very same thing a number of times since meeting Aria and Wren, perhaps they just had the benefit of a potent pain tolerance?

They’d have to have one, given the sickening snap of the primary strut being put back into place did not in fact cause them to show any sign of pain.

None at all…

Ironhide had wept when he’d had to have something similar done to him during the battle for Polyhex.

It was honestly becoming somewhat unnerving how little the twins were reacting to the whole procedure… Ratchet hadn’t implemented any type of pain suppressors, he’d mentioned earlier he had no idea what a safe dosage was, so refused to risk such a thing.

His thoughts occupying him, the procedure seemed to fly by, his attention only snapping back to the present when Kia pulled away, the wisps recoiling back into her frame and both Ira and Kia offered a wing for the twins to hook their own on.

With an impressive shared grunt, the monochrome femmes were righted.

There was a moment of hesitation, where their right pede hovered just off the ground, it was strange really, to see it now, the identical opposite to Aria’s own pede.

The talons clenched and unclenched just above the deck a few times, testing their motion, before with a muttered curse he didn’t catch, the talons met the decking, along with the rest of the pede.

One second, two, three, there was no groan of metal straining against metal, no pained grimace, nothing.
Just the monochrome femmes standing on their pedes.

It took all of three seconds for Ira to break whatever composure she had, let off a shrill sound that would likely of sounded drastically different from a human, and tackled the largest Harpies, who let off a startled sound of their own at the sudden impact as they were thrown back by the force.

Sending all three careening off the side of the ship.

There was an almighty crash and burst of seawater that burst across the decking, splashing those still onboard in the process.

“God damnit Ira! Not again!” Kia shouted, taking the one step needed to look over the side of the ship before turning up to the bridge. “KILL THE ENGINES!”

Almost instantly the sound of the ships powerful engines cutting out reached him.

He looked to Ratchet, the holoform was already trying to spot the three Harpies in the waves.

The sound of others aboard the ship running back out to the main deck, a number of them shouting questions, be it about attacks or where the Harpies were.

Primus this day was turning into quite the eventful mess wasn’t it?

Phew, this was a long one.

World building continues!

And now you all know a little bit of what happened to Soundwave, he’s got quite the tale to tell.

Not got much else to say really, so, until next time, Moon out!
Ok this is actually starting to get ridiculous, not counting the days I didn't work on chapter 27 because of a very busy and draining weekend, I managed to crank out the next chapter in five days, not as quick as the manic one day I wrote all of 26 in, but still, I haven't ever managed to crank out this much before and it's starting to scare me.

Oh well, don't look a gift horse in the mouth, on with this next chapter! Some new faces are being introduced in this one, I hope you like them!

He was brought back up onto the deck to help.

What little help he could provide he gave as the ship turned and came back around to where the three overboard Harpies were.

The twins had spread their wings out wide, using the massive surface area to try and keep themselves from sinking into the Atlantic.

Ira was clinging as best as she could to their back, having thrown her wings over the larger femmes shoulder plating, her own wings apparently not being built to provide enough surface area to keep herself up in water, though that wasn’t saying Aria and Wren’s were any more suited, they just had the larger surface area.

Soon enough he and Kia were almost hanging half on and half over the edge of the decking, his arms weren’t long enough to reach the waves, but Kia’s wings were.

They managed to haul Ira back onto the deck first, Kia had managed to snag one of Ira’s wing struts with the hooked plating that existed over the last joint, her light weight being a blessing as he found it hardly a task to pull the Harpy back onto the deck, where she quickly went to stand, a rivers worth of water came flowing out from seemingly every part of her frame.

In an interesting twist, the sea water was washing away the mess already made of the wooden decking.

The twins were more difficult

The moment they reached out a wing to snag Kia, they lost their buoyancy and sank beneath the waves.

With each one they re-directed themselves, spreading their wings back up and beating them down to break the surface again with a spluttering gasp.

Kia and Ira were already starting to chitter and warble, Kia was becoming anxious, he could feel it in the EM field that now bled off her from where she was precariously balanced on the edge.

And then, an idea seemed to come to the Bateleur and she flared her protrusions in a string of different positions.

A few moments later, the twins lurched their frame up with one strong beat.

And bit down onto Kia’s right wing.
The Bateleur hissed but began to pull.

Once the twins were in reach, he grabbed them by the black plating that encircled their neck cables.

After one strong pull, the twins were scrambling back onto the deck, hacking and coughing as sea water was expelled from their frame and their large wings spread out to support them, one of them banging against his own pede as he moved back to rest upon them.

Ratchet was already running a hasty scan over Ira, who was muttering under her vents, her frame beginning to shake.

He kept his attention on the twins, as with a final strained cough, banged the side of their helm into the decking with a groan.

Only to lurch said helm back again with a hiss.

They’d hit the damaged protrusion.

After a moment of running a quick analysis of the four Harpies condition, he rolled further back on his pedes to lean against the upper balcony, letting off a small sigh of relief.

That could of gone far worse if the twins hadn’t had the forethought to use their wings as giant paddles.

“Ah’m sorry.”

Jolting out of his short stupor, he looked to Ira, she had curled in on herself, looking at her own pedes as sea water continued to flow off her frame and trickle off her feathers like rain drops.

He watched as Kia and the twins exchanged a look before Aria spoke. “You got excited, there’s nothing wrong with that Ira.”

The twins were getting up themselves now, and turning to face Ira themselves.

Without any kind of warning, the entire deck, himself, Ira, Kia, and all those on the upper balcony, where hit by the full force of sea water being ejected from the Harpy Eagle femmes as they shook seemingly every part of their frame hard enough to becoming a blur of black and white.

It stopped almost as quickly as it started, finishing with a few last helm shakes before they chuckled at the absolutely scandalised looks from both Kia and Ira.

There was a chorus of complaints from the balcony as the humans tried to get the sea water out of their faces and mouths.

“There, consider that us paying you back for tackling us into the North Atlantic.” Wren remarked, but they turned to regard the rest of those gathered, himself included. “Sorry about that, not exactly easy to aim.”

With that quick apology out of the way, Wren gestured to her newly healed pede. “How about we see what this frame can really do?”

Their answer came in the form of Ira leaping into the air and taking wing, quickly followed by Kia.

He could see the smile on the Monochrom femmes features as they spread their own wings and crouched, building up tension in preparation for launch.
The Gilded Falcon rocked against the force of the waves at the moment of launch, and soon enough, all four Harpies were slipping into the clouds.

Letting off a slow vent he looked towards the already setting sun, it’s colours lighting up the horizon in a thousand different shades of colour. Another eventful day would soon come to an end.

High, high above the Gilded Falcon, Aria let off an elated whoop, her and Wren beating their wings to send them rocketing up through a cloud bank.

Yes flying in storms was great, but the noise always made it impossible to hear anything outside the crack of thunder and the persistent hammering of rain and hail.

Now, there was no such noise, and the speakers built into their back struts pounded as they performed their own little aerial acrobatics, flaring their wings to slow their rise until that moment when they hung motionless in the air, before gravity remembered they existed and began pulling them back down to Earth.

They pulled up into a wide banking turn, and lined up with where Ira was hovering in place, a fun little trick Scavengers such as Red Kites could pull of.

With all the care such a maneuver allowed, they flipped into a vertical position and clipped Ira’s left shoulder guard with Wren’s back talon.

It was a glancing blow, but all that was needed to state a Challenge.

Soon enough they were racing through the clouds, chasing each other.

The twins were at a disadvantage, their wide broad wings were built for quick, fast paced flights through dense rain forests, meant for swerving to avoid crashing into tree trunks.

Up in the clouds, there was no such need, and Ira, being a Red Kite, was far better built for making use of the thermal vents that rose up from the ocean.

That being said, Aria and Wren certainly didn’t make it easy on the smaller Harpy, and with Kia as witness, gave the Red Kite quite the challenge to snag with her own talons.

Finally though, Ira found her moment, climbing high, far higher than either the twins or Kia would, and hovered for a moment, before diving.

Soon enough, she’d snagged the twins back, and with an overdramatic Harpy Eagle cry, they admitted defeat and leveled out.

The four re-grouped, all but Kia being somewhat out of breath after their little game of cat and mouse.

“So… what now?”

The twins and Ira looked to Kia, their expressions and protrusions showing their confusion at the question.

Kia was quick to elaborate. “With Wren’s foot fixed, we could fly ahead, make sure everything is ready for the bots, we already planned to have guides to take the bots to the warehouses, and I know for a fact none of us like the idea of being towed in a trailer, if we time it right, we can all arrive at our homes once the sun’s down.”
A moment of thought went between those gathered.

Ira spoke first. “Ah go’ tha fathes’ tah fly, I’ll stick with tha ship till we get to the Mediterranean, and I’ll fly ahead from there.”

Kia and the twins nodded in understanding, Kia speaking next. “My final destination is the closest, I can head off first.”

Wren spoke then. “We’re not built for long flights, none of us are, if your flights to the Amazon all that time ago are anything to go by, I suggest we stay with the ship for at least one more day before you head off Kia, and from there, it will be a matter of when the wind and timing is right.”

They seemed to all agree to the plan for going forwards, and the conversation shifted as they re-oriented themselves to fly in a reverse ‘V’ formation, the twins taking the lead, and Kia and Ira riding on the air currents the largest Harpies created.

The Gilded Falcon was already a good way ahead of them as a result of the previous chase, it was best to catch back up.

For a while, no one talked, and then, Ira piped up. “Are we eva gonna tell ‘em?”

Kia glanced over. “Tell them what?”

Ira returned the look like her statement had been far more obvious in it’s meaning. “Ah mean, are we eva gonna tell ‘em tha’ they were ah kids cartoon, an’ bloc’busta film bac’ home?”

Kia went to answer, but Wren beat her to it. “No. We have created a narrative, where we are completely clueless to the Cybertronian race, to their war, to their abilities, and that we certainly have no understanding of what is to come. We did this to protect ourselves, and to prevent any more scrutiny than we are already under by our actions. We have already been over this Ira, they can’t know.”

Ira bared her denta for a moment, but conceded. “Fair… think you’ll be able to lan’ unassisted?”

The twins accepted the topic change and Aria answered. “Even if something goes wrong, I should be able to take most of the weight.”

Kia was the one to break the silence next. “What’s the plan for the Matrix?”

If the twins were surprised by the question, they didn’t show it, and instead let off a small sigh before Aria answered. “We’re not certain… after how the Allspark reacted to you Kia…”

“You’re scared?” Ira asked, beating her wings that bit further to catch up, though stayed in the twins air currents.

“We’re not found of its implications.”

Kia huffed. “Neither was I, though being able to put you all back together does have its merits.”

The twins shook their helm. “We don’t mean it’s powers, Kia, you carry an ancient relic synonymous with life, for all purposes it’s merged with your very soul… don’t you get what that means?”

“Not quite catching on here, go ahead, enlighten us.” Kia replied.

“For all intensive purposes, you’re likely immortal.”
Kia stopped her motion for a moment, before righting herself into a hover.

Ira was able to bank quickly to regard the Bateleur, the twins took a few more moments to do the same.

Ira glanced between the three larger Harpies before speaking. “Kia?”

Wren wasn’t done laying down the facts. “Just being Cybertronian, in part, has made the possibility of a very, very long life inevitable, but with the Allspark inside you, well, I can’t speak for the Grim Reaper, but it’s safe to say you might no longer be on the list at all…”

Kia seemed to let that all process through her before taking a long shuddering vent. “My whole familia… I know mama made me swear to keep Fernando alive until she passed… but… if we go back… I wanted kids… not now… later… when the Triage was more… when home was healing… fuck I wish Ivan was here.”

She didn’t dare look at Ira when she said that, keeping her gaze on the twins, who were sending looks of sympathy to both.

It wasn’t a secret the twins had long agreed not to personally carry on their bloodline…

“If Ivan was here he would of tried shooting the Allspark.” Wren remarked.

“At least twice, three if the first attempt didn’t kill him and the second was as ineffective.” Aria added, trying to lighten the mood.

It did work, as Kia felt something in her drop, she opted to ignore the twins attempt to use her statement to draw the conversation elsewhere. “And if… if you accept the Matrix… you’ll be effectively immortal too… you’ll outlive your little brother… you’ll outlive the family he wanted you to help him raise when the time came… oh hell.”

The twins just nodded.

Ira spoke then. “When… when we go bac’… will, will we still be li’e this? Still… gian’ freaks? Cause ah was hopin’ we’d be human again…”

If they weren’t currently occupied not dropping out of the sky, the twins would of shrugged as Aria answered. “We don’t know what’s going to happen anymore than you do Ira, it’s all speculation… but there are facts, and one of them, is, for all we know, Cybertronians don’t really die of old age… and even if they do… it takes a lot longer than a single human lifespan.”

Kia kept going. “But if the relics… make us immortal?”

“We’ll be forced to watch the Universe move on without us, Earth will eventually be devoured by the sun, humanity will die off and be eventually replaced with something else, hell, we might outlive all of the bots… we’d be… we’d be left to watch on forever… time will stretch to a point where a single day will have no consequence to us, then a year, then a lightyear, the passing of time no longer relevant to our constant existence.” Wren answered, her tone filled with nothing but a looming dread.

Ira felt the shudder run down her frame and right to the end of her wedged tail feathers before she spoke. “How abou’ we drop this dreary topic an’ focus on how we’re suppose’ tah even ge’ home.”

Kia spoke then. “When the Allspark was… merging with me, I heard voices… couldn’t tell one from another, but there were lots, they kept chanting about slag like how ‘You have to find them
all ‘You have to find them’ ‘You are the chosen’. The last one in particular is just… well, ridiculous! Why, in the nine circles of hell would we be picked for this?!”

Ira replied. “Well wha’eva tha reasonin’, we were picked, an’ ah doub’ i’ was random luck i’ was us an’ only us four.”

“Don’t forget Fernando.” Aria piped up.

Kia scowled. “I don’t like any of this… let’s get back to the ship, we can discuss this more later.”

There were no arguments there, and soon enough, each Harpy was touching back down onto the deck.

Ira and Kia watched like the birds of prey their frames were now built like as the twins landed with a few extra strong beats to slow their descent.

Sure enough, Wren led, her talons meeting the decking, not a single groan leaving the metal as Aria’s followed soon after and they tucked their wings up against their sides.

At some point, Optimus had slipped back down to beneath the decking, giving the three the room to settle down and focus on their holoforms.

Kia glanced to where Aria’s holoform came on and after a moment had her own holoform make a quick clothing change. “Aria, the gym still in the same place?”

The white themed twin looked to her in surprise at the question before the sports gear Kia was now wearing clicked. “Yeah? It is?”

Kia smirked. “You, me, boxing ring, it’s about time we settle the score after that mess in Montenegro.”

A blind man could of seen the sudden flame of competitive drive that burst into life behind the white twins sunglasses as she smirked. “Oooooh~ You’re on. Race you to the ring! Loser has to clean up!”

The White twin was already bolting for the doorway that lead into the ship before she even finished shouting the terms, her own holoform shifting out of it’s previous attire into suitable sports attire.

Wren and Ira watched as the two sprinted out of sight, Kia crying foul at Aria’s head start.

Ira snorted as she glanced at Wren. “Neva ah quie’ day aroun’ here, huh?”

Wren raised an eyebrow at her but said nothing.

Monaco

The room he was being kept in was barren, an office table, and two chairs, one on either side.

He was handcuffed to the one bolted to the floor.

The table was also bolted to the floor.

The other chair wasn’t, he’d kicked it, and after having dropped from exhaustion, he’d woken to find the chair had been righted, though it had been moved just out of reach of his foot.
Honestly it was just taunting him now.

He wasn’t sure how long he’d been here.

But he knew for a fact he was both in desperate need of a bathroom, and something to eat and or drink.

His stomach twisted again at the thought, feeling like a painful knot being wound even tighter.

And then the door opened.

The door was behind him, and he didn’t bother to look over his shoulder.

A plate was dropped in front of him and the figure took the other seat and sat in it.

Jamerson scowled and looked to the plate in front of them, ham sandwiches, shop bought.

He didn’t bother even look at them again, he could only guess what they might of put in it…

“It’s not poisoned, you really think we’d waste a good sandwich on someone we planned to kill?”

The woman spoke, accent a thick Russian twang.

He snorted and refused to even give the sandwich another look.

The woman seemed to sigh. “Stubborn American… Eat, the Orichiono’s want you alive long enough to see you. And I doubt you want them to order a bypass straight into your stomach.”

He would take it to his grave that statement sent a bolt of fear down his spine.

The woman got up and left, though he could hear people speaking just passed the door.

Again he reached around to look over the handcuff keeping him in place, no visible lock, and the ratcheting mechanism was locked away within the hard metal shell the connected both ends of the cuffs.

Remote controlled was his assessment, and certainly not something he could pick with a sandwich.

The door opened again, someone else came in.

He didn’t bother to look, not even as the back of the other chair was grabbed, spun, and the new person sat spread eagle on the now backwards chair.

“I do not envy you Jungle boy.”

That, got him to look up.

And a sense of fury he hadn’t felt since the dam rose in him like bile.

Flint.

Flint was the man sitting opposite to him with a bored and put off expression on his features.

The expression just made him angrier, and before he even bothered to think of it, pulled back, lurched forwards, and spat directly at the other mans face.

Only for Flint to dodge it with a simple sway to the side before moving back into his previous position, expression unchanged.
But, he spoke again. “Temper, temper Jungle boy, you’d better loose it before the Orichiono’s get here… How’s the hand by the way? Keeley really was pissed you just went and shot Aria in the ear like that.”

Jolted by the sudden faux show of concern, he looked to his free hand, still wrapped up in a thick bandage, apparently too thick to put a handcuff on, it had long stopped bleeding, but he could still vividly remember the pain of having Keeley trying to tear his hand to ribbons with her talons, even now it felt like agony.

He scowled. “How do you think it is?” He snapped.

And Flint clapped. “The man does speak! My! Here I was thinking they’d already cut your tongue out!” He proceeded to chuckle at his own far from funny joke with a shake of his head.

Jamerson wasn’t sure if you could hate a person anymore than he hated Flint in that moment. “You’re a traitor.” He spat.

Flint immediately sobered, his humour drying up faster than a dog bowl of water in the Gobi Desert. “Oh wow… the hypocrisy… says the man who handed over access of all of the Pentagon, and by proxy, America's military and defenses, to the Harpies. And for the record, Jungle Boy, I’m no traitor, I’m not even American.” Flint replied, though that smug smirk had returned.

He stalled, eyes widening for a moment before narrowing. “Then you’re a spy.”

“Was, was a spy, I’ve been put back in my original position.” He shook his head. “I’m here because I thought a more familiar face would be able to hammer something important into that thick skull of yours.”

He just scowled. Flint shrugged, but his expression and body language were deadly serious. “You’re a dead man walking. You didn’t just piss off a Harpy, you shot a Harpy, through the ear, I can only imagine how many are gunning for your head right now. But do you know what’s funny about all of this?”

He kept scowling, Flint was going to keep going, it was in the spies nature.

Flint seemed to pick up on that, and decided not to beat around the bush. “Aria sent out an order, you’re to be kept alive, at least, until they’ve seen you. To quote them. ‘We’d rather not have a chat with a corpse.’ They want you alive, hell if I know why, but what I do know is this.” He leaned over the table slightly, elbows resting on the edge and chin resting on the bridge of his interlocked fingers. “You will not be leaving this room as the same man who was dragged in here under the influence of a horse tranquiliser.”

He rose, and strode back to the door, opening it and went to walk through, but seemed to pause.

Jamerson kept his attention facing forwards.

Flint spoke again. “I know I wasn’t born with the name Flint. And I sure as hell didn’t come into this room with that name, but here I am, looking at you, in the same spot I was in...”

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Scottish Highlands - Triage Earth

The stone and thatch cottage was run down, the wall paper faded, one of the glass windows broken, letting in a draft, outside, the wind howled lack a pack of starved dogs, crashing against the loose stones of the building before rushing onwards.
The lone rocking chair creaked as it rolled slowly back, and then just as slowly forwards again.

Sitting in the chair was a young man, thin and frail, the clothes he wore too big for his frame, though once they had fit him perfectly, tailor made for him and him alone, now, they were tattered at the edges, and barely clinging on.

In his lap, a vibrant Peacock, the bird curled up in it’s masters lap, letting off quiet little sounds as it was carefully stroked, it’s tail feathers once shimmering and elegant were now tattered and broken, not one left it’s true length.

Next to the rocking chair, the half rotted and skeletal remains of the last person to sit there, shoved off and onto the floor by the current occupant, their clothes threadbare and damp with mildew.

A sound came from outside, both the head of the man and the Peacock jolted up, tense and ready to spring into action.

The hand gun in the man's pocket was a constant presence.

Three knocks to the front door and a curse foul enough to make a sailor pale and their tense bodies eased.

The man who stepped in after the lock on the door was undone was everything the one in the rocking chair wasn’t, built like a tank, a physical representation of pure masculinity, aged by a lifetime of near death experiences, bloody combat, and most recently, two years of fruitless searching.

The younger man looked the larger one over. “Any word?”

The larger man shook his head, dropping the heavy sack he’d been carrying on his back onto the floor, the bottom already stained red. “Just another would be assassin, they’re closing in, we need to keep heading North.”

“Much further and we’re going to need a boat.” The younger man remarked, shuddering as another gust of wind came through the broken window. “Epsilon isn’t built for these conditions.”

The peacock seemed to agree with the statement, trying to bury itself deeper into the loose fitting clothes of his master.

The older man sighed and shook his head. “Only madmen think they are… don’t you own a castle somewhere around here?”

“We own Edinburgh castle.”

“Ah… right… we missed that.” The older man conceded, kicking the bag of would be assassin. “We’re not going to find your sisters sitting around like idiots… We need to figure out where to look next.”

The younger man sighed. “There’s checks at every land border looking for me, and you… we’ve searched every damn mile of this island and found nothing of them…”

The older man sighed and walked over, placing a hand on the younger mans shoulder. “We will find them, we’ll find all of the Harpies… I swore on my life I would defend the Estrada lineage, and I don’t intend to fail that vow any more than I already have.”

The younger man just sighed and nodded. “I know Ivan… I know… and whoever took them, they
will pay for this…”

Epsilon gave a caw of agreement and got up to jump down to the floor, the large bird was the only one he had left of his beloved pets, his vibrant colours had on occasion given them away, thankfully Epsilon was a smart bird, and they’d managed to train him to follow them from a safe distance, mostly ducking around hedgerows and through fields whilst they took the roads when they could.

Epsilon was also the only thing of home he had left. The only one he’d managed to grab during that first attempt on his life.

Since that incident nearly two years ago, he’d been on the run.

Six months later, Ivan had found him, the chief bodyguard of the Estrada family had promptly put him under his watch, and they’d been searching ever since.

So far, not a single trace.

The Triage had risen after the disappearance of its leaders, and the power struggle that continued even now was pitting private army against private army all across the world.

Like Earth didn’t have enough problems, he thought bitterly.

But the ultimate prize was him conceding his powers to whoever held a knife to his throat.

Something he would never do.

He wasn’t a fighter, his sisters had always stood between him and anyone who had ever wished them harm.

All had fallen either under their thumb, or to the floor, their heads no longer upon their shoulders.

But with them gone, and with Ira and Kia both missing as well, his sisters part of the Triage fell to him.

Ira’s part had fallen to complete disarray, the smallest in number but arguably the most disruptive.

The less said about the mess that was the multi sided war that was going on inside Kia’s part, the better.

He’d been forced to flee when he realised just how little control of the situation he had.

And now he lived in constant motion and self exile, trying to keep ahead of those who wanted him either dead or at their mercy.

Once again he felt the weight of the world falling heavy upon his shoulders… how had they done it he wondered? His sisters had carried this weight with a determination unrivaled by any force in the world… and the moment they were gone, he crumbled under the force of it all coming down on him.

He felt like crumbling now… but he had to keep going… he had to find his sisters.

Ivan patted his shoulder again. “We’ll find them Derrick, we’ll find them… somehow. C’mon, it’s time to eat.”

All he could do was sag into the rocking chair and mutter. “I’m not eating a man.”
Ivan just snorted, they’d argued about food for months. “The twins will kill me if you starve to
death, and you know a death by their hands is permanent.”

He could read the implications, he knew that Ivan had courted death herself many a time through
his life, and he knew just how frequently death had been in close proximity to his sisters
throughout his life, and before he was introduced to them.

When someone died at his sister’s hands, there was no miracle return, no doctor brilliant enough to
turn back the clock.

Be it poison, a sword, a gun, or, he shuddered, a fireplace, no one who’d ever earned his sisters ire,
had returned from their death.

He knew he had no reason to fear them, he knew they would never dare harm a hair on his head,
he was the only family besides themselves they had, and he knew they would face the universe
head on to protect him.

But with them gone, with him now the only one of his family lineage left, oh the down sides to the
last few generations being fucking mental, he wasn’t sure what to do.

“I know Ivan… I know…”

He missed his sisters, a piece of him had been torn away, and the feeling of dread, the feeling that
he’d never see them again? It haunted what few dreams he had, and was a constant in his
nightmares.

He could only pray that they’d find one of the Harpies soon, bring some sense back to this
madness.

But who was to listen to his prayers when the Gods rotted on their golden thrones?

Hoo... welp, hope you all enjoyed this latest chapter! You all have a good one!

And please, let me know what you think, I sustain myself off your comments.

Moon
Chapter 24

Woo! New Chapter! 28 took a bit longer to write up, but I had Uni projects to finish and they took priority (mostly). Now a bit of a headsup, in just over a week I’m gonna be flying out to America to work at a summer camp for six weeks, and I’m likely gonna be real busy. I’m staying in the US for just over two weeks after I finish work, visiting my good friend Drago, who owns Kia, Annie and Ivan. Basically, my chances for writing might be quite sparse, so another update likely won’t show up for a while... depends if I acknowledge the need for sleep really. That’s all on that little update, hope you all enjoy this latest chapter!

Jasper Nevada

Pulling up to their shared home, Annie sighed as she let Prowl pull back his seat belt and opened the door for her.

They lived together on the outskirts of town, in an old aircraft hangar that had been left to rust after the Cold War ended, their boss had convinced the local mayor to give them a building licence to turn the hangar into a home suitable for both of them.

Stepping out she walked over to the main sliding doors, and after fiddling with the lock for a moment, managed to undo the pesky thing and start pulling back the heavy doors on their rollers.

It was barely a chore anymore, her core body strength was something she never let dip.

Lord knows what would happen if she let Prowl open the doors, it would be the one time someone was this far out of town and paying attention enough to see him in all his giant glory.

Soon enough the doors were open enough and Prowl quickly rolled inside, being as patient as ever as she pulled the sliding slat doors back closed.

Only after did he transform back up to his full height, stretching in all manner of ways to loosen up his joints after another long day being stuck in his car form.

Once done, he glanced to her, and with a practiced ease from years of doing it, he easily bent down and allowed her to sit in the palm of his metal hand.

Prowl gave her a small, timid smile, and rose back to full height to carry her to the human living space that was built comparatively close to the roof, held in place by a set of cables, and supporting pillars.

Annie hopped off and turned to her partner. “Thanks Prowl, join me?”

He nodded and moved to sit his actual form down on the massive, and somewhat moth eaten, pile of crash mats they’d accumulated over the years, his systems powering down as his human avatar flickered into existence beside her.

Smiling she reached over to cup his sharp jaw in her hand, every day she got older, and every day he stayed the same.

Prowl sighed at the touch, slumping against its warmth. “By the deserts I love you…” He muttered, turning his head to the side to plant a chaste kiss into her palm.
Thirty years and him saying that still made her blush.

She gave him a smile, the same smile he claimed melted him into a puddle. “Alright casanova, let’s see about dinner huh?”

He nodded, and they walked hand in hand over to the kitchen section, Annie’s space was open plan, no need for walls, they just put unnecessary weight on the structure.

The kitchen was, by all standards, your average kitchen, oven, fridge, freezer, sink, washing machine, tumble dryer for the rare time Jasper Nevada wasn’t able to dry wet clothes in minutes, and a moderately sized dining table and chairs.

“Anything in mind?” Prowl asked, stepping behind her to drop his head on her shoulder to nuzzle the side of her head, he wasn’t allowed to cook, it got him all paranoid for some reason and that in turn made him panic.

And there’s nothing worse than having a giant metal boyfriend having a panic attack on her, especially one over food.

She shrugged, about to make a remark about checking the fridge, when the doorbell went.

Yes they had a doorbell.

Glancing between themselves, Prowl’s avatar flickered out of existence and back down to the smaller human door that was built into the wall next to the main slat door.

She stepped over to the edge of her area and watched him peer through the peephole for a moment before sagging and undoing the lock on the door and opening it.

Annie couldn’t help but smile at who came through the door.

First came her boss, Maria Rodriguez, followed swiftly by her beloved daughter Bella, the sweetest girl in all of Jasper, and following her...

She nearly threw herself off the edge when she spotted the third guest. “Molly!”

Said woman looked up at the shout and waved. “Well heya darlin’! Surprised tah see li’l ol’ me?”

The deep south twang was a comforting thing to hear, just as was seeing the face of one of her oldest friends.

Well, to be more precise, Molly was one of Maria’s close friends, and her and Prowl had been dragged into the tightly knit friendship group not long after they joined the force under Maria’s watch.

As a result, Maria’s friends and her daughter were the few others alive allowed to know the truth about Prowl, all of them had held their vow of secrecy all these years, and she couldn’t be happier.

It certainly would of been a nightmare doing this alone.

“We brought food!” Bella called, jostling the cardboard box practically overflowing with fruits and veg.

“Oh thank god.” Prowl muttered.

Annie just rolled her eyes, her cooking wasn’t bad, Maria, Bella and Narissa just spoiled him with
their stupidly amazing cooking.

Soon enough, their home on the edge of Jasper Nevada was bustling with idle gossip, and the ever comforting sound of someone else doing the cooking.

Bella and Molly were apparently in charge tonight, giving Annie and Prowl the chance to just melt into the large, very worn and comfy sofa.

Prowl was, once again, being his affectionate self, having pulled Annie into his side and begun lazily dropping kisses against the side of her face.

Maria rolled her eyes at the display of affection and shook her head.

Annie knew why, Maria was never one for grand displays of affection.

Hell, Annie had known Maria as a boss long before the sudden announcement that she was two months pregnant, they’d never even seen Bella’s father.

Rumours had certainly been abound when Bella was in school, but the girl had never paid them any heed, and her sweet nature quickly won over the naysayers.

Maria had never even breathed what the mystery man she’d had Bella with looked like.

And they couldn’t really guess from Bella, she was the spitting image of her mother in every way, same bright hazel eyes, same full black locks, though Maria was greying around the edges, and the warm sun kissed skin of Latin Heritage.

Prowl dropping his head to her shoulder and letting off an absolutely pitiful whine brought her attention back to her poor attentioned starved love.

She huffed to contain her laugh and gently coaxed his head up to press a kiss to his lips.

Prowl’s actual form purred, as did his human avatar, his eyes half liding in bliss before breaking the kiss to contently drop across her lap.

She rolled her eyes again, he was like a damn cat when he got like this she swore.

“Aww, now ain’ tha’ ah sigh’ sweeter than suga.” Molly crowed from the stove, not even paying heed to the giant frying pan she was flinging around to toss the vegetables.

By some miracle they all stayed in.

Prowl had no dignity to even look embarrassed he’d been caught.

Shaking her head in good humour, she started playing with his snow white hair, paying extra attention to the cute twin streaks of red that perked up from his forehead like that piece of armour on his actual forms head.

Prowl’s purring became even louder, and somehow he melted even more.

Maria and Bella were talking about how best to season whatever it was they were having, Annie paid no true mind to the debate, they always got like this, and the food always tasted great.

Soon enough she had to push him off so that they could both get up to join the others at the dinner table.
“Stir-fry?” Prowl enquired, ignoring the offered chopsticks for the fork and spoon.

Molly and Bella nodded.

They were digging in soon after, Annie let off a sigh of bliss at the taste, Prowl chuckled at her but focused on his own bowl.

No one really questioned how his avatar was able to eat, it meant he never had to be left out.

“So, what’s the occasion Molly? Someone finally managed to serenade you into marriage?” Annie asked, checking Molly’s fingers as subtly as she could, pity, no ring.

Molly shook her head. “Oh no darlin’, you know ah’m not the type to settle down. No, I came to tell you, me, Selena and Narissa are headin’ for Europe, again.”

Bella chuckled around a mouthful, Maria was the one to speak after sending her daughter a look, it was humourous really, Bella was almost thirty now and Maria still couldn’t help herself sometimes. “Any set destinations?”

Molly nodded. “Obviously, Narissa and Selena are dragging me to Monaco for the F1 racing season, and they want to visit their home town in Switzerland, I think the plan is to stay at their families old manor… you all heard that their Aunt passed away last year and the deed was passed to them.”

They all nodded, there’d been no real shed tears, Selena and Narissa’s aunt had been going on ninety eight, it was no surprise that she’d passed away, and left the manor to her only still living relatives.

Molly kept going. “Well apparently there’s only like, two staff left looking after the whole place so they wan’ to go hunt down some people to work for them in helping maintain the place, as well as revisit some old childhood memories… I think this will be the first time they’re going home…” Molly trailed off, expression suddenly becoming solemn.

They all did, it was no secret the sisters had fled to America back in the 70’s, they never said specifically why they’d fled Switzerland though.

At the same time though, none of them could complain, if they hadn’t, they wouldn’t of met Maria, Sophia and Molly, and in turn been introduced to herself and Prowl.

“So, you’re going to give them some emotional support?” Bella asked tentatively.

Molly nodded. “Sophia offered to join us, but she might not be able to join us until later, getting to Switzerland from the middle of Siberia takes a good bit of planning after all.”

Prowl let off a noise of agreement around his current mouthful.

It was Bella who brought the conversation around to a more pleasant topic, bringing up the latest exploits of two of her co-workers at the town bank, and their constant overly convoluted courting, apparently neither of them have yet figured out the other is just as interested as the other, despite how blatantly obvious they are to the rest of the workforce.

Annie and Prowl accepted the joking comparison of how they’d been in the early days of their budding romance, they’d heard it all before.

Eventually though, once the dishes and cookware were all washed, dried and put away, it came
time for their guests to depart once more for the night, Maria and Bella leaving first, both stating they needed to be somewhat awake for work tomorrow, Maria sent one last knowing look to Annie and Prowl as she said that, Annie muttered ‘One time, one time we were late and you still haven’t dropped it’, to which Maria just shook her head in good knowing humour.

Molly lingered for a few more minutes, idly chatting to make up for the time between her last visit, she had a ranch out in the Messa’s, and her animals normally demanded all of her attention.

She made a good living, boosted by her luck in the stock markets, she sold all of her shares a few weeks back and had gained a zero or two in her bank account for it, though she didn’t specify how much.

Eventually though, the idle chatter died away and Molly hugged Annie first, she always was one to give tight, near crushing hugs.

When she hugged Prowl, Annie thought she caught something, a small glimpse of pain on Molly’s features.

It wasn’t the first time, Molly, and the others all had the biggest bleeding hearts, and Prowl’s amnesia was always something they grieved over, more than Prowl ever did really, he’d mostly made peace with his empty memory, though he still wondered who he once was.

But this time, at the same time, the hug seemed even tighter, and lasted a few moments longer, before they both pulled away and she patted Prowl’s avatar on the check. “See you both aroun’ darlin’s, don’ be strangers.”

With that, she stepped out into the darkness and stepped into her large offroader.

It was often a bit comical to see the petite, sixty two year old clamber into that behemoth, but that was just how things were, Molly’s ranch was so far out there, there wasn’t even a road for the last mile and a half, Maria went to check in on her every Friday, just to make sure something hadn’t gone wrong, it was never said explicitly though.

As the offroader slipped away into the distance, Prowl took her hand and began leading her back inside, the sun had long since set, and the sounds of the night were loud and clear as they rolled with the wind along the desert.

He pulled her in close and just held onto her for a time, his avatar was always warm, but he claimed feeling her warmth bleed into him was a comfort he yearned for.

He pressed a kiss to her cheek over her shoulder, just before the avatar flickered away and his actual form came back to life and offered her his hand once again.

She perched herself in his ever careful hold once more, and gave him her best winning smile once he lifted her up to his face.

The visor he wore lifted up into the metal that surrounded his head, revealing the golden pools that were his glass eyes, Annie swore she would one day be hypnotised by those pools of molten gold, Prowl would just chuckle at her.

“I love you.” He muttered, pressing his lips to her hair, before giving her a full body nuzzle with the metal of her face.

She giggled like a school girl at that and patted the side of his face. “Come on then, the Sheriff made it clear, she want’s us on time to work tomorrow.”
Prowl let out a noise of disappointment, but didn’t fight the inevitable, carefully placing her onto the large king sized bed they had in one corner of Annie’s section.

His avatar joined her not long after she’d gotten changed into her PJ’s, always the gentleman.

Soon enough he’d buried his head under her jaw, their arms wrapped around each other’s middles and legs so intertwined it would take some work to untangle themselves when morning came.

She pressed one more kiss to the top of his head, and swiftly slipped into slumber herself.

And if Prowl’s hand rested against a certain bit of scar tissue on her back, she wasn’t going to say anything.

The Gilded Falcon

It had taken asking one of the normally statue like staff, but he had managed to learn the location of Ratchet’s room on the ship.

He wouldn’t say it out loud, but no one had seen the CMO since the previous evening, and with Kia due to depart to fly ahead to Barcelona within the hour, he thought it wise to bring the CMO back onto the deck.

Aria’s second protrusion was still badly damaged after all, and she’d remarked to the fact that, as much as she trusted Kia with her life, she’d prefer to have Ratchet there to coach Kia through the full procedure.

Which was a understandable reservation, though he also felt there was some underlying context he was not privy to.

So here he was, walking up to the CMO’s door and having his brows furrow ever so slightly more at the muttering he seemed to be able to hear from the other side of the door.

Taking a moment to be sure of what he was hearing, he knocked twice with the back of his holoforms knuckles, noting the odd sensation and the dull thudding sound the impacts caused, Ira truly had to be commended for the work on the Holoforms, yes he’d encountered similar physical projections before, but the attention to detail was something to be admired, especially considering her apparent ‘learning on the fly’. “Ratchet? May I enter?”

There was a pause in the muttering before Ratchet answered. “Come in Prime, the door’s unlocked.”

He knew that tone, something wasn’t good.

Pushing the door open he found Ratchet sitting at the wall mounted desk, the wall mounted TV now resting against the wall and being held in place by the CMO’s hand, one of his fingers pressed into one of the TV’s data ports.

On the screen, seemingly endless data. “What seems to be the issue Ratchet?”

The medic groaned and shook his helm. “I can’t make helm and pede of their anatomy Prime, they’re made of metal, yes, but everything from their processor to their struts are of organic design, you saw their fuel pumps.”

He did, though it was a bit surprising to hear that apparently every single piece of the Harpy’s
internal systems were organically based.

Ratchet then gestured with his helm to a plate on the desk, some of the tainted energon sat crystalised in it’s centre. “I don’t have the tools to analyse that yet, but I know it’s going to give me just as much of a helm ache, energon normally takes a few joors to harden without a patch, that hardens in under a klik.”

He’d noticed that too. “Perhaps there is some merit to the notion of learning organic anatomy.” Perhaps there was something within the Harpies that could, if compatible, be transferred into his mechs, though that would require rigorous testing first.

Ratchet’s look of scandal was once he’d have to file away, any expression such as that was priceless.

But, after a few moments, Ratchet seemed to resign himself. “Fine, I’ll see about looking into it... “

He nodded, pleased that his CMO hadn’t needed much of a push in making that decision, Ratchet could be stubborn at times, much like his mate Ironhide, but thankfully that was not the case this time. “Perhaps one of the Harpies can acquire some medical ‘textbooks’ or something to that calibur.”

Ratchet just huffed. “I’ll ask.”

Seeing the option to change the topic, he spoke again. “Kia has announced her intention to fly ahead to her residence in Barcelona, Spain, I think it is wise you join her, Miss Barnes has apparently been hired by Miss Estrada, so you will have Bumblebee to give you company.”

Jazz and Miss Madsen had already been offered residence at Ira’s home in Rome, apparently there is limited space in the City centre, and only Jazz would be able to drive without issue in the city.

That had left the twins to offer himself, Ironhide and Ratchet safe harbour in Monaco, though Kia had also stated there would be enough room in Barcelona for at least one more as well.

Personally he’d rather have two bots in close proximity to the Allspark, he meant no ill will of Bumblebee’s abilities, but he also had his charges to watch over, and he feared the scout would only be able to do so much were an attack to happen.

Ratchet seemed to ponder over the suggestion for a few moments before nodding. “I assume this means you want me up on the deck to see her off?”

Optimus found himself nodding before Ratchet had even finished talking. “It would be the polite thing to do considering how much they have done for us so far, they did not have to give us safe transport to the Eurasian Continent.”

Ratchet gave him a look he couldn’t quite decipher, but resigned himself to getting up, pulling his finger out of the data port and letting the screen go dark with a mutter of ‘finishing the analysis later’.

Optimus stepped aside to let the grumbling CMO out first.

There was no specific need to rush at present, but evidently the medic didn’t see it that way.

He allowed himself to fall behind, moving at a slow idle to look around him.

He’d found himself falling back into memories a lot recently, both fond an melancholic, often they
were a mix of both.

Ever since Ratchet had mentioned his mentor Dust, it was almost impossible for him to avoid it.

He was becoming somewhat frustrated, it felt like he was taking a step back.

He’d moved on from that time, he’d come to terms with his losses, though he doubted he’d ever forgive himself completely for many of the events that littered his past.

It was thoughts like that which had been puzzling him.

He’d let the visages of his first one sided affection drift into the past, he’d found love with Elita…

Elita… he hoped she and her unit were still online, he would have to send out a heralding call soon, though he’d only do that when he was sure the Harpies would be willing to aid a larger number of them with staying under the radar.

He missed her, his spark yearned for Elita’s presence, to have her there to let him step away from the pedestal he stood upon now, to just hold her close and talk like they used to, when she became his confidant, when he was still Orion.

Elita had stood by his side, just as his first loves had.

Bitterly his spark wondered how things would of gone if he hadn’t lost them…

If the offense on the Tarn Energon Refinery hadn’t gone to so horribly wrong.

He wouldn’t of grieved them, they would of still been online, still on base, still lighting up the darkness of their warn torn world with the bright smiles they always had for him though not for him alone, he wouldn’t of sought out Elita, wouldn’t of become even closer, likely wouldn’t of taken their relationship past close friends…

“Prime, hurry it up.”

Snapping back to the present he cursed himself internally, he’d all but stopped in place, falling back into the memories when he’d been thinking about not doing that.

He picked up his pace to catch up with his CMO. “My apologies Ratchet, I was, lost in thought.”

He didn’t miss the furthering of Ratchet’s scowl.

He went to try and placate the medic. “Ratchet, I did not mean to make you…”

“You didn’t offend me Optimus… I’m worried about you.”

Optimus felt this holoform jolted a bit at the admission. “Ratch-”

“I knew I shouldn’t of brought up Dust… it’s thrown you off, we need you focused on the now, not the past.” Ratchet stated.

Optimus wanted to rebuke that, to reassure he was fine, but he hesitated before sighing and nodding. “I have… been struggling with it…”

“Spark break is a potent thing Prime, it leaves scars… speaking of which, if I am to reside in Barcelona, we’re going to need a work out a way to move between the Harpy’s domiciles, I didn’t like the way Ira’s spark looked, I’m going to either have her come to Barcelona, or travel over to
wherever she resides to try and see what’s causing it.”

Optimus happily accepted the change of topic, but felt the concern he’d already had simmering within him start to bubble. “Any possible causes you can think of?”

Ratchet nodded. “A theory… I’ve seen sparks like that before.”

He waited patiently for the medic to continue.

“You’re well aware of how spark bonds work, when one of the pair is offlined, the other enters an accelerated rate of decline, often taking less than a joor before the spark completely collapses in on itself, no longer being able to support itself without it’s other half… sometimes though, in rare cases, the severed bond will not offline the other sparkmate, especially if skilled enough medics are present to put their spark on support and give it time to re-stabilise.”

Optimus nodded, it was why he and Elita hadn’t bonded yet, they wanted to, but the risks of being offline were too high with the war.

That aside, he wasn’t sure he wanted to hear what Ratchet was leading up to.

He didn’t stop his old friend though.

Ratchet rubbed the side of his holoforms helm. “It stands to reason then, that, likely in her human life, Ira lost a mate, and the effect has become a physical wound on her spark. I’m going to have to monitor her, it’s stable for now, but it’s been weakened by the ordeal.”

For a moment he thought that was the end of their conversation, but Ratchet wasn’t done. “And it’s not just Ira, she’s just the worst of the four.”

He felt his brows furrow. “What do you mean?”

Ratchet let off a vent. “Kia’s spark seems to of gone through two separate bond ‘severings’, though I’m fairly certain they were familial bonds, Fernando comes to processor as one of the two. It’s nothing to be concerned about, a familial bond breaking is something all sparks can handle, even multiple times, it’s to be expected, we’re not immortal, creators pass before creations, older siblings pass before younger, or visa versa, so I’m not really concerned, especially considering the Allspark has merged with her spark, i’m more fascinated by how what seems to be experiences in their human lives have affected their sparks…”

He nodded along, he wasn’t the most informed on the topic of bonds, it’s was a spiritual part of their culture, something he’d had little time to think about with the war.

But he trusted Ratchets judgement on the matter.

He also had the feeling a certain set of twins were about to be mentioned.

“Then there’s the twins.”

Optimus almost felt like patting himself on the back, though kept his expression inquisitively neutral. “They’re sparks are fused.” He remarked.

Ratchet nodded, but his frown remained. “Yes, that in and of itself will need me to keep an optic on them, but it’s something else I found in their scan that concerns me… a number of things really.”

He raised an optic ridge on his holoform, Ratchet took another vent to stabilise himself. “Firstly,
there’s the remains of familial bonds, and one still existing one, though obviously whoever that one is attached to does not exist in this reality, so it just, lingers there, it seems to of resigned itself to the other end not being there, but still being online, something I haven’t ever really seen with my own optics before, but, this is of course, an abnormal case.”

He knew there was something else, so, he waited, and kept pace.

“I know this will sound absurd Optimus… but… it looks like there was a third spark merged with theirs… though it’s not there anymore… there’s the after effects, signs of a sudden, near instant severing… Ironhide has been suspicious of all of the Harpies from the start, I’ve had my reservations... but that… that isn’t normal Prime, and I’m saying that in the context of everything else two fused sparks is impossible enough… but three? With one no longer there? My advise? Keep an optic on the twins, a close one… their em field was weak, but what there was of it, to use a human phrase, it reeked of death.”

Just then, they reached the doors to the main deck.

Optimus wasn’t sure if it was the holoforms physics engine reacting to a sudden drop of the ship, or if it was his spark that just dropped in his actual form in dread, but suddenly he found himself hesitant to step out.

That hesitation was quickly stomped out, but the warning lingered as he tilted his helm back to regard the Harpies, all four now standing at their full heights.

The twins just so happened to be staring right back, their pitch black visor seemingly locked with his own gaze for a moment, a single moment that sent a bolt of fear through him, had they heard? Had they heard Ratchet’s warning to him? They knew they were not trusted by his unit, they likely suspected them of going behind their back struts... all of this raced through his processor in the mere moment before the twins gaze broke away to continue conversing with Kia with those protrusions.

He wasn’t sure what he felt then, but a bout of tense relief was in there somewhere that the Harpies hadn’t done… something.

Kia left within minutes of Aria’s protrusion being fixed, taking wing and rising up high into the clouds.

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California

They were arguing again.

Barricade was drowning them out by watching a human TV show on his HUD, he’d developed the habit after realising it was likely his best chance at maintaining his sanity while those two lugnuts bickered.

It was a show about cold case murders.

So far, he’d found an odd joy in watching these police investigators discuss the murders of the episode, times, dates, locations, murder weapon if there was one, the bodies state after being discovered.

He’d made a game out of it, though he’d only cracked three episodes so far.

Funnily they were all the spouses acquitted of the murder.
Not that he really cared, it gave him a chance to use the skills he’d mastered as an enforcer in Kaon all those vorns ago…

Pits that was not something he wanted to be thinking about.

He focused his attention back on the show, it was a particularly brutal one, he had no care for the victims normally, but he felt one small bite of sympathy for the two children who’d been part of the entire family, all murdered in the same room, children last.

At large though, the show was just cementing his distaste for humans…

Especially a certain former human who’s screeching seemed to be a match for the previously unrivaled Starscream.

He wanted to just punch the both of them, preferably knock their mouths clean off, but they’d just turn all their screeching on him once they were all put back together.

Out of the two, he wasn’t sure who was worse.

Demolisher and Bonecrusher had long tried to convince him in joining their betting pool on which of the two would offline the other first, but he declined, he wanted no more reason to have to interact with those brutes.

Frenzy was curled up in one of the gaps in his armour, poor kid, he’d been reaching across the bond with his sire and siblings for some time now, though the distance between them had barely shortened, little to nothing could really be transmitted across that distance.

“WE NEED TO GO TO EUROPE!” Fernando roared, slamming a pede down onto the concrete. “WE NEED TO WAIT AND REGROUP!” Starscream screeched back.

Primus how had a human not heard those two yet?! He’d sent a report to Kia expressing just that, he’d received some advise back, ‘Bear with it.’

It wasn’t helpful advice, but he could practically feel the sympathy through the words.

He didn’t need sympathy, but he admitted to himself that the thought was what counted.

It was certainly better than the majority of the company he was having to keep.

There was an unholy screech of frustration from the other side of the hanger, followed swiftly by the sound of the two breaking out into a minor tussle for the sixth time that day.

He contemplated patrol, but he’d literally just gotten back from his third one of the cycle.

They only had so much energon, already he was burning through a concerning amount just by going on so many patrols to get away from the twos constant squaballing.

Oh… apparently he’d missed some important details, because all of a sudden the show wasn’t making any sense.

He could just rewind it.

Orrr….

He rose from where he’d been sitting propped up against the wall, and with a quick clearing of his
systems, revved his engines on full blast.

The noise was blessedly, enough to finally shut up the two squabbling mechs. “Now that I have you attention, do the rest of us a favour and either go frag out that tension between you, or just shut up, before one of us snaps and kills one of you, Bonecrusher’s looking twitchy.”

He wasn’t lying, the massive tan mech was certainly getting twitchy.

Starscream and Fernando alike spluttered with indignity for a moment before Starscream’s embarrassment was overcome with fury. “You… You dare insinuate I would even… he’s a freak!”

Fernando screeched in retaliation. “Better than a living pile of rusted scrap!”

Demolisher tried to hide his laugh behind a clearing of his vents.

The two stormed off in opposite directions Bonecrusher and Demolisher had been expanding the base whenever they felt sufficiently bored enough to do so, meaning there was already a network of tunnels the could go and sulk in.

Unlike Demolisher, Bonecrusher seemed to take no humour from what had just occurred. “You realise they’re gonna actually frag each other now, right?”

Barricade felt his four optics partially close as he grimaced. “With that… thing?”

Bonecrusher just raised an optic ridge.

“You’re right… Starscream’s taken worse to his berth.” Demolisher added. “Wanna make a bet on who tops?”

Barricade wanted to punch the damn tank.

But his self preservation suggested he not do that.

And his self preservation was something better heeded than ignored.

At least without the two screeching maniacs, he could get back to the cold case series.

Five minutes later and he could hear them screaming at each other somewhere down in the tunnels.

He felt like slamming his helm into the wall.

Once again, self preservation told him no.

One of these cycles he was going to ignore that and do something stupid.

He could feel it.

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And that's all for this one folks! I hope you all had fun reading! Until next time, Moon out!
Fun fact, the most effective way for me to write is 30,000+ feet in the air, no WIFI, limited battery and a desire not to think about the land/ocean hurtling below me at a rate that would kill me on impact were the plane to crash.

This reveals a few things about me, one, flying, no matter what distance, is the bane of my existence, and two... good fucking hell I am not looking forward to my other flights in the next two months at all.

Anyway, as I cranked out the vast majority of chapter 29 while fearing death to a degree I don't normally reach, please enjoy this latest chapter, with a guest star, death herself.

There was no warning of the twins departure like there was Kia's, the split spark same frame twins took off in the dead time after midnight, when all were at rest and none would wake at the sound of their broad wings taking them up into the air.

It left only Ira on board of the Harpies, and the Irish femme seemed to have limited interest in speaking to any of the bots, her frame curled up and unresponsive on the now empty looking deck, her holoform locked away in her designated room.

He sought out Lena Oxton out of a desire to speak to someone outside of his unit and their charges.

She was tending to Leeroy, the young boy had taken to the woman, and she to him, so it was unsurprising to find the two up in the boys room, which, despite lacking any real toys, had otherwise been fitted as best as they could to make it safe, spare pillows were left on either side of the bed in case he rolled off, that sort of thing really.

"Miss Oxton?" He called, knocking lightly on the door.

It opened not long after a call from inside told him to wait a minute, it opened in less than twenty seconds. "Optimus Prime Sir, please, come in." She invited, stepping aside to allow him to do just that.

He stepped inside, looking around at the carbon copy of his own room. "How have you been?" He enquired.

She nodded her head happily. "Oh I've been great! Leeroy is such a sweet little thing." She remarked, easily picking the boy up and holding him in her arms. "Also helps I have some upper body strength… oh one second, hold him please I need to do something."

The boy was passed into his inexperienced arms a moment later.

He exchanged a look with the boy, who just smiled and patted his face, where his holoform was apparently developing 'stubble'.

Lena darted off into the bathroom for at most a minute before coming back out with something stuck in her mouth.

He assumed she said 'thank you' when she took Leeroy back, but with the white foam and stick in her mouth she couldn't easily say it.
He just nodded in ascension.

Not a minute later Leeroy was passed back to him and Lena went back into the bathroom to spit the foam and stick out.

Something in his internals twisted, and he was somewhat thankfully his holoform required no such act to be performed.

She took Leeroy back and sat down then. "So… I'm assuming you came here wanting to talk?"

He nodded. "Yes… the Orichiono's departed last night."

"And Ira has locked herself away?"

He nodded.

"And you feel like you need a break from your team because they've been your only social contacts in ages?"

"Since the exodus of Cybertron, yes."

Lena looked at him in mild confusion for a moment before shrugging it off. "Can't blame you then, come, take a seat."

He sat down on the bed and she moved to sit next to him, letting Leeroy wriggle free to go lay elsewhere on the bed. "He's such a sweet thing… hasn't spoken a word since he asked Bumblebee for help." Lena spoke, breaking the ice that had been forming at his hesitation to speak.

He hummed, he'd noticed the boys silence too. "He saw things no youngling should, it will likely haunt him for the rest of his life, even if he doesn't remember specifically why."

Lena pursed her lips to the side and nodded in understanding. "I know… Miss Aria was able to track the family down…"

That was good news… but something about how Lena said that concerned him. "Is there… something wrong?"

"Yeah… the family had been battling a court order for Leeroy to be put into care, it's all been dropped given he's been marked as deceased, alongside his mother. No other living relatives outside of a father who has since gone missing… there isn't a family to send him back to… so he's going to be put up for adoption in Monaco."

Leeroy looked over to them then, and Optimus could tell the boy knew what Lena had just said meant.

Affirmed by the fact he crawled over and clambered back into her lap and did his best to hug the woman who'd been caring for him.

Lena sighed and stroked his head of blonde hair. "I'm sorry dear… but I can't look after you forever… my duty is to the Orichiono's" She tried to explain, the boy just buried his head against her stomach and whimpered.

Lena seemed to be almost physically pained by the sound, hefting the boy up from under the arms so he could rest his head on her shoulder. "Sshhh, sshhh, please don't cry… sshhh… I'll try and keep in contact… I… I'm just not what you need… I'm no mother."
Leeroy whimpered again but seemed to relent, going limp in his grip on her front.

It seemed to pain the woman, her hold on him tightening for a moment before she tapped him on the nose with a finger. "You must be hungry right? Why not go ahead and get yourself something to eat at the breakfast table? Have to have a ‘grown up’ talk with Mr Optimus here, ok?"

Leeroy pouted but nodded, sliding off the side of the bed backwards before walking to the door and stepping out, the door closing behind him.

Lena huffed out a sigh and slumped. "Such a sweet little boy…"

Optimus nodded in ascension, but opted to change the topic. "Do you think there is a reason, the Orichiono's departed as they did?"

Lena nodded. "Yes, they were called last night about something important they had to do in Monaco, they saw little reason to delay it any further… and also… they're not good at goodbyes."

He regarded her with a look of confusion. Lena seemed to notice and tried to elaborate, though came up short. "I don't know why, I may know my bosses personally, but not that personally."

That gave him an idea of what to ask. "How did you meet the Orichiono's?"

Again Lena reached for her other wrist, clutching to it. "I got a job as a receptionist… they like to be on good terms with their staff, took time to talk to everyone they found on a given day. Working at the desk, I was always an easy find."

He felt like that wasn't it, at least, not all of it. "They seem to of taken a specific liking to you though? Is there a reason why?"

He certainly wasn't imagining it, the grip on her own wrist tightened, the area around starting to go white.

He reached over, and with a look, convinced her to let go of herself. "Lena, if they are holding something over you…"

"They saved my life." She interrupted, a fire having sparked in her gaze, one of fierce loyalty.

He let her recover from the snap, a small part of himself preening itself that his true suspicions had been just that.

Lena sighed. "I was young… stupid… I thought it was just how he showed he loved me… we married…I… I cut ties with my family… they didn't approve… he moved us to Vegas… He'd go out… work… then go right to one of the casinos… paycheck in his pocket on some nights… my limited savings vanished… he drunk… a lot… ate any food I put in the fridge… I realised… if I could get a job, a part time one… I could… I could keep it secret… I went on every job site, applied to everything… the Orichiono's were my big break…" She took another breath to calm herself. "For a few months, it was going well, some of the money went to makeup, I didn't want people to worry… to question… so I covered up the bruises, avoided sitting on chairs with backs…"

Optimus felt his spark go out for the woman, and with a cautious hand, placed it on her shoulder to get her attention. "Breathe… I'm under the interpretation breathing is somewhat vital to the continuation of human life."

He knew what she was getting off her back was, emotionally weighted, and he was glad to see his
"alien' way of phrasing things, managed to coax a disbelieving laugh out of her, breaking the
descent into the past she'd started.

"Feel better?"

Lena nodded. "Yeah… but I want to keep going… I want to get his off my shoulders."

He took his hand away, and let her pull together her thoughts, waiting patiently for her breathing to
level out once more.

"Wren had come down, to talk to us at the front desk, she was always so polite, waiting for us to be
free before striking up a conversation, asking about our well being, if there were any medical bills
she could help us pay off… they always insisted on helping pay off any unplanned bills. Certainly
made them popular." She chuckled to herself there before continuing. "And… the next thing I
know, there's shouting, specifically a 'You whore!', from the front doors. It was my husband."

He brought his holoforms hand to her shoulder again, offering support that she seemed to
appreciate, before continuing. "He charged the front desk… Never even made it, Wren tackled him
to the ground and called for security after he managed to punch the side of her head… That was
when we all saw her body… glitch, the impact caused the side of her face to pixelate… thank God
the lobby had been empty. We were all debriefed on the truth later that evening… after my husband
had been taken away by the police for attempted assault and actual assault."

She grabbed her wrist again. "When it was time for the court hearing… Aria and Wren came to
support me… he was brought in in shackles… it didn't stop him… he was like a monster… he
grabbed me and broke my wrist in three separate places… The judge sentenced him for Six
years… for so long, I feared he'd find me once he was free… but now… now he'll never find me…
Louise died in the Cosmopolitan fire, and the twins, they helped me become Lena Oxton." Her
smile was infectious, one full of hope. "They've given me the chance to start over, it won't be easy,
being one of their personal guard, but I'm ready, willing, and once I'm fully trained… I'd lay my
life down for their safety."

He was surprised by her conviction, but he also he believed every word she said.

This woman was willing to die for the twins, to sacrifice herself for them…

It was… humbling… but at the same time he was worried.

He'd seen such loyalty before, within both his own ranks, and that of the Decepticons… blind
loyalty was something easily exploited, or become corrupted… he could only hope that wouldn't
happen here...

Lena patted his shoulder, getting his attention. "Thank you, for listening… if you ever want to, and
I have some free time, I'm more than willing to talk if you want to get something off your chest
too."

He appreciated the offer. "Thank you Lena… I'll remember that."

Lena nodded. "We'll both be based in Monaco, I'll only be a call away."

A thought came to him then, and he spoke it. "Lena… if you could… you said a few days ago that
'The bombs dropped' on the Harpies world… and it brought upon the world a sickness? I've never
heard of a weapon that could do that… especially on such a scale…"

Lena looked him over for a moment before she asked back. "Wait… you mean you, your race of
hyper advanced aliens… you never split the atom?"

Split the… "I'm sorry, split the atom? The building blocks of all materials in the universe? Mrs Oxton, one does not so simply split the atom… It… It cannot be done." He couldn't help but sound incredulous.

Lena seemed to take a moment to process what he said before she replied. "Well don't I have news for you Optimus Prime… we, both this world and the Harpies one, split the atom to end World War two."

His holoforms eyebrows shot up. "Two world wars?"

"Hmm… looks like we've got a lot to discuss, but let me tell you something Optimus… the Cold War, back in thr 70's and 80's… that was the closest this Earth ever came to a nuclear war… we were the lucky ones. As the Orichiono's said… their Cold War, didn't stay cold for long… and it decimated the human race… poisoned every living thing… and yet… in a show of stubborness, they're still fighting, fighting the sickness, and trying to find a cure. It's just another reason I look up to the Harpies, they were born into that world… over a decade after the bombs dropped… and they're the ones that were fighting to fix it, they saw their world going to hell when everyone else was content to just live in this world, and keep living their lives, because what did they have to compare it to? To us, and them now, they have a comparison, this world, where the bombs didn't dropped, and now… they want to get home all the more, because they want to try and set the world right… how can you not admire that?"

He let all she said roll through his processor, taking in everything she said, and a sense of understanding and agreement was his conclusion.

Perhaps he wasn't wrong to trust the Harpies...

Monaco

He was starving… thirsty too… definitely thirsty… they were going to kill him… leave him to slowly dry out into a dried husk under that stupid flickering light bulb…

The door swung open behind him, he hadn't even heard anyone approach…

And whoever it was, they seemed to be just… standing there… looking him over.

"Jamerson…" The lettering was drawn out like a ghost on the wind, but solid in a way that send a cold chill down his back, the voice of disapprovement, disdain… that dual resonance that could only belong to them...

The twin freaks.

He felt his body tense, despite how… tired he was… how long had been awake…

"You're being stubborn, boy~."

He gritted his teeth and shook his head.

"Definitely stubborn… hmm… oh well… we can leave you a couple more days if you want… you're not exactly going anywhere."

He didn't have the strength to clench his good hand, the handcuff had long rubbed the skin
painfully raw, it had even started to bleed, he'd humoured just tearing the thing off, damn the thing, he didn't need hands…

Something brushed the back of his collar bone, a single sharp nail, scraping across the shirt that was too big for him… the one that reeked because he'd worn it so long.

The bite of pain made his eyes go wide and his body go tense and rise up, following the sharp glide of that talon like nail now at the base of his spine.

"Or… we can let you go…"

His chest was spasming… why was is spasming…?

He was shaking… violently, so much the table and chair rattled.

They remained deathly still, the nail now dug sharply into the divot of his skull where it met the back of his neck.

"Oh you poor thing~. You're shaking like a leaf~."

The nail pulled away.

He could feel the thin trickle of blood staining a line running from his neck down his back, causing the shirt to stick to his already sweat coated skin.

Finally he spat something out at them. "Just kill me already!"

There was a pause, one so long he thought they'd left… his ears weren't working their best, nor were his eyes… they were flickering… how long had he been up?

How long had he stared at that sandwich?

God he was hungry.

It was poison… they'd poisoned it… they had to of…

A body sat down in the chair opposite him.

His eyes betrayed him, they looked up.

That… that wasn't a human…

It looked human… head… cruella de vil hair… shoulders… breast pushed up by crossed arms… one leg cross over the other… laid back…

But those eyes… that he glimpsed over the edge of those impassive sunglasses…

No humans eyes burned hellfire red.

God he was seeing things… hallucinating the devil incarnate…

They leaned forwards, already cradling their jaw in their intertwined fingers before their elbows thunked in perfect time onto the table. "We can help you Jamerson~. Like we did in the Amazon~. We can fix you~. Just like we did then~."

He wanted to spit at them… but his throat was too dry… to hoarse… speaking like he had… it had
burned like fire…

One of their hands reached forwards, cupping his jaw, he didn't have the strength to move away as they tilted it both ways, examining him. "We can rebuild you~. Make you better~. And you'll never have to worry about a thing~."

He shook his head again… where was that stupid ringing coming from?

Why was the world moving sideways…

Why wasn't he fighting back…

Did he want to fight back…?

"All those worries… we understand Jamerson… they're a heavy burden… they weigh you down… hold you back… we can take it away… take away all that weight… doesn't that sound lovely?"

They purred, releasing his head so that he was looking directly into those hellfire red eyes.

It did… no… it did… it did…

He was going limp… he was nodding… why was he agreeing…

Because he wanted it.

He wanted them to take the weight.

They smiled… it was a nice smile…

They were nice…

"First thing then…"

The handcuff gave way, falling from his hand to clunk against the metal leg of the chair.

RUN!

No… no… no run… stay… listen…

"And your other hand?"

He showed the bandage to them, they took it, turning it over.

The blood stained bandages fell away.

They scowled and shook their head.

"That's going to have to go, don't worry, we know a thing or two about prosthetics."

That sounded nice… his hand… it was bad… green… puss filled… he hadn't even noticed…

It had to go…

They'd get him a replacement…

"Eat. You must be starving."

There was nothing but crumbs left on the plate… he'd almost choked in his haste.
"Don't choke."

Wouldn't dream of it.

"Good. Good man... now... stand."

He stood, ramrod straight.

They looked him over, slowly prowling back to his side of the table.

"Jamerson is dead, his death reported as a vehicle crash during the evacuation of the dam... we're going to need a new name for you... aren't we?"

He nodded, yes... a new name... a new name was needed.

"Glad you agree... Max."

Max... he was Max now... yes... Max...

They stepped back towards the door, the grey dress, so thin it trailed behind them like a spectre, flowed behind them like a river, glistening as the white and black interwoven threads danced in the flickering light of the only light in the room.

Beauty... grace... power...

His Ladies.

He turned and clapped his hand to his shoulder. "I will lay my life down for you, my ladies."

They smirked, but shook their head, pushing their sunglasses back into place, the red bleeding back to green.

"No, you lay your life down for the Triage. Nothing else matters."

"Yes my ladies."

"Dismissed, go get yourself back in shape."

He nodded and walked out of the open door.

They remained in the room, looking around for a moment, before smirking and stepping out, flicking the light off from the outside as the door swung shut behind them, no hands required.

He was taking the stairs, giving them immediate access to the elevator.

They stepped inside, and pressed the button for the top floor, the silver plated mahogany doors sliding shut before rocketing upwards.

"That, took less time than usual." Aria remarked, running her left hand through Wren's black hair.

"Five days without food and water, if it weren't for us, he'd be dead, I'd say he was a bit past the threshold required for an easy transition." Wren remarked, tilting their head to the side to glance at their nails. "We'll need to alert the medical staff, and the craftsmen, Keeley certainly didn't leave much of a hand."

"No. No she didn't."
The elevator doors opened again, revealing the sprawling living room beyond.

"Nuit!"

"Noir!"

Two heads popped up on the couch, their pointed over ears raised as their heads jerked round.

Twins barks and the two doberman where scampering over, their nails clicking on the polished purple heart wood floor as they rushed to the twins as they stepped out of the elevator, letting the doors swing shut behind them.

Two large guard dogs yaped and barked, circling the twins.

The twins felt a sense of relief seeing them, they'd had the forethought to have the two flown to Monaco a week before they made contact with the Autobots.

It had saved the two pooches lives, Ira wouldn't of thought to save them from the blaze that became of Cosmopolitan.

"Aww sweet hearts, did you miss us?"

Noir barked especially loud and performed a quick jump before a single gesture had him and Nuit sitting patiently.

The dogs watched on as the holoform began to warp and twist, before splitting into two in a mess of static like pixels.

Before they could start enjoying some time with their dogs however, a knock came from the doorway that led to the rest of the sprawling manor.

"Mademoiselles, there is a guest… waiting for you in your office." Stephan, one of the four butlers in charge of keeping the manor in perfect condition, announced.

Both bowed their heads slightly in ascension. "Thank you Stephan, we will see to them." Wren replied, patting down her dress to get rid of non-existent creases.

"Did they introduce themselves?" Aria asked

Stephan shook his greying head. "No mademoiselles, she… walked right through the closed door."

The man's confusion and alarm was evident, but if anything the twins presence lightened, and small knowing smiles appeared on their features.

"Well if someone wants to see us so badly they ignore physics, it must be important." Aria remarked, beaming as she made her way to where the butler stood, Nuit following directly behind her like the loyal dog she was.

Noir waited for Wren to follow after, his tail wagging as he trotted beside her, earning a fond head scratch and ear ruffle from the black themed twin.

Stephan stepped aside to let them through, before turning and heading down towards the opposite end of the corridor. "Dinner shall be ready at seven, shall I have the cooks prepare extra for our guests?" He enquired sharply, before any of them had disappeared fully from hearing range.

Wren shook her head. "No, that won't be necessary Stephan."
The butler nodded before swiftly turning a corner out of sight.

The twins glanced to one another, and a sense of childhood joy seemed to overcome both as they broke into excited giggles.

Wren was first to calm, returning to her normally serious composure, though was moving just as quickly as her twin to their main office.

Soon enough they were before the dark oak double doors.

Each took a handle, turned, and pushed the doors in.

Sure enough, a figure stood ahead of the three chair desk, looking out the floor to ceiling windows at the city far below.

Said figure wore a hooded cloak, black as night and glistening like the stars.

A dark smoke like corona bled off the cloak, which trailed across the ground by over a foot behind them.

Wren was first to speak. "We were wondering when you'd find us, Grim."

The cloaked figure's head tilted to the side to listen, before turning a bit more, revealing the bleached white skin, pulled taught over bone, and marked by patterns in black ink that danced under the skin.

Eyes, devoid of colour and life, met their own, and the features of the figure turned into a happy smile. "You're certainly not easy to find, my dears."

The twins stepped into the room, letting the doors close behind them.

Grim looked them over, a skeletal hand becoming them closer. "Please... let me get a good look at you... my girls..."

Both stepped forwards again, now within arms reach.

The skeletal hands brushed over their holoforms skin, and Grim chuckled. "My... you even have peach fuzz... Ira?"

Both nodded, Aria speaking. "How bad is home?"

The hand fell away from her cheek and Grim's expression became down cast, the ink morphing into a single tear. "The Triage, after you all... disappeared... came into the public light."

The tension in both of their holoforms bled out with a shared curse, both looking to the other in a search for strength.

Grim nodded. "Derrick is safe, he and Ivan are looking for you... all of you... of course they can't look in as many places as I can..."

Wren's expression furrowed. "When did you realise we were no longer on Earth? Our Earth?"

"Three months, the roses helped narrow it down." Grim gestured to outside the window, at the sprawling hill top estate.

Every inch not a path, garden ornament, or pool, was covered in white rose bushes.
Aria spoke then. "Grim… be honest with us… why are we here?"

Grim looked between them and sighed. "I have… at most, a very good hunch, and I think it's based on the same thing as your hunch is, the relics."

Wren hissed through clenched teeth. "We're not…"

"You have to." Grim cut off the black twin.

The fear in both of their eyes was enough for Grim's expression to soften and open her arms. "Come here…"

The hug was tight, if Grim had needed lungs they would of strained under the pressure.

Her girls were both shaking, gripping tight to her cloaked form like a vice.

Eventually they pulled away, and Grim cupped one of their cheeks each. "Forces outside of my control, and your uncle, claimed you…"

"The deal…"

"Will have to be re-written when you come home… now I've found you, I'll let your uncle know you're safe, alive and… mostly well… he's been worried sick."

The both ducked their heads into her skeletal hands.

She lifted both to look them over. "He'll certainly be happy to hear… you've found a way to split… Ira's certainly earned her keep." She chuckled half heartedly at her own joke, there was no humour in her girls though.

Both nodded, their gaze a timid hope, but one also laced with fear. "Grim… we're scarred…"

It pained the ancient being to hear her wards say that, the unison of their speech breaking as their holoforms seemed to spasm from the terror that bled through them.

"I know… I wish I could take you home… but your fates… they have been re-written…" She brought a skeletal hand to her own thin lips. "And there's nothing we can do, our hands have been bound by this force."

The twins exchanged a look before Wren spoke. "Primus?"

Grim gave a shallow nod of her own. "I don't know why… he is a celestial god, one outside of even my reach… he has a power beyond us all… and when he wishes something, there is little one can do to stop his will…"

"So… we're trapped? We have to… to accept that relic… Grim… the Matrix… we can't do that…"

Aria said, her expression still one filled with terror, and eyes beginning to bead tears at the edges. "Goodness knows what the Allspark could be doing to Kia right now!"

Grim could feel the knot of empathy within her own existence, and shifted closer, pulling them both into another hug. "My dears… of every human, I have ever met, you are the two I have the most faith in… your strong, versatile, stubborn, cunning, ruthless, deceptive, I have no doubt, that, if he was here now, with you, your uncle would be so proud of you, maybe even more proud than I am…" There was another, another who would of been just as proud, if not more... she dared not mention them out loud, but the sentiment was just as well received.
The confusion in their expressions was telling, but her words were truth and only truth. "Look at you… you, Kia, Ira, you four… in two years, you've come this far… we were right to chose you, never forget that, and I think that's why Primus chose you… he believes there is no one better for this fate, even if you do not wish it… so please… stay strong… just as you always have… when you come home, we'll figure this out… But for now… it looks like you're going to have to take on the Matrix."

Both nodded, but the hesitance was still there.

Grim knew her time was drawing close, there was only so much time she could spend here, she had a multi-verse to keep watch over, to shepard the departed onwards.

Earth was her soft spot these last billion or so years, but that did not exempt her duties to the rest of the multiverse.

"I have to go…"

"We know… don't forget to tell uncle we're alright… ok? And… maybe drop a hint to Ivan next time he nearly dies?"

Grim had to chuckle at that. "Of course… take care, stay safe… I'll try and visit."

Both smiled at that, though Wren spoke with caution. "We're… going to be hosting some Autobots here soon enough… Kia and Ira don't know about this… so… don't barge in… wait for a signal maybe?"

Grim smiled at that, ever the cautious planner Wren was. "Of course, the same as always?"

"A white rose on a freshly slain corpse." Aria confirmed.

She reached up and patted both of them on the shoulders.

If she touched any other life, they'd die in an instant.

But not her girls, no, the deal she and their uncle had struck with them and the other, it exempted them from her touch of death.

And now… there was a new seal… one she could feel when she touched them, one that almost seemed to try and repel her…

Primus didn't like to share…

But there were things that the God didn't know, and she tilted her head to Wren, giving her a comforting smile. "Before I forget, how's the eye?"

Wren's eyes widened for a moment, before a smile formed, the question so familiar that it was like a warm blanket had been dropped over both twins shoulders. "Same as always Grim." It was always good to show the twins she cared when she could see them, that there were people still left in their lives that did care… even if the question was absolutely redundant, the answer known for years now.

With nothing else to say, she allowed herself to fade away, slipping back into her true state.

And once more, death came to the multiverse, after having been given a short break.
The plot thickens... 'rubs hands then claps them' Okay... so... I have no idea when I'll be able to write next, I'm in the US for work that will likely eat up the majority of my time like a starved hyena, so, please bare that in mind.

Welp, hope you all enjoyed this one, and I'll see you all when I see you, toodles!

Moon.
Chapter 26

You might remember me writing something about there being no better motivator than wanting to ignore my own fragile mortality to write? Apparently, an even greater one is the fragility of ones sanity... I have had some... very rough weeks at this job in the states, there's one week left, and after two weeks with a total of only 32 hrs break where I'm not passed out cold, looking back I am honestly shocked at what I managed to crank out... 11,000 words, on my 24 hr break last weekend, and now, that I have wi-fi for the moment on my laptop, I've decided to post this, next week I'll probably post chapters... 27, 28, 29, 30? Yeah I've cranked out five chapters since the last time I posted... it's how I've kept sane.

Anyway, enough of me rambling about my slipping hold on sanity, it will come back to me, eventually, right now, I want you all to enjoy this latest chapter, and don't be afraid to let me know what you think!

“Welcome to Barcelona!” Kia called, arms out wide on the hanging walkway built into the warehouse they had been led to.

Once the heavy slats of the warehouse had been closed, and Bumblebee’s charges had given them enough space, they transformed up to their full heights.

Bumblebee gave Kia a friendly wave and a spanish radio recording that he’d already picked up.

It got a chuckle at of the tan woman as she moved to lean her holoforms arms on the railing of the walkway. “Gracias abejorro.” She replied back.

Bumblebee’s doorwings bounced, before leaning down to offer Mikaela his servo, the teen catching his meaning and carefully sitting in his waiting palm.

Her father watched on, still unsure of this all as Bumblebee rose back up and moved to bring his charge within reach of the walkway.

Kia reached out, offering her holoforms hand to the teen, and within a quick moment Mikaela was standing beside the older woman.

Kia patted her shoulder to get her full attention. “Work starts next week. Though I have a tailor coming tomorrow to my villa to get the measurements for your uniform.”

Mikaela was quick to nod her head, before she noticed something, a little red stain on Kia’s cheek. “Rendezvous with a lover Kia?”

Kia went rigid for a moment, reaching up to rub at the spot, pulling her fingers away, Mikaela noticed the red wasn’t the waxy texture of lipstick… but instead…

“Oh no, there was a… welcoming party when I arrived, haven’t turned off the holoform since.” Kia patted her shoulder again. “Don’t worry though, you’ll just be my secretary, they don’t go after secretaries.”

Mikaela breathed out a strained laugh. “Can’t be any more dangerous than a missile being shot at you?”
Kia practically beamed. “Ha! We’ll make an Estrada out of you yet girl!”

“I’m still not one hundred percent onboard with this.” Mikaela’s father called up.

Ratchet glanced down, and following Bumblebee’s earlier lead, offered his servo to the man.

Mr Barnes waved off the offer, walking over to metal stairs that lead up to the walkway. “Not one hundred percent on that either.”

Kia regarded the man. “And again, allow me to reassure you, that no harm will come to her, or you, Winston has already offered to be her personal guard, she’ll be perfectly safe with him. Considering she also has Bumblebee, I doubt you have anything to worry about Mr Barnes… now that I think of it, the matter of your employment is still unresolved.”

The change of subject wasn’t missed, and Mr Barnes huffed. “I ain’t working a des-”

Kia cut him off. “One of my mechanics as been waylaid by a tumour, there’s now an opening.”

Mr Barnes’ words fully died away as he processed her statement. “I wouldn’t need to be re-trained…”

Kia smirked and extended her hand out. “You will be paid handsomely for your service, more than enough that you’ll never have to worry about stealing another car… unless situationally paramount.”

They all gave her a look for that.

But Kia just flicked the collar of her shoulder padded leather jacket, pulled at the cups covering her bust by the strings that held them together, and pushed her sunglasses further up her features. “An SUV will guide you to the manor at nine sharp tomorrow morning, don’t be late, the tailor charges by the minute.”

And with that, the Bateleur Harpies holoform flickered out of existence, dried blood flakes drifted down to the ground from where the thing they were attached to suddenly vanished out of existence.

Mikaela huffed and glanced over at her guardian. “Soo… wanna scout Barcelona Bee?”

The scout was already transformed into his camaro form before she could finish the sentence.

All at once, Kia’s holoform was back. “Oh! One more thing, you might want to… change your alt mode, you were seen getting off the Gilded Falcon as an American Camaro, the same with you Ratchet, look for some European models in the selection that Ira provided and then head out, I doubt you want to end your first day in Barcelona with a bullet through your rear tire.” The moment her statement was done the holoform flickered back out of existence.

Bumblebee’s radio buzzed in disappointment, he liked this alt mode, it’s powerful engine, frame, suspension… did he really have to?

Ratchet clearly picked up on his hesitance. “I am not pulling bullets out of you kid.”

The words were there, but unspoken.

The Harpies had enemies, and they had allied with them, this was just a new danger brought from this agreement.

They were targets, and the safest way to avoid confrontation was to prevent anyone from
recognising them.

American vehicles on the European continent were apparently uncommon enough to be a marked feature.

After five minutes of going through all the alt modes available that fit his frame type and were from a European nation, Bumblebee realised he’d gone through the list twice and he should probably stop being so picky about this.

It was to prevent people shooting him, and by proxy his charge…

Sacrifices had to be made, so he selected the one that he’d shoved down his interest for the last two goes around.

The transformation process was swift, the back seats folding away into his subspace as he adopted his new altmode, the two seater 2007 Opel Speedster.

Already he mourned the loss of his old alt mode, but the impressed whistle from Mikaela lessened that dent a bit. “Looking good Bee, even kept the paint job.”

Bumblebee blared his horn and swung open the passenger door, his holoform already in the driver's seat.

Mikaela took her time on the stairs, but broke into a quick sprint once she was on the bottom, though did a quick double take when she realised the seating was reversed.

European car, steering wheel on the right, passenger on the left, she could get used to that.

Ratchet watched the scout book it back out of the warehouse, rolling his optics in good nature before looking to Mr Barnes. “So… now what?” He asked gruffly.

Mr Barnes just shrugged. “Wait for something to happen I guess.”

Barcelona, Bumblebee quickly discovered, was nothing like America.

It stood to reason, different continents, different culture, architecture… it was like visiting a different city state back on Cybertron.

Though the amount of jaywalkers was starting to stress him out a bit.

Didn’t they see the perfectly working stop signs just a way ahead?

He was having to drive under the speed limit because of traffic yes, but that didn’t mean they could just jump in front of his bumper right before he was going to move again!

Mikaela had already blared his horn twice at especially dangerous jaywalkers, they just looked back at the both of them in confusion.

Maybe it would of been an idea to ask Kia about road etiquette… he sent a warning ping to the rest of the bots.

Optimus and Jazz both sent back replies, and Optimus added the extra information that the Gilded Falcon had already departed from the port, and was now bound for Monaco.

He wished them a safe journey and slammed his brakes on again, even creators with younglings
were doing it!

His holoform’s forehead banged into the top of his steering wheel, Mikaela patted his back sympathetically, he appreciated the gesture.

Primus help him this was going to be an adjustment.

He glanced up at the road ahead as something dawned on him.

An adjustment… this was all just an adjustment… being in Europe, working with the Harpies, having a charge, it was drastically different from what he thought he’d be doing now that they technically had the Allspark.

But at the same time, it felt right to be here, stuck in traffic, with Mikaela enjoying the sights, with Kia hosting them, with her having the Allspark.

That was especially odd, the fact she had the Allspark didn’t make him worry… the most important piece of his homeworld culture, in a former organic, and he wasn’t worried at all.

Kia could handle herself, they were just there to make sure the Decepticons didn’t discover the precious cargo she carried.

The blare of a horn behind him jolted him into realising the traffic light was green.

Hitting the accelerator he raced through, causing Mikaela to yelp for a moment before he slowed back to normal, having already caught up with the car in front.

Mikaela breathed out a sigh. “Isn’t there a Cathedral nearby that’s been under construction for like… three hundred years or something?”

Bumblebee didn’t have an answer, but noticed there was in fact a road sign at the next junction with the Spanish word for Cathedral… it wouldn’t hurt to do some tourist level of sight seeing with traffic this bad…

Estrada Villa Vallvidrera region

Kia’s holoform scowled as it looked over the main living room.

Her staff were hard at work, cleaning every possible surface of the blood that had been splattered everywhere last afternoon.

Winston stepped over to her. “We’ve managed to ID one of the bodies, it’s from one of the local gangs.”

Kia’s scowl furthered. “I thought Barcelona had been purged.”

Winston nodded. “It has been, they were from Mataró.”

Kia hummed under her breath. “Send a squadron, take the head, and make it very clear they’re under new management.”

Winston saluted and rushed out of the room to do that, already pulling his flip phone out to call in one of the squadrons.

Kia rubbed at her temples with the tips of her fingers, trying fruitlessly to abate the throb she could
feel coming on, she hadn’t gotten any sleep the night before, and now she was having to deal with… this.

She landed in the already constructed entry tunnel, made her way to the partially excavated bunker, and had settled down for the night to rest her weary limbs from the long flight.

She’d activated her holoform, wanting to check to make sure that everything within her childhood home looked just as her memories provided.

She’d walked into a veritable army.

All with guns, and other unsavoury weapons.

Safe to say, by the time her own forces came to defend her, she’d already slain twenty, and the rest were trying to escape the ‘devil woman’.

If anything the title had pissed her off more than anything, she was a Harpy, not a devil.

By the time the last blubbering would be assassin was put out of his misery, the living room was practically painted in red and gore.

The smell was already becoming putrid, the bodies already sent off to her recently purchased private crematorium, the ashes would be sent back to the loved ones, but with only ashes, the family would have to admit being in criminal activity themselves to try and get justice for their fallen family.

She had no love for fools who thought they could kill her, but she did have sympathy for the families, and once they were identified, and she’d officially taken over the gangs territory, the families would receive compensation for their loses, the children could even receive training, a bit of coercion to stay on her good list...

All of this took organisation and planning, she had to call up Wren to run the logistics for her, as she commanded her staff through the cleaning process.

Before she knew it, a whole day had passed, and she hadn’t gotten a wink of sleep.

She’d taken a break to welcome Bumblebee, Ratchet, Mikaela and her father to Barcelona, discovered her holoform now had the ability to show and hold onto blood stains, and then returned back to the Villa that held so many childhood memories, fond memories...she pondered if this had been a mistake, but thought twice, it felt right to be home.

It was just annoying that it had almost immediately been stained red.

Didn’t help all the walls were painted white.

Apparently the twins had had no such issues with arriving at their manor in Monaco, and Ira was still enroute to Rome, having pulled an all day flight, though she had to be careful in not being spotted on her final approach into Rome as dusk broke.

Looking around the living room, she decided to just take a quick tour around the villa… or maybe… maybe she could just go to bed, yes, that was a good idea…

She looked to one of the staff. “I’ll be hungry when I wake.”

The staff nodded, not looking up from where they were rubbing cleaning chemicals into the
wooden coffee table.

She glanced at the sofa, the casings were going to need to be washed…

Hopefully all the blood would be gone in time for the tailor arriving the next morning.

With nothing to really do, she left the living room, taking the spiral iron railed staircase up to the smaller second floor where both hers and two guest bedrooms where.

In her youth one of those had been her mother and fathers, the guest room frequently taken by close or distant relatives who were visiting on family matters.

Now, it was quiet, as identical as this Villa was from the one in her memories, it lacked the character of a home well lived in.

She had every intention of fixing that.

But first, she needed to sleep… hopefully she’d be able to get a few hours in at least.

Though with the staff keeping as quiet as possible as she worked, and the lack of a living presence resting beside her, she had a feeling she would not be so lucky.

Pushing the door open, Kia jumped, startled by what she saw as she looked to the bed.

Aria and Wren were sitting there, looking at her with soft smiles.

Her racing heart calmed a bit, they hadn’t missed a would be assassin… “Testing out the long range projectors?”

Both twins nodded, and Wren tossed a piece of scrunched up paper at her.

She caught it and unfolded the piece, reading it out. “Sound isn’t working yet. Ahh, why are you here?”

Aria tossed a piece of scrunched up paper to her, Kia laughed, how many pre-written notes did they have?

“‘We knew you’d need the company’ … Arien…”

Both patted the bed, and Kia realised they were already in their nightwear, silk semi-transparent spaghetti strap tops that left nothing to the imagination, and silken short shorts.

Kia huffed. “Trying to seduce me?” She joked.

It was a running joke, one that got silent laughs out of both twins as Aria waved her off.

They all knew the truth, they overheated easily in bed, as little attire whilst maintaining some form of decency was preferred over waking up half ready for a fine roast.

Of course, the holoforms weren’t their human bodies, but habits like these weren’t easily broken.

So, after a quick wardrobe change herself into a shin long night gown, she slipped in between the two.

Aria turned into her, curling up to press the top of her head into her back, as she in turn wrapped her arms around Wren’s middle.
She took the time to look over the tattoo on Wren’s back, the tattoo on the twins was the most expansive of all of them, the broad wings that stretched across their shoulder blades and down the back of their arms, the crest of the triage, and all the intricate details between, well over fifty roses filling in the gaps with their white pigment, standing out against the black gradients of the rest of the tattoo.

It was an impressive work of art.

It was a shame they had to hide it when the Autobots were present, the Cybertronian names etched into them would have been…

Kia paused, looking over the alien lettering… it looked, different now…

Kia could only guess, but she figured that the original tattoo hadn’t been the correct spelling, and that it had now been corrected.

She’d ask the twins if they’d noticed it another time.

Right now, she had good company, and a lot of sleep to catch up on.

Yes it was only just gone six in the evening, but the twins were already there ready to call it a night with her, and that was reason enough.

With that thought in mind, she allowed herself to drift off, content surrounded by the two other holoforms.

She did miss the heat they put off in their human bodies though, it had become subdued in their Harpy forms, still hotter than either her or Ira, but not as much as they used to be…

Her thoughts faded away as she slipped into oblivion, dancing around memories from her youth as they merged with fantasy.

Rome, a few hours later

Touching down was tricky, the entrance to her tunnel was hidden in the side of a hill near the Coliseum, hidden from tourists by a high wall and higher trees.

She was glad a second, longer tunnel that led all the way out of the city was already well under way, holding herself up in the clouds until after night had fallen, after her already long flight gliding on thermals was an exhausting affair she had little to no intention of repeating anytime soon.

Eventually though, she slunk into the new bunker under her old apartment blocks underground parking, her wings stiff and sore and her frame wanting nothing more than to just curl up and rest.

So, she did just that, activating her holoform in the penthouse for a quick look around.

She looked to where her bedroom had been, and stepped inside.

There was a bed, not her bed, no desk, no monitors... no chair…

No pots painted with skulls, no paintings in the twins unique style of clashing colours, no posters of sports cars that haven’t even been built yet.

Of course none of it would be there…
Looks like she was going shopping tomorrow…

Something smashed in the kitchen.

Going rigid for a moment, Ira processed the sound, it sounded ceramic, hitting the granite countertop…

Fury raced through her, that better not of been part of the crockery set she’d bought!

In only a few sprinted strides she was grabbing onto the kitchen’s island, nails scratching against the polished granite to jerk her holoform to a stop so she could glare murder at the ars…

Oh… it was Glen…

Said teen stared back at her, open mouthed and stiff as stone.

Had… had he been standing there since she activated her holoform in the connected living room?

Apparently so, she leaned over the wide island just enough to look down at the spot his hands, still in the position of holding something, hung in there air.

Yup, that was one of her new bowls.

Great… more shopping to do.

Leaning back a bit she reached over and snapped her fingers in front of his face.

The sudden sound jolted him, and the teen let off a truly girlish scream as he ducked down behind the counter, hands over his head.

Ira rolled her eyes. “Rela’, ah ain’ gonna hur’ yah.” She huffed, crossing her arms over her chest. “Yah hungry?”

Glen peered up at her, realising she didn’t plan to kill him over a broken bowl. “Y-yes…?”

Ira huffed again but pushed off the island to move around to the fridge.

She opened it, sure enough, empty.

Of course it would be, she didn’t have live in staff like the other Harpies waiting on her hand of foot, she’d kill someone if they tried to.

“Righ, give meh ah minute.”

She moved over to the landline, typing in a number she still knew by heart.

Within a few minutes of back and forth, and one ask of Glen about his preferred toppings, the order and payment was made.

She made a mental note they’d have to go to the local market to get food in the morning. Leftovers only lasted so long.

She put the landline back down and turned her full attention back to Glen. “How lon’ yah been here?”

Glen glanced at the clock on the oven. “Err… woke up… like… three hours ago…”
Ira nodded, made sense, she’d requested he be dropped off at her apartment. “A’ leas’ tell meh yah wo’e up in ah be’?”

Glen seemed to take a moment to understand what she said before it seemed to dawn on him. “Oh! No… I woke up on the Sofa…” He pointed to the large item of furniture, it’s orange and yellow woven outer layer pristine, unlike the one in her original apartment, sullied over the few years she had it by the things that had occurred on it.

“Betta than tha floor ah guess, yah pic’e’ ah room ye’?”

“Err… no?”

“One a’ tha en’ is mine, there ah four others, ta’e yah pic’.”

Glen nodded, and immediately bolted down the corridor where all the bedrooms where.

Ira shook her head. He’d have to get used to her, they were living under the same roof now. That would come with time, that she knew.

If the twins could have the patience for her, she could have the patience for Glen. In theory.

She was tired, she wanted to sleep, but that bed wasn’t one she wanted, she’d have to just sleep in her actual frame tonight.

Not something any of them enjoyed.

With a groan of begrudging acceptance, she de-activated her holoform, the feeling of her actual frame laying on the recently laid concrete causing her to squirm in an attempt to find a spot that her aching frame would find comfortable.

Something told her… oh, an invite?

Oh the twins were testing out the long range holoform generators… She went over the diagnostics, the sound needed to be worked out, but there’d been no other issues.

Wren recommended a relocation to the twins bed in Monaco, given it was closer to Rome than Barcelona.

She accepted the invite and booted up the long range generator, it was a side project she’d worked on, on and off for the last year after Wren brought up the suggestion of being able to generate their holoforms at a further distance than the range provided by the generators in their frames.

So far, the long range generators had only been installed in their homes, and in the warehouses that Kia and the twins now owned, but she was looking to change that soon.

Soon enough she was curled up between Aria and Kia, legs intertwined with Kia in front and Aria holding onto her shoulders at the back.

The twins bed was massive, arguably able to fit a twenty strong orgy without anyone falling off.

The pitch black mattress cover, pure white duvet, and a veritable horde of plush silken, goose down filled pillows that gave under her head just right.
It was all finished off with a silken quilt, not the same that the twins had made, but one of high qualities nonetheless that was used to hold the duvet at the bottom of the bed in place until someone wanted to stay a bit warm when they went to the kitchen for something to eat.

Not far from the end of the bed, she spotted the silhouettes of the twins dogs, Nuit and Noir, curled up together on their own bed, cute.

On the other side of the room, the fireplace crackled with dying embers, the room slowly cooling whilst they remained warm, laying together for the company they all so desperately sought in their slumber.

It had saved their lives more than once sharing a bed after all.

She couldn’t say anything, but she could fix that later, right now, she was in a comfy bed, and she could just… sleep.

“Ira… put some clothes on.” Aria mumbled.

Ira rolled her eyes but heeded Aria’s request, generating a pair of sweatpant short shorts and a two sizes too big T-shirt.

Not long after, she slipped into oblivion with the rest of them once more.

Her and Kia would return to their own cities in the morning, likely after they’d had breakfast, and then, she had some shopping to do.

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The Gates

The Gates of Hell, for centuries, a sight that has wrought horror from every soul that has arrived at it’s flaming form.

The guards were no more than statues now though, there was no need to force souls inside, they all knew there was nowhere else to go.

It was a bitter truth.

The guards only moved to bow their head as the form of Grim manifested, her ethereal black tendrils dancing out from around her, billowing like a low sitting cloud of noxious gas.

She bowed in return to the guards and strode inside, the souls around her parting like a sea to allow the one who brought them here to pass, many whispering to others, others they’d never known in life, would never of had the chance to meet in life, now linked in their whispering, their wondering.

Their questioning simple, their curiosity greatly peaked, after all… what had had to of happened for death herself grace Hell?

What could possibly convince her to put her soul harvesting the multiverse on hold?

How much more royally fucked could they be?

She ignored them all, taking her time, yet having an urgency to her that outpaced all those around her, who parted like an endless sea, their soul forms instinctively shifting away from that noxious cloud and skeletal face.

Demons, monsters and spawns of the ever-burning pits looked just as the souls did, though they did
not question why she was here, they knew why, so instead, they hoped her presence was the good omen they wished it to be.

Lakes of magma bubbled, becoming rivers fast and fierce beneath the bridges she crossed, all moved aside as she continued onwards.

It was only at the gates of the centre circle did Grim stop, her unseeing eyes staring up at the guards, who sent on the message of her arrival, the heavy gates opening to allow her to slip through.

Before her, the centre circle, and the grand hall of Hell loomed even higher than the gates did, they’d redecorated again she was last here… the style was an… interesting choice, renaissance gothic, with flying buttresses and a thousand and one gargoyels, all spewing magma from their mouths, straight onto the backs of the foulest souls she’d ever had the displeasure of collecting.

The main hall was filled by a table, one so long the end seemed to narrow into a point sharper than the scythe she used now akin to a walking stick, every tap of its end jarring the souls of the dead within every circle of Hell.

At the very end though, there were three chairs, the centre one filled by the only individual currently sitting at the table set for thousands, flanked on either side by two of his generals, who stood a few paces behind the table, weapons ever at the ready, just in case, their grotesque, demonic forms hardly phasing her, she’d seen hagfish.

Within a moment she stood to the left of the one sitting in the chair. “Lucifer.”

“Grim… I suppose you have news?” The king of Hell enquired, looking up from the never-ending scroll that was slowly rolling down in front of him before re-rolling on the other end.

Grim nodded. “I found them.”

The fallen angel was upon his cloven hooves in a moment, the chair slamming into the wall behind it from the force of his rising, the generals didn’t even twitch as he took Death herself by the cheeks. “WHERE?!” The look of pure elation on his features was telling, two years of fretful worry and inability to search himself had taken its toll on the already over stressed king of demons.

The three serpents he had coiled within the golden cage that hung next to him from a chain on the ceiling, hissed in unison at the both of them.

Grim grimaced. “They have been taken from us… claimed by a god of another reality… it is doubtful we will get them back…”

To see the joy on his face warp into despairing horror was painful.

His hands dropped from her cheeks to land on her shoulders. “Where? Grim… please… where are my girls?”

Grim bit into her lower lip, the ink like markings on her features shifting to show her own worries and anxiety over the situation. “It’s easier to show you…”

She reached out, and pressed a single skeletal finger to his forehead, between the set of horns that sprouted from his head were.

She shared the memory, of sensing an abundance of white roses, the twin’s method for summoning her.
Finding herself jumping her sentience across the dimensional rifts, to land on the front porch of a familiar villa in Monaco, gliding through the doorway and up into the familiar greyscale manor until she stood in the office he knew as well as she did, looking over the sea of white roses.

The doors had opened, she turned to face the sound, and there they were.

The noise Lucifer made at the sight of them, both of them, flanked by two pure black hounds, gave her a repeat feeling of the mix of joy and surprise she’d had at seeing them, finally split apart.

They’d long believed they wouldn’t get to see them like that, until their mortality came to an end.

But she also didn’t miss the sliver of oil that leaked from the corner of his eyes.

She showed them talking, interacting, how they were scared, how she could touch them, but there was a barrier, one they couldn’t see, but one that danced across them in a way that was distinctly not of Earth.

“They’re projections… their true bodies are… well… Primus is the one who has them, so one can imagine they’re not made of flesh and bone anymore.”

Lucifer’s jaw hung slightly agape, his grip on her shoulders tight. “And.. and the deal?”

Grim shrugged. “He wants them to merge with the relics of his created species… Kia already has, she’s immortal… and I highly doubt it will be different from the others.”

He was shaking, and she gestured subtly for the chair to be brought back as she eased him into it, his head already buried in his hands. “Luci…”

“My girls… my sly… conniving… lethal girls… and I can’t even go see them…”

Grim shook her skeletal head. “No… you can’t… Whenever I can, I’ll check in on them, and let you know how their doing…”

“I knew something was wrong… I knew they’d been stolen… but I kept denying it… they were just lost… just lost… instead… they were stolen… I fear that… without them… the earth as we know it will be lost…”

Grim nodded, Lucifer wasn’t wrong.

By all accounts, their last hope at saving this Earth, Lucifer’s Earth, from the sickness that plagued it… was gone…

Now it was just a matter of making Hell… liveable…

After all, after Heaven collapsed, alongside the other ‘good’ afterlives, Hell was the only one left.

Mostly because she had a soft spot for Lucifer, and hadn’t slaughtered him like all the rest.

The souls of her favoured Earth had to go somewhere.

She patted his shoulder. “I must return to my duties.”

Lucifer nodded, bidding her a farewell before slumping back into the chair, the scroll no longer interested him.

He looked to the inhabitants of the cage beside him, the three snakes, one with a broken neck, it’s
head off to the side, one, listless, the colour of its eyes gone, one only needed to slice it open to see what horrors remained of its internal organs.

And the final one, it had no scales, but coal black flesh, charred to the point it could barely move.

All three looked smug.

He huffed and smirked. “They will sit beside me, one day, and when they do, I’ll finally be rid of you.”

All three hissed again.

Ooooh, the plot thickens, again, heads up, if I have like, the mental strength left, I’m gonna go through all the up coming chapters and get them ready to post in the next week, I’m honestly looking forward to being at 30,000+ feet again flying to California now, and that’s, really saying something.

Honestly I just wanna sleep now, so, signing off for now, toodles!

Moon.
Chapter 27

Life is busy, very busy, that's all I can really say, other than that I hope you all enjoy!

Monaco was a beautiful city.

That was his thought when he first caught sight of the city, built into the hills framing the crashing waves of the Mediterranean.

It wasn't Iacon, not by a long shot, but something inside of him preened at the city at large, it's culturally styled architecture.

It screamed of cultural and monetary wealth.

Optimus could understand why the twins would desire to live there.

Lena stood beside his holoform, Leeroy balanced on her hip as the boy took in the sight for the first time as well, his eyes wide as he looked at the bustling port that seemed to stretch the length of the city.

The Gilded Falcon was a goliath compared to the majority of the high end yachts already fastened to the jetty's.

Ironhide stood at his other side, looking out across the city they would soon be residing in with a mix of trepidation and intrigue. "Interesting defensive position Prime, as long as we have the high ground, I'd like to see any of the Decepticons try and attack."

It took him a moment to look along the cliffs once more before nodding. "Indeed... Though I'd prefer not having the civilian populace be between us and the Decepticons were they to attack..."

That was something he hadn't had to worry much about in some time, civilian casualties.

The war had been going on for so long, finding a neutral was like discovering a treasure trove that did not, under any condition, want to be found.

And was more often than not packing some form of heat until they could escape.

Lena tapped his shoulder, once she had his attention, she pointed past the city, to where there seemed to be a large manor perched upon the crown of one of the hills to the right of the city, a looming structure that seemed to look out across the city. "That's Orichiono Manor, the twins have requested you join them, they're holding a 'housewarming' party."

He wasn't specifically certain what a 'housewarming party' was, but he was immediately concerned when she passed a memory stick to both him and Ironhide. "Download these, they're suits for your holoforms, it's a black tie event."

And with that, she slipped back inside the ship, likely to finish packing.

Ironhide looked to him in concern.

Opting to lead by example, he brought the memory stick to the port on his holoform hidden normally under the cuff of his sleeve, and in turn under a patch of skin he needed to specifically press for it to vanish, revealing the USB slot underneath.
Apparently Ira had thought it easier to program the holoform to receive updates this way.

Ironhide was less enthused by the idea, but followed his Prime's lead none the less.

Within moments he was pulling at the too tight bowtie around his neck. "Prime, it's fraggin' strangling me!"

Something about it caused a smirk to quirk his lips. "Nothing new for you I assume."

The look of shock and his weapons specialists hanging jaw was more than enough to get a chuckle out of him.

He was still getting back at the mech for all the taunting he'd done in the early cycles of him and Elita being an item.

Deciding to leave his weapons specialist to flounder, he sought out a mirror to properly examine his newly acquired suit, if he remembered correctly, there was a 'public' toilet block with a wall mirror not far past the main bar…

The dinner suit was was a perfect fit, sheer black thread inlaid with thin red thread that seemed to be woven subtly into flickering flames that danced upwards.

An interesting stylistic choice, reminding him of that paint scheme option he had for blue with red and orange flames he'd turned down for his preferred red and blue pattern.

That said, it did look nice on the suit.

His stubble was gone, his blue tinged hair slicked back, the suit showing off his build well.

Ira, it would seem, had a good eye for these things.

He'd see about talking to her next they met, he was interested in finding out just how much time and effort she'd clearly put into these holoforms.

A labour of love no doubt.

An announcement came over the speakers not long after.

Himself, Ironhide and Jazz would have to disembark the ship, then Jazz would re-board and continue on with Maggie to Rome.

Lena and Leeroy were once more riding with him in his cabin, and Ironhide had Freedom with him, the bird having kept low and quiet throughout their journey.

Lena had gotten changed since the last time he'd seen her on the deck, the dress she now wore a vibrant orange that sparkled along with the thick silver straps that wound around her waist, torso and arms in a crisscross pattern, Leeroy had been coaxed into a slightly too big dress shirt and pants.

As he finally rolled back off the ramp at the rear of the Gilded Falcon, he allowed himself a moment just to turn his wheels from side to side, trying to get some feeling back in them.

He could only imagine how stiff his mechs had felt, being stuck in their altmodes for the entire journey across the Atlantic.

Jazz gave a final rev of his engine before rolling back up the ramp, which closed back up not long after.
Lena patted his dashboard. "Best not to leave the Orichiono's waiting, I have a map and directions so we don't get lost."

Leeroy remained his quiet self during the journey, looking out the window in rapt curiosity at this city that was in all likelihood as alien as it was to himself and Ironhide, who followed close behind his own altmode.

The winding narrow streets were a challenge to get accustomed to, and the sheer amount he had to swing his wheels around to not hit the walls and crash barriers, but he soon seemed to get the hang of swinging his large frame build in the ways needed to not go careening off either the steep slopes, or into the equally steep walls that flanked both sides when houses and gardens did not.

Considering his frame size, it was unlikely he would find an altmode better suited for both his frame, and the requirements of these roads, so for now he'd have to remain as is.

Within half an hour, they reached the massive front gates of the Orichiono's estate, the guards waving both himself and Ironhide through before closing the gates again in front of the next vehicle trying to get in.

All around was a sea of roses, in the afternoon haze of the setting sun the petals glinted, the water droplets on them shining all the colours of sunset blazed across the sky.

Leeroy seemed just as taken by it as he slowly rolled up to the front of the manor, where valets were escorting away the cars and limousines that had somehow made it up to the manor with their own guests.

Soon enough it was his turn, though Lena beat him to jumping out, perching Leeroy on her hip once more before walking over to the valet that had approached, a few quick words were exchanged before they moved on to the next set of vehicles to arrive.

Lena beckoned him and Ironhide to follow. "There's a garage to the right, when you get there the doors will open, see you inside!"

Taking a moment to collect himself, he opened his own door and stepped out, allowing his frame to drive away, swiftly followed by Ironhide's own, and hoped no one noticed the sudden lack of a driver.

Stepping through the front doors along with the rest of the small crowd, he found himself taking a moment.

Evidently the manor had been designed to show off, every facet of the building seemed to of been polished to a shine, one that came from the numerous crystal chandeliers hanging around the grand hall, where the other guests seemed to be dancing and mingling to their heart's desires as a band and male singer performed in the corner by one of the windows that looked out and down across Monaco.

Ironhide grumbled something about not liking how this all felt too familiar.

In a way, he could agree with his weapon specialist, an affluent display of wealth like this was something he'd last seen during his time in Iacon before the great war, when…

No, stop, he thought, thinking back only brought up painful memories that he did not need to deal with right now.

This was familiar, but it was also different.
These weren't Senators and their wealthy friends, these were humans, guests of a 'housewarming' party.

"Mr Prime, Mr Hyde, we so glad you could come."

The familiar voice had himself and Ironhide turning to regard Aria, she stood expectantly, champagne flute balanced between to nails, her snow white and silver dress fluttering around her from the draft coming through the main doorway, the outer light skirt flaring to reveal the tighter leg split second skirt underneath.

Sat on it's haunces beside her, a pitch black dog, it's equally dark eyes trained on him with a focus that was, rather unnerving, the only breakin the canines black colouring was the thick, white with black horizontal striped collar that hung from it's thick neck. Hanging from said collar was a tag that simply spelt 'Nuit' night in French if he was correct.

He went to reply when Wren arrived on Ironhide's side, flanked in turn by another pitch black dog, it's collar the inverse of Nuit's, with the tag spelling 'Noir' black. "Please, try and enjoy yourselves. If you need anything, just ask one of the servers."

He went to look back and reply to Aria, only to catch the end of her light skirt vanishing into the throng of bodies, turning back to Wren, he realised she'd done the same, the two canines trotting along at their sides.

That was right, they were just guests, they would receive no more attention from the hosts as anyone else, to lessen suspicion of relation he assumed.

So, he nodded to Ironhide, and decided to explore, if they'd be eventually residing in the bunker beneath the manor, he might as well learn his way around now.

That was the plan at least, until he spotted someone strangely familiar by the stairs that seemed to lead up to the second floor of the sprawling manor.

Making his way over, he finally connected the dots to who this was.

It was one of the humans from the dam.

And he'd already spotted him making his way over, and had beckoned him to follow.

So, he did just that, following his curiosity and the man into a quieter room, one that seemed to be a kitchen, only a few people were inside, though they seemed to quickly vacate once they realised who had entered.

Curious.

The man moved to what a quick search of internet revealed to be a wine rack, pulling one of the stained glass bottles out before placing it on the counter before rummaging around the cupboards for two 'wine glasses', he went to placed them down but hesitated, glancing to him before finally speaking. "Want one?"

He'd seen the Harpies holoforms drink enough to know his would be fine, so he nodded.

The man took the ascension and began to pour out a small amount into both before walking back over and passing a glass to him. "Flint Unjun, head of human resources for the Orichiono's. Optimus Prime correct? I was alerted there'd be two of you..."
Ah, he was introducing himself. "Optimus is correct."

The man nodded. "Good, good, so… what can I do for you?"

"I was wondering if you could inform me as to why you were at the Dam?"

"Hoover? Oh, Wren re-assigned me temporarily to infiltrate the Pentagon, they wanted someone to
keep any eye on the military from the inside and have someone deep undercover and all that,
apparently I was seen as the best bet and sent. I'm back to my normal job of managing the people
working for the Orichiono's now, which is much preferable, not as much 'could be executed if
discovered' stress and more 'Where the hell have those idiots gone?' stress." He chuckled at his
own joke for a moment before taking a sip. "So… let me see if I've got your case file right, leader
of a warring faction from a world no longer able to sustain itself?"

He nodded, somewhat alarmed at how accurate the assumption was. "How did…"

"I know? Oh it's my job to know, once Wren cracked the language in their systems, it was pretty
easy for Ira to tap into the communications of the Decepticons on Earth from there, they're a really
gobby bunch." He remarked.

That made sense. "Wren cracked our language?"

Flint nodded. "Iaconian standard I think… from there she was able to crack Ira and Kia's internal
languages."

That was… odd. "They were all different?"

Flint shook his head. "No, the twins had one, Kia and Ira share another, there's a translation sheet
upstairs in my office, Wren suggested we all have one readily available, just in case, care to join
me?"

He was already walking further into the manor before he could answer.

So, he followed again, still holding the glass by its stem, careful not to squeeze it hard enough to
break it.

Two flights of stairs, three corridors, and sixteen closed doors, before he was stepping through the
one held open by Flint.

Sure enough, an office, crisp, well kept and a neatly stacked piles in the outbox.

"Wren doesn't like their employees making a mess."

He just hummed as Flint moved to the wall to wall bookcase that was filled with both files and
hardback books.

The sudden urge to catalogue the exact position of each was something he had to quickly stamp
down.

"Ah ha! Found it!" Flint cheered three folders in, pulling a collection of papers. "These are the
translation sheets for the twins." A stack of the papers was pushed into his free hand, Flint took the
glass from him. "And these are the translations for the ones in Kia and Ira."

It didn't even take him a second to recognise the layouts of each of the typographies.
"Iaconian upper standard… and Praxian upper standard… is there any idea why the twins are
different from Ira and Kia?"

Flint shrugged. "No clue, that's just what Wren managed to translate, she get it right? And if no, you're telling her, not me. I like my head where it is."

He regarded them again, surprised to find that the translations were accurate. "How did she even…"

"Wren doesn't like being idle, when her pede got mangled, the others forced her and Aria to remain in the caves, gave them lots of time to pull their internal systems apart, figure out what each function did, and then reversed the potential meanings back and… well… I'm only guessing here…"

He shrugged again, passing the glass back to him. "Now, how about I give you a proper tour?"

Back in the main hall, Ironhide grumbled to himself, more than once someone had tried to take him out onto the dancefloor, each time he opted to just ignore them till they went away.

Ratchet was humoured by the whole affair, his end of the bond bleeding reassurances that he wouldn't be mad if Ironhide cut loose and enjoyed the music, but he was too wound up, Prime had wandered off and he couldn't see the twins anywhere…

A tap on his shoulder and his temper flared. "Look I am not going to dance with yo- … Ira?"

The redhead's expression was off put, raised eyebrow, pursed brows and an aura of being less than impressed, though her attention wasn't on him, but the other guests. "C'mon, there's ah firin' range a' the otha en' ah tha esta'e."

A firing range?

Turns out the twins had good taste after all.

First the boxing ring, now a firing range.

Ratchet sent him a warning across the bond not to hurt himself, he went to rebuke but Ratchet was already reminding him over all the firing range 'mishaps' he'd had to repair, quickly cowing his own rebuke.

He conceded defeat, promising to be careful.

Ira certainly wasn't wearing attire that let her blend into a crowd, studded jacket, torn fishnet leggings, short shorts and a top with a bomb with a lit fuse on it.

Finishing off the ensemble were the geometric earings and the steel capped boots that caused the gravel to crunch on the ground lit path they were now walking along as dusk set in.

"How are you here?" He finally asked, keeping pace with her.

Ira replied. "Lon' distance holoform generators, go' ah beacon here an' in Barcelona, our frame transmits tha signal, an' the holoform appears here… i's still buggy, only go' the soun' workin' again this mornin', twins sugges'e' me an Kia s'ick aroun' fah tha par'y."

Soon enough a large structure appeared, hidden amoung the sprawling rose garden, Ira typing in a code into the pinpad lock on the door before swinging it aside. "C'mon in, sure tah fin' somethin' yah li'e tha feelin' of."
And with that, she switched the lights on.

It took a few moments before a manic smirk grew on his features. This wasn't just a firing range.

This was a fully stocked armoury that happened to have a firing range.

Ratchet sent a wave of concern over the bond that he was quick to reassure.

Ira shrugged off her studded jacket, hanging it up on the coat hooks bolted into the wall. "There's one gun yah can' touch in here." She pointed to the left, and Ironhide felt the weapons specialist in him croon at the sight in front of him.

It was a rifle, sleek, elegant, a magazine slot built into it's right side, a large silencer built onto the end a scope.

The whole thing was engraved with roses.

"Tha's Widower 2.0, Wren's gun, i' ain' tha original, nothin' can compare tah tha original Widower, bu' Wren'll s'ill run yah through if yah ma'e tha mis'a'e ah touchin' i'." She remarked, stepping over to where the massive rifle was mounted on the wall, just admiring the grey scale weapon.

He followed. 'Caliber size'?

Ira huffed and chuckled. "50 cal, shou' ah seen tha face ah tha guy they commisione' when they tol' him they wan'ed a magazine for tha monsters."

He let out an appreciative whistle. "It's seen use?"

Ira nodded and smirked. "Hones'ly surprise' they don' have her with them."

That sent off an alarm bell. "What? Why?"

Ira laughed. "Oh Ironhi'e, i' ain' an Orichiono housewarmin' par'y if someone doesn' try tah kill tha twins."

And as if by some chance of fate or accidental timing, from the still open door rang a gunshot.

There was a quick scream from the manor, but the music kept playing.

Ira grabbed his shoulder. "Woul' be assasins' dea', don' worry, one ah Wren's boys too' Optimus on a tour."

Surprisingly, that was enough to reassure him, this was their norm.

Ira tapped his shoulder to get his attention again, and he found her holding a hand gun in each hand. "These ah more my style, le's have some fun."

The Gilded Falcon

There was barely anyone left.

The staff were all still there, but now, with it being just her and Jazz, it felt like she was on a ghost ship.

She clung close to Jazz's holoform, taking comfort in his presence amoung all the… oh god how
did she even describe the crew?

They were almost lifeless, doing their duties, working their shifts, before disappearing into their own rooms for the night or day depending on the shift…

She'd tried to speak with a few, but something about how it almost seemed to bring them back alive temporarily… it scared her…

Jazz was getting flighty too, muttering that they reminded him of 'drones'.

At present, they were hunkering down in her room, Jazz hadn't even bothered with his since their first night together.

A French news broadcast acting as much needed background noise, they were cuddled up under the covers, just enjoying the others company.

After a few more moments Maggie let off a sigh. "I miss Glen…"

Jazz was well aware of who Glen was, and the arm around her waist pulled her closer. "Ah know sweetspark, first thing ah plan to do when we get to Rome is to start searching."

She tucked her head back under his chin. "Thank you…"

"Anything for you sweetspark." He replied, shifting just enough to kiss the top of her blonde hair.

Maggie just slumped further against his side, the fingers of her left hand entwined with his on her lap.

"Jazz?"

"Hmm?"

"I… I've never been to Europe before."

He chuckled. "Neither have I, guess we'll just have to stick close…"

"... What's Ira like? I mean.. You've seen more of her than me… And if we're going to be living with her…"

"Hmm, well, when ah first me' 'em, she lost her cool somethin' fierce and screamed bloody murder at Ironhide, got him across the face ah good coupla times too."

Maggie snorted out a lung full of air. "She did what?"

Jazz's shrug jostled her a bit. "Serves him right, he did refer to them as something quite unpleasant."

"Ahh, he had it coming then."

He chuckled and nuzzled the top of her head. "Yes, yes he did… hey.. Wait…" Jazz's attention was on the screen.

Maggie followed his gaze, it was a news report from Monaco? She got that at least.

Jazz, noticing her confusion, translated. "Apparently there was an assassination attempt, prospective victim had a license to carry… I think that's the Orichiono's place…"
She shrunk back into his hold. "Someone tried to kill them?"

"Unsuccessfully."

That didn't settle the knot in her gut. "God… what have we gotten ourselves involved with… I don't want to be a criminal…"

"And you ain' darlin'."

She grimaced. "Actually, I kinda am, I stole a copy of the signal used to hack the database in Qatar… they caught me and Glen and that's how we ended up in the dam."

Jazz didn't reply for a bit before speaking. "Oh…"

"Yeah…"

He chuckled then an nuzzled the side of her face before giving her a quick peck on the cheek. "You've been holdin' out on meh Mags... you got tha makin's of Spec Ops alread."

A chitter right in her ear jolted in her, and a moment later the little thing in her ear began to move, causing her to yelp in pain as it suddenly began to dislodge itself.

Jazz, startled by the noise, went to ask her what was wrong, freezing as blood hit the bare arm of his holoform, following it up he saw the sparkling was pulling itself loose. "Whoa Maggie, easy, little one just wants to move about…"

Maggie grit her teeth at the sensation. "Yah think?"

The sparkling chittered again and on reflex she caught it as it jumped down, rolling onto it's back in her palms to keep it's bladed legs up in the air.

This was the first time he'd actually seen the little one in full.

It's tiny singular green optic blinked up at them, chittering away as it waved it's blood stained legs up at them.

"I think it's hungry."

She laughed out a pained rasp. "And feed it what?"

"Simple… Energon… now… where's it's intake port…" He muttered, leaning to the side to better look at the little thing still squirming in her hand.

The little thing chirped and sprung up, causing her to wince as it's little blades poked her skin, it was so light it didn't break the skin, but having a bunch of scalpels in her hand wasn't exactly fun. "Ok, now, don't excite Skitter."

Jazz paused and turned his head to look at her. "Skitter?"

Maggie nodded. "Been calling him that in my head for a while now… right Skitter?"

The little thing, Skitter, chirped again and jumped.

This time the blades did cut and she winced, reflexively dropping him onto the uneven bedding between her legs, causing Skitter to whine in distress and flail around.
Jazz was quick to react, picking the little bot by its back so its legs dangled, and his other hand went to hers, bringing it close to look it over, just small punctures, the blood seeping out sluggish. "C'mon, there should be a medic somewhere on this ship."

Maggie nodded, shuffling to get out of the bed, thankful they'd not stripped each other for a change.

Jazz followed quickly behind, lifting up the little bot that seemed to be trying to swing it's frame in his hold towards Maggie.

Not surprising, sparklings imprinted on the first thing they saw, in this case, it was apparently Maggie.

But now it was out of her ear, did she really want to let it back?

That would be a matter for later, after they'd gotten Maggie's hand bandaged.

Orichiono Manor, Monaco

The sounds of repetitive gunfire was something Ironhide had sorely missed.

And having a shooting partner who got just as into it as himself was just an added bonus.

They'd already had to replace a number of the cut-outs, having absolutely decimated them once Ira had pulled a tripod mounted gatling gun and she'd let him just unleash all hell whilst she fed the magazine.

They were now having a marksman competition, closest to a perfect headshot won.

It was tight, but his millenia of warfare won him victory.

Ira suddenly let off a whoop of joy, despite having lost, she threw her arms up and jumped, before swinging round and pulling him into a crushing hug. "Ah ain' ha' this much fun in ages!"

The sudden exuberance on top of everything got a laugh out of him as he managed to hug her back, holding up the wild redhead to stop her from falling on her aft.

Ratchet sent a humoured yet curious pulse across the bond.

He wasn't sure why, but the question was out before he'd even fully thought it through. "Oh? And when was the last time you mad fem?"

Like a flip had been switched, Ira slumped in his hold, becoming nothing but dead weight as her holoforms head thunked against his broad shoulder.

Alarmed, he jostled her. "Fem, fem, what's the matter with you?"

Ira whimpered and shook her head against his shoulder.

Ratchet was expressing his own concern across the bond, such a massive emotional swing wasn't good on a spark, especially one as erratic as Ira's.

Thankfully he knew pretty much what to do, with Ira a dead weight on him he moved to one of spaces between the gun racks, easing the Harpy's holoform down to sit against the wall.
As quickly as misery had replaced joy, despondency replaced misery.

He clapped a hand on her shoulder, jolting her enough for her head to roll to the side. "Kid, kid, snap out of it would ya?"

Suddenly he had an idea, and com-linked Optimus. "Prime, it's Ira, she's... she's not responding, get one of the Harpies, we're in the armoury."

Optimus just sent a confirmation ping.

Attention back in front of him, he realised she was starring at him now, her gaze hollow.

"I was las' tha' happy... tha mornin' tha love ah my life... didn' come home..."

Something in his spark twisted, and Ratchet's own worried yet knowing dread only made it worse.

She was going limp again, gaze going distant.

There was sounds of running footfalls on the gravel path, and within moments Aria and Wren were there, their canines still at their heels.

Ironhide moved aside, watching as the twins easily hefted the over up, putting an arm over both of their shoulders while muttering something in a hushed whisper his holoform couldn't pick up on.

Kia and Optimus stood waiting just outside the shooting ranges doors, despite the sunglasses on the former, their expressions of concern seemed to be identical.

Kia quickly followed after the rest of the Harpies.

Ironhide moved to his Prime's side, watching as Ira's dead weight was lead away. "This has happened before..." He muttered.

Optimus nodded. "You have an idea why?"

Ironhide nodded. "Spark damage, she said her human sparkmate didn't come home... considering everything... I'm not surprised... Poor kid..."

Optimus hummed, that did line up with Ratchet's earlier assessment. "I'll alert Jazz, he'll need to keep a close optic on her, for her own good."

Something else was on Optimus mind, he hadn't fought by the mechs side this long and not be able to pick up on that. "What's wrong Optimus?"

The taller holoform pulled something from inside the suit, a bunch of papers stapled together. "Wren's head of human resources provided these... there the code languages in the Harpies."

Ironhide felt his holoforms eyebrow raise, but he looked them over nonetheless. "Iaconian and Praxian?"

"Indeed, there's a number of questions this raises, I mapped Earth against Cybertron, the locations of the Harpies bird sides don't match, nor do the assumed locations of their origins. Why the twins have Iaconian and Ira and Kia Praxian, it is... a confusing detail... one that only further complexes this puzzle we find ourselves in..."

Wren and Aria grunted, easing their friend back down onto their large bed.
Kia hung back, overseeing what was going on whilst she awaited one of the servers to return with a jug and glass of water.

Aria slipped onto the bed to join the younger red head, pulling the still catatonic holoform to her. "Shhh… shhh… it’s okay… you’re okay… it’s all in the past…"

Ira's grip became tight, the nails of her holoform cutting through the fabric the white twin wore with ease as she finally moved, burying her head into the dip between Aria's shoulder and neck.

Wren moved to join, slowly running her hand down the others back, a soothing motion she practically had down to an art form as the tension in Ira's holoform was slowly eased away. "Facile mon ami... facile... nous sommes ici..." She muttered.

She knew Ira didn't know a lick of french, but she knew it had a calming effect, to just listen to the sounds and not know the words.

Wren could call her a shit faced whore and it would probably help just as much.

But she also knew that Aria would choke herself trying not to laugh, and that would of tipped Ira off.

It had happened before, so she avoided it.

The waiter finally arrived, passing the jug and glass to Kia before whispering that the guests were now departing.

Kia nodded her thanks, moving further into the room to set the jug and glass down on the bedside table. "Drink Ira, it will ground you."

Ira's hold didn't waiver, and Wren sent Kia a look asking to give the red head more time to calm herself.

Kia accepted the silent request, this wasn't her place, she was just filling extra space.

So, she moved to the guest room, and pulled up the latest report from Barricade and began reading.

No real changes, Fernando was still demanding they move immediately to Europe to come hunt her and the other Harpies down, and Starscream refused outright everytime.

She almost laughed, the mental image of her younger brother in a near constant screaming/insult match with the Second in command of the Decepticons was certainly entertaining, though the older sister in her couldn't help but worry.

A knock on the door drew her attention to Winston, who had made the quick trip across the border earlier that morning. "Mikaela called."

She raised an eyebrow. "Oh? What was the matter?"

"Nothing serious, she wished to ask if there was a store in the area that sold notebooks, apparently Bumblebee has already burned through seven, and four pens."

She huffed a laugh. "Let her know, I'll deal with it, one can't fault the scout for wanting to talk."

Winston shook his head. "Not at all my lady… And on a similar note, the medical textbooks Ratchet requested have arrived."
She nodded. "Very good, is that all Winston?"

The giant of a man nodded.

"Dismissed, go have some fun, I'm certainly one of the twins staff would be willing to keep you company."

Months ago the giant would of flustered at that, but Kia was a frank woman, and he hadn't grown accustomed. "Goodnight Mrs Estrada."

"Goodnight Winston."

---

Another chapter down, I've got a couple I'm gonna try and let loose within the next week or so, though I'm going back to Uni in just over a week for my final year, so I can't really make any promises, oh well, until next time!
Welp, another chapter ready to go, back at Uni now for my final year, so I have no idea how frequently I'll be writing this year, but we'll see.

Somewhere on the North Sea - Triage Earth

"Do I even want to know, how the captain's wife knows you?"

Ivan looked up from the bear bottle he'd just popped the cap off, courtesy of the captain's daughter.

A daughter who's head of pitch black hair didn't match either of her parents browns.

Not like it did Ivan's when it wasn't starting to salt an pepper.

Ivan huffed in good nature, gesturing to the fact he'd been handcuffed to one of the many air-conditioning units by his left hand in the hull of the cargo ship they were now on board. "Why do you think the captain handcuffed me down here?"

Derrick pinched the bridge of his nose, Epsilon was perched on his shoulder, content in just preening the vibrant blues of his breast feathers.

Ivan chuckled at the young man's exasperation. "You know, the girl looked pretty interested in you… or the bird… couldn't tell which."

Derrick wanted to slap the man, but knew better.

Ivan had a temper, and one that sometimes made him forget important details.

That aside, the smug bastard…

He put down the plate he'd brought with him, leftovers from the dinner he'd been invited to, the captain's daughter had already left, heeding her father's warnings about the older man.

Ivan grunted his thanks. "Make sure to eat well kid, I'll be fine down here."

Derrick knew it to be the truth, but he hesitated for a moment. "What if…"

"Kid, there's forty people on board, and as far as they know, you James Ryker, my nephew, you'll be safe here, you and the damn bird."

With nothing really to say to that, Derrick turned and headed back up and out of the cargo hold.

"James!"

The call of his latest fake name had his attention snapping to the captain's daughter, Serene.

She was waiting for him by the stairs that led up out of the belly of the ship and further up to the main deck and crew quarters.

Serene locked arms with him. "C'mon! I have a tone of games we can play up in the main rec room!"
He was being dragged up the stairs before he could even get out a coherent answer, looked like he was going to be entertaining Serene for a while.

Soon enough, he'd been coerced into game of scrabble with Serene and her mother.

The captain was busy with steering the ship, and much of the crew had already retired for the night.

"So James, you're Ivan's nephew..." The captain's wife, Juniper stated, looking over her tiles.

Derrick nodded. "Yes, I am."

"Hmm... odd... he never mentioned having any siblings... alive ones at least..."

Derrick chuckled. "Yeah, I was quite a shock to him when I managed to track him down. My mother hid her pregnancy and died of 'complications during a..." Appendix removal surgery... yes I remember him mentioning he'd lost a sister to the operating table... And your father?"

Derrick sighed. "He hung himself... turns out my mother was a... mistress of his..."

"Oh that's... terrible? And his wife?" Serene asked, her attention rapt.

Derrick bit his lip. "One of their... chefs poisoned her drink... that's why my father brought me into the house, I didn't need to be kept a secret anymore... and that's how I met my half sisters, they helped me track down Ivan when we were older."

"And you said they've gone missing?" Juniper asked, finally putting a word down on the board.

Serene was quick to add her own onto her mother's.

Derrick nodded. "Yeah... they were working in London at the time, we've looked everywhere we could think of, and we've found nothing... they always talked about going on vacation to Norway, so that's where we're heading now... hopefully we can find a clue or something, but so far we've found nothing, ain't that right buddy?" He cooed to Epsilon, who had just hopped up to join him on the stiff bench.

Epsilon cawed back, enjoying the chin scratch Derrick was giving him.

Serene reached over for a moment, as if going to pet the vibrant bird, but it ducked back away from her, causing her to pull back in turn. "Not fond of people?"

Derrick shook his head, finally placing down a word of his own. "No... no he's only ever liked me, I raised him from an egg, I'm his mother basically."

Juniper exchanged an impressed look with her daughter. "You're a rare thing James..." The older woman remarked.

Derrick gave a half hearted chuckle. "Well... my sisters certainly didn't raise a fool."

Not five minutes later, the game of scrabble was interrupted, much to Derrick's relief.

Juniper had been slowly creeping into more and more personal questions, ones he'd rather not answer.
The one who interrupted them, happened to be the captain himself. "Curfew, everyone to your cabins."

No one complained, Derrick easily hefting Epsilon up under his arm, bidding the family a goodnight before promptly departing.

Once Derrick was out of earshot, the Captain turned on his wife. "What did you find out?"

Juniper petted her daughter's hair. "He's perfect... we're keeping him."

Serene practically glowed at her mother's confirmation.

She'd make 'James' hers, no matter what.

Even if she had to keep him in a pretty little cage, just like his pretty little bird.

Rome Italy

Ira grumbled to herself, looking over another grocer's store, her holoforms arms didn't strain under the weight of the bags she carried, but the insistent muttering from Glen was starting to grate her nerves.

She tried to be reasonable, far from home, not understanding a word of the native language, and under the watch of someone who could so easily kill them and make it so their body was never found.

She'd been in the exact same place as him at the ripe old age of fifteen.

She hadn't however, made a habit of muttering.

With a sharp intake of breath, she turned on the large teen and hissed. "Will yah shut up!?"

Glen froze stiff instantly.

Better. "Good, keep followin' me."

She wasn't in a good mood, period.

Not after what had happened the night before.

As well as the looming fact Jazz and Maggie would be arriving at her apartment soon, and she still hadn't found what she was looking for.

Was it really so hard for people to just... sell the food she needed?

Groaning in frustration at another stall in the market that didn't have what she was looking for, she spun on her heel and began to stride back out of the market. "C'mon, we're gonna be la'e."

Glen scrambled to keep up.

Sure enough, when she kicked the front door of her apartment open, Maggie and Jazz, who'd been 'enjoying' themselves on the sofa, jumped.

Quite literally, considering the impressive backflip off the sofa Jazz did.

It got a much needed laugh out of the Irish woman. "Ah've hear' ah breakin' in tha' bed, bu' mah
bran' new sofa? Heh. You two have fun."

She walked over to the kitchen area and dumped the bags from her arms, causing their full mass to clatter to the counter top.

A few moments, Glen finally came through the door, and spotted Maggie. "Maggie?!"

The Blonde cracked her neck she spun so quickly. "Oh my god… Glen!"

The two met in the middle, Maggie nearly falling back when Glen pulled her into a desperate hug.

They were rambling nonsense, so Ira left them be, only bothering to acknowledge the intrigued look from Jazz that he sent her way.

Maggie's attention only shifted to Ira a few minutes later, after Glen explained how he'd woken up in the apartment, and that the last thing he remembered before that, had been getting a look over from the full size Harpy out in the middle of nowhere in America.

Ira met her gaze for a moment before shrugging. "He's go' potential, both ah yah do. Li'eh'd let tha' go tah waste." She'd already started preparing some food for lunch, and to emphasise her point, she slammed the clever she was wielding down one of the slabs of steak she'd bought earlier in the morning.

Maggie spoke then. "What happened… to the one who shot the twins?"

Glen glanced to Maggie and Jazz.

Ira pursed her lips, bringing the clever down again, the suspense built again, but she held it even as she set the clever back down, the scrape off razor sharp steel against granite causing a shiver to jump up the spines of the two humans.

"He's dead."

Barcelona two weeks later

"One more! One more!" Kia cooed, clapping her hands together as Mikaela spun once more, allowing the flaring skirt she now wore to spin outwards, the colours dazzled, bright flowers that would make a bouquet rot with envy, and decorated with beads, gems and other such finery.

It was a gift, from the Estrada to the Barnes.

One Kia liked to see on the young teen far more than her raggedy mechanic clothes.

Which were up in the teens new wardrobe, nestled in a villa not far from the warehouse.

Bumblebee clapped along, and Ratchet watched the affair before him with humour.

Things were peaceful in Barcelona, and it had granted Kia the free time to visit her employee and her other guests after her first week of work.

At Mr Barnes request for his daughter to be as safe as possible, which Kia had agreed to without hesitation, Mikaela had been placed at one of Kia's sports car dealerships, where she was being trained as an accountant and, at her insistence, given full rein of the show cars.

They themselves would not be sold, so allowing the teen to have her way with engine blocks that
would barely ever turn over, and brake systems that were fated to lack of use was something of a no-brainer for the Estrada.

And from what she had heard from the manager, Mikaela, despite her grasps of spanish, was quickly becoming a hit with the staff, who knew to be patient with the girl.

It was why they were training her as an accountant, numbers needed no translation.

"¡Maravilloso! Querida, te ves divina!" Kia cooed as Mikaela finally stopped spinning.

The teen, somewhat dizzy, chuckled as Bumblebee's holoform easily caught her. "Thanks 'Bee."

The scouts holoform just smiled and helped her back fully upright before letting her go, somewhat slowly.

Kia chuckled to herself at that, switching back to english seamlessly. "Well Mikaela, what do you think?"

Mikaela laughed herself at that. "Um… I love it? Like, where did you even find this?"

"Oh once I had your measurements from the tailor, I sent a few rough sketches to this fashion house I bought a few months ago… You can thank Wren for the suggestion of all those bits of finery, and Aria for the colour choice, I was just fine with you having a fun skirt!"

Mr Barnes glanced over at the group and spoke up. "You're spoiling my daughter."

Kia waved the man off. "Oh hush! She deserves to have some nice things to show off!"

Before Mr Barnes could reply, Kia turned on the medic. "Ratchet, may I request your presence at my villa post haste? I have something to give you that is somewhat time sensitive."

Ratchet raised an optic ridge and gestured to the skirt Mikaela was now wearing.

"Oh I wanted that out of the way first, now, can I expect you at my villa in… let's say thirty minutes?"

The CMO went to ask why this matter was so 'time sensitive' yet not, but Kia's holoform had already flickered out of existence.

He looked to Bumblebee and their human wards, all three just shrugged and he let off a vent of exasperation.

They'd all grown accustomed to this, Kia wasn't one to waste time, departing with just the same haste as she arrived.

He'd be up at the villa soon enough, there was little reason to say goodbye.

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Estrada Vila

She'd not been back two minutes when her com-link went off, it was a group call from the twins, for both her and Ira.

Ira had joined immediately, her acceptance taking a few moments.

"Yes?"
"We're doing it…"

"We're going to the mountains of Petra to secure the Matrix…" Wren detailed.

Kia felt something inside her drop. "Arien…"

"Yah jokin' righ'? Tha' thin' coul' fuck you righ' up!"

"We appreciate the concern Ira, but we've been sitting on this decision for a while…" Aria clarified, conviction was in her tone now, though even now Kia could sense the hesitancy.

"Aria, Wren… you're certain about this… I mean… what about Derrick?"

"... Can… Can I be brutally honest about something? I know that's normally your thing Kia but…"

"Oh woul' yah jus' say i' already!" Ira snapped.

"Eh...We don't think Primus is going to just… let us go home… this isn't a commitment with an end…" Wren declared.

"We're stuck, and the longer we drag our heels… the longer we're left in the dark."

"All fair… bu' how tha' flyin' fuck are we suppose' tah fin' the Omega Keys then?! Las' ah chec'ed they weren' in Bayverse."

"They're not, they were only in Prime and Cybertron… so either they're scattered across Earth, or we're going to have to go on an intergalactic egg hunt."

"An' raise Atlantis."

"Find, not raise, we're made of money, but not that much money Ira." Wren replied.

Kia didn't like this. "You're going alone aren't you… I don't think I can put into words how much I think that's a bad idea."

"If we all go, the Autobots will suspect, if it's just us 'going to take care of some things', they'll suspect less than all of us up and leaving at once."

"Kia, they don' wan' tha bo's fin'in' ou' abou' tha Matrix."

She paused at that. "Why not? Aria? Wren?"

"... Mmmnn… it's… complicated… we know we have to take it on… but the cultural implications…"

"Yah don' wanna be ah Prime?" Ira sounded almost incredulous at that.

"Ira, you've known us for years now, we're… we're not that kind of leader, and we certainly aren't fond of the idea of taking Optimus' job."

"Migh' wor' ah little differen'ly here if yah as' me." Ira muttered from her end, she seemed to be doing something now, tapping away at the computer hub she'd already set up, and bitched about a number of times because it 'wasn't up to snuff'. "Cons'erin' Prime is ah Prime, an' the Matrix is in ah cave in tha middle of fuck all nowhere."

"We appreciate the sentiment Ira… wait, you're agreeing with us?"
"Yah alrea'y decide' an' we shoul' all know by now yah two are the stubborn ones here."

Kia huffed, just as she could hear Aria laugh over the link.

"Well… it should take us three days of night flying to reach Petra… if we're not back in… say… three weeks, come and find us." Aria explained.

Kia felt herself frown. "Three weeks? I was down for at most an hour, why do you think the Matrix would take so long?"

"Call it a hunch." They said in unison.

"Fuuucckkk… Twins… if yah come bac' spoutin' hollier than thou bull crap, le' i' be known now ah'm gonna dec' yah in tha' face ah yahs."

"Message received Ira, we're flying out tonight." Wren confirmed.

She and Ira chorused their surprised.

Kia took a moment to roll her eyes, of course they'd wait till the last minute to tell them, damn mad women. "How about this, in a week, Ira flies out, that gives you a day to be late flying back."

"Mmmm, Ira?"

"I'm with Kia on tha' one, if somethin' is wron', we're callin' in tha' big guns tah carry yah ass bac',"

"Not a trailer, please, we beg of you."

"Twins, if I fin' yah ah grey husk, yah two bein' stuffe' in ah trailer is gonna be tha' las' of our problems."

"Alright fair…fine, if we're late by a day, you can come hunt us down Ira."

"Fly safe you two, and watch where you land."

"... That was a horrible excuse for a joke if that was your attempt at humour."

If she rolled her eyes anymore her holoform might just send them bouncing along the floor.

She made the note not to suggest that to Ira.

She opted to cut her part of the call there, she had things to do.

And one of those was getting the body on the coffee table out of its body bag.

It had taken a while to find a candidate that was suitable.

No close family, good body structure, and most importantly, a member of one of the local gangs.

One could never put too much fear into the smaller groups.

It was like her momma always said, keep the iron hot, and they'll always flinch.

The call had eaten up more of her time than she'd expected, she'd barely gotten the body prepped when Ratchet's holoform walked through the open double doors that lead out into the corridor, and promptly froze in place.
She looked over, hands occupied in pulling on a set of rubber gloves, yes it was a holoform, but she still wasn't the keenest on getting blood on it specifically.

Seeing the need to break the silence she spoke. "Surprise! It's time for your first practical lesson on organic biology Ratchet!"

She caught the holoforms eye twitch. "Please tell me that is a very accurate replica of a corpse…"

Kia shook her head, pulling out a knife. "Nope! Killed fresh this morning!"

Ratchet went to rebuke her, but she cut him off. "No, no, you are not throwing a fit about this, I already gave you the text books, but you need something to work on that won't die if you fuck up."

She gestured to the corpse. "You can't kill someone that's already dead, so, until you know the in's and out's, you're gonna be working on Cadavers like they did back in the Victorian era."

Ratchet wanted to refute the logic, he truly did… but something about how Kia worded that… it threw him off for a moment, something that took him right back to when he was first being trained as a medic…

"There… in that rotary valve, do you see it?"

He leaned in to where his mentor had pulled something free from the offline frame on the operating table, sure enough, it was a rotary valve.

She tapped the opening of the valve with the back end of her scalpel. "What does that look like to you Ratchet?" His mentor asked, bending over a bit so that she was holding it just in front of his view.

"Umm… it looks like a blockage ma'am." He flinched, realising he'd fragged up.

No reprimand came, just a roll of the optics, how many times did she have to tell him that 'Dust' was just fine, no 'ma'am' no 'Chief Medical Officer of the Senate, and by proxy Iacon', just 'Dust'.

"Exactly, now, let's see what that blockage is." With a skillful flick of the wrist, she'd flipped her hold on her scalpel, and tapped lightly against the side of the valve with the handle of the scalpel.

A few more light taps, one more insistent hard hit, and the blockage popped free.

It was a ball of blue, congealed energon, and now free from the confines of the valve, spread out slightly, revealing the tiny pebble that had been hidden inside.

Placing the scalpel down, Dust picked the tiny pebble up, and scowled, like the tiny bit of rock had just insulted her. "Unbelievable… do you see this Ratchet? One pebble, one pebble, was all it took to take this mech's life… Alright, you're supposed to be learning from this, how do you think this tiny pebble…" She gestured to it, and then to the offline frame on the operating table. "Took this mech offline, go."

In a brief moment he panicked, trying to think back to what he'd learned from the tutors he'd had before… what was it… how could a pebble offline an adult frame miner from Kaon? How? How?

"Ratchet?"

"Ratchet?"
"RATCHET!"

Snapping back to the present was like a rubber band breaking, and he promptly realised he'd been standing there, stock still, for a good few minutes, earning the building ire of his host.

Whom, upon realising he had finally snapped out of it, huffed. "Finally back from La La Land?"

He shook his holoforms head. "I'm sorry… what?"

Kia huffed again, arms crossed in front of her. "Just… use the textbooks, don't get blood on them, and let one of the staff know when you're done, I don't care if by the end you've sewn his head to his ass, just… try and get a basic understanding from this, Wren's getting all paranoid that you, the medic, only have what you can look up on the internet in regards to human anatomy… Now if you'll excuse me, I have other things to do, I've rifled through enough corpses in my day, this one's for you."

With that, Kia turned and left the room.

Leaving him with the body on the coffee table.

He opted to com-link Optimus, Ironhide was taking a nap and he somehow hadn't woken his mate with his internal turmoil.

"Prime…"

"Yes Ratchet? Is something the matter?"

"There's a body on the coffee table…"

"... I'm sorry, repeat that."

"There's a body on the coffee table Prime, Kia told me to come up to her villa, showed me a body on the living room coffee table, and told me to, in effect, 'figure it out'..."

"... Ah... They are quite... odd aren't they?"

"Yes... yes they are... and Prime... I'm afraid to inform you, you are no longer alone in being taken on jaunts to the past..."

"Ratchet... what happened?"

"Just... an old memory, from the golden age... of Dust... we were doing an autopsy on a miner from Kaon... part of a general survey of the health of the masses..."

"Ah... And the body on the coffee table brought this back?"

"Yes... at least... I think so..."

"Alright, as long as the jaunt has passed, I'd like to inform you that the twins had no objections to sending out a hailing signal to our scattered forces, though they did gripe a bit about having to expand the bunkers so soon."

"That is... good to hear... signing off Prime... the body is already starting to smell..."

"Very well, dismissed." And the call ended.
Ratchet sighed, rubbing the side of his face, feeling the simulated stubble that was forming.

Might as well get started he figured, locating the autopsy style equipment that Kia had placed on the plastic covered sofa.

After only a few moments of hesitancy, and opening the first of the medical textbooks to where he’d gotten in his last reading… one on the organic blood pump, he made the first incision.

It was somewhat unnerving how easily the skin gave way to the blade.

They truly were a fragile species…

He could understand the Harpies concerns.

Beneath the Villa

The bunker was nowhere near done.

Kia stood, though she did not need to hunch, a good few more feet would have to be taken out of the floor for Optimus to be able to stand without hitting the roof himself.

Her attention was not on the bunker at large though.

No, her attention was on the shipping container that had been brought in that morning, and was now finally being opened by some of her men.

The heavy locks came loose, the seventeen bolts on the front door being unlocked.

The door swung open, and Kia stooped to look inside, then had to drop all the way onto her wings and roll back on her haunches to be low enough to properly look inside.

The now thawed helm of Megatron stared lifelessly back, face still held in a roar.

He certainly hadn't left a peaceful corpse.

But it mattered little.

If she had knuckles in this form, she would have cracked them as the helm was unfastened from its moorings, and wheeled out of the container.

A look had her men dispersing, almost instantly leaving her alone with the decapitated helm of the tyrant.

Well… almost alone.

"I don't like this idea…"

Kia huffed. "The American Government has Blackout, which means this son of a bitch is the only Cybertronian corpse I currently have access to. If I'm going to keep everyone online, I need to know how to cheat death."

"But…"

"He's a head, there's little he could do to hurt anyone. Now realax, I don't plan to start work on him yet… Ratchet has a lot to teach me."
The little voice fell quiet and Kia sighed in relief.

She knew who that little girl's voice belonged to…

Coming to terms with it had been… surprisingly easy…

Telling the others, less so.

Something kept her quiet, she wanted to tell them…

But that first time that little voice had begged she not tell, not tell, not tell… she'd made a subconscious promise to not tell…

Not ever…

She turned her back on the decapitated helm.

Megatron wasn't going anywhere, and she had a growing empire to rule.

And it's done! Hope you all enjoyed, see you all next time!
Another chapter? So soon? Yup, let's do this. A heads up, there's a scene in this chapter that is quite gory and ideologically challenging. With that little warning out of the way, I hope you all enjoy!

Rome Italy

"Feisty li'l bugger ain' he?" Ira jokes, watching as Scitter tried to attack her waving fingers with his blade tipped forelegs.

Maggie huffed a laugh, Jazz nodded, and Glen was still sending looks to the now healed over wound that was Maggie's ear.

They'd fallen into a pattern over the last few weeks, Jazz and Maggie often spent the days exploring the city, Scitter, Glen and Ira remaining in the apartment.

The former because Scitter didn't really pass as a 'hearing aid', and the later two because Ira had finally coaxed Glen into helping her with her own activities.

They were also joined by Keeley, her mechanical forms head peeking just above the counter now.

A counter she remembered easily walking around on not a few short years ago.

She wanted to do it again, but her higher cognitive processor told her she'd damage the granite.

And her charge hated it when her granite counters got damaged.

Scitter finally gave up on trying to swat at the ever out of reach fingers, and spun on his back bladed legs, sending a little chir up to Maggie and waving one of his forelegs, almost in a beckoning motion.

Maggie, over the last few weeks, had become used to Scitter being indecisive.

Sometimes he wanted to be carried around in the spot a good chunk of her ear had been, the other he wanted to run around the large penthouse apartment.

What she still wasn't used to, was hearing Keeley talk whenever Scitter was fully linked up with her ear.

More accurately, she could hear Keeley, but couldn't understand a word the Red Kite was actually saying.

She'd told Ira of course, and Jazz.

But the red head had just shrugged, and said 'My guess, i's Galic, raise' her on i", and then went right back to her room to continue doing God knew what on that brand new, Ira called it out-dated, computer system that she'd built up over the last few weeks.

It was strange really, she knew Keeley could talk, albeit illegibly, but the Red Kite rarely ever did, expressing herself much more in gestures than she did in any noise she made.

Speaking of which, Ira's attention had shifted, no longer interested in watching her bring Scitter
back up to her ear, instead she was petting the metallic bird, that was more her shadow than the one cast on the ground, muttering something or other in what Maggie had guessed was Galic.

"Oh, before ah forge'. Ah migh' have some business tah atten' to in ah few days, migh', migh' no'. Nothin' serious, jus' some business." Ira suddenly spoke up, jarring her from her thoughts as the Irish Woman rambled for a few moments before nodding her head. "Yeah… so… don' go in mah room, don' brea' anythin', an' if yah wanna incite ah mass rio'... call me firs', ah wanna be here for tha'."

Maggie and Glen exchanged a look, Jazz raised an eyebrow behind his sunglasses.

She didn't infer further, simply shooting them all a knowing smile before turning her holoform around and walking back to where her room was, closing and locking the door behind her.

Maggine grunted, feeling Scitter squirm within the hole he'd carved into her ear.

"Woah li'l fella, go easy on your carrier." Jazz cooed, leaning down just enough to spy the little green dot of the little sparklings optic.

Glen had his attention on the door that Ira had once again disappeared by. "Either of you got any idea what her 'business' might be?"

Jazz, his attention shifted, frowned and shrugged. "Can't say for certain my man, though Optimus reported that those twins vanished off for some 'business' too about… three days ago? Yeah, three days ago." He nodded his holoforms head in affirmation.

With that discussion settled, they went about their daily routine.

Maggie and Jazz headed out with the intention of exploring more of the city, and Glen was eventually summoned to Ira's room for another lesson.

The teen had been, more than a little hesitant in the beginning, but it hadn't lasted long.

Despite her brash demeanor, and somewhat garbled take on the english language, the woman seemed to just, come alive when she was teaching him some new trick for hacking, methods that seemed almost impossible, already she'd shown him how to make two separate viruses, both trojans, that decimated established cyber security like they were nothing but digital wet paper.

It was all very, very illegal.

But it felt so good.

Mostly because what they used it for.

He felt like a modern merry man, helping the dashing red headed robbin hood rob from the rich, and then distribute the wealth out across the entire population of Italy.

Just a few extra Euros for everyone, a big hole in the 1% bank accounts.

They'd been successful six separate times, and only one of the companies had announced it, and then suffered for it, the stock market turning on them.

Ira always grinned like a Hyena when she saw news coverage of that one company, desperately trying to recoup itself.

And if certain evidence of borderline slave labour as it's work force was revealed?
Well, that was some damn good journalistic work.

Though the Orichiono's helped with that bit, apparently.

To quote his mentor, 'Tha Triage is a union, a union don' wor' if we don' rely on each otha.'.

And so here he was, still somewhat cautious, but warming up to his mentor with each passing day.

She was a fire cracker of emotions, one with a fuse that could be lit by almost anything.

But somehow he'd convinced himself she would never hurt him…

Maybe he should ask her?

"Hey… Ira?"

He'd tried to call her 'Miss', and she leveled him such a look of disdain he'd not slipped up once since.

Ira, it was just Ira.

Ira Halloran if they were ever stuck at a formal event, which was apparently less likely than hell freezing over.

Hell had apparently frozen over a few times in the last two decades.

"Hmm?" Ira responded, her attention still on her monitors.

"I'm… I'm safe here right? Maggie too?"

Ira's tapping stalled.

He leant back in his chair as Ira's head turned slowly to face him, her ever changing eyes narrowing just over the brim of her sunglasses.

God they were so unnerving to look at…

Like pools of half melted coloured glass…

"Glen… Do, do yah no' feel safe here? Ah can understan', some hesitance… regardin' wor' in' with meh… bu' if yah don' feel safe…"

He stared at her for a long moment, knocked off his course by the sudden show of worry, he shook his head and mumbled something she didn't catch, causing her to frown. "Glen, be hones' with meh… please."

He sagged. "I'm… I am scared… I don't know what's going on!" He finally burst.

Ira leaned back a bit, but her slightly wider eyes and raised eyebrows showed her surprise, before it seemed to settle on something.

"Alrigh' then… loo's like ah've go' a few thin's to clear up with yah."

He wasn't sure what that entailed specifically, but he appreciated that she wanted to help clear things up.

So, he settled himself in a bit for the long haul, and they began, their previous work forgotten.
Outer reaches of the Omega Quadrant

By some miracle there had been a starship left behind at the base of the Omega Quadrant.

The starship, whose name had been struck from the side long ago, yet still bared the faded hue of Decepticon purple, was a small ship, meant for at most three mechs his size to be ferried between the distant quadrant and Cybertron.

Now, the course was set for the Milky Way Galaxy, for a tiny planet that Soundwave had driven himself half up the wall trying to find by its solar system.

His younglings had gotten worried for him, muttering under his vents. "Where's Jupiter… Neptune… Saturn… The Sun… where are you… where are you…"

He'd finally found it, and had wasted no more time, loading every dredge of Energon left on the base, it had been abandoned in such haste there was a good bit left behind, and loaded them and his small family onto the nameless starship.

Now, a few cycles later, now that they had settled into the journey, his little ones were getting… pushy… they wanted to know more, wanted to know what had happened to him… why he was acting so… strange to them…

Eventually he relented, the autopilot was set, he needn't worry about piloting it himself, so he rose from the captain's chair, and led them all to the largest of the three berthrooms, which Laserbeak and Buzzsaw had used their boredom to clean.

He settled on the berth as his four present younglings all made their own way up, Ravage easily hopped up the distance, Rumble scrambled up, whilst Buzzsaw and Laserbeak each landed on one of his shoulders, their plated wings folding in on them whilst their thrusters cooled and were tucked back away.

He reached up to pet both on the helm, before doing the same for Ravage and Rumble. "I'm… not sure where to start…" He admitted, it was easy to start from the beginning, but what now?

They'd seen the horrors of war as it consumed Cybertron… but he doubted they'd react well to the organic horror he had witnessed while being one.

Ravage shifted to drape himself over his pedes. "I want to know where that fleshbag took you." He hissed out the word 'fleshbag' like it had poisoned him.

Yes, that was a good idea.

Jack had been his saving grace in those early days, and he tried to express that, but they were hesitant.

Showing them should convince them.

He hoped it would at least.

So, he began opening up the bond, letting the memory bleed back out of him.

His younglings accepted the teether, and he took them back.

Back to that day he'd woken up human, in a pile of trash.
"Well… here we are kid, home sweet home." Jack announced, killing the engine with the twist and pull of the key that had been in the 'ignition'.

As they continued down the 'highway' he'd pointed at odd things inside the car, enquiring about things he didn't recognise.

It was strange… like asking about the internal functions of a bot, whilst inside them.

But this wasn't a bot, it was inanimate, a machine, used from getting from one place to another, with not a single shred of sentience to it's existence.

Now, he was slowly easing himself back out, Jack had already made it around to his side of the car, already grabbing at him to make sure his p-legs didn't give out on him as he stepped out of the car.

He looked over to the large building they'd pulled up to, out in the 'country side' the same sloping roof style as he'd seen in the city, but it was broader than those buildings, with multiple floors in fact, each getting smaller and smaller as they went up, following the tapering of the sloped roofs.

A number of humans had been running around in the green that surrounded the building, around the trees that spotted the grounds.

More than one had noticed their arrival, and were flocking to the double doors of the building, waiting anxiously as Jack lead him out, round, and up the flight of stairs.

And then the questions began, the youngest looking ones going off like a shot, their attention specifically on his arm.

The older ones, more his height, just regarded him with acute curiosity and Jack tried to stem the excitement of the young-children jumping to flock him from all sides.

Eventually the you-children calmed, the older ones, teenagers, all stepped forward, bowed, and introduced themselves.

He tried to remember, he'd likely be living here for a while, it was best to know who was who.

There were seven children, four teens, him and Jack.

He was led inside, and Jack shouted up. "KIDS! WE GOT A NEW ONE!"

What came next could be at best described as a stampede, the sounds of sliding doors and footfalls racing down flight after flight of stairs, each joined by happy shouts and exclamations he couldn't of kept track of.

Soon enough he was swamped, himself and Jack surrounded on all sides.

Apparently his panic had been evident, as Jack had brought two fingers to his lips.

The sound the man made was shrill, like a whistle blown at the end of a cycles work.

Silence fell.

Jack clapped him on the shoulder and looked to one of the teens. "Miko, be a dear and take this young man to one of the empty rooms, he ain't got a voice so I ain't got a name out of him yet, so be
gentle."

The girl who stepped forwards was a head under him, black hair up into two bunches that became neon pink at the tops.

At least she’d be easy enough to spot.

Miko nodded, jumping forwards a step and offering her hand. "Miko Nakadi! Pleasure to meet you new guy!"

He took the offered hand, and before he could even properly react, she was pulling him through the parting crowd.

"Make way! New guy coming through!" She exclaimed as she reached the stairs, and took them two at a time.

He had to exert himself to keep up.

Six flights later, and she finally, blessedly, stopped going up the flights of stairs, and instead pulled him down two separate corridors, before finally reaching a door and pushing it open with a bang of her hip. "This is your room now new guy, hope you like heights, my room is three down that way, need anything, just come over, bedding will be brought up later yadda yadda yadda, just pull your weight with chores and try to get a job and you'll be fine."

And with that, the vibrant haired girl was gone.

Leaving him with a spartan room, lots of floor space, a cupboard to the left…

And a sprawling view of a snow topped mountain in the distance.

It seemed to take his breath away for the moment, the hills between him and that distant mountain like that out of a surrealist painting…

Surrealist for Cybertron.

It finally hammered something home for him.

He was on an alien planet… and alien world… with an alien culture similar enough in broad strokes to Cybertron that it wasn’t too difficult imagining himself living here…

No war… no endless fighting…

No younglings…

Rumble, Frenzy, Ravage, Laserbeak and Buzzsaw… he already missed them, like another hole in his spark, twisting and warping with the one already there.

A knock on the still open door drew his attention away from the view.

Jack, he assumed it was Jack behind that mountain of what he could only assume was his 'bedding'.

Which was dropped out onto the floor where it formed a somewhat impressive pile.

Jack sighed with relief, liquid, sweat pooling on his furrowed brows and within the scars that decorated his face. "Alright kid, I'll help you set this all up, you remember how to make a bed?"
He’d never even heard of a 'bed' before a few minutes ago, so he shook his head no.

Jack nodded. "Hella bout of amnesia you got there kid, don't worry, Miko's the same, some brute banged her head in with a rock a few years back, found her wandering the streets half collapsed from blood loss... poor kid... tried to find her family, found them, but they wanted nothing to do with her, so, she's here."

The bit of exposition was helpful, he would seek Miko out.

Jack looked at him expectantly, already kneeling in front of the bedding.

Realising he was supposed to follow, Soundwave carefully eased himself back down, he’d barely gotten used to standing upright yet, getting back down without his right arm giving out and sending him face first into the pile was just as difficult.

Thankfully his prosthesis seemed to take the weight like a champion, and he was soon enough kneeling next to the far older man.

Within three minutes the 'bed' was made.

If you asked him what the different pieces were called, he'd blank, he hadn't been paying attention to the names of the pieces.

Jack clapped him on the shoulder. "C'mon, it's almost time for food, you've got to be starving?"

Apparently the question didn't need him to vocalise an answer for.

Something in his lower abdomen did that form him, letting off a growl akin to a rabid cyber hound.

It made him jump, and Jack just chuckled. "I'll take that as a yes… maybe we can see if any of the kids have any name ideas for you, they've done decently enough before."

He was moving to get up, but a sudden urge compelled him to grab the older man's arm with his prosthesis.

There was a moment of silence then, and he lifted up his organic arm, and mimicked where Jack's scars were on his own face.

He was curious, he'd always been curious.

He wanted to know all he could about this world.

And finding out just what did the damage he could see on the older man's face was paramount.

He did not want to end up being mauled by whatever had done that to Jack.

Knowing what it was, meant he knew how to avoid it.

Jack stared at him for a few minutes before sighing and sitting back down. "You really don't have any memory... do you kid?"

He shook his head no.

Jack reached up to rub at one of the scars on his left jaw. "War's hell kid... no... war's worse than hell... hell is where the sinners go... the sinners are punished for eternity for their sins... war... war doesn't discriminate... young... old... women... children... innocents... whilst the pigs who
caused it sit pretty in their war rooms and send good men to their deaths... for gains... all for gains... land... resources... sometimes to destroy another nation outright..." Jack sighed and shook his head again. "I was a ground soldier... stationed here in Japan... forty years ago... my nation... it did something horrible... and I... in my foolish belief that we were doing the right thing... I didn't drop my gun... I didn't walk away... I kept training... fighting... we were supposed to move in on the one we attacked... to flank it from all sides... they said it was because the Australians had made a deal with the Russians, our enemy... and this was us preventing our enemy getting stronger..."

Jack trailed off, his gaze becoming shadowed, haunted.

"They didn't tell us what they'd ordered done... when we landed in Melbourne... there was nothing left kid... the bomb destroyed everything... every building... school... park... but you know what haunts me kid?"

He shook his head, but urged him on.

"The shadows... bombs like that... they make a flash... one so bright... so blinding... everything it hits gets bleached white... But for that single moment... if there's something in front... it captures the shadow... a snap shot of what was there... then wasn't... Anyone who wasn't... atomised instantly... God above... that was when I threw my gun down... we all did, my entire troop... Australia lost two thirds of it's entire population that week... Not everyone with a gun saw what they did to Melbourne... We didn't all put down our guns until we stopped getting orders... when the News came through... that we were being called back, the home front was being attacked from all sides by their Allies... we made it to Japan when home fell... and I've been here ever since, a soldier of a nation that no longer stands..."

He gestured to his face. "Radiation sickness... they didn't tell us what was there... didn't tell us we'd be irradiated in minutes... lethal dosage apparently... it didn't kill me... just cost me a good chunk of my flesh... Dr Angela saved my life... I was the only one of my troop she was able to save..."

Soundwave had listened to every word in rapt focus, fascinated, he gestured outside.

"What? The radiation? It's half life's long gone from the atmosphere... at least... that's what the scientists say... no one trusts them... the sickness is still with us... still poisoning all of us... save the lucky bastards hiding in their bunkers..."

"JACKKKKKK! WE'RE HUNGRY!" A shout came from a few floors down.

"Shit... completely forgot... Hold up kids! I'm coming!" He pushed himself up, gesturing for Soundwave to follow.

He did, he wanted to know more, Jack knew more, and was willing to give.

He was also really, really hungry.

He ended the memory share there, his processor and spark feeling taxed.

"A soldier... you were taken in by a soldier." Ravage mumbled, coming out of the haze himself.

Laserbeak and Buzzsaw chittered, but Rumble looked... perplexed...

"Never heard of a bomb like that..."
Soundwave chuckled at that, but it was a hollow one. "Because Humans have done things we Cybertronians never have."

That earned a debauched looks from his younglings.

He answered the unspoken question, but the comparison he was to make was a harrowing one. "They found a way to split the atom… The force released… Is much akin to the Tarn Refinery…"

Suddenly everything became much clearer to the younglings, or at least they thought it did.

Their sires haste, his near panic, to get Frenzy, to go to Earth…

If these flesh bags had weapons of the magnitude their sire suggested…

The war could very well end on Earth.

And neither side would be left standing to claim victory.

The Mountains of Petra

The night winds had been kind to them, carrying them on their journey like a helping hand to the back.

Their guest, however, did not fair so well in those same night winds.

Said guest was where he'd been for the last two days, caged within Wren's talons.

The bladed edges bit into flesh and clothes alike, staining her talons in a fair deal of the iron filled blood.

He should be thankful though…

If Aria had been the one to grab him, she wouldn't have been able to hold back her curiosity, which pinged around even now in their shared headspace.

But Wren was firm, he was to live, for now.

Not that that statement was going to run much longer.

Already they could spy their destination on the horizon, ancient stones, cut by man eons before standing out against the barren landscape around.

The one bit of shade their guest would receive as the dawn broke to their left, bathing the world in it's sun bursts and painting the clouds with a thousand different colours.

A beautiful sunrise, their guest should be happy.

A sunrise like that was perfect for one's final day.

Then again…

They ducked their helm down, looking past their chassis, wings shifting into a hover.

Just a quick check…

Yes, still alive, they could pick up his heartbeat with their protrusions, they'd forgotten that for a
moment.

He'd screamed himself hoarse the day before, it was no surprise he was quiet now.

There was no use speaking with a dead man any way.

The sunrise continued to be beautiful, giving them the first kisses of warmth after the long night flight from their stop off point in Turkey the day before.

It wasn't wise to fly over too much water.

Their guest hit the dust and sand covered ground just outside the temple.

If he hadn't torn his voice box, he probably would have made a noise past a pained rasp.

No matter.

One more quick wingbeat, Wren's pede settled first, followed by Aria.

They tilted their helm to the left, regarding their guest.

No, he wasn't their guest anymore.

He was the halfway snack.

Yes Ira had joked about eating humans, but that was Ira.

It wasn't something they liked to do, far from it.

But this was a, kill two birds with one stone, issue, and that was enough for them.

"Sit." They spoke, their resonance easily snapping their snack to attention as he stared at them.

It took more than a single word.

"Sit down Attinger. You have not the energy to stand, and we'd rather not see you as a drunkard fool like the one we found the day before yesterday."

Slowly their snack moved to sit, legs out in front of him.

They regarded him with a sympathetic gaze. "We are sorry for your family... but your rage at the world is unfounded, the world was not what killed your family, and all those others that night. Nor was it our fault. Though you don't care that their deaths weren't our fault, and your rage has clouded your senses in a way we cannot afford, you are a threat, and one we plan to remove."

He didn't move, just stared at him, his gaze was dead, whatever was left of his intoxication and hangover was gone, now there was only reservation, acceptance, for their words cut through the haze, and destroyed his will to keep going.

They smirked then, optics narrowing slightly behind their visor. "Good, now, hold still."

He did.

Their snack didn't flinch, not even once.

Aria's wing rose high, catching a sunburst with the very tip as the end scythe snapped out, slicing the tips of a few feathers on it's razor sharp edge.
Their snack only flinched when his head was removed, the body twitching and jerking as a body does when the head is removed.

There were a few spurts of blood, neither of them cared, watching and waiting for the body to fall still.

Hera, who was attached to their front, reached into their subspace for them, and tossed a single white rose down onto the freshly slain corpse.

It took a few minutes, but their shadow, and that of the corpse began to warp and twist, before pulling itself from the ground.

The twins shifted back, taking one step and then another, ducking down to fit snugly into the shadow of the temple.

They didn't want to shock Grim straight away.

Grim finished her rising, scythe at hand as her skeletal form regarded the body, and the rose, before looking to the shadows of the temple, where she could make out a form, but no more details. "Girls?"

They nodded from the shadow. "Hello aunty." Aria cooed, her voice melting a bit at seeing Grim again so soon, the time before, when she had found them was too long ago already.

Grim looked to the body. "You summoned me… why?"

"This temple." Wren stated, extending a wing to let it bang lightly against one of the stones, there was a hollow resonance from beyond. "The Matrix… our relic… is here…"

The situation came to Grim then, even as she knelt to pull the soul of the departed free. "I… I see…"

What Grim likely hadn't expected, when she pulled the soul free, was for a sudden rush of wind, two fast heavy steps, and two giant metal shears to slam shut around the still upright torso of the departed.

She watched in morbid horror and fascination as her girls… her girls… that giant metal amalgamation of bird, human and machine… stomped one of those massive talon tipped feet down onto the legs, crushing them in a splattered of bone, muscle and sinew, and with one quick motion, a brutal jerk back and up with their helm and torso, tore the human torso down the middle, ribs, spine, lungs, all visible in their now decreased amount as the rest was thrown into the air, only to fall into the wide open maw of the mechanical creature that now stood before her.

She felt the dagger that had slowly been twisting in her jerk sharply further in it's twist.

They'd thought Primus would make them fully Cybertronian… claim them fully as his…

As she watched them tear the rest of the body to ribbons, swallowing each like some rabid animal… she felt her dread grow.

What was Primus planning for them… if this is what he'd made them?

The body was already gone, the severed head was the final piece to be tossed up.

There was a splatter of blood and grey matter, before it was licked off the sides of their faces as
well as a metal tongue could, leaving their lower face stained red and flecked with tiny bone fragments.

It was a sickening sight…

Not because of the gore, no, she'd seen far worse a trillion times before…

No… it was because it was her girls… who'd just performed the act she had witnessed with her own glassy eyes.

She stepped forward as their attention snapped back, and the pitch black visor they war shifted up and out of sight.

Were she able to cry she would of wept openly.

The terror in their gaze, even as they flinched, forced to close their optics as the light of the sun blinded them, unable to see her standing before them, felt like a second dagger had been plunged into her, vicious and serrated in it's nature.

That damn Celestial God…

Damn him for all eternity…

Her girls were breaking.

Primus had struck a foul blow… one that had left cracks…

Cracks that were growing ever further from the impact, and ever wider.

She cared not about the blood staining their lower face, or the bone fragments stuck within the gore.

When they'd nearly doubled over, when her bony hands touched the sides of their face, cold hard metal met her touch… a mockery of their warm, peach fuzzed skin, she felt the urge to weep, one stronger than she had even thought possible.

She pulled them in as best as she could, their face, all the stuff on their head that fluttered and bounced, sunk and rose again… it dwarfed her.

But they were still her girls.

As scared for their lives as the day she had first met them all those years ago.

The moment ended when they pulled away, their body twisting in a way that wasn't human, before they stepped to follow their torso. "The Matrix…" Wren reminded, but her voice, as stoic as she tried to make it, still waivered in her hesitance.

She reached out and grasped the wing that belonged to Aria, that barrier between them, that possessive claim, that too mocked her. "Come… I mean not to rush… but death cannot be delayed too long."

They nodded, and stepped back into the temple.

For once in her paradoxically immortal life, Grim had to run to keep up.

Empty, the temple was completely empty.
Grim huffed. "Tomb raiders I'd bet."

Her girls nodded.

Aria raised her foot, talons flexing up.

A moment later those same talons met the stone with an unholy screech.

Grim winced from the sound, but her girls were not done.

Not a moment after Aria had set her foot down, Wren's had pulled back behind them.

The sound of metal meeting the weakened stone was jarring, but as the dust cleared, the wall was no more, and a breeze rushed past them to fill the once sealed chamber.

Bodies… giant metal ones, all fused and twisted around one another like some horrid game of twister gone wrong.

Yes she and Lucifer had played Twister, more than once.

Nestled in the palm of one of the metal bodies, was a shape, twisted and pointed in a way unlike much other, glowing a faint blue hue.

"Grim, step back a bit please." Wren spoke, their frame shifting down onto all fours.

Grim did as suggested, stepped back to the entrance, the sun now framing her shadowy physical form in an aura of gold.

The twins paid no heed, they'd already jammed the sharp overlapping plates their covered their back against the upper half of the hole.

They pulled back, and more of the wall gave way, the stones crashing to the ground around them, sliding off their flat sharp plating.

Metal groaned, but the sandstone buckled, giving way bit by bit until the hole was large enough for them to fit through.

Just enough to tap the relic with the hooked end of their wing strut.

In a moment mixed relief and disappointment, the twins huffed.

Wren tapped it again, a bit harder.

It didn't turn to dust, but it also didn't react.

Grim had moved again to enter the hole, stepping up to the palm holding the relic. "Hmm… curious… I've felt this energy before…"

Wren raised an optic ridge. "Considering you're literally death personified, and this relic had a habit of causing violence, that's hardly a surprise…"

They shifted back onto their haunches, and Aria reached out her wing, their upper frame and wings barely fit in the hole, but it was just enough for her hooked wing to tap the matrix as well, Wren's still pressed to it.

That was when time slowed for Grim.
She had no control of time, but it felt like she'd been saved from the world becoming half frozen.

Yet at the same time, time moved too fast.

Too fast for her to react, to call out, to do anything as the relic suddenly shattered into a thousand little shards, and rushed for the seams in her girls body.

They heard a scream, a scream that belong to all of them.

She watched frozen as her girls convulsed, optics sparking to a blinding white as more and more of those shards forced their way inside, piercing them like a thousand diamond tipped arrows.

It all happened too fast.

The very next moment, their body shone, every seam lighting up like a neutron star.

The barrier, once held taught to her girls, shot out, it's intention one filled with malice.

Grim, for the first time in her paradoxically immortal existence, could do nothing but flee.

And pray her girls would be alright.

That they'd get up.

That they'd still be her girls when they did.

But she knew that energy.

If her girls had not been stolen from her and Lucifer before… they had been now.

Death started again, no one really noticed, deaths came a few minutes late sometimes, they just gave the passing and the suffering a few moments more…

It was hardly a positive she wished to dwell on.

Not now…

She had to get to Lucifer…

She had to tell him…

The Matrix had taken their girls…

Phew! Another chapter done! Sorry if anyone felt uncomfortable with the scene between the twins and Attinger, hopefully the rest of the chapter made it up for you all, until next time! Moon out!
Chapter 30

Bit of a shorter chapter this time around, but that doesn't mean it don't give me a gut punch every time I went through it to edit.

Welp, hope you all enjoy!

Somewhere in the Atlantic, Triage Earth

"C'mon James! C'mon!" Serene called over her shoulder, jumping through another bulkhead.

Derrick panted, she'd had him chasing her around this damn ship on and off for three days…

Where the heck was she even leading him?!

This was becoming a running trend, every day she'd be there, waking him up, rushing him to get ready, and then have him entertain her in whatever way she desired that day.

And for the last three, he had to entertain her by chasing her around in the front half of the ships seemingly endless labyrinth of tunnels.

Finally there seemed to be a break in the pattern.

She'd led him back to the main crew areas early, or at least it felt like earlier than usual.

He was starting to lose track of how long they'd been at sea…

Surely it would only be a few more days until they reached Iceland…

But something in the back of his mind told him that wasn't right, they should of arrived in Iceland by now, it was a few days at most to Reykjavik and that was in bad weather with the currents against them.

It felt like they'd already been at sea for over a week.

He'd also not been able to see Ivan… he knew his bodyguard was still down there in the hold, on the other side of the ship from where Serene had been leading him around…

He hoped his bodyguard was alright.

Something about this kept on setting off alarm bells.

But he couldn't say no, something more prominent kept telling him to behave, to be the perfect guest.

The North Sea was hardly a pleasant way to die…

And he'd rather not get kicked off the ship, with or without Ivan being kicked off with him.

He'd been running after Serene so long his body felt like it was on autopilot, just following behind as his thoughts rolled around his head.

Until she suddenly wasn't in front of him anymore, and a hand was beckoning him through a door.
He had to follow.

It was a room, Serene's room he realised a moment or so later, decorated with pastel pinks and baby blues, the walls decorated with a thousand and one different sea shells.

She was already sitting on her king sized bed, the duvet puffed up around her from overstuffing.

A mountain of pillows were at her back, that sagged and shifted as she shifted back.

"C'mon James, you've earned your prize."

The alarm bells were suddenly as blaring and loud as an air raid siren. "I'm sorry… My what? Serene… did you have an ulterior motive to me following you around like some dog? …Besides having an excessive amount of exercise to ward off atrophy?"

Serene starred at him blankly for a moment before laughing and waving her hand. "No! No! Silly James! Look!" She leaned over the side of her bed, and pulled up a laptop. "You have a phone right?"

"…Yes? I do…?"

"Apple or Samsung?"

"Samsung… why?"

"Bril', c'mon, sit down, I got a cable for that."

He hesitated, still standing in the doorway like a lemon.

She huffed, and plugged the aforementioned cable in. "I wanna give you a backup of my music, duh."

Oh…

Oh!

He felt himself sag a bit in relief and finally stepped fully past the threshold. "Thanks… I guess?"

Serene nodded, booting up the laptop. "Daddy set up a satellite connection so I could still browse at sea, I've got so many songs, but no safe place to store them if something happens to this one."

She lamented, gesturing to it before beckoning him closer.

Finally, he relented, despite the earlier air raid siren alarm, he eased himself onto the edge, and passed his phone to her.

He'd disabled its ability to be located by actively removing the pieces that projected such data only a few hours after the beginning of his self-imposed exile, so he had little to fear of it being used to download some songs.

So long as Serene didn't turn on the data roaming, he'd be fine.

He watched with the attention of a hawk for all of two minutes as she set to work making copies of everything.

And then a familiar call came from the still open door.
His head swung around, spotting Epsilon already stepping across the threshold in haste, within a moment he was taking a quick jump up to land firmly on his legs and upper torso, knocking the wind out of him in the process.

Derrick grumbled to himself, petting the needy bird's head and neck. "Hey buddy, been having run without me?"

Epsilon just warbled, trying to push himself further up against Derrick's chest.

Only to recoil and hiss when Serene tried to reach over and pet him herself.

Serene snapped her hand back and pouted.

Derrick chuckled, an awkward little noise as he petted Epsilon some more to try and calm the large bird down. "Easy bud, easy."

Epsilon took a few moments to settle but seemed to keep his attention firmly on Serene now.

"I'm sorry, it takes him a long time to warm up to people." Derrick tried to lament.

Serene waved him off. "No, no, it's fine… he'll come to love me too, eventually."

Another alarm bell began to ring in his head.

But it was almost instantly interrupted by a sharp prang in his chest.

Gasping out a breath at the sudden pain, he jerked forwards to clutch at where the pain came from.

Epsilon cawed in distress, jumping up and falling back onto the floor as he doubled over.

The pain was already almost unbearable, his heart… it was his heart!

He managed to look to Serene… "H-help… me…"

Serene stared at him in shock, not sure what to do, or what was even happening…

That is, until his eyes rolled back, and he slumped forwards, causing him to crash to the floor beside the now screeching Epsilon.

Monaco

Something was wrong.

Optimus could feel it in his spark, and he suspected that Ironhide felt the same.

It had been a week since the twins had taken off for some 'business'.

A solid week with no word from either of the monochrome femmes.

Yes this wasn't really a surprise, the twins had warned them that they would be going off the grid for a while, and that they'd eventually return.

But Jazz had reported that Ira had been erratic since the night before.

Erratic might have been putting it gently, considering the Red Kite's observed temperament.
As of this morning, Jazz had reported that Ira hadn't even been there when he and his charge had woken up that morning.

He tried not to read into that part too much, both knew the risks of their engagement, so he would keep his concerns to himself.

Back on point, Kia was now the only one of the Harpies they had a somewhat good idea of the location of.

Considering she was the one carrying the Allspark, it was no small relief she hadn't vanished as well.

Ratchet had reported she had called him back to the Villa a few hours prior, another freshly 'acquired' body ready to go.

As… concerning the sourcing of the bodies were, these sessions seemed to be aiding the medic.

Again, he found it best not to voice his concerns.

The Harpies knew what they were doing.

They seemed to take no true joy from it, they were just doing what had to be done.

He could respect that drive.

But that did not mean he did not worry.

"Prime?"

Ironhide's call brought him out of his stupor, the red and black detailed mech had walked up to him.

Perched on his shoulder, was Freedom, the mechanical avian had certainly taken to his weapons specialist, and in turn, said weapons specialist had begrudgingly taken to the mechanical avian.

Hence why the two were now rarely seen apart.

Freedom's legs were fully healed now, but a certain degree of psychological damage had been done, and the avian was hesitant at best to move around on the appendages alone.

"Prime?"

Again, jolted from his stupor, he tried not to get distracted again. "Apologies old friend… what seems to be the matter?"

Ironhide's expression wasn't one he liked seeing, it was the one that always promised bad news.

"Kia just took off, Ratchet says she got a call… paled, and dropped her holoform… somethings' gone wrong Prime… Bumblebee tried to follow her out of the city, but he got caught in late night traffic."

Optimus felt something inside him twist.

"And… we have no idea where any of them are?"

Ironhide just shook his helm for a negative. "Winston was no help."
Optimus reached up to rub the sides of his helm. "I will seek out Miss Oxton, hopefully she will be able to provide some information."

Ironhide nodded, stepping back to let the large mech transform into his alt mode.

He wasted no time checking the address Lena had given him, a small quaint house only a mile or so from the manor.

Gunning his engines, he wasted no time with his departure.

Within twenty minutes, his holoform was standing at the small house's door, and was ringing the doorbell, more times than was necessary.

He could hear someone shout that they would be out in a moment, before the door was promptly pulled open and a revolver was jammed in his face.

For all of three seconds there was a tense standoff, his finger still on the doorbell.

Hers on the trigger.

"Optimus?"

"Ms Oxton? … Where you… suspecting someone else?"

He watched the tension in her shoulders drop, the revolver being placed in the holster on her hip, before she gestured for him to come inside.

He did as such, taking stock of the corridor he had stepped into, a doorway on the left seemed to lead to a kitchen, and one on the right lead to what seemed to be the living room, the corridor continued further, interrupted by a flight of steps up to a second floor on the right, a second doorway on the left he couldn't see into, and what looked to be a back door out to a garden.

Lena walked into the kitchen. "Sorry about that… want something to drink? Tea? Coffee? Milk? Just plain water? Good old H2O never hurt none… If you don't count waterboarding and drowning that is…"

He followed her into the kitchen but shook his head. "No, there's no need, though I appreciate the offer."

The last time he'd been offered something to drink, he'd left it somewhere in Orichiono manor.

Word of Ira going catatonic would do that though.

Lena shrugged. "Ok… you just look a bit shaken… something wrong?"

She said this as she put the kettle on, and dropped a mesh bag filled with something into a mug with a spoon.

Optimus felt his holoforms chest shift with the sigh it let out. "The Orichiono's left for 'business' a week ago."

Lena nodded, and spoke. "Yeah, I heard about this, they do that sometimes, vanish for a week or two."

It was unspoken that they always came back.
But he had a hunch that wasn't the case this time, so he pressed on. "Jazz reported that Ira became erratic yesterday, and when he roused this morning, she was gone, she'd warned a few days ago that she might be going on 'business' herself, but her behaviour before her disappearance was... concerning..."

Lena frowned at that, raising a finger for pause before moving to the fridge and looking at the calendar that was hung up on the metal shell.

She ran her finger over the dates of the current month, then the next, and then next, before finally landing on one date that was ringed, and had a set of initials on it 'S,D'. "Nope... it's not any time soon, so it's not that... continue."

He nodded and did just that. "Then, less than an hour ago, Kia received a call, and then took off without giving any reasoning, this is alarming beyond the fact she carries the Allspark, and we have no way of tracking them..."

Lena looked at him for a moment, and he felt his own worry spike when he realised she was paler.

"Oh... Oh somethings gone wrong... very wrong..."

Today was the day of him receiving the worst news possible apparently.

The Mountains of Petra

"-TWINS! TWINS! WAKE UP! WAKE UP GOD FUCKING DAMNIT!"

Ira had known that something was wrong when she hadn't spotted them flying back on the flight path they'd sent ahead of time.

She'd known even more so when she didn't see them just resting, maybe catching their breath before the return flight.

She'd finally spotted them when she stepped into the temple.

They were strewn across the floor, mouth locked open in a silent scream.

Hera was still attached, but showed just as much life.

Meaning none at all.

She'd rushed forward, hitting her helm on the top of the hole they'd made in her haste.

She'd grabbed hold of them as best as her wings could, and had gone to shake them.

Only to remember that was probably the worst thing she could do.

So... she'd stepped back, tried to collect herself... and called Kia to get her ass there now.

She'd hung up before the Latina had even had time to give a coherent reply.

She'd been screaming at them to wake up for the last three hours.

It was anything but therapeutic.

Because no matter how loud she screamed, no matter how much she cried, no matter how much
she reached for them before pulling back, they didn't wake.

Didn't so much as twitch.

Her strength finally failed her, and she slumped backwards, crashing to the ground and onto her aft. Keeley finally detached from her back, and with a few quick hops, had relocated to her lap.

She clutched the bird to her, as close as her stupid fucking wings could hold the smaller Kite.

"Ah can' loose 'em Keels… Ah can'… Ah can' loose um too…"

Keeley just warbled.

Ira dropped her helm down, pressing the metal of her face into the bird's metal down. "Ah'm no' strong enough tah loose them too… not mah twins… not mah twins…"

Time stretched too long then… the sun set had long passed when she called Kia, the first hints of it rising were now on the horizon, but she didn't care… Kia would take another day at least of flying to arrive.

She was getting hungry… she'd eaten before she took off yes… but her nerves had cost that when she'd had to stop and rest for a few hours.

She never did well with stress.

But she couldn't leave…

She couldn't just leave her twins there… laying half in a tomb made of metal bodies…

Not with their only company being a possibly equally dead bird… and whatever that mess of blood and guts that was being picked at by scavengers outside.

Why the hell hadn't she paid attention when the twins offered to show her how to better use her protrusions?

Yes she knew how to get a basic map of her environment with them, it had saved her ass during the attack on the Cosmopolitan…

But deep scanning?

The twins called it that, they'd figured it out, they really got bored after Wren got her foot fucked up.

Boredom was the twins second most powerful motivator.

Right after spite of course.

Ira had learned long ago to never spite the twins…

But that didn't matter right now.

What mattered was that she turned down their offers to show her how to do it.

It was deceptively simple, flair out those weird things on their head, the ones none of them really had a proper name for, and then slam them back down onto the metal of their helms.
The thing was, that hurt like the unholiest fucking bitch in the universe.

The hit generated a sound pulse unique to their helm structure, the trick was to use it then like an X-ray/sonar pulse, the sound travelled pretty well through anything that wasn't explicitly soundproof.

Whatever it eventually bounced back off, would come back, and be picked up by the things on their head.

And that was where it got stupidly complicated to a degree she'd previously decided wasn't worth both the physical and mental headache.

Every little thing had to be processed, yes they had computers for brains, yes the twins, namely Wren, had figured out a handy dandy math equation to run it all through, and created a chart to compare the results to, a chart that was ever expanding as apparently the twins were masochists and kept fucking doing it for the whole almost two years Wren's foot was fucked to all hell and they couldn't walk five steps without almost or fully collapsing.

God those first few months had her nerves frayed to hell and back.

And now she didn't even know how to use that fucking chart to know if their heart/sparks were still going...

Not knowing was killing her...

She hated not knowing...

Hated wondering if they'd come back...

Hated...

Her thoughts broke, her spark, and the heart it surrounded, cried out right along with her.

It was a desperate, heartbroken keening sound, one she hated hearing herself make.

She was pathetic.

She couldn't keep the ones she loved safe...

She'd failed each and every person she'd ever cared for... except Kia... she hadn't gotten the chance yet to fail at saving Kia...

So lost in her own downwards spiral of self-loathing and distress, she didn't even hear the pained groan from the body of her two closest friends, her sisters in everything but blood.

It wasn't until a few minutes later, when she was pulled into a tight hug, did she realise she hadn't been mourning a corpse...

Words failed her, the lubricant that pooled in her optics fell like twin rivers, and her wings, shaking, reached out to wrap around the larger body holding her to them.

Her helm thunked against their broad chassis, and she revealed in that dual beat, left, right, left, right, left, right...

"Yo-yo-you're alive..." She managed to rasp out as one of their wings ran down her back in as close to a soothing gesture as those broad, wonderful, cumbersome wings could pull off.
She felt the twins lean back, and without any prompting, she looked up to see their visor move away, revealing their emerald green optics, scrunched up almost to the points of them being slits from how bright the cresting sun was, she took a moment to raise her wing up to give them the shade needed to actually look at her properly, and she had to laugh at the brief moment.

But as she fully looked up into their eyes, she couldn't help but think about what she'd once heard, that the twins hearts were as cold as ice, and their mind as sharp as a vipers fang.

The mind part was undoubtedly true, but she knew her twins, and they had the stupidest bleeding hearts she'd ever known.

A heart can't bleed if it's frozen.

The twins seemed to take in a breath, their shoulders rising before sagging again, and the softest smile she'd seen on their face in years was for her alone to see. "Oh Ira… you think we'd just… die? Darling… it takes more than… that, to kill us." Aria spoke, her voice soft as Hera reached up to caress each side of her face.

She had to laugh, it was the only way to get air into her.

Keeley chirped between them, bumping her head against Hera's larger arms.

She banged the front of her head back against the hard metal of their chest. "Yah bitches… Yah fuckin' bitches… Don' yah dare… don' yah fuckin' dare… do tha'… ever again… ah though' ah'd lost yah…"

And there were the tears again, thick and fast.

"Oh… Ira… come here…"

She felt their wings incircle her even tighter, they were on their upper knees, the rest of their legs behind them, their upper torso shifting so their head could rest against her back.

They surrounded her… they were there, alive, not as warm as they used to be…

They felt even colder now…

But they were still somehow warmer than her… and that was what mattered.

"Please… ah'm beggin' yah… please… don' ever do tha' again…" She was coherent, but that didn't mean she didn't stop crying, didn't stop trying to hold onto the twins as much as her own stupidly cumbersome wings could manage.

The twins, ever alert, ever aware, ever able to read her like a fucking book, spoke again. "Holoforms darling… holoforms."

Aria barely ever called her darling anymore, she'd said it twice in less than five minutes… that meant something, they all knew it.

She didn't even hesitate to activate hers just to the left of her body, which went limp just as quickly, though lubricant still flowed just as much as projected tears flooded out of her holoforms eyes.

The twins, in their separate holoforms, came online right in front of them.

She couldn't remember a time they'd hugged each other tighter.
"We promise Ira, we won't ever do that again, we promise…"

She had her face buried in Wren's shoulder, Aria had already circled around to her back, arms wrapped around her chest whilst Wren put hers around her waist, whist she had hers wrapped around Wren, and as much of Aria as the angle would allow. "I've been sittin' here fah hours… wha' tha fuck were yah doin' off in la la land that long?"

Wren dropped her face into her left shoulder, Aria in her right.

Not good, that wasn't a good sign. "Twins?"

"There's not enough room." They said in unison, practically whispering it like a secret into her ears.

"They… they shoved everything around… our memories… they're scattered… in the wrong order… all to barely make room… it hurts… Ira… please… tell us you called Kia… it hurts so much…"

That was when she looked down from Wren's shoulder.

That was when she spotted the blood.

She didn't want to, but she had to, she looked back to the twins real body.

Energon… there was so much energon, leaking through the seams around their chest.

"No… god please no…"

The twins gripped her tighter.

"We promise…"

"…Little sister…"

"…We're not…"

"…Going anywhere."

But their frame was already shifting, crashing down, taking her, Keeley and Hera with her.

Only once had her heart broken like this before…

But this time, her agony wasn't silent.

Her scream shook the temple, the sky, the heavens above…

But just as all those before, it did nothing…

____________________________

**Told yah there was a gut punch.**

**Few days ago I got the urge to give Ira a bit of an upgrade on her helm, so, I did.**

(Can't see in the preview if the image shows up, so I'll add a hyperlink, just in case
Welp, until next time! Bye!
Chapter 31

Ouf, this is a long one, and just a warning, there is an incident that occurs in this chapter in which a character is forced into a sexual act by a more powerful individual against their will. If that isn't something you want to read, just do not read what is in the block of italics in this chapter.

There is also a scene where characters have a psychotic breakdown, this may be distressing to others, if you want to avoid it, stop reading the chapter at the scene marker 'eight days later'.

With those disclaimers out of the way, on with the chapter!

Monaco

Ironhide was pacing.

Ratchet was doing the same in Barcelona.

Optimus had sent a less than reassuring message that Ms Oxton had reacted just as poorly to the news of the situation as they had.

This wasn't something normal, and something had gone wrong with the Twins.

It was the only explanation.

And it was one that Ironhide didn't not, not one bit, like to think about.

But he had to.

Because as much as he hated to admit it, he'd come to respect the Harpies.

They knew their slag, and got their jobs done, efficiently.

He'd spent the most time with the Twins at this point, visiting their manor to use their firing range.

He'd been joined by one or both of them on more than one occasion.

And if he'd learned anything from those sessions where they'd test each other's marksmanship, it was that he could trust them.

Or more accurately, trust them to look after themselves.

They were vicious with that rifle of theirs and he pitied any fool they levelled their scope on.

And it was that previous assessment of them that had him so worried.

The Twins could handle themselves; Optimus had let him know about the throwing knife incident in the Gilded Falcons kitchen a few days after the event had happened.

So for them to be in potential danger, something really bad must have happened.

And they wouldn't know what until a Harpy showed back up, and they managed to pry what
happened out of them.

Freedom warbled in distress as he turned a bit tighter than before.

He paused his pacing, looking to his shoulder where the bird was perched. "Sorry kid, just… wound up."

Freedom blinked at him, before bobbing his little white helm and warbling.

He still wasn't used to how smart the bird was.

The roar of an ever-familiar engine caught his audio, and he watched as Optimus rolled back into the warehouse, waiting for the doors to close behind him once more before transforming up to his full towering height.

Optimus sighed, looking to his weapons specialist. "Ms Oxton was unable to provide any further information regarding the location of any of the Harpies, to quote 'I'm just a bodyguard in training'."

Ironhide huffed. "Ratchet got similar when he quizzed Winston, the man didn't know anything either, and we already know what Jazz saw with Ira."

The Prime nodded, turning to look back out. "I… I am going to go for a drive Ironhide, down to the docks perhaps" He mumbled the last part.

Ironhide raised an optic ridge at him for that. "You could of just said that when you commed."

The look that the Prime sent to him over his shoulder was telling.

It had been many a vorn since the Prime had trusted what a bot had said over a com-link, especially in regards to their own safety.

Silent explanation given, Ironhide just waved the larger mech off. "Go, me and the bird aren't going anywhere."

He watched the Prime depart, shaking his helm for a moment.

Now wasn't the time to be getting lost in the past.

Not when the Allspark had up and left.

________________________________________

Monaco Dockside

He'd been driving around now for over an hour, his processor jumbled and rolling, trying to make sense of what could of happened.

In that time, there was only two conclusions he could think of.

One, the twins had encountered a hostile force, be it Decepticons or humans, and they'd had to get far from their assailants before they'd been able to call for aid.

Or two, the twins had located their relic.

Jumping between the two was taxing his processor, and he'd rather not have Ratchet pick melted wires out of his helm again.
He needed a break…

Lena had offered him a drink to calm down… maybe there was something to that…

He had already had his holoform activated, so he glanced around where he'd parked himself on the side of a somewhat busy road.

He must have stood out quite a bit, this was quite obviously a tourist destination in the City, and his alt mode was an American freighter truck.

Considering how many people seemed to be taking the time to take a picture of him, he should have looked more into taking a European based truck as his alt mode at the least.

Yet at the same time, he couldn't care less if he was conspicuous or not.

He just wanted to relax for a bit.

So, he opened his own driver side door, and let his holoform jump out and make something of a show of scanning the surrounding building fronts.

He finally spotted one that caught his interest, a quick translation of the neon sign and he knew it was a 'bar', Flint had joked at one point that before he'd been hired by the Orichiono's, he'd been a bar keeper.

Apparently, it wasn't a job that paid well.

But that mattered little.

To take a human term, he needed a drink.

It wouldn't do anything for him, not like a cube of highgrade would, but he could pretend it made everything a little bit better.

He stepped into the dimly lit building, it was already early in the morning, but it was quite obvious that the bar was still fairly full, a band was playing on a small stage in the corner, and the bar was at the other corner in the back, a number of the more drunk patrons singing along to the singer of the band.

Optimus found himself a table not far from the window, just to keep an optic on his altmode, and pulled out one of the menus.

He may or may not of started watching the odd bit of human media in the past few weeks.

For research, of course.

Research that was clearly incomplete given he found himself taken aback by just the sheer variety of drinks on offer.

Flint had given him a glass of wine… Lena had offered a bunch of drinks that sat in the 'soft drinks' section… but that was a small section compared to the rest.

Wine section got half of one of the large fold out pages.

Surely it wouldn't hurt to see what all the fuss was about regarding human highgrade, if the youth put it on such a pedestal, and the older generations relied on it so much to banish their sorrows, it had to be something.
He spent twenty minutes unsuccessfully trying to figure out what to order when a body slid into the chair on the other side of the table.

"Need a translator?" The voice belonging to the body spoke, female, the three words with a knowing wit, a little lilt, and the telling hint of a smile halfway to a smirk.

There was also an accent, a different one from Ira's thick one, Kia's less noticeable one, and the twins hybridised mix of two.

He looked up, and almost did a double take.

It was an older female, a scar on the left side of her mouth and arching up to her cheek where it was obscured by the greying platinum blonde hair, the odd strands showing the signs of a previous blue colouring, humans, it would seem, dyed their hair into their older years in vibrant colours. Interesting.

But it wasn't any of those features that caused him to do a double take, it was the eyes.

Soft, tired, knowing, world weary, yet just looking into them gave him the strangest feeling… that he'd gone home…

"I-I'm sorry. Repeat that?"

The woman's smile seemed to soften. "Of course, do you need a translator? The menu here's quite… large."

He glanced back to it, nodded, and placed it down on the table so she could read it. "I'm not sure where to even start to be honest."

The older woman chuckled, then spoke. "Narisa."

"Huh?" Was his oh so eloquent reply.

That got a little giggle out of her.

A little, melodic giggle, half drowned out by the noise in the bar.

"Narisa, my name, Narisa Solvermor, and you are?"

He stalled, Optimus Prime wasn't a human name… Prime as a last name was passable, the twins had used it to vocalise their acknowledgement of him at the house warming party… But of course, as was his luck, that wasn't what came out. "Orion… Orion Pax…"

Narisa tilted her head to the side in intrigue. "Oh? Are you Greek?"

He blinked. "Um…"

She waved the question away. "Sorry, that was rude of me, it's a very unique name… do you know what it means?"

He paused, and then shook his helm, it had always just been his designation, Orion Pax.

"Well, Orion was the legendary hunter of Artemis, the 'Hunter', and Pax, means Peace… so, you're name is basically 'Hunter of Peace', quite high expectations your folks must have had, huh? I'm sorry, I studied in foreign linguistics when I was still a young lass." Narissa apologised as an afterthought, having noticed his look of surprise, which was now firmly plastered over his face.
The older woman frowned when he didn't reply, expression becoming one of worry. "Orion? … Mr Pax?..."

He didn't even hear her world weary, worry laden voice.

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**Iacon**

::Hunter… Hunter… Hunter… Hunter… Hunter open you're damn door before I find someone big enough to kick it down. You know I will.::

He was already rushing to open it, he'd been so buried in his work it had taken a moment for him to properly register who was messaging him.

The door slid open, and he looked down.

And there she was, servos on her hips, optics in that knowing look of disappointment as she shook her helm from side to side.

If she could have, she probably would have tutted at him.

"Sol… I am… so sorry… I got…"

::Caught up in work again? That's exactly why I'm here, c'mon::

She reached up, her helm was level with his upper wheels, meaning she had to stretch a bit to grab his servo, which was comparatively gigantic to her own, and pulled him towards his berth.

And suddenly he felt exhausted.

Not enough to not wrap a servo around each side of her narrow waist and give her a boost up onto his berth though.

She shuffled up against the wall, giving him all the space to slide his larger frame on.

His arms wrapped back around her small two toned blue and dark teal frame, pulling her up against his chassis as he dropped his helm down on top of hers, pulling in a vent.

She'd washed, he could smell those cleaning products her and Neb loved to use.

This was a tradition of theirs, he'd overwork himself, as was expected of him given his position as the next in line to be Prime, Sol or Neb would demand he let them in, and they'd help lull him into recharge with the pulse of their sparks.

It was a soothing pulse, slow but strong, a strange mix for their small stature. "You're a miracle." He mumbled into her helm.

::That's one way of putting it Hunter:::

Hunter, that was her nickname for him, just as Sol and Neb was his for her and her twin.

Solarstorm and Nebularburst were somewhat of a strain on even the slipperiest of glossas when one wasn't paying enough attention.

Speaking of the other twin. "Where's Neb?"
He could feel her tense in his hold, never a good sign, before looking back to the rolling text on his HUD, still displaying the last message she sent.

Finally a new one began to appear, but she wasn't looking at him now, helm ducked down against his chassis, and he could feel her frame give off the slightest tremors. ::Senator Arogia wanted her 'company'… he hasn't done anything… yet…::

"Sol…"

It always hurt him to see them like this.

It happened more frequently than any of them liked.

One of the twins would be called on for their 'company', and at some point in the night, they'd limp into his room. His single room apartment he had been given within the highest tower of Iacon, paltry compared to the expansive whole floor suits the Senators and his predecessor Sentinel Prime had for themselves. From there, they would curl up with the other twin and him, and they'd just hold the other tight, bathing each other in their combined EM fields.

Sometimes they were lucky, and the senators just used them as dummies to bounce their latest 'jokes' off, other times…

Other times Dust had to be called.

Sol was here, Neb was with Senator Arogia, he was one of the tamer ones…

Though considering what some of his fellow Senators had done to one or the other twin when they wanted a 'challenge' instead of the easy frag of a pleasurebot… that wasn't saying much for Arogia's character.

They enjoyed trying to make them scream… in pain or pleasure, it mattered little to them.

None of the Senators knew of their own rendezvous, when one twin would seek him out, pull him from his work, and just be held by a comforting presence.

They didn't know the twin with him would project the feeling of his hold to the other.

He took a small amount pride for it, knowing that both of the twins, for all they were used, found safety and security within his arms.

Arms that could snap their small frames in two if he wasn't careful.

The Senators also didn't know that, despite everything, the twins still spoke.

Not with audible words, no, the Senate had long since muzzled them with the horrid masks that were clamped over both of their faces up until just below their optics, their oh so beautiful, oh so expressive optics, but with the rolling text on his, and their only other two friends HUDs… well, that in and of itself wasn't true.

Senator Shockwave, the one bot on the whole Senate who actually had a spark at this point, he was on amicable terms with Shrike, one of the aforementioned other two, and Sol, so he was allowed to know, he'd sworn never to tell, he needed to be on Shrike's good side, and he liked Sol's calm presence too much to destroy such a trust.

Especially considering any possible slight against either of the 'Mutes' as they were known, sent
the head theoretical scientist into something best described as a murderous rampage...

Sol suddenly tensing in his arms had him back in the present. "Sol?"

::He's… he's dragging her… there's going to be dents…::

He pulled her closer to him, letting his engine rumble just that bit louder.

::She's scared… Hunter… she's so scared… He's… Hunter! He's!::

The sound that echoed from somewhere in Sol's chassis felt like a dagger twisting in his spark.

He knew that, if she could, she'd be screaming, crying out for someone to save her twin…

But that option had long been stolen from them both…

He already had Dust's com-number ready to go, this sounded bad…

"I've got her… I've got her, make sure she knows that." He mumbled into her helm, Sol nodded, her servos, so delicate yet deceptively sharp, the Senators liked it when they tried to fight, gave them a reason to be rough, now though they clutched to the seams of his chassis, to the glass that covered the front in two panes, despite everything, they didn't even scratch his paintjob.

The pained keens that left his berth partner haunted him, echoed around in his helm as she felt everything her twin felt, her hips those narrow hips connected to their chassis by even narrower barely armoured protoform, jerked and bounced, following the same motions of her twins, a mirror of what Arogia was doing at that very moment.

Sol's grip grew tighter, lubricant pooled, glinting in her blown wide pale blue optics, the teal highlights nestled within her optics inner workings making the lubricant look like it was shimmering…

And then, it stopped.

The lubricant didn't stop flowing, but her hips stilled once more, her grip loosened, only slightly, still desperate to hold onto something safe when it couldn't be her twin.

::He's done… he's done Hunter…::

"And Neb?"

There was a pause for a few breems.

::She can walk… she's gonna need her shoulder re-aligned… he dislocated it when she tried to stop him…::

He nodded, already sending off the information to Dust.

Only to get an odd message back, it was cryptic. "Sol… is Dust… not in Iacon?"

He felt her nod. ::She's in Kaon.::

"Kaon? The Kaon?"

::Yes. Neb told you a few cycles ago, Dust's opened a clinic down there, her knew protégé is
He opted to accept the change of topic back to the original, and slowly unwound his arms from Sol so he could go up and go to the door, ready to pull the over twin in the moment she was in reach.

Soon enough, there was a ping, a request for his door to open.

It swung open instantly, and he had to take a moment to take in the sight before him, and more importantly, temper the urge to go and put a sword through Arogia's helm.

Lubricant pooled optics, shimmering that same two tone like her twin, her left arm hanging lower than her right, and dents, so many dents, the arm that wasn't out of it's socket was desperately trying to hold all the pieces torn from her frame, to her chassis, the broad shoulder piece that covered her left arm just hanging low enough to hide what Arogia had torn away at to claim his 'prize'.

His spark wanted vengeance, penance, he wanted all the Senators who toyed with his twins to pay, to suffer like they made his twins suffer.

Yes his twins... his spark yearned for their bond to go beyond where it was now... but he had to hold it back, the twins, for all their bravado, he knew them, being in a relationship whilst the Senators used them like a challenging puzzle to steal pleasure from? It... his spark wept for them, he just wanted to hold them close, to never let anything or anyone steal them away again, hold them till they recovered, hold them until the masks gave way, and he could see them smile.

See them smile... see the scared faceplates beneath... for those masks were nothing less than torture devices... ones his twins had been forced to wear for so... so long...
Far longer than he had known them, neither Dust or Shrike could give a set time for how long his twins had been the Senators playthings.

"Mr Pax?"

He jolted, optics widening at the voice that came from Neb's mask covered face, it didn't match the rolling text of her begging him not to pity her... as if he ever would...

"Mr Pax? Mr Pax?"

"Mr Pax!"

He jolted again, the world around him snapping back to the present a hand on his shoulder, the old lady, that had been her voice, what was her name? Narisa? Narisa Solvermor... that was right...
He'd been knocked into a flashback by her saying something... but he'd gone blank as to what.

The older woman, with her platinum blonde hair, signs of a blue hair dye sometime in the past, her wrinkled face that showed a life of smiles, and soft baby blue eyes, they were what he was staring at now, yet not, his focus a hundred thousand lightyears away, in a life that had long since slipped from his desperate grasp.

"I-I'm sorry... I just had a flashback..."

The sympathy in her gaze then floored him for a moment, and a spark of wonder came to light in his spark, humans truly were emotionally advanced creatures...
Narisa spoke then. "A bad one?"

He shook his holoforms head. "No… Not bad… I lost the ones in it… a long time ago… remembering them is painful… I miss them… deeply…"

Somehow the older woman's expression was able to mirror his grief, her eyes, those soft baby blues suddenly seemed to take a weight of experience far beyond her mortal years, as she reached down to rub the top of his clenched fist. "Losing the ones you love is painful… memories can be, both blessings and curses… right now… they seem to be a curse for you, no matter how pretty they are wrapped… so…" She tapped the menu still between them with one of the fingers on her other hand. "Try the scotch, a few glasses always helps take the memories of old 'what if's' away for awhile… For the most part… sometimes something a lot stronger is needed…"

She made a brief gesture as she said that, tracing the scar on her face that went from her upper lip, up past her cheek bone.

And with that, the older woman got up, gave him one more pat on the shoulder, and bid him goodnight.

He took a few minutes for him to fully recoup himself, then called a waiter over, and ordered the scotch.

Out of the corner of his alt modes viewing range he spotted Narisa, accompanied by two other similarly older women, all three had to be at least six human decades old…

They all slid into a car not far from where he was parked, he was surprised to discover it was an American model, a 1970's Corvette Stingray, it's white paintjob accented by a metallic silver.

He quietly wished them a safe journey, before putting his attention fully back on his Holoform, his scotch had just arrived.

It didn't do anything.

There was no haze, no softening to the sting of old wounds, no reprieve from old memories.

In a way he was glad.

As painful as the memories were… it was nice to remember how good it had felt to just… hold them…

Back before he was a Prime… before the war… before the revolution… before Megatronus… fell.

When it was just him and his small band of friends, trying to get by in a universe so much larger than they were, and seemingly so against them.

He ordered another scotch, he still had the Orichiono's card, they'd told him to keep it.

The liquid still didn't do anything, but sometimes it was nice to pretend.

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The Mountains of Petra

"Dios mio…"

"Yeah…"
"Imagine what it feels like." Wren huffed, looking down over their open spark chamber at where Kia was looking in.

The Matrix had not been kind to them, not like the Allspark had been to Kia.

The life-giving relic had wrapped itself nicely around the inside of the Bateleurs spark chamber, not interfering with anything.

The Matrix, had been far, far less gentle, sadistic if anything.

As shown by the endless criss-crossing needle sharp protrusions, pressed up, and in places even piercing the many hundreds of cables that led to their hybridised heart.

Hence the copious amount of energon they'd lost before Kia had been able to seal the hundreds of leaks, moments after managing to get the twins spark chamber to open, waking them in the process… somehow.

It was a miracle she'd been able to even do that.

Ira, to her credit, was sat next to the slumped twins, leaning against Aria's side to help prevent the larger Harpy Eagles from slumping away from the corner she and Kia had been able to prop them up against.

Now that the twins were no longer close to bleeding out in the temple, the other two had been able to take better stock of what was before them.

Ira was reminded of their mutterings about there 'not being room', and felt her own internal systems twist at the physical proof of that very statement.

Kia huffed to herself, rolling back onto her haunches and resting her first wing joints as best as she could on her hips. "Well… my diagnosis? We need to get you to Ratchet, and get some food in you…" She gestured around at the numerous already crystalised formations of energon. "Because it's quite obvious you've lost more than the safe amount…"

The twins both huffed at that, and Aria responded. "We can probably… walk?"

"Wal'? No' bloody li'ely, yah can barely sit yahselves up!" Ira remarked, putting some extra weight into her own efforts to keep the larger Harpies upright.

Wren spoke this time, what little humour she did have gone completely. "The nearest mine is in Southern Cairo, luckily enough, one of you can fly out there, pick up some, and bring it back."

Kia and Ira glanced at one another.

"Ah'll go, ah've had time tah rest." Ira stated, giving the twins another hard shove to push them further into the corner so she could get up. "Ma'e sure they donna do anythin' stupid." Ira huffed out again.

The twins protrusions flared in their incredibility, and Kia had her own make a gesture of 'These two? In their current state?'.

Ira felt her own optics roll behind her visor. "They're the twins." She stated.

Evidently that was answer enough to convince the other three she was right.

The twins were the twins, even they didn't know what they would do next sometimes.
And so, she left the temple, spread her wings, and took a running jump up into the air.

Leaving the twins and Kia to talk.

"The Bots are probably worried sick that you took off without any warning." Wren said, shifting to try and get more comfortable in the corner.

Kia regarded them like they'd actually split their head in two. "And risk you two bleeding out any more than you already were? It took me sixteen hours of dead flapping to get here, they're big mechs, they can handle themselves a few days while I try and get feeling in my arms back."

The twins pouted. "Now that Ira's gone… How close were we… to… you know…"

"Close? I'm shocked you woke up while I was patching up all those holes in you… oh and on that note, no fighting, one hit and those needles are gonna tear you to ribbons." She muttered in warning.

They huffed. "Like we weren't made of spun glass before." Aria muttered.

Kia reached over and patted the white twins shoulder with her wing. "We all are, you just need to keep even more out of the fight now… good thing you're the snipers."

"If that was supposed to be a joke it wasn't very funny."

"One out of five at best, and that's being generous." Aria added.

Kia felt her lips quirk. "At least your personalities are intact."

At that the twins seemed to look away from her.

Never a good sign. "Twins… What happened in there?"

They were biting their lower lip for a moment before they spoke. "Voices… lots of them… angry… thrashing about… more at each other than us… but the thrashing… it hit everything… and it left marks… the needles… they started tearing through stuff… we saw a lot of stuff we never wanted to remember… they've jumbled up everything… dates are messed up…" Aria was the one to speak, but the dejected tone in her voice was a painful kick.

Kia patted their shoulder again. "You'll… you'll figure this out… me and Ira have faith you will."

"Faith doesn't get you far when you don't have the means to follow it…" Wren muttered. "Is it safe for us to rest? …We're tired…"

Kia wasn't an expert, she knew the procedure was probably to keep them up, but they were already drooping to the side, so she nodded. "Yeah, you two get some rest, I'll wake you when Ira gets back, rest chica's… I'll be right here."

They were already out cold before she had even finished saying that.

______________________________

Jasper Nevada

"Alright kid, in the back."

The red head grumbled but did as told, sending a loving look to his custom paint job muscle car one more time before Officer Prowl Davron pushed his head down and in after his body.
The back-seat door was shut and Prowl looked to Annie, already on the phone to call the Sheriff over to come tow the offending vehicle.

In a small town like Jasper, there weren't enough people to do all the jobs, and with only three officers, they were always just a bit short on staff.

Even when one of them was also one of the stations two police cars.

"Yeah, hiya Sheriff, we're gonna need the tow truck out here, got a muscle car for impound and a teen who thought he was a hot shot racer… yeah… yeah it's Vinnie… huh? Oh! Sorry didn't catch that last part… they… they found what?"

The shock and surprise in his loves voice had Prowl's attention snap back away from how much he loved her to the present. "Annie? Is something the matter?"

The look she sent him was telling and cryptic all in one go.

A thousand different hopes, and just as many fears, all mingled together into quite the menagerie.

"Ok… Ok… we'll boot the car here, and we'll be right back." She hung up, and almost instantly speed walked over, pulled down his projections shoulder and whispered in his ear.

"Narisa spotted that red symbol of yours on an American Freighter Truck, in Monaco."

Something inside Prowl skipped, and he leaned in to whisper back, noting the teen trying to listen in out of curiosity. "They… they did?"

Annie nodded, breaking apart from the proximity with his projection to instead hop into the passenger seat.

Taking the message, he hopped into the driver seat of his own body and made a small show of getting ready to drive, couldn't have Vinnie thinking the car was sentient could they?

They were right on the outskirts of their jurisdiction out here, out in the desert along the route where the only markers were the odd tumbleweed and cactus.

It would take a while to get back to the Police Station in Jasper.

When they finally pulled up, Prowl had become more than a bundle of nerves, he was a batch of live wires, his excitement palatable in the air and her looked to Annie, begging her to get Vinnie registered with the receptionist so that he could go ahead and get the full news from their Sheriff.

Annie waved him along. "Go, go, I'll be with you in a few minutes."

He'd already thrown open his own door and jumped out before she'd even finished.

Annie huffed in good nature, glancing at the ring on her finger. "God I love that man…"

"Isn't he like… twenty years younger than you or something? God it's so wei-urk!" Vinnie huffed in the back seat before being cut off by his seat belt locking and pulling.

Annie frowned at the rear view mirror, and the seatbelt squeezing Vinnie laid off.

If they'd been in private he probably would have grumbled.

Deciding she needed to speak her peace, she did just that. "He's older actually, the amount of
moisturiser he puts on could probably float a whole boat."

Vinnie looked morbidly concerned at that.

But at least he wasn't taking about age gaps anymore.

Which was good, because Annie did not like people calling her the older of the two, when Prowl, for all his amnesia, was quite obviously a few hundred, if not thousand years old at least.

This wasn't the first time they'd brought Vinnie in for a driving violation, so the process of getting him set up in one of the cells whilst his parents were called was fairly quick, and the call handled by the receptionist.

Giving Annie the freedom to finally go join the Sheriff and Prowl in the former's office.

There on the table, printed out for them to see, was a flash picture, illuminating a large, ed and blue American built truck, sitting on the side of the road next to a chain of bars.

And sure enough, right there in place of the hood ornament, was the symbol that on Prowl, was on both of his shoulders.

"It's a one time occurrence… if the sisters and Molly spot any others whilst there, they'll let us know." Sheriff Rodriguez warned, trying to tame the excitement and worries of her deputies.

Both of them nodded, that was sensible.

The Sheriff breathed in, then let out a long breath. "I'm gonna let you look the picture over some more, I've got a car to go tow."

And with that, the Sheriff got up, and strode out of her office, leaving them to go over the paperwork whilst she went to the behemoth that was her own Police car, which was innocently parked out the front, just as non-sentient as all the others.

Where Prowl had the sleek form of an interceptor, Maria Rodriguez had the bulky muscle of their small force, an out fitted range rover that she could take off-road if the situation called for it.

Considering Jasper, it wasn't an entirely surprising amount.

Rome Italy, eight days later

Jazz wasn't a mech that normally worried much about things.

He worried about his charge and her sparkling, he worried about his unit, and a couple other general things, but this?

The Allspark, it's vessel, and their companions had been missing for over a fortnight.

That was something to worry about.

Maggie, bless her human spark, was trying to help keep his focus elsewhere, food shops for her and Glen, more exploration of the city, her warm embrace when they met under her sheets at night…

But it wasn't enough to get him to stop worrying.
This was the Allspark, yes he was worried for the Harpies, all four up and vanishing wasn’t a good sign, but the Allspark meant a lot more to him, it was the life force of their home planet, likely the thing that would revive their world from it's war torn, dead state.

What could possibly get him worrying more?

Kia breaking her silence, just to tell Ratchet to get on a plane, sitting at Barcelona's primary airport, to Rome, and not to waste a second, before falling into silence again outside telling him to have an open processor and a decent amount of patience.

Kia, asked, no **begged** Ratchet to hurry, and in more words than needed, aid them.

It needed no guesswork who needed the aid.

Optimus, Ironhide and Bumblebee were also privy to that call, their holoforms had joined him Maggie and Glen in Rome, using the long distance generators for the first time for the very reason of seeing what it was that had happened, what had left them so worried and fitful all this time.

So when Ratchet managed to get his actual form down into the still unfinished bunker, alongside Jazz and the other three's Holoforms, only to find nothing but in progress construction by what seemed to be a small army of familiar drone like humans, and no Harpies, the five only started worrying more.

Twenty minutes later, Bumblebee, ever the scout, heard something coming from the pitch black tunnel.

Muttering, slow metallic footsteps, and more than one muttered curse.

Then a faint glow, familiar in it's lilac hue, came within visual range.

In a strange reverse of the first time they had seen the Harpies, it was the Avian femmes who stepped out of the darkness, whilst they waited in the light.

Arien stumbled, helm bowed over their chassis, pedes barely supporting their own weight.

Holding up the larger twins, were Kia and Ira, who were hunched beneath the larger Harpy eagle, their backs supporting the underside of each dragging broad wing, as their own wings were seemingly wrapped around the larger Harpies back, while using the tips of their other wings to press on the ground to hold them up, the tips dented in from the miss-use.

It meant they could immediately see the clusters of crystallised energon that covered the twins frame.

Ratchet rushed forwards to help carrying the weight off the twins, easily taking the burden off the smaller two Harpies as Jazz also joined him.

Said smaller Harpies slumped to the concrete just outside the tunnel with groans, each crashing down onto their respective sides as their visors, even in their obvious exhaustion, tracked the largest of their group of four with an intensity telling of their heightened concern.

With both mechs now supporting the larger twins, it was impossible not to hear the mutters, the twins lipplates not even really moving as words came out in short pained breaths, speaking something neither could properly translate.

And then, Ratchet shifted, moving better into the twins vision, and went to examine their chassis,
once Jazz had also re-aligned to better hold the bulk of the twins weight.

It seemed to trigger something.

Something abjectly the furthest from pleasant.

With a sound like a strangled scream, the twins lurched, their helm and chassis rising from their hunched state for all of a moment, before their helm and upper torso came swinging back down in an arch from the right.

Ironhide called out, but there was no time for his mate to react.

The impact was brutal, a direct blow right to the shorter medics own helm, sending him to the ground as his processor was thrown off.

Jazz tried to hold on, but the moment their attention shifted to him, it was over, an inhuman howl of rage, one that broke almost instantly into a stuttering scream, one loud enough to short out the audios of those not prepared to hear it.

Jazz was flying before he even knew what happened, though the sudden pain in his chassis and Wren's wing flaring out to the side was tell enough in the moment before he crashed down to the ground, not far from the holoforms of the rest of his unit.

"No... No... get... get away! Please... no more... please... let us... let us be..." The words were rasped, directed at the other wall.

"T-twins..." Rapped Ira from where she was slumped over, the strength to move having left her. "Aria... Wren... no..."

The twins didn't hear, and all Ratchet and Jazz could do was lunge away as the scythes on both wings sprung free, seemingly at their own accord, as the twins spun to something none of them could see. "No! Get back! GET BACK!"

The scythes sung as they struck at nothing, cleaving gashes into the set concrete with every strike at nothingness.

The vents on their sides flared open, releasing clouds of steam as they rasped down air between desperate words, helm snapping around as they spun, lashing out at anything.

"HELP! PLEASE! HELP! MAKE THEM GO AWAY! BIG BROTHER! BIG BROTHER! BIG BROTHER!"

The rest of the final cry became a screech as they reared again, and rushed at a wall, slamming the front of their helm directly into the solid concrete, causing a crater of spiderweb cracks. "WHERE? WHERE ARE YOU! MAKE THEM GO! KILL! KILL THEM! PLEASE! MAKE THEM GO! SHUT THEM UP! SHUT THEM ALL UP! BROTHER! BROTHER!"

Jazz watched all of this, watched the smaller Harpies desperately try to rise, their wings collapsing when they tried, he watched as the twin's visor shattered on the second impact, sending the fragments of glass clattering to the ground far below, shattering further.

Jazz watched as optics, brighter than spotlights, whiter than a neutron star, were revealed, so bright the direction of their stare was impossible to see.

Too bright for even the twins to see through.

Jazz also watched as movement happened beside him, a flash of red and white, and suddenly
Ratchet was on the twins ridged back, out of reach of the wings as his far heavier weight sent them to the ground, their helm slamming into the wall once more.

The twins fell still after that impact, their strained too far optics flickering out, the optic casings rolling shut as colour began to return to the face plates still hanging open in a scream.

Silence ruled for a few long silent moments.

And then, a sob.

Attention shifted, holoform eyes and Cybertronian optics going straight to Ira, her own visor pressed into the concrete as her frame broke down into a sobbing mess.

Kia was just staring, her visor as impassive as ever, but her parted lips were telling of her own distress.

Ira finally managed to temper her sobs for a moment. "Six… tha's tha sixth time… Oh God… oh God… wha' did tha' thin' do tah them…?" She barely finished the last word before crying out again.

Kia's helm slowly turned to the red kite. "Ira…"

"It broke'em… it broke mah twins… Kia… how the bloody blue hell ah'm I supposed to do this…? Ah can'… Ah can'… Kia… Ah can'…"

The red kite broke back into hysterical sobs.

Kia didn't move, she didn't have the strength to.

So he did, he strode past Ratchet and the stasis locked twins, the former already scanning the other and trying to roll them onto their front to look over their frame.

He could see more energon pooling on the floor from their chassis, not good, but Ratchet could tend to the twin's medical needs.

He knelt in front of Ira, close enough to catch her attention.

Her helm lifted off the ground, visor snapping away to reveal those ever changing optics, now heavy with overflowing lubricant. "Ja-Jazz?"

He reached down, took the femme by the under sides of her wings, and hefted her into a tight hug.

He heard her exhausted wings scrape across the floor slowly, until one, then another returned the hug, her helm thunking against his chassis. "Ah'm no' stron' enough tah do this withou' them… please… help them… I don' know how… I don' know how…"

Her voice was quieter than a mouse's whisper, but he heard her, heard the desperation.

He ducked his own helm down over her. "We'll help you li'l lady, we'll help them too, that's ah promise."

The sobs were quieter too now, like she had no energy left to even cry. "Ah wan' ah fuckin' time machine… ah wanna go back… stop them… stop everythin'… keep us home… I wanna go home… home made sense…"

He clung onto her tighter, keeping her focused on him, but he knew the sight of the twins strewn
out across the ground was probably cycling through her helm.

Then came the sound of a chassis being opened behind him, and a horrified invent from the CMO.

"By Primus' Spark…"

Some heavier stuff in this one, not gonna lie, and this is a bit of a tone setter for what's to come, so just a heads up on that.

Thank you all for reading! See you all again soon!
Chapter 32

Not got much to say for this chapter, just hope you all enjoy!

California

Barricade was going shoot his self-preservation.

Metaphorically of course.

But he was this close to just outright shooting something as well.

Fernando had gone off somewhere the day before, and Starscream, who was now mostly back in working order at last, the patience of the mech was something of a surprise, and was now focused solely on two things, getting all the information he could out of Fernando so they wouldn't need the abomination anymore, and two, getting revenge on the smallest of the group, Ira, for beating him in aerial combat.

Someone's pride was still smarting evidently.

Frenzy had been, for the last few weeks now, all but catatonic, to the point he'd humoured putting him in his subspace.

Old words telling him specifically not to do that many vorns ago kept him from doing as such.

It was surprising how much of an effect ghosts from the past could have on one's life in the present, Frenzy probably would have agreed with him if he was alert to do so.

Barricade remembered Frenzy's carrier, the little mini took after her more than his sire, she had been, to take a human term, a Spitfire, the sass, passion and spunk to Soundwaves more cautious, curious and ever alert nature.

Soundwave and his minis had been devastated when she'd perished early in the war…

Right alongside his own beloved…

The one who's old words stopped him from putting Frenzy in his subspace, he couldn't quite remember why… his memory banks were starting to corrode from poor maintenance, and few to no pulls on the old drives to restart them and defrag them…

She always told him to do that every Vorn… but… with the war… he lost track…

He regretted it now… her faceplates were starting to distort… he knew Frenzy's carrier better, Frenzy reminded him of her every other cycle when the mini was alert… but his own?

She was slipping away…

No, he couldn't let that happen… Starscream was keeping Demolisher and Bonecrusher occupied, Starscream was giving him a break for all of his dutiful patrols…

Perfect time to defrag the old memories of his old love.

Of his life before the revolution… during… and that time when the war seemed to… be almost
trivial…

Before it was made truly personal.

But where to start?

The beginning? He frequented those the most, not that was much more than the rest…

No, something mundane… yes… something mundane… something to remind him why he was still fighting…

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Kaon

He was grumbling, his four optics narrowed on the destination ahead, his servos full with the pedes of the mech he was dragging, a mech easily a third over his own size.

A circuit speeder was still jammed in the mechs arm, bobbing every time he managed to haul the mechs limp weight a few steps further.

His target? The clinic.

Yes he was an Enforcer, one of the few secretly not corrupt in Kaon, he had a full life with work, but this, this was something he did on the side.

Because he knew his love needed all the servos helping her that she could get, and she only really had him, and that other medic she'd managed to wrangle into working with her when she couldn't be in Kaon herself.

Before he even knew it, he'd made it close enough for her to risk stepping out to help.

She towered over him.

She was white, white with two tones of red, the colours of a medic, but they made her look like a vision.

White wasn't something bots saw in Kaon, but her? Oh she was like a star, his star, his light in the forgotten city.

Her optics furrowed behind that soft blue visor, moving to kneel, putting her helm level with his. "Let me 'Cade."

She was double his height, she stood helm to helm with some of the tallest mechs out there, all the more of her to love, really.

He let her take the mech, easily hefting him up onto one of her broad shoulders.

And then she picked him up with the other arm, bringing him close to kiss the side of his helm. "Thank you."

Her thank you, just those two words, lit up his cycle like nothing else.

He was exhausted after his appointed work, but every cycle he went out, found a mech or femme in need, and brought them to her, and every time she said those two little words, he'd reply. "Just doing my duty ma'am."
It always made her giggle, to see and hear her giant frame giggle, oh it sent his spark spinning like nothing else. "Hmm..." Her attention was on her newest patient. "Fairly big... he'll need a lot to flush everything out."

And with that, she carried them both inside, already focused on getting her latest patient well again.

Her partner medic wasn't there, he worked five cycles in the clinic, she worked whenever she could, there was often demand for her back in Iacon she couldn't ignore.

Joors later, when the mechs systems were flushed, and he'd been set up on one of the recovery berths, she finally put her focus solely on him, and only him.

He knew what was coming, but seeing the sway or her hips, emphasised by the white flared armour that covered them as she sauntered over to him... it did certain things to him.

"Such a good job you did, he'd of been offline by the next cycle." She cupped the side of his helm with her claw tipped servo, the visor sliding away to reveal her soft blues, ones that contrasted so well against his four reds.

They'd barely pressed their dermas to each other, his plain to her deep red, when a familiar wail came from the other room.

He raised an optic ridge and she just smiled. "We got another one this cycle, found him around the back, he's a Praxian."

Oh now that was something, someone left a Praxian sparkling... in a back alley... in Kaon?

She took his servo, and led him further into the clinic, into the private area reserved for them, and the little ones that were showing up more and more frequently.

Sure enough, there in the little incubator, was a squirming sparkling, barely online from what he could tell, laying on his front so as not to damage the doorwing nubs.

Completely grey and silver, no colour would show until he moved into his youngling stage.

But the sparkling was wide awake, big blue optics squinted as he wailed.

She opened the incubator, the sparkling fit within her servo with room to spare...

Premature emergence, he realised.

"We'll need to hold onto this one longer than the others... ready to be a sire again for a bit?" She asked, well aware of his answer.

He smiled, reaching up to stroke a clawed digit ever so carefully along that smooth helm, too big for the body it was attached to, already calmed with the close proximity of the beating spark hidden away under the armour he was held to. "Of course, who could say no to a faceplate like that?"

She huffed a quiet laugh through her vents. "We might even have to designate him... 'Cade... maybe..."

He knew where she was going, but raised a servo. "We can't... at least, not officially, the way things are going outside... we can't risk there being documents connecting any of us to the other..."
we can't risk the Senate using one of us to hurt the other."

He saw her flinch, and it pained his spark to know why... he'd pried it from her one night, when she'd slipped into the clinic, a limp in her gait obvious, the metal band around her neck bent, near crushed against the cabling that it normally hung loose around...

Two of her closest friends were being held in what was best described as slavery... and the Senate held their suffering over his love, and another mutual friend as 'incentive' to remain 'docile'.

It had sent his spark into a burning rage, she had miss-read his anger...

It was the one time he'd seen her on her knees, begging him to forgive her...

They'd held each other that night like a lifeline.

She sagged, the motion jarring him from those thoughts, but relented, and oh how it broke his spark to see her worry, he reached up, just managing to cup her own helm, she knelt for him to make it easier. "I love you... I love you... I love you... and when we've won... when the Senate falls... we'll bond... and then, we can adopt all the little bitlets we want, this one included."

He reached out to stroke the little ones helm, it beeped at him, those big blues staring over at him in awe, dwarfed by the giant who carried him in the crook of her arm.

This was why he was part of the revolution, this was why he was Megatronus' optic in the Kaonian Enforcer system, this was why he was ready to fight to the very end against the Senate, to end their reign once and for all.

So that one cycle, he could finally bond with his other half, raise this little one, and maybe a few more they found, and no longer have to fear for her clinic being discovered by those who employed her in Iacon.

He was doing this, for a better future, a better future for all of Cybertron.

He reached up and kissed her again, this time watched by curious optics.

Pulling away he spoke again. "I love you, I love you Dust, we're going to win this."

The smile on her faceplates made his spark soar. It was that knowing smile, the one filled with so much love and adoration, they'd get through this, together.

The giggle from the little sparkling made his spark hit the stratosphere, he reached out, and let the little sparkling wrap his whole servo around the tip of his digit.

They'd never have their own... the Senate had stolen that option from his love, and he refused to just... use another femme for that, so, they would adopt, this one, and any others that so desperately needed someone to look after them.

That was why he would fight, why he counted the days till the revolution began... surely it wasn't too far away?

Only time would truly tell... for now, he was going to enjoy this moment...

"Cade?"

"Hmm?"

"The little one's in recharge."
He nodded and watched her ever so carefully place the tiny sparkling back in the incubator, an action that would normally seem impossible with a frame of her size.

And if he ducked his helm just low enough to catch a peak of her hidden array?

Well, he couldn't help his love was so tall.

She turned back to him once the little one was safely sealed away.

They were barely out of the room and into their own when they were on each other again, his pedes wrapped around her hips, neck cables craning as she bowed hers down.

This time, it wasn't a slow kiss, it was one of heated passion.

His spark strained, desperate to be released.

His HUD pinged, requesting his spark camber to open.

Just as every time, he had to press the negative… no matter how much it hurt to deny himself the wonder that was his loves golden and white spark.

Especially when he let the rest of his systems do as they desired.

Coming back to the present from that memory was painful, coming back to a world where his beloved was gone… her features renewed in his memory banks, even that little one, the one they'd held onto, through the revolution, and even into the beginnings of the war… before they'd been forced to leave him in safer servos… only to lose contact with them soon after, before they'd ever properly designated him… it was… beyond words to describe really, just how much his spark now hurt once more, reminded of it's agony.

He'd long since wept all he could for his lost beloved, his spark, though not bonded to hers, had still torn itself asunder when he'd received that final message.

He'd only listened to it once, when he thought it was just her reporting in…

He'd saved that recording, in a memory heavily encrypted thanks to Soundwave, the similarly grieving mech had done much the same.

The last words their beloveds had ever spoken to them…

Soundwave had taken his vow of silence the cycle they were declared offline, what good were words when they couldn't convince the love of one's life to stay, to stay with them, not go out into battle…?

Barricade had taken no such vow, they'd been stationed in different cities when Dust had been called to be the medic for a unit that also held Shrike, those two always fought in the same unit when they could, something about Dust wanting to make sure the smaller scientist didn't over do it, which she did, every single time.

His last words to her had been full of love, promising a quiet lunar cycle with a few cubes of high grade he'd managed to distil.

She'd smiled, though her smile hadn't been as sure, she always fretted before a battle, and that one had been set to be a big one…
He hadn't been worried, the unit was tasked with infiltrating the target before the main army began to fight, they'd have the target claimed before the Autobots even arrived…

At least… that had been the plan…

His last words had been 'I love you.' Her's had been. 'I love you too, I'll hold you to that promise of Energon.'

He'd ended the call after a quick shared laugh, his shift was going to start soon.

At least his last memory of her faceplates were of her laughing… optics full of love and a servo just visible stroking the side of the camera in a mock caress...

"I'M BACK WHORES!"

Snapped from his remembrance, his helm swung to see Fernando standing in the entrance, hobbled by something in his talons.

A closer inspection of the thing made him want to purge, and he thanked fate that Frenzy was catatonic.

For all he disliked organics, and humans in general… the bright red flesh of a boiled human wasn't something he wanted to see, especially as the flesh, so well passed cooked sloughed off the bone in chunks that splattered to the floor on contact…

There it was, clutched in those talons, it's final scream still on its face, he couldn't even tell if it had been male or female, all he knew was it had been boiled alive.

Fernando didn't notice his disgust, his visible features morphed into a sadistic smirk. "And I just discovered a nifty trick~."

He glanced to Starscream and the other two, they were grinning, smirking even, as if Fernando had finally won some sort of favour in their depraved processors…

He had to get this to Kia.

In the moment that followed, Barricade witnessed something that would likely never degrade in his memory core.

Fernando leaned down, snapped open his lower jaw far further than was natural, and bit the boiled alive human in half.

The crack of bone, the sheering of frayed flesh…

Barricade turned, and left, he didn't run, no, he sent a delayed message to Starscream, he would go ahead, he would go to Europe.

That was the last straw, and Kia needed to know exactly what her younger brother had done.

Preferably as soon as she opened his last report…

Or the one before that…

He'd been sending reports more frequently, made them shorter and sweeter, easier for the Harpy to read through and send a reply quickly.
But the last three hadn't even been opened.

Another reason to go to Europe, to find out what happened to his new employer.

Triage Earth

Derrick was awake, he had been for a few hours…

It had been well over a week since his heart attack, but they were keeping him on the ship, attached to all of these machines monitoring his heart.

He shouldn't be surprised, his heart had gone and gotten itself in an offbeat rhythm, it was a curse in the Orichiono line to have heart conditions, his big sisters were the most severe case of course.

His thoughts were cut off by the door opening to the small medical ward that existed within the ship.

He wasn't even surprised when Serene popped her head through the door. "Look who I brought for you~!" She chirped, before her head vanished with a yelp of surprise, and Ivan strode through the door, closing it behind him. "Damnit kid, you couldn't of picked a worse time, could yah?"

Derrick noticed his bodyguards hand cuff was missing the other half, looked like he'd been cut free instead of freed with a key, the captain didn't know about this visit.

He shrugged at the remark. "I had little control in the matter… Ivan… while I was under… I saw my sisters…" His expression fell.

At least, he thought they were his sisters, the words he heard sounded like them, the dry wit of Wren and the bubbly snark of Aria weren't easily duplicated, but half the time, when he was looking through them… they… they were made of metal? Their arms were wings?

He couldn't tell Ivan that, he'd think it was just a dream brought about by the amount of CPR and shocks they had to give him to get his heart beating on the regular again.

How was he supposed to tell Ivan he'd seen his sisters, and equally metal Harpy looking females responding to Ira and Kia, all in turn speaking with Optimus Prime and his Bots?!

He had a physical mutation, but telling Ivan that might just be enough to label him a victim of the sickness rot…

He didn't want to die, and he didn't want Ivan to deal with the consequences of having to put him down.

So, he didn't mention it, maybe if it kept happening… but who would look after Epsilon? Who would keep looking for his sisters?

Ivan wasn't a psychic, so missed all of his internal musings. "Oh? Anything useful?"

Derrick shook his head. "Just… memories… some good… some bad…” He glanced away.

Ivan's expression fell, and he moved to sit in the chair next to the medical cot. "Hey, kid, life's like that, just focus on the good, tell me about some maybe?"

Derrick huffed in good humour. Of course Ivan would use this chance to pry into the secretive world of the Orichionos… Maybe… considering everything, Ivan could get more than a little
peak... "Well... I remember, this one time, I couldn't sleep well... so I snuck into their room, they didn't notice, they just kept talking... I'll always marvel at how they did that... taking turns... then... I noticed something, their conversation had a third part to it, yeah they were talking, but less to each other and more to the air, I think they were talking to someone, cause they seemed to get replies about what they said... That was the night I met him..."

Ivan's head tilted to the side. "Him?"

"Well, Aria and Wren called him 'Voice', he was the manors poltergeist... He proved it by poking me." He pointed to a scar on his cheek. "He'd never thought to trim his claw like nails... he kept us all safe, we think he was a previous bodyguard who'd died defending the family at some point."

He glanced to Ivan, and was shocked to see the mans attention so rapt and focused on him, it was like he'd just offered the man the holy grail itself. "Yeah... so... Voice was like, our guardian, and big brother, he was more with the twins, but because they were always close, I guess he was always there too, looking out for all of us, he's the one who trained them to fight..." To kill.

Ivan nodded. "Yeah, sounds about right for the Orichiono's, fuck I ain' even surprised."

He had to laugh at that. "Yeah... I was just happy there was someone else keeping us safe... explained how they knew how to poison their mother..."

It explained a lot of things, Voice seemed dead set on training his big sisters in how to be unstoppable killing machines... he never got a full explanation from them, but something had happened, something bad, and now, his big sisters had no qualms in killing, by the time he met Voice officially that night, in fact, the whole time he'd known them, since father had introduced him and his mother to his half sisters after they poisoned their own mother... they'd always been volatile, hostile, Aria kept a shiv knife in her pocket, even when they were sleeping in bed...

Ivan huffed. "Let me guess, he taught Wren to shoot, and Aria to throw knives with enough accuracy to split a flies wing?" The man seemed to shudder at that, likely remembering the time he learned never to sneak up behind the twins.

Derrick actually nodded. "Yeah, he figured Wren's eye... would be an advantage, turned out he was right, then Aira wanted something to be her signature, and well, the rest is history."

Ivan was nodded, then shook his head. "I believe it, every damn word out of your mouth... Fuck... a poltergeist?!"

Derrick just shrugged from where he was lying on the cot. "Yeah, I mean, I was like, what? Six? I thought the Voice was the coolest thing since sliced bread, hell, even cooler... but then..." He trailed off.

Ivan leaned in. "And then...?"

Derrick reached up and rubbed at his chest. "He... a few months after my mother... you know... did what she did... when we were finally safe from harm... the risk of someone trying to murder us in our sleep that belonged to blood... he... he vanished... like a flame, taken out by a sharp wind... they were... I didn't see them for weeks... they destroyed their room, screamed... thrashed... I could hear them... no matter where I was in the manor, they'd scream at nothing... everyday I put food and water just inside their room, when they screamed themselves to sleep... I don't think they had much of it... by the time they came out... they were skeletal..."

He was shaking, the memories of that time... they took losing Voice... badly... he was like... their
stability, the load bearer that held them up… with him gone, his big sisters crumbled… it was the one time, the one time he ever saw them break… or more accurately, heard.

It changed something in them, their protectiveness of him skyrocketed, arguably beyond sane parameters, but his big sisters had always had the odd screw loose, losing Voice just loosened a few more.

It was why they'd taken Ira on, that broken little teen they'd pulled to safety, her instability became their stability, their norm, and they craved that, he figured their reasoning was, if they could support Ira enough for the redhead to stabilise, they could support each other to do the same.

When they began the Triage, when it snowballed into a global underground superpower in only a few short years, Derrick believed they had found stability, and he was right in a way, the constant demands, the weight of the world on their shoulders, it kept them focused on the now, not on those they'd lost in the ever furthering past…

And then, they vanished too… just like Voice… just as quickly… and suddenly… he knew exactly how they felt… and yet, he knew their bond with Voice was different, he'd never put a finger on specifically how, he just knew.

"Kid, hey, hey kid, snap out of it."

Ivan's voice brought him out of those thoughts, and he looked back to his bodyguard apologetically. "Yeah, sorry Ivan… just… got lost in thought…"

The burly man just huffed. "Yeah, I know, you're sisters always did that when they had meetings with Kia and Ira."

He could imagine that.

Their conversation wasn't able to progress any further, as the sounds of hammering on the door cut off what Derrick had planned to say next.

The Captain had found out about Ivan's little jaunt to the medical ward, and wanted him right back down in the cargo hold last week.

Derrick watched Ivan get up and go, though before he did, he leant down and whispered something in his ear. "Four weeks, we've been on this ship for four weeks, we're not going to Iceland."

Derrick just nodded, letting his bodyguard know he understand, the ship would need more fuel eventually, and that would be when they escaped.

Not two minutes after Ivan left, Serene appeared, a bright smile on her features, as she waved his phone. "I finished transferring everything!"

He gave her a weak smile, feigning that he was still rather disoriented, and that after seeing Ivan, he needed more rest.

She'd pouted, and to his dismay, merely took the same seat Ivan had, and reached out, taking his hand, like some concerned relative.

He would not humour what her gaze actually meant, he wanted nothing to do with one of Ivan's daughters.
Orichiono Manor, Monaco

The roar of the massive Peterbilt as it pulled up into the large garage drew the attention of the staff, who seemed to flock on mass to the double doors that lead further into the manor.

Over twenty sets of eyes watched on as the familiar red, blue and silver pulled to a stop, the trailer it, or rather, he pulled drawing most of the eyes.

They all knew who was inside.

Stephan stepped forwards, and pressed a button on a panel on the wall.

There was the sound of machinery coming to life, and suddenly the entire floor the Peterbilt and trailer were on, were dropping downwards, down into the bunker, where the eyes would not follow.

They would return to their duties maintaining the manor in it's perfect condition, nothing less would be accepted for the return of their ladies.

It took over two minutes for the piece of floor to be lowered down, a new temporary facsimile of the flooring closing in place far above in the garage, plunging both semi and trailer in darkness until the massive trucks high beams lit up.

Finally the flooring came to a stop, revealing the bunker, now almost complete.

The Cybertronian scaled bunker was an impressive feat, the entire thing sans berth rooms was open plan.

Now it was just a matter of creating the technology to fill it, but that would come later.

For now, Optimus Prime, unhitched himself from the trailer, looking over to see his weapons specialist approach. "Ironhide…"

The smaller red and black themed mech just nodded in understanding, they all knew the situation.

Both turned their attention to the trailer, and Optimus sent the command for the trailer to unfold, the same trick the original trailer that had carried the twins to the Gilded Falcon had.

It did just as commanded, the top, sides, front and back shifting away and folding into the base to reveal the precious cargo within.

The beast form of the twins were soon revealed, ocean green optics scrunched up with the sudden light, as much of a grimace as their beast form could do present on their features, they shifted, but didn't make much progress in moving.

Unsurprising, considering how tightly strapped down to the base of the trailer they were.

It was a precaution, they had been kept in Rome for six days, whilst Ratchet did all he could to try and undo or at least abate some of the damage caused by whatever relic it was that was now merged with their spark chamber.

They had had two more outbursts in that time, blows to the helm had sufficed to knock them into stasis both times with little issue…

But it had been decided that, for the twins to work through their scrambled memories, to try and get control of the outbursts, being in a more familiar location, such as their childhood home, would
be preferable.

And that's how they ended up here, in their beast form, as it could theoretically do less damage, strapped down to the base of the trailer, managing their claustrophobia, something they'd begrudgingly admitted to when the trailer had been brought up, with both Prime and his Weapons Specialist looking down at them with a sickening amount of pity.

They couldn't talk in their beast form, not that the strap holding their beak shut would of let them, another precaution, they were all very much aware of how sharp their beak was, and how it would slice through the other straps with ease if they'd had a panic on the journey.

Judging from the talon marks they could spot where the twins had kicked out, that had evidently happened at some point.

Now with a simple command, the straps came loose from their fastenings, and a heavy silence fell between the four of them as they all froze in place for a moment.

After the blink of those large, avian optics, plating began to shift, upwards of a few million feathers pulling into themselves as they vanished into the tiny spots on the Harpies protoform, revealing the shifting armour plating as they shifted into their bipedal form.

It was a fascinating transformation, one all the Harpies seemed to avoid as much as possible, likely due to the foreign feeling of the process being so drastically different from anything they had experienced when they were simply human.

Regardless, when the transformation was complete, and the twin Harpies remained laying on the trailer, hesitant to move any further, Optimus knelt, and offered his servo, and waited.

Their optics were closed now, this smaller set, the ones he'd tried to spy on more than one occasion, now they were no longer hidden by their visor, and had instead been hidden behind closed optic coverings ever since the twins had came back too those few days ago, and realised they'd broken the visor that had previously hidden them.

Sais visor had apparently had the job of preventing them from being blinded by the ambient light around them.

A revelation that they'd been able to pry from them after the twins had tried to walk around without their optics open.

Now, he waited for them to be ready, there was no reason to rush them, to just grab them and carry them somewhere, no, they needed to be as calm as possible, and taking away the decision of where they went was abjectly the furthest thing from what they needed at present.

He and Ironhide, who kept a few steps away so as not to crowd them, waited as their protrusions bopped and bounced, picking up anything and everything as they seemed to get another check of the world around them.

Then and only then, did Aria's wing slowly begin to move, shifting away from their now larger and strewn out form.

He took the furthest joint in a careful hold, just enough to help hold the wing up, tired and stiff from being bound down, before he began to slowly move backwards, and pull.

They were so light, even that was enough to get their frame scraping across the trailers flooring, until Wren's leg moved, and landed on the ground, it was a bit of an awkward angle, but soon
enough, he was pulling them upwards, up so they could stand themselves.

Only then did he step back, watching those protrusions flare, and the floor length tail feathers as well, acting to balance the rest of them without anything visual to base their orientation.

Only then did Aria speak. "Thank you… for helping us."

They'd become timid, the loss of their sight in this form had cost them some of the confidence and businesswomen bravado he and the rest of his mechs had come to suspect from them.

A reasonable thing really, so he just slowly made a show of nodding, keeping his optics on those protrusions.

They'd finally gotten a proper explanation on how they functioned, something of a hybrid between echolocation, and a 360 degree radar, picking up the electronic pulses unique to everything, and mapping them out into a translation of the world around them.

It was hard to wrap the processor around, just as hard as trying to live by that, hearing and touch alone apparently.

He kept his hold on Aria's wing, for she didn't pull away, he assumed she was using it to ground the both of them in place, and they were waiting for him to lead them on.

So lead them on he did, walking oh so slowly backwards to make sure nothing happened, there wasn't anything to trip on perse, but the twins were still very new to getting by without their optics.

He glanced to Ironhide for a moment, a silent request, and the smaller mech nodded, making his way to the platform, he'd patrol for a while, give the twins their much needed space and privacy.

Optimus felt his back come to one of the walls. "I'm going to sit now, turn around and you can join me."

They nodded, and he did just that, keeping his hold on Aria's wing so she could feel him move down, until his aft was on the ground and his legs stretched out in front of him.

Only after a few more moments, did the twins move, slowly Aria pulled her wing free, and they cautiously turned their helm, the rest of their frame following the motion until their back met the wall, and they carefully slid down.

Their broad shoulder armour banged against his, and they flinched further away from the sound and impact. "Sorry." They both mumbled in unison.

He just nodded slowly, slow, grand gestures were the easiest for them to pick up. "It is alright." He let them fall into silence.

It was in moments of vulnerability, that humans seemed to come out of their shells most, he knew there were things the twins wished to say, many things, he just had to wait until they'd collected themselves enough to say them.

Almost ten minutes later, it happened.

"We should of told you…" Aria muttered, her wing shifting along with her pede, so they could rest the side of their helm against the new bend in their upper knee joint, the wing coming to wrap around it all. "That… that some of our eyes found the clues, that lead to the relic… We should of
told you… had at least one of you come with us…"

He nodded. "Yes… why didn't you?"

They shrugged, Wren answered. "We… we were scared… the Allspark was something Sector Seven had had in their clutches for decades, they’d documented everything, could create life from machines, big, obviously alien… we knew what we were going into, and we had you lot… but… all we knew was a glimpse of what it looked like when we first found it… where it was, in theory, theory turned out to be true… and that it had brought us here… we had no idea what it even did, same with Ira's relics."

He nodded along, but then got caught on the last word. "Relics? As in the plural definition?"

They nodded, Aria took her turn. "Yeah… Ira's friend tossed her her car keys… all she had time to do was see the four keys weren't her car keys, before she was hitting the forest floor in Germany… so there's four, key shaped looking relics we need to hunt down… but after what that relic did to us, she's probably not interested in even looking for them…which is… understandable…"

Wren was using her wing to rub at their chassis, Ratchet had done what he could, but the relic was not something that would just, move out of the way, so his CMO had to, persuade, a good chunk of the cabling, and even shift the pumps their shared spark chamber contained to fit around those bridges and spikes of metal, it took away most of the pain, but the risk they were in from a punctured fuel pump or spark was high now, too high for anyone's liking.

He continued to nod before speaking. "Ira has been taking your… situation… especially hard…"

They nodded, and the look of pain on their features at the notion was telling. Wren answered. "She found us… unresponsive, she doesn't take loss well… thought we were dead…"

"We told her we weren't going anywhere when we first woke up… but then the pain hit… and well… we went back under, that's when she called for Kia… the second time we think..." Aria followed.

"You probably noticed how much she clung to us… she clung to us even as… even as we…" Wren cut off, their faceplates pressing into both of their bent knees, they were bent double now, and in the light, he could see they were starting to shake.

Carefully, slowly, he rested a servo on the ridged plating on their back, and began to push the servo downwards, he'd seen the twins do it to Ira when the Red Kite lost her composure whilst they were all in Rome, it seemed to help ground the smaller scavenger.

Grounding was exactly what they needed, and as he felt them push back into his servo, the ridges plating flaring to try and follow his servo down, he knew it was working. "What, did the relic do?"

They both huffed and Aria answered. "Better question, what didn't it do? It… it got into our head, into our mind, and shoved everything around, the timeline of our entire life is in tatters… and we're gonna have to piece it all back together… but… there's certain things… that were pulled out of where we put them… and… it's stuff that's making us…" She trailed off.

"Lash out?" He provided, they nodded.

A quick search similar to their description, and he found it, compartmentalising, the act of storing memories away when they were too painful to have in the primary conscious, but could make sudden and volatile re-occurrences, causing relapses.
It troubled him, he wouldn't hide that. "You are not alone in this… not anymore…"

He did much the same after all, burying painful memories down, a number of which were starting to resurface, they weren't causing the reactions like those of the twins, he'd compartmentalised them all for different reasons… but they were starting to rise back to the surface as well…

He continued to offer his physical touch to ground them.

Then, the lights started to dim, and he spotted their optics starting to crack open, the faint glow within causing his spark to jump.

By the time the entire bunker was nearly pitch black, when only the bright whites of their armour hadn't quite yet blended into the dark world, did those optics finally open fully.

Green, bright near emerald/ocean green, with tiny flecks of blue in the finer mechanisms.

They were wide, the central orbs taking up much more of the optics than his own, a tell of their light sensitivity.

The glow was bright, lighting up the nasal ridge that had been hidden by the visor, and their optic ridges, in an eerie green hue.

A few moments of staring, and the sound of parts moving brought him fully back to the present, just in time for one wing to wrap around his back, followed by the other.

Swiftly followed by the rest of them pushing up against him, and a muttered. "Thank you." Before they pulled back away, rose, and walked away to where the rooms were, there was already one set up for the owners of the bunker, obviously.

He listened more than saw them go, when the sound of large hanger sized doors sliding back shut reached him, the lights in the main bunker slowly turned back on.

He glanced around where he was sitting, and spotted something, one of their under wing feathers, the white with mottled black zigzags…

He carefully picked it up, observing the fascinating thing, so small, but able to pull all of it's fibres in, and shrink down into its designated spot on their protoform…

He looked around, and then pocketed the feather into his subspace, though also spotted a few more just laying around, apparently the feathers were replaced on a somewhat frequent basis.

Still, it was a nice little trinket to ask Lena to hang up somewhere in his altmode for him.

He only hoped they wouldn't mind.

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Welp, that's all for now, hope you all enjoyed!

Edit - Drew this for the chapter at the request of a friend on Discord
Let me take it from here. Code, you've brought them close enough.
Chapter 33

All I will say? Brace yourselves.

"Captain... captain please! Be a reasonable man!"

"Reasonable? Reasonable?! I took you and that mad bull of a man in, welcomed you to my ship, gave my daughter my blessing to marry you, took care of you when your heart flipped it's shit, and what do you do? YOU MURDERED MY DAUGHTER! In cold blood! Now, I'm returning the favour, you lame pig."

"Blessing?! You wanted me to marry her?!"

"Enough talking, pig, the beasts of the deep will have more use of you now. Now hold still, and die."

"DERRICK!"

They lurched up, optics wide in the pitch black room, vents labouring as the armour on their sides flared, letting off a collective blast of hot air in a desperate attempt to cool off their already running hot frame, the room, however, was no salvation, the temperature having already spiked beyond a comfortable sauna.

Steam already fogged their optics, and they stumbled to rise, the door sliding open, revealing the bunker beyond as the steam cascaded out around them.

Their optics darted out, left wing bracing on the opposite side of the corridor, stabilising them on unsteady pedes.

Pede steps were approaching, by how much the ground shook, they knew it was Optimus, knew he'd have questions, knew that they weren't in any state to get around them…

This was the fourth time now… the fourth time they'd had that dream, in a row… it was coming quicker and quicker in the night, stealing their much needed rest…

It had been so real… the smell of the open ocean, tainted by the metal of the ship, the foul scent of oil and diesel, mixed with the barely felt rise and fall as the giant cargo ship crashed over the waves…

The look of madness and rage in the other man's eyes… the pleading, desperate… scared… oh their little brother had sounded so scared…

And they could do nothing, they were seeing what he was seeing, moving with him… they couldn't lunge into the line of fire… they couldn't take the shot themselves… not this time…

That moment, that moment right after the trigger was pulled, they felt it, as that burning hot piece of metal met flesh, the wrong side to hit their little brothers single heart… oh but it burned Wren's.

They could hear Optimus trying to get their attention, but they'd pitched forwards at some point, banging the front flare of their helm against the concrete of the opposite wall, their little brother hated bland walls, an art fan to the end, it was why they even bothered painting, well, him and Ira,
she apparently liked the atrocities they made too…

They could feel his presence now, he'd stopped walking, he was close enough to touch them.

Wren's wing was rubbing at their front, where the phantom pain of that bullet still was… that had been… too real… a memory… not a fantasy… and that did not bode well for them…

If what they'd seen was… true… their little brother was dead… or soon to be… or worse… had been… for a long time… and they'd been trying so hard… so hard to find a way to get home… get back to him… keep him safe… their little brother, their sweet, innocent little brother…

The only family they had left…

And if the dream was the be believed, it was too real to be a dream though… right? Back on track… it meant… their little brother, who they'd fight the gods to keep safe… keep from being tainted by the sins of the world… he was a murderer… had taken at least one life before his own demise…

A noise cracked through their throat, and it took a moment to realise what it was… a sob… they'd just sobbed, and they were crying… ancestors they were such a mess… and Optimus was standing right there, watching, made weary of contact from the outbursts…

Those damn outbursts… no one touched them now, refused to, they didn't want to set the twins off, that was the claim at least.

They weren't ornate china… were they? Something pretty, or rather, hideous, to look at, marvel from afar, and never be of any real use?

Another sob tore through, despite the attempt to swallow it back down.

The lubricant was coming fast now, leaking out of their half lidded optics, it was still too bright in the corridor, the visor, their stupid visor, they just had to break it, didn't they?

Touch… something… someone… Optimus… he'd touched Wren's wing, just enough for them to register he was there, he seemed to hold perfectly still as he waited for their protrusions to flare, picking up his stance, completely relaxed, worry on his features, they couldn't quite read his optics though, they weren't that good yet.

Another sob, and they'd moved, clutching onto the large mech with all the coherency they could, they tried to speak, but all that came out was incoherent mutters and whimpers.

They couldn't put it into words… that wasn't a memory of theirs… it was something else…

How else were they supposed to take it such a scene? The pain? The terror?

The sweet touch of Grim once she reached him…

Grim would tell them if Derrick was dead… right?

They had to contact Grim… a corpse… they needed to kill something… get one of their roses… put it on the corpse, and wait for their dear Aunt to rise from the shadows, smiling, and pass them their little brothers soul, she promised she'd do that, if they ever failed to keep him safe, she'd put his soul in a pretty little locket, and they could wear it, wear him around their neck, keep their little brother safe and in the living world with them…
But how were they supposed to do that? Optimus was holding them now, pulled close, their head resting against the glass of his chest, they could feel as much as hear the powerful spark, and the soothing waves coming of his EM field, he was trying to calm them down, comfort them… they appreciated the gesture, but they had to move, it was still dark out, more than enough time to snatch someone walking alone on a street, knock out the cameras first of course, snatch them up, and then slit their throat with a talon before they had time to scream, yes, that's what they'd do, then Grim would give them their brother, and they'd finally be reunited…

But at the same time, they hesitated… this felt so… nice… being held… having a comforting hand run down their back, one that wasn't made of bone… daggers… or red hot brimstone… no… this felt nice

(Why not… just have this for a few moments?)

/We have to find out if Derrick is… gone… we have to…/

(Ok… but… if he… if he is… there's no rush right? Optimus is actually a pretty good hugger…)

/I'm not denying that… but… we have to, I know you're scared of the truth Aria but…/

(Grim didn't mention anything when we met her at the temple… that was what… a week ago?)

/Four weeks actually… we've been… out of it, remember?/

(Ummmmhmm… Five more minutes getting hugged… please?)

/Fine… five more minutes… or when he pulls away… I'll admit this is… nice…/

(Just like when Voice used to hold us? Minus the feeling of being hugged by a pile of knives?)

/Yes… minus the knives part…/

(…Wren?)

/Yes?/

(I miss Voice… I know, I know, I've said it a thousand million times before, and you've admitted to it… sometimes… but like… he'd know what to do… right? He always had a plan…)

/I do miss him Aria… that's true… and I do miss that he'd always know what to do to keep us safe… the plan for everything certainly helped my nerves…/

(…Optimus is talking to us… think we should pay attention?)

/Hmmm… no… his voice sounds nice as background noise…/

(Hmmm… Agreed, all in favour of just enjoying the sound of that baritone say I. I.)

/I… And when we're ready, we go tack down some fresh meat… that shipment of glass quality sand is coming soon, right?/
(Should be, we strong armed the owner of the plant pretty hard, it'll be here tomorrow morning at the latest, Flint and Max will bring it down, I want to see how his new arm is doing.)

/Oh good point, we're going to have to get back to recruiting soon, we've fallen behind on our targets.../

(Wren, honey, we took a proverbial sledgehammer to the head, we're allowed to fall a bit behind.)

/Not if you don't want me being twitchy before bed now that I've actually remembered that./

(Fucking damnit.)

/Sorry./

(No, no, not mad at you, I'm mad at the fuckers being all fucking smug in there, I've counted at least ten now... can't understand a fucking word they're saying though.)

/Same, and they're giving me a headache.../

(Oh hey, when the fuck did Ironhide get here?)

/Are we still crying?/

(Fuck me sideways, we are.)

/How do we stop that again?/

(Fuck if I know, this doesn't normally happen.)

Jasper Nevada

It was a quiet day, no traffic incidents reported, no one speeding with Prowl visible, and no teenage hijinks to interrupt.

Maria told them to take the rest of the day off after lunch, today was too hot for shenanigans, but to keep a radio on, for both of them, that was more for the receptionist to hear, the three of them knew Prowl didn't need a radio.

Prowl was on his mat pile, fiddling around with one of the red faces he'd discovered years ago he could remove.

He glanced over to Annie, she had busied herself with making them a pie, apple and cherry pie, he could already smell the ingredients, it was promising to be a good one.

He looked back to the badges.

They looked back, ever scowling, he didn't like scowling, so why did the badges always have to?

Maybe he'd find out why they were scowling soon enough?

Maria was calling in some old favours, trying to get him and Annie a few weeks to scour Monaco,
try to find the big red and blue semi.

It was strange, ever since he'd seen the picture of it, he'd had this strange feeling somewhere in the machination that was his own form, that... he knew that truck...

He'd probably seen one pass through Jasper at some point, it was a pretty recent model, this was probably just another case of de ja vu, he'd experienced the odd one of those in the past thirty years.

And yet... he knew it was different this time, it felt different.

That truck... was something he should know about, should remember.

"Hey Prowl?"

"Yes love?"

"Do you think I should pack like... a swimsuit? Apparently the hotel Narisa recommended has a pool, and, you know, no pool in Jasper."

"Hmm... do you even own one?"

"As a matter of fact I do! It's right... GAH!"

He jumped at her exclamation, nearly hitting the platform. "Annie! Are you okay?! What happened?!"

He already had the answer when he spotted the impressive flock of moths that had burst from one of her draws.

One that evidently, Annie hadn't opened in a while.

"Gah, damn moths... okay, scratch the previous statement. "She reached in and pulled back a few shreds of fabric. "This, couldn't hold a baby."

He chuckled at that, she always looked so cute when she pouted.

She caught his humour, and her expression promptly became one of scandal. "Prowl! My pout is not cute!"

He loved the fact that they'd been married so long, she knew exactly what he was laughing about, Annie said the doors on his back gave him away, whatever that meant, he couldn't turn his head that far back, and they'd never found a mirror large enough for him to properly see.

Jasper wasn't exactly a good place for pristine reflective surfaces, what with all the sand blasts, courtesy of the arid desert.

Whatever he was about to say was cut off with a sound, that only then reached his audible range, a jet fighter... curious, the nearest air base was a good distance away, and he was fairly certain none of them had flight paths over Jasper, they did their training further out in the desert, where the people of Jasper and her sister towns wouldn't so easily see...

Annie caught the sound soon after, human hearing wasn't as good. "Hey... what wise guys flying over a populated area?"

He shrugged, it mattered little to them, they had to go swimsuit shopping, and Annie had to make...
sure the pie didn't burn in the oven… Prowl looked up, his audios straining, was that in his head, or was that whistle getting… louder?

In a moment of sheer panic, he realised what it was, he didn't know how he knew, nor had the time to process it, all he had time to do was grab Annie, tuck her under his chest, and duck.

The whistle was screaming, Annie was shouting, but all he could do was screw his golden eyes shut, and brace for impact, those doors on his back breaking away and shifting to hide themselves under his outer metal plates.

Just in time for the world to slow down, for one singular moment, as something pierced through the ceiling behind him, and smashed into the concrete, detonating the payload.

He was sent flying, the blast knocking his senses out, all except the sudden burning pain that raced across his back, fire, he was on fire!

A thousand fire and police safety trainings came back at once, and he was rolling, his side banging into the crumbling wall of his home, it crashed down around him, and he barely had time to hold his hands under his chest to keep Annie from being hit, to take the falling bricks himself.

Only… Annie wasn't there…

His hands clenched at nothing but open air, his eyes snapped open.

All he could see were shattered pieces of his home, burning and charred around him…

He was shaking his head before he managed to croak out a word. "Annie! Annie! An…! ANNIE!"
He'd spotted her, half buried under a beam from the platform… oh God she was bleeding, her skin, what he could see through the holes already singed in her clothes were burned…

He wanted to empty his gut… he army crawled to her, the bricks on his back sliding off and crashing to the ground, breaking into pieces from the drop.

With the same care one would pick up a broken bird, he picked up his injured wife, love of his simple life…

She was unresponsive… unconscious… the blow to the head had knocked her out, just as she had been stolen from his hold by the blast wave.

He wanted to cry, to scream, to beg for someone to save her, to turn back the time…

But he didn't, over the roar of the fire, there was the roar of engines, and the sound he made when he went between his humanoid form, and police car form…

"My my…You Autobots… Not even bothering to cloak your energy signatures any more? My and to pick such a place as your… base…?"

A towering mechanical figure stepped through the fire and smoke.

Prowl had never seen something so ugly in his life.

And he'd seen that picture Annie found of a Hagfish with it's jaw out.

"… Prowl?! You're online?!"

Prowl jolted, the disbelief in this other… robots voice… as his scowling eyes, more red than blood,
widened in a moment of surprise.

He pulled Annie further out of sight under him.

Then, the robot was chuckling, the jet wings on his wings bouncing, oh where was Annie to read this ones mood when he needed her?!

Right, unconscious, with a serious head wound, caused by the one standing over him.

"My? No dry remark? No 'You're under arrest?', none of that boring legal codex? … Oh well, save your voice for when you beg for a merciful death." The robot was smirking, revealing a mouth full of equally hideous teeth.

Annie groaned then, oh why did she have to groan?!

The robot became intrigued, then, pitched a leg back.

He was so confused, it was already too late to react, the giant metal leg was hurtling towards him.

His head snapped back, the rest of his body being dragged along with it, sending him flying back into the wall that was still partially standing at the back of his home.

Revealing Annie, his sweet, spunky Annie to the gaze of the robot that had destroyed his home.

"Oh! You have a pet! Oh don't worry Prowl, I'll take good care of her… I'll make her dance for me… yes… dance around baster fire… or whatever it is you have her for…"

His memory flashed of the life he'd had with Annie, and the light in his chest screamed, roared, **NO**, Annie was *his*.

This monster had hurt her enough as is.

But he couldn't put her down… the fire would get her… but he had to make sure she was safe before he could even think of balling a fist and sending it right into that fuckers face.

The other robot seemed to pick up on the sudden rage he felt, and actually seemed to take a step back.

This robot knew him… somehow… likely knew the old him.

Apparently the old him wasn't someone this robot had intended to piss off so royally.

Good.

Thinking fast, he dropped Annie to the ground, and in a mad scramble that had the claw like appendages at the front of his feet tearing into the charred remains of the floor, he lunged with a roar, fist pulled back, and going right for the other robots gut.

His fist landed true, and the other Robot staggered back, clutching his front, where a fist shaped dent was left, just beneath the glass cockpit at the centre of his chest.

His clenched fist hurt like a son of a bitch, but he didn't care, he had a hundred thousand more to deliver, and a little pain wasn't going to stop him.

Something flashed next to his vision, and going on impulse, he accepted.
The next thing he knew, something shifted on his back, and he was pulling a dual handed shotgun.

He'd never fired one before, to his memory, but it fit like a glove in his hands, cocking the barrel, and firing felt like something he'd done all his life.

The round exploded the moment it left the muzzle, each tiny shell screeching as they exploded into little balls of light, and tore clean through the other robots front.

You never shoot a shotgun at point blank, but he wasn't point blank, he was just far away to put a nice few hundred holes in the bastards front, they weren't deep, but the blue stuff now seeping down the larger robots front was tell enough.

Something inside him screamed in delight, another roared in anger, and a final one, was icy cold and silent, he lent into that one, cocked another round, and fired, this time, aiming higher.

He hit the upper torso, knocking the robot back again, causing him to stumble over the remains of the hanger doors.

This was when something went wrong.

The other robot fell into smoke, and for a moment Prowl couldn't see him.

That was enough time for the other robot to recover, and come back swinging.

Suddenly there was pain just under his chest, the first punch returned, with the force to clear his feet from the ground.

He groaned as he stumbled back, the shotgun crashing to the ground as he tried to clutch his middle, shield the area he could feel his blood pooling.

Another strike, a blow to the side of his head, and he was being sent to the ground.

He rolled onto his front.

The worst mistake he'd likely ever made.

One of those heavy feet came crashing down, right where his doors had hidden themselves away.

He screamed, the agony causing his golden eyes to short out, the world became nothing but static, and for a moment, he believed the pain had killed him.

But he was not lucky, not that kind of lucky.

"My Prowl… you must be going soft, the second in command of the Autobot forces, making such rookie mistakes… What would Prime say if he saw you n-"

"HEY! **PERRA**! GET THE FUCK AWAY FROM MY DEPUTIES YOU ILLUMINATI FUCK SHIT WANNA BE!"

The shout was followed by the sound of a gun going off, quickly followed by a scream, and the foot being taken off, and landing not far from him.

He managed to look to where the shout had come from… and his eyes widened at what he saw.

Maria Lopez Rodriguez, Sheriff of sleepy town Jasper Nevada, with an unholy fury like that of an imploding star in her amber eyes, handgun held in unwavering hands as she stared down the robot
staring back at her, one of his red eyes shattered, blown out completely, the glass melted around the entry wound.

"I hate repeating myself you Dorito whore. Step the fuck away from my deputies, or the other eye gets it." Maria growled out, her hold on the weapon tighter than a vice grip.

The icy coldness in the over sixty year old woman put a fear within him that couldn't be explained.

It was a look of unholy fury, of promised retribution, of an anger that spanned the cosmos with its breadth… mercy upon him may he never earn that same ire.

Evidently, it was enough to put the fear of his boss within the other robot, who turned tail, jumped up, shifting back into the form of a fighter jet, and blasted off.

The force of the jets didn't even blow her back, his boss stood strong against the gale-force winds, unloading round after round into the retreating jets form.

Each round landed dead on the retreating jets thrusters, until the magazine clicked empty.

A few more clicks followed, before the gun was tossed aside, and Maria was running over, old age hindering her none as she called out to him. "Dios moi… Prowl! Sweet mama…"

He watched as she trailed off, as what happened seemed to finally dawn on her, before her attention snapped to focus again. "Annie! Where's Annie!"

Annie?… Annie! Recognition dawned on him like the robots kick to his face, which felt dented in in ways he couldn't properly register, he wasn't even sure he could speak at that point…

So, he acted, crawling back to where he'd set her down, desperate to see that she was at least in the same condition as when he'd left her…

He barely felt the agony of his own body… for it was stolen by the sight of his beloved, laying motionless, just under the reach of the smoke…

It wasn't just a head injury…

"Annie… oh god… Annie… Prowl! Call an Ambulance!"

He already was, watching frozen as Maria managed to heft the fifty year old up into a fireman's carry, and run out of his still burning home…

His home… he looked around, there was nothing left he could recognise… that monster… with one shot he'd destroyed his and Annie's home…

He wanted to sob, but he had to focus, Annie needed him to focus, he had to tell the lady on the other end what had happened.

"Ambulance… please… Old plane hanger… outside of… Jasper… to the… South… Sheriff Rodriguez is already… here…” He managed to rasp out, but it hurt so much to talk… he probably had a broken jaw at the least…

He somehow managed to get himself out of the burning ruins of his home, and spotted Maria bent over his beloved, CPR already in effect.

In a moment of clarity, his shifted down and turned on his projection, not even bothering to generate inside himself as he ran over to aid Maria.
Just as Maria hit thirty, he bent down, and breathed as much as he could into his loves lungs.

They kept going, they had to, they kept going even as the Ambulance arrived, until they could pass Annie over.

Maria grabbed his wrist before he could jump into the Ambulance with Annie, the urge to go with her fierce.

His head snapped around to stare at his boss, but stopped at her harrowed expression.

"If you go with her, your body will follow, you'll be at risk of revealing yourself…"

He wanted to rebuke her, but she kept going, though her voice seemed to waiver in pain before she even spoke the words she seemed to be dreading.

"You have to get to Monaco, I'll take care of Annie… but you have to find your own kind… or else that one will come back for you…"

Prowl couldn't help but gape at her, before pointing at the Ambulance already racing away. "That… That's my wife Maria… And you want me to just… leave her?!"

Maria shook her head. "No, I want you to one, take a drive, try and clear your head, she won't be out of surgery for a while, two, be there when she wakes up, she won't be going anywhere any time soon… and three… once she's awake, tell her you're going, and that, when she's strong enough, she'll come join you, I'll make sure of it, I promise you."

He wanted to rebuke her, like hell was he just… up and leaving his wife right after she woke back up!

But the sympathy in Maria's gaze stopped him as she reached up, grasped the sides of his shoulders, and pulled him into a hug.

The beating heart he could hear was a reassurance… at least Maria was okay, probably just as shaken as him…

His boss, not a few years from retirement, just unloaded an entire magazine at an alien robot… she was probably still processing that herself…

He needed to go drive… every part of him hurt, but he knew he had to drive some of this off first… he had just as much to process as she did, but she was taking one for the team now, and he had to make use of that.

"I'll… I'll be back by dawn…" He muttered.

Maria nodded, and let him go, watching as his human form flickered out of existence, just as the shattered front headlights of his actual form lit up, and he slowly drove away.

Maria watched until his form disappeared on the horizon, before she looked to her own vehicle, sliding into the driver's side, she pulled out her personal phone, and dialled that ever memorised number.

"It's me… it happened… Starscream found Prowl… those Magnesium laced rounds you made worked a charm, got him in the optic for you."

She listened as the one she called laughed. "Yeah, thought you'd be happy about that… but…"
Annie is hurt... badly... and there's practically nothing left of their home... I'm sending him to Monaco... but... Annie... there's not much of her that wasn't burned... enough for skin grafts to be warranted but... when I send her to Monaco, you pamper the fuck out of both of them, okay?"

Resolute confirmation came from the other side of the line, and Maria couldn't help but smile, why had she even bothered asking?

She'd known these girls for almost her whole life, they all took care of each other, and Annie was no exception, sans the whole life bit.

"Alright, signing off, see you all soon amigos." Maria cut the call and sighed, rubbing her temples.

As she was putting the phone down, she spotted something, something familiar.

Her door swung back open and she jumped out, striding right back into the fire to look over what she'd spotted.

The pump action shotgun of alien origin laid there in front of her, unflinching under her withering gaze... apparently Prowl's combat protocols had fully engaged, and he'd managed to draw the weapon...

Sighing, she reached down, and began dragging the giant hunk of weaponry behind her, she'd have to get it back to Prowl later.

Certainly explained all the small entrance wounds she'd seen when Starscream had turned to take her own bullet to the optic...

Her trunk door swung open, and with a grunt, she managed to heft the thing into the deep trunk, where it clunked against the padded metal... she'd deal with that later... Right now, she just wanted to get away, so, she walked back to her open driver side door, and clambered back in, buckling herself in after a moment of deliberation, always best to act on the same laws she upheld, despite how little she could give a toss for them in that moment.

A moment later, her car came to life, and she drove away, already spotting Jaspers one fire engine racing towards the burning warehouse.

She had an incident report to write up, and deputies to look after, she'd leave the burning remains of the hanger for the fire department to worry about, she knew the fire chief, he'd understand.

Not that James wouldn't bitch about it, he'd had a date with Carol if his bragging earlier today was anything to go on...

Somewhere at the bottom of the Atlantic.

This was, servos down, the worst idea he's had in his life, ever.

Another something went squish under his pede, something not fast enough to get out of the way.

And now there were more spines lodged in his pedes he'd have to pick out later.

Joy of joys.

But this was just his luck wasn't it? He couldn't take the form of a boat, and he was certainly never leaving the ground, so what was he to do when he reached the Atlantic but walk the whole way to the European continent?
At least he wouldn't be bothered by any mechs he wanted to explicitly shoot.

Frenzy was more alert right now, he'd waited for the minicon to become alert to tell him what he was planning.

Since then, the minicon was hidden away in one of the crevasses of his armour, holding on tight to make sure the currents didn't steal him away.

This far down, it was easy to get turned around, what with the pitch blackness, and the weakness of the planets magnetic field causing unreliable readings.

As luck had it, he'd discovered where a massive fibre optic line ran across the ocean floor, one that linked the American and European continents together.

All he had to do was keep following that and…

He came up short, something had just pinged on his HUD,

A spark signature, not his, not Frenzy's, and not one that belonged to any mech or femme he'd ever met.

Curiosity piqued, he set a way marker on his HUD for his current location next to the cable, and changed course.

If it was a bot he needed to slag, he'd slag them, if not, he might have some company.

A few kliks of walking, and he came to where the signal was reading a presence, but there wasn't anything actually… there…

Sighing to himself, he activated his spotlights as well, and let their light cut through the murk.

Almost instantly, they found a face.

He jerked back at the wide open scream on the other bots faceplates, optics blown wide despite there being no colour in them, a semi-transparent navy blue visor covering them as well.

He ran the spotlights down, the helm was attached to a surprisingly long set of neck cabling, broken up by two metal rings each a bright blue, which eventually met the rest of the very thin frame…

That was when he spotted the wings…

Realisation struck him a moment after, they were the same type of wings he'd seen on Kia and Ira… ones that replaced the arms, that stole the dexterity of the frame…

The frame, it was a mech, at least, he figured it was a mech, the two vibrant blues, along with the darker navy and blue tinted green made it a bit confusing, alongside the fact the mech seemed to be very… narrow…

Well, what off him he could see, which was, the one wing, the helm, the upper torso, and that was about it, the mech was more than halfway buried into the silt.

Another Avian… he huffed, he was at a crossroads now…

Either this was an Avian like his boss, and would probably be in his debt for saving his aft from being rusted to the sea floor… or… this one was just like Fernando…
He opted to pull the mech out of the silt at the least.

Frenzy seemed to agree, already clawing himself free enough to get a better look of the mech himself.

So, he did just that, grabbing the wing by it's furthest joint, and pulling.

It took him a moment, but the mechs frame came loose, the silt shifting away into a cloud that obscured his and Frenzy's vision for a moment.

When it cleared, he had a brief moment of near spark collapse at how far back the mechs helm had rolled backwards… so much so he could only see one of the blue rings…

That did not look healthy…

At all.

Then the current shifted, and the helm rolled sideways, and banged dully against the shoulder pauldron.

Odd, for half a moment he thought the mech was someone else… oh well.

He looked down the rest of the exposed frame, the same double jointed pedes, a narrow waist Starscream would be jealous of, the sides of the mech were barely armoured, just a few flaps to hide what a poke revealed to be external vents.

Interesting, kinetic flight must cause a lot of internal heat build-up.

His curiosity was building even more.

He remembered that the two Harpies he had seen, had each had different styles of tail feathers, perhaps this one…

'Oh for the love of Primus… that's just… excessive.' He thought, as he spied the massive green with multifaceted blue orb marked tail feathers that flowed with the currents, each one longer than the mech was tall, and easily making up a good chunk of the mechs mass.

He glanced to the sea around him… he couldn't leave the mech here… he seemed to be slightly taller than him, but so frail, he likely wouldn't be able to put up much of a fight…

He made his decision, and easily hefted the majority of the mech up over his shoulder, the wings and helm lolling behind him as he let his forward motion push the rest of the mechs frame back under his arm, giving him the mobility he needed to make his way back to the cable, with only one servo up to hold the mech in place.

Only when he arrived back at the cable, did he set himself back on track, he'd hardly wasted any time in obtaining the mech, and now, he had something to give Kia as an apology for abandoning his duty.

To be fair though, Starscream at the least was likely already on his way to Europe, his injuries from his fight at the Cosmopolitan finally healed enough for him to have a sustained flight across the massive body of water that was the Atlantic.

A joor later into his journey, he finally humoured to do a more invasive scan of the mech than just what his optics could see, his curiosity again getting the better of him.
What the scan came back with was… to say it was confusing was an understatement, outside of the basic struts, apparently mostly hollow, and the outer casing that wrapped around the spark chamber, there was little to nothing of the mechs anatomy that he could make helm or pede of.

Dust would of probably had a field day if she got to do an autopsy on a mech like this…

His spark gave a painful tug… refreshing the memory banks had brought Dust back to the forefront of his processor… and it was… interfering with his thought processes…

But he couldn't be mad at that, and especially not her… he knew what he was doing when he refreshed the entire memory bank he had of her during his trek from California to the Atlantic.

Speaking of which, he was running low on his reserves, Kia had managed to send him another hunk of crystal, hidden somewhere out of sight that only a coded message had led him to, but even that chunk was starting to get worryingly small.

Not enough to keep him, Frenzy, and whoever this mech was, going for very long.

If the mech would even ever wake up, there was a spark pulse yes, that was how he found the mech, but it was weak, and little to no EMF that he could feel.

If anything, it was just… static… like no bot was actually home in that helm.

He'd worry about that later.

He'd be Kia's problem soon enough.

At least he had something else to worry about other than… and he just stepped on another of those spike covered things.

Again, joy of joys.

Monaco

Ratchet's holoform scowled down into the open spark chamber before him.

What he was seeing was… alarming… one because what he was seeing was arguably impossible, and two, the fact he had missed it in the first place…

To be fair on himself though, he'd been a bit too preoccupied stabilising his current patient to care much about the severed bond that was joined by their sparks.

But now… with imminent offlining far from the table, and the twins concerns over a recurring memory-like dream that wasn't theirs… well… he'd had to investigate…

And sure enough, there it was, proving his wildest suspicion correct.

That severed familial bond, seemed to of re-tethered, and gauging what the twins had described, it was making up for lost time.

Which was just raising too many questions for him right now.

He turned his gaze up to the closed optics of his patients, the twins were propped up against one of the walls, the med bay wasn't ready yet here in Monaco like the one in Barcelona was, it put their chassis at an angle that allowed his holoform to stand just below the open chamber, but also gave
them enough of an angle to not have any issue looking down into their spark chamber.

If said balls of bright white and faded black weren't too bright for their optics to handle without a visor that is.

Given they couldn't see what he could, he spoke. "One of the severed bonds attached to your spark has re-ignited."

He caught Optimus and Ironhide exchange a look in his peripheral, just as he felt the twins tense, they wanted to get up, apparently his words were all that were needed to connect the dots.

He sent a pulse of alarm to his beloved, and Ironhide moved, stepping forwards with heavy purposeful steps. "Stay there you two." He growled out in warning.

They tensed further for a moment, and he spotted them pulling their white painted lower lip plate in to chew for a moment, before releasing it, a tiny sliver of lilac energon marking their mistake of falling back on a human habit.

Carefully, he slid his holoform back off their upper abdominal plates, feet first to land into an upright position before turning around. "Until your visor is repaired, I strongly advise against leaving this bunker, I know I have said it before, just as I know both Ironhide and Optimus have had to block your way before."

They seemed to wince back at the scolding tone.

Despite that, Aria still spoke. "With all due respect Ratchet… if… if he's here… we have to find him."

Ratchet sighed, so it was a him. "And who is this him? We can search for him whilst you both recover."

Again they bit their lower lip, before promptly wincing from the pain and releasing it again, a nervous habit that was proving traitorous.

Optimus had already joined them, kneeling on their other side. "Aria, Wren, you need to tell us, if we're to find them, and bring them to you that is."

Again they grimace, and a sound came out from between their clenched denta, apparently they were at war with which option to take, to tell, or to remain silent.

The battle lasted a few more moments before they sighed in defeat. "Derrick… Derrick Selver Orichiono, he's our half brother…" Wren answered.

"And the only biological family we have left." Aria added.

He saw Optimus nod. "Bumblebee and Jazz have been informed, they'll try and widen their patrol boundaries to try and find him, I assume you'll want Ira and Kia to join in this search?"

They nodded, so he sent off that added bit of information.

Apparently that wasn't necessary for either of his mechs, once Jazz and Bumblebee had relayed respectively that the twins half brother had somehow jumped the gap between their realities, the two more able bodied Harpies had already taken off to pull their resources to the search.

Further discussion with the twins was interrupted however, when the human sized elevator
attached to the bunker pinged, and two men stepped out, both pushing a dolly laden with a bag labelled with something in French.

Optimus recognised Flint quickly enough, but the other one took a few moments, and when recognition did dawn, he couldn't help but feel a bit… shocked.

It was the human who'd shot Aria's helm protrusion, the one that Keeley had promptly mauled the hand of.

Said hand, was evidently no longer with the man, instead replaced by a mechanical replica, that was being used to hold and push the dolly forwards.

Unlike the last time he'd seen the human, there was no anger, no hatred or bloodlust, only… admiration? Adoration? It was a gaze similar to the one he'd seen on Lena, but… different at the same time.

Flint let go of the dolly, letting the other continue to push it forwards as he began to make a showy announcement, bowing to them and everything. "My dear ladies, we present to you, this humble offering of sand, may it aid you in having a swift recovery of your sight… and~" The man pulled a bottle of something from his pocket. "... The chemicals you requested, already mixed and ready to go."

The twins seemed to trill at that, shifting to roll forwards on their pedes.

Their lower jaw snapped open, and the moment it was in range, the sandbag was gone, snapped up and swallowed down like a small treat, despite how much it made their neckcables expand out on the way down.

Once Flint stood within range, he offered the bottle of chemicals out, it promptly disappeared down the gullet as well.

The twins seemed to grimace though. "Not the nicest taste… but it will do, Flint, Max, you are excused, return to your normal duties and await further instructions."

Both bowed, spun on one heel, and walked back away.

The whole scene felt off to the three Cybertronians…

Perhaps it was the replaced hand… or how… drastically different the mans behaviour had been from when Optimus and the two other mechs had seen him… no it was definitely the later.

They still had to get to the bottom of that… whatever that was…

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Quite a few... developments I'd say, until next time! See yah!
The familiar sound of a heart rate monitor was what woke Annie from that empty void.

And with that waking, came a dull haze of pain and stiffness as her eyes cracked slowly open.

The room was dark, lit only by the myriad of monitors that surrounded her.

They were mostly green, but one pair of lights were bright pools of gold, ones she recognised instantly.

Those pools of melted gold blinked, and the sound of motion reached her, followed swiftly by arms wrapping around her blanket covered form in a light, but desperate hug.

She tried to reach up and hug him back, but the haze in her body also seemed to haze her motions… she couldn't even really move her head without putting more effort than really necessary into it.

"Annie… oh god… Annie… you're awake… you're awake…" Her husband, her sweet goofy alien husband rasped out the last word as if her waking was a gift from god himself.

Her mouth felt like it was full of cotton, and her head was too busy spinning to even make her want to reply, she just put all her effort into finally getting her hand to move, followed by her arm, getting them to move up to cup his jaw.

Her hand met a pad of gauze, held in place by a hatching of medical tape… god he must look like shit when there were more lights on, but she couldn't for a life of herself give a flying toss about that.

She just wanted him to keep holding her.

He seemed to want just the same, he kept hugging her even when he managed to get his own legs up on the medical cot, and laid down on his side, one hand draped over her middle, laced with the other one still laying flat just above the blanket, wrapped in just as many bandages as the one she'd used to hold his cheek, she was fairly certain from the dull pain there was an IV in that arm somewhere…

Something had happened, and Prowl had likely feared she was going to die…

He always feared her mortality over his own… and this time… it looked like they'd gotten pretty close to proving him right…

Like he wasn't a worry wart enough after the riots that gave her the bullet wound on her side…

But to be fair… if it wasn't for the chemicals, they'd likely pumped into her… she'd likely feel a fuck ton worse than how she felt after that one bullet wound.

The door opening some distance away drew her gaze, and she felt him tense, his hold tightening, she liked this side of him secretly, she didn't get to see this almost animalistic protectiveness often,
but when she did, she revelled in it.

Such a powerful thing as her Prowl, who, as far as she was concerned, could have had any woman once his gaze drifted from the human that had found him… but his gaze had never drifted, just stayed on her, and only her…

Normally the protectiveness was triggered by an external hostile threat, but as the nurse, one she knew personally, June Darby, stepped in, she couldn't help but worry if Prowl was in reach of anything specifically sharp.

"Prowl, off the bed, don't make me get my spray bottle." June didn't even look up from the clipboard she was going over. "Now that Annie is awake, I need to speak with her, and I can't do that with you crowding her."

She finally looked up, her grey eyes betrayed her, she was bone deep tired, she was likely pulling the nightshift again.

Jasper's operating room was hardly a well-staffed place at the best of times, meaning June often had to do these post op checks as well.

No matter how much it went against procedure.

Prowl and June had a glaring match for all of three seconds before her husband conceded defeat and slid back off, and made his way back to the chair he'd been sitting in next to her bed.

She wanted to chuckle, but her body did not feel up for it, she knew full well the moment June was gone, he was gonna be right back up on the bed like some over sized house cat.

June apparently knew the same, bless the woman for not turning on the lights, but even in the darkness Annie could see that June was not going to take any funny business from Prowl, she had a thirteen year old at home, she was fooled by nothing.

Annie knew that for a fact, she still remembered the day June had gone into labour, and called her and Prowl of all people first, not the ambulance, but her and Prowl, apparently she wasn't keen on the guy who drove the towns ambulance, and that was enough for her to decide that her and Prowl were the better option.

Apparently her reasoning whilst in that wonderful thing called labour, she'd decided that Prowl had seen Annie down low enough times to be able to see one doing it's other job.

She had greatly over-estimated the range of things that Prowl could handle, the moment Jack crowned, he was out cold on the floor, it was only a miracle he crashed so hard that the projection system didn't get the message to deactivate it.

So, with an unconscious husband to worry about later, Annie had helped June bring Jack into the world, and it was a story they taunted Prowl with whenever such a thing came up.

The whole time, June had said nothing but some of the most obscene words Annie had ever heard come from anyone's mouth, primarily directed Prowl being more delicate than an old lady!

Considering some of the older women they both knew though, that really didn't have much of a bite.

Not last Christmas, Moly, Narisa and Selena (reluctantly for the later) ended up dancing on the dining table to deck the halls… and at some point Narisa straight up backflipped off like some spry
teen Olympic athlete, landing perfectly upright without so much of a wobble, just as the crazy woman was known to do.

Goodness though she didn't get to see Sophia as much, what with her teaching job in Siberia, she'd heard horror stories of what that woman would do once a few bottles had been shared…

"Alright Annie… I know this is a stupid question, but how do you feel?"

June's words brought her back to the present. She tried to speak, but all that came out was a rasp, fuck her throat was drier than the Sahara.

June seemed to note her inability. "Okay, thought as much, okay, yes or no, do you remember what happened?"

She shook her head no, the last thing she remembered, she was baking a pie, next thing she knew, she was waking up here.

Prowl's hand snaked back to hers, and gave it a light squeeze.

June let that be. "Your home exploded, the force and heat of which has caused burns ranging from one to third degree, but only in a few places, across the parts of your body that weren't covered in clothes, so… there wasn't much undamaged skin for us to graft elsewhere… Annie… I'm sorry… sixty four percent of your body was burned… and the amount of operations we'd need, and the time between to let your skin heal… you're going to be here for quite a while… miraculously you still have most of your hair though… if that can even be counted as a positive."

She could see this was starting to get to June, without a doubt she'd worked and worried herself as sick as Prowl had all things considered.

So, with a herculean effort, she reached her other bandaged hand up.

June clasped it gently, like anymore would cause her to shatter. "You're pumped full of morphine, so you might not remember this… so I'll come back after my 24 off, okay?"

Annie nodded as best as she could.

June returned the nod, turned, and left.

Sure enough, Prowl was hugging her again.

And only now did he speak again. "Our home didn't explode… we were attacked… by one of my kind…"

Never had her stomach dropped so fast in her life.

And she still remembered how fast it had dropped, when her first day on the job led her to coming face to face with a giant mechanical alien.

Her grip tensed on his hand as much as the bandages allowed.

"Maria managed to scare it off by shooting it in the eye… but it knew me Annie… and it mentioned someone else… a 'Prime'… I'm on the Prime's side… the 'third in command of the Autobot forces'… Annie… I… that thing knew me personally… and he tried to kill us both… I… I can't risk him finding you and killing you… so… so I'm going to Monaco… I'm going to find that truck with the same red face as me… and I'm… I'm going to find out who I am… and when you're
better… when you're better… no sooner… Maria's gonna make sure you're all better first… I want you to follow me to Monaco… so I can pick you up, hold you, and never let you go again… Never again."

Her heart cried out at his words, and she was fairly certain she was crying, no, he couldn't… he couldn't do that alone… he'd get lost the moment he realised they drove on the other side of the road… and he was hopeless at directions… she was his navigator… always had been… always would… on the road, and in life…

But… at the same time… the one that did this… they'd given them a clue Prowl couldn't wait on… couldn't sit on until she recovered…

She'd see him again… when he was with his kind… and hopefully, with a better understanding of who he was.

She wanted that, more than anything, but she also feared it…

She'd always wondered if she'd taken Prowl from someone, his near complete amnesia outside of what he assumed was his name was… something she had, in a way, taken advantage of, and taken him from the life he had, and placed him firmly in hers.

She knew he loved her, the ring on the table next to her, and the two she felt on his ring finger were testament enough to that… but… she was only mortal… him… not so much… and the rest of his kind?

There was bound to be one who'd loved him… Prowl was too good not to love.

When he went back to his own kind, they'd tell him about his other, or the other would be there, and they'd reunite, Prowl would probably get his memory back just from being around him… and he'd toss their ring away…

But even with that fear… she still nodded, she still managed to croak out an 'I love you', and still watched the despair in his gaze as he rose, and walked slowly away, looking back over his shoulder when he pushed open the door and said those same words back, but he didn't stop there. "- it will only ever be you Annie… when I find them… and when I pick you up, I'm gonna show you off to all of them… the greatest human ever crafted by this planet, my wife."

She did cry a little then, and nodded, watching him disappear.

A few minutes later, she heard a familiar engine come to life, and slowly drive away.

She didn't get to stay in her melancholy long, within fifteen minutes, Bella had crashed through the door with a stupidly large bouquet of flowers, an equally massive get well soon card, a pile of boxes of chocolates somehow balanced on her head, and god only knows what in the back pack that looked ready to explode on her back from the...

"ANNIE! HOLY FUCK YOU'RE ACTUALLY ALIVE!!?"

If she had the energy, she would of laughed, not just a small one, but one that shook her whole body, all she could do was shake, you could always rely on Bella to say something like… well… that, while looking like a one woman get well soon stand.

She could also hear June yelling at Bella, something about 'immediate family only', but even by the tone of the nurses voice, Annie knew June had already resigned herself to letting Bella see her, nothing could stop that hurricane of a thirty year old, no matter what you tried, she was Maria's kid
after all.

She'd be alright, she'd recover, and she was gonna get the first fucking flight she could to Monaco to hunt down her husband, as well as call him, every day, international call rates be damned.

Lord knows he's gonna call her the first time he goes the wrong way down a damn street.

If it wouldn't completely wipe out the police force of Jasper for the foreseeable future, she'd beg Maria to go with him…

Or maybe Bella… No… Bella was a darling yes, but she wouldn't want to explain to her mother why her daughter took the next flight to Monaco before even Prowl did… or how she ended up in Oslo Norway instead, Bella wasn't good with Airports.

Somehow the girl had ended up in the Arctic when she'd had a flight booked for Brazil once. It boggled the mind to this day.

Barcelona

Mikaela sighed, reaching around to rub at the crick in her neck.

The computer in front of her continued to show the latest accounts that were running through the car dealership.

Interesting thing about car dealerships, they sold a lot more cars in a day than what one would think, and this one, despite being for high end sports cars and luxury cruisers, was no exception.

Which made some of the numbers on the screen just… blow her mind.

Not six months ago, she'd been getting by as a part time waitress, slowly trying to save enough to pay her fathers bail money, feeding herself, clothing herself, going to school and such.

And now, boom, the Harpies came into her life, her Dad's bail was paid, and now she was over seeing accounts with some of the largest purchases she'd ever seen anyone make, ever, it boggled her mind the first few days.

It still did over a month in, which was why the private workshop she had in the back was such a blessing.

Kia had been firm, whenever she wanted to take a break from staring at numbers, she could go have fun in there, she was still working as far as Kia was concerned.

And that's what she felt like doing right now, give her neck a break and all that.

So, getting up, she waved to her colleagues, all really nice people, but she swore at least half of them were secretly packing heat.

Winston certainly didn't hide his when he visited to check in on her and escort her back to the house Kia had bought for her and her dad to live in whenever Bumblebee was off patrolling the city and the surrounding area.

Stepping into the back, she shrugged off her jacket, and went to her locker, the suit was too nice to ruin in her workshop, so she always made sure to change before she even stepped foot into the workshop in those comfy shoes Kia had practically apparated out of thin air the first and only time she'd complained about those heels she'd first had hurting her ankles.
At this point she wouldn't even be joking referring to Kia as something of a sugar momma, the Harpy got her anything she even slightly inferred she'd like getting.

She was the same for Bumblebee and Ratchet, some of the stuff that she'd gotten for Ratchets med-bay was… staggering.

Getting changed into her workshop clothes done, she stepped inside.

"[Zzzt]Hello my honey! Hello my baby!" Came to her almost instantly, and she had to laugh, there was Bumblebee, sitting pretty right next to her project piece.

One of Kia's SUV's was having transmission trouble, instead of sending it to the workshop her dad was working at though, Kia had sent it to her to work on to de-stress.

"Heya Bee, not too bored back here with tall white and silent over there?"

His holoform popped into existence, and a moment later he was hiding behind her, almost cartoonish in the amount of fear the big strong Autobot was showing, causing her to laugh again. "Oh Bee, c'mon, he doesn't even have his engine block in him! He can't hurt you!"

The radio replied. "Corpse! … Yah'll [zzzt] found a body! Oh lord have mercy upon us all!"

And again she was laughing, he pulled this stunt every day at least once without fail. "Alright Bee, c'mon, I need to actually work on this guys transmission today, you can give him a wax if you want?"

He actually looked offended, she rolled her eyes. "Okay, I'll give you a wax when I'm done, happy?"

Bumblebee's actual body actually jumped up and down on his suspension at that.

God he was such a clown.

And he kept her life interesting.

Which was far more than she could ever even want to say about Trent.

She glanced at where she'd left her phone, she didn't actually tell anyone… but Trent was still doing all he could to drag her name through the dirt in California, and well… she wasn't really getting any support from her old friends… they all saw her leave with Winston and never come back…

She'd barely even thought about California, at least until the first time she'd checked in on her social media.

To say she'd wanted to cry was an understatement…

Bumblebee apparently caught her gaze, and his holoform, with the cute wild cut blonde hair with its two black streaks bouncing with the motion as he turned to look at the phone too.

Just in time for it to buzz with another alert.

She walked over to pick it up, bracing for what she was going to see.

It was from the group chat she had with her 'old friends' she'd never left, if she left now, they'd know she'd seen everything they'd written about her.
'God where the fuck even is that whore anyway?'

'You think she'd even come back for college next year? If she does, I say we fucking drag her.'

'I'm game, god I fucking hate that bitch, I've been fucking Trent for like three weeks, he's good, I've said this before, what wrinkly ass is paying her enough to make her like skip town? And how much cause damn I need to buy a new phone.'

'Yeah like, what is up with that, she was like, the ugly one, and some bastard is paying to fuck her? Dude, A+ material right here.'

'Preach sister, preach.'

The phone was snatched from her grasp, causing her to gasp and spin.

Just in time for Bumblebee to read enough of the messages to scowl, his thumb pushing the up button to go back through the group chat.

"Bee… Hey Bee… stop… It's okay…"

He shook his head, not looking away from the phone, but then, she spotted it, the little smirk, the little twinkle in his gaze, he was planning something.

"[ZZzzt] Work with [zzt] me."

It took her a moment but she nodded.

He pressed a few buttons, and suddenly he was pulling her into a side hug, the camera held up and he was pressing a kiss to the side of her face, just long enough for the camera to do its job.

She'd smiled in preparation, and when Bumblebee turned the screen to her, she had to admit it looked like a good couple… shot.

Realisation dawned on her, and she couldn't help but smirk. "Do it Bee, make them cry."

He smirked right back, and typed a message alongside the picture, before showing it.

Her smirk grew wider. "Send it."

He nodded and did just that.

The picture took a few moments, but the wi-fi was good enough for it to go through quick enough, followed swiftly by the message.

'This wrinkly ass Bee got himself the sweetest honey.'

And in the background, thanks to the angle, one could easily see Bumblebee's alt mode, in all it's European sportscar glory.

It took half a minute for the replies to come through.

'You bitch.'

'Fuck you got a hot suga daddy?!!'

She smirked and gestured to the phone, he handed it back before she spoke. "Call Kia, I want her in
Kia, was not a woman to waste time, and within five minutes, she'd joined them, looking like she'd just stepped off a fashion runway, massive wide brimmed black hat topped with a red rose, cream and rouge red tube top dress that did nothing to hide her bountiful assets, the slit on each side just as high up her thighs as ever, and a semi-transparent veil hanging off each arm and draped over her rear.

Her smirk was as if she was the devil himself and had just won the key to heaven. "What's this I hear about making petty ex-friends squirm?"

Bumblebee showed her the chat, and the picture, and Mikaela actually shuddered and the smug smirk on Kia's expression.

"Darling, I'm having Winston bring you something to really make them green with envy, once you're changed, we're going to my Vila, and from there, we're gonna make them cry. Am understood chica?"

She was already nodding, right alongside Bumblebee.

She nodded, and flickered out of existence again.

Mikaela glanced to Bumblebee, and his previous actions finally caught up, and she couldn't help the blush that was always forming. "So… Bee… about the uh… you know… for the picture?"

He looked to her in return, and she swore he was blushing as he reached back to rub the back of his neck.

Yup, he was bashful about it to.

"[Zzzt] Was that okay? [Zzzt]"

She thought it over for a moment before nodding. "Yeah, it's okay.

Okay he was really red now. "[Zzzt] Can I… [zzt] do it for real?"

Her heart skipped a beat and suddenly all the air in her lungs was pulled out. "Y-yeah… yeah… you can."

He smiled, cupped her jaw, and leant down the little bit needed to press their lips together.

To say there were sparks was a bit of an understatement, his holoform seemed to buzz as their heads tilted in opposite directions, making the originally chaste kiss something a bit more… passionate.

Bumblebee seemed to leave it as just a liplock, but Mikaela had secretly been wondering and hoping for this for some time, and she was not going to let him just step back out now in the name of politeness.

They all knew exactly what Maggie and Jazz were doing every night, she'd actually befriended Glen via him wanting to vent to a human around his age about the fact Ira's apartment hadn't been built with soundproofing, at all. Ira had the benefit of actually sleeping in the bunker/basement, he didn't.

If Jazz and Maggie got to have fun, she was going to make sure her and Bee got to do much the
same, if that was what he wanted…

She broke the kiss before she actually went any further, and took in his half lidded gaze. "Bee… Bee… Bee!"

His eyes snapped open, and he nodded furiously a few times, causing her to let off a breathless chuckle.

"God… I've done this before but it's so awkward… but… before we go any further… what do you want us to be?"

Bumblebee blinked at her a few times, staring at her before his gaze went to the side, evidently thinking the whole thing over, before his arms were moving and he was pulling her against him in a hug, his holoform wasn't warm, and though it did have a pulse, it was still just a projection…

Again, she figured, it hardly stopped Maggie.

The radio once more came to life to answer her. "[Zzzt] I want you happy… [zzt] my sunshine! Don't take my sunshine away! [zzt] If you'll let me ma'am."

She nodded against that chiselled chest, hidden under yellow shirt and black unzipped leather jacket. "You make me happy Bee, Like… genuinely happy… It ain't love yet… but it's getting there."

She felt his chest puff up, be it from the breath she heard him just take, or from just pure pride, she chuckled and lightly whacked his left peck. "Bee, you've been hanging out with Kia too much, you're acting like a rooster."

She could almost hear the scandalised Spanish she'd hear from the Bateleur if that ever reached her… whatever they had for ears.

And there went her curiosity again, she couldn't help it, the mechanic in her was fascinated by the Harpies, she hadn't actually seen any of their forms since they were on the Gilded Falcon, but she still remembered them all vividly, the fluidity of the motions, how they seemed to move like a river current, or soft breeze, never too fast, and one motion always leading to another until the energy dissipated…

A hand cupping her jaw brought her back, and she looked up into Bumblebee's adoring electric blue eyes.

They both leant in and their lips met again, the thoughts melting away as she focused on the now, focused on him.

Her arms went around his neck, and his rear met the front of his actual form.

No turning back now, just forward.

And she was very much looking forward to that.

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Somewhere under the Atlantic

Frenzy flickered his optics online, hissing under his water filled vents as he glanced around, still submerged, still tucked within one of the less moved nooks on Barricades frame…

A peek up through the cracks in the armour revealed he was still carrying that Avian mech.
Brilliant, they might as well be standing in the same spot.

He was exhausted, his spark stressed as it kept trying to reach for the rest of his family.

They were still so far away… he knew they were there, slowly getting closer, faster than before, they must of gotten a ship, but his every attempt to get more, learn more, find out all the details he so desperately needed, the more he was let down, communication range was still a long way away, calculations suggested at least five human months, insignificant after so many eons of nothing from his sire, and some bits and pieces from his siblings… but now that he knew they were coming, to find him, his patience was gone, and he was desperate.

Frenzy slumped back down into his curled-up state, surrounded by the freezing cold water he was now used to as, the same with the darkness, but he was used to that long before the ocean, he'd hidden himself away within Barricade for some long now…

He'd done little else since that damn Harpy got a hold of him on that damn plane.

He… had hadn't recovered from that…

But he'd not really recovered from much in his life… had he?

And certainly not alone.

He needed his brothers and sister, he needed his sire… he needed…

His spark gave a pained twang, instinctively reaching for the shattered bond still attached to his spark.

He needed his carrier.

But she wasn't coming back.

He was scared, almost completely alone, on the bottom of an ocean on an alien world, with his temporary guardian hauling an unknown mech to another continent to try and re-connect with their missing 'boss'.

Before he even realised he'd done it, he'd let off a whimpering keen, that same sound he'd made whenever he was scared, the same that Rumble would make… whenever they needed their carrier.

It was high pitched, almost shrill, and it had always gotten her attention, always pulled her away from her work to pick them up, hold them close, and whisper sweet promises to help calm their taxed systems.

Hard to believe the first time they met her, they'd hated her...

---

*Underground Express Highway 7-09 from Upper Kaon to Lower Praxus*

*The transport rocketed down it's tracks, maglev engines humming as the aerodynamic shape shot onwards.*

*Within, were three Cybertronians, one alert, their cerulean blue optics trained on the blurred tunnel walls, the lights of the tunnel, spread thin, creating pockets of shadow and light, illuminating the Praxian build every over moment, before it was bathed in almost darkness again.*

*Held within their primary set of arms were the other two forms, much smaller, and laying across*
the larger forms legs, curled up and around themselves, they'd been resting against each other only at the beginning, but now were completely entangled.

The secondary set of arms, floating next to the collection of forms, were kept busy with a data-pad, writing up another report on the current state of their project, a project that often left their optic twitching.

One digit, the end curved and narrowing into a long and wickedly sharp tip, carefully ran over the dented-in helm of one of the younglings in their lap, faded pale purple and blue was it's paintjob.

The faded purple was a stark contrast to the larger, who's myriad of purples, each pristine and glossy in a way few could maintain, aided to tell apart the different pieces of armour plating.

The door wings of the Praxian twitched, their small ministrations had finally won them the rousing of one of the two, the purple and blue one to be specific, they were not as badly injured as the black and red one.

Which did not say much, both had been barely clinging to life when they had been found by the one currently holding them.

Medical help had been swiftly acquired of course, but they had had to be quick, whisking them away to this transport the moment they were deemed stable enough for such a trip as the one they had been almost late to set off on.

All because they had found these two, by mere happenstance really, laying beaten, energon splattering the walls and ground around them, each clinging to the other in what they likely believed would have been their final moments.

They had not allowed that.

They let out a long, exhausted sigh, stroking the tiny helm again, they wouldn't leave those two to offline, no, more accurately, they couldn't.

Apparently, the noise was enough to rouse the waking one further.

Red optics flickered online, jerking and darting even in their half-dazed state, desperately trying to make sense of what was around them.

Cereulean optics watched with simminging interest, a optic-ridge raised a bit higher to hide behind the plating that came down between their optics.

The far smaller bot reached out almost blindly, patting around the curved armour they were perched upon.

Finally the tiny helm tilted to the side, following the leg down to the floor, where the large pedes, the metal flaring around a wide tire at the back of each, twitched, specifically the three claws on each pede that idly grasped at the floor of the transport.

The mech took another moment staring downwards, before gaining the courage to look up.

Red met cerulean.

There was a moment of heavy silence.

Broken when the little one hissed.
It was a pitiful sound, no energy behind it, no bite, unsurprising, the little thing was still recovering from a significant surgery, not that said mech knew that.

Finally they spoke. "Careful little one, do not pull the welds."

The much smaller mech didn't bother to hiss, but snarled instead, displaying the little fangs hidden away.

They were half tempted to smirk, show off their own much larger fangs.

They only had the four that cropped out their otherwise flat dental plates.

But that hadn't stopped them from using them whenever they damn well felt like it.

Now was not one of those times though.

"S-slag off!" The little pale purple and blue mech bit back.

They shuttered their optics a few times slowly, just taking in the little mechling, the black and red one was already rousing from their twins aggravation.

They sighed. "Little one, that is no way to address the one who picked you up out of your own energon, paid for your treatment, and is now transporting you out of Kaon. My designation is Shrike, what is yours?"

They already knew of course, but it was good to be polite.

The mechling snarled for a moment, shifted, and immediately regretted it as he pulled one of the welds, just as Shrike had warned them not to.

Shrike felt her doorwings sag a bit. "See, aggression will get you nowhere in this situation, please be still, you're no where recovered but I could hardly risk leaving you in Kaon to recover alone."

He winced, dentas gritted from the pain, but still managed to get ot a one word question. "Why?"

Shrike's helm tilted to the side. "Why? Why did I help you? Because I could, I had the time, the means, and more than enough shanix. Why did I take you both with me? Simple, I wish to be certain you will never find yourselves bleeding out in the gutter again, and I cannot be sure of that if I left you behind." She listed off.

The little mechling stared at her, and then scowled. "There's another reason."

Smart youngling.

"Yes, there is, I wish to… introduce you to someone."

Probably not the best wording, the little mechlings optics went wide with terror.

They'd heard that before, and it had hurt them.

She let her engine kick up into a higher gear, letting off a soothing rumble she knew normally worked on those in distress. "I mean it in no negative way… they… under my watch is a mech, a dock, he was given to me to be 'used' like some calculator, but there is no life in him… it is quite obvious his original dockings are no longer online… I want to see if you can… coax some life back in him… only if you want to that is? If you say no, I can find you a different job…"
His brother was waking up fully now with all the talking. "F...."

"Easy little one, your condition is worse than your brother, please hold still."

Rumble did just that, he hadn't the strength in him to do anything but lay there.

He was still listening though, and expressing his pain addled interest.

This femme, Shrike, was obviously wealthy, with a bleeding spark, they could use that to get away later.

Couldn't be to hard to rob her blind too.

Frenzy felt his spark twist at the notion, it still wasn't as hardened as he wanted it to be, had to have it to survive Kaon...

He looked up again. "Where are we going?"

"Praxus, and after I've had your repairs checked over, onwards to Iacon, I can't risk being late... my.... Employers detest me being late to work... and I don't want to leave my assistant alone too long... he has not the will to defend himself..."

Sounded to him like the mech was a weakling.

"We'll do it." He stated he was much more alert now.

A smile pulled on the femmes features, revealing two hooked fangs on the left side of her faceplates. "Wonderful... but I need to lay some ground rules... for everyone's... safety."

That didn't sound welcoming, they were going to Iacon right?

The fact they were actually going to Iacon the Capital hadn't fully dawned on him yet.

"Rule One, outside of private quarters, you will not address me, you will not look me in the optic, and you will not physically interact with me, with my assistant you can show more affection if you so desire, I encourage that in fact, only what you are comfortable with though."

He nodded, Rumble was alert enough to understand so he was nodding for both of them.

"Rule Two, I... work..." Shrike spat the word out like it was acid. "Directly... with the Senators, if one is approaching, or in our presence, you will speak only if addressed, and when you speak, be brief, do not curse, politeness will keep you online."

Concerning, but he nodded.

"Rule Three... no matter what, when I introduce you to my friends and assistant, you will be respectful, we've all been through a... lot."

Again he nodded. "That it?"

"If I ask you to do something, it is more than likely within your best interest, and if you have the urge to misbehave, come to me, I'll help you figure out a way to get that out of your system without you getting in trouble."

Again he'd nodded, he didn't like this femme, Shrike, she was upper crust, upper upper crust, he could tell just by how she spoke, how she held herself, it sickened him in a way.
And that digit still running down his helm every few moments was getting slagging annoying.

He slipped back into recharge a few breems later, Rumble slipping back under with him.

He missed her…

Frenzy felt himself curl up tighter, if he focused hard enough, he could still feel the ghost of her touch, that digit running over his helm…

He keened again.

He didn't have anything of her to hold onto… Ravage was the one who'd taken that one trinket she liked with them, for safekeeping.

It was a stupid trinket, something Sire had made for her as a courting gift, a little puzzle of interlocked metal pieces that seemed to be impossible to separate.

His Carrier had used it to keep her secondary limbs busy when she didn't have a set task for them, kept them from getting up to mischief…

Because mischief wasn't allowed in the towers of Iacon, when it was caught that is…

He let himself chuckle as more happy memories came to light…

Carrier always found a way for them to prank the Senators and not get caught.

He let his processor focus on those happier memories, he needed to have some happiness, just for a bit…

He was getting tired again, dredging up memories from so long ago tended to do that.

He slipped into recharge with a rarely seen smile.

The next he'd wake, he'd be a little happier.

He was always a little happier when he got to see his carrier in recharge fluxes…

Barricade and the mech they'd found would never know about the little smile, it wouldn't be there for long.

The good memories were all tainted now, and soon enough, that taint stole the smile away once more, and he remained curled up, hidden from all view.

Just as it always was these long vorns.

Welp, that's another chapter done and dusted! 'looks at chapter 40 and cracks knuckles' no idea when I'll next update, but hopefully relatively soon, so until then, toodles!

Moon
Chapter 35

Wooo boy this is a long one, finished 40 and went straight to giving this one a final run down... took... three hours?

Oh well, hope you all enjoy!

Triage Earth, somewhere in the Atlantic

Three hours, for three hours the ship had seen nothing but bloodshed and carnage.

The evidence was painted on every wall a body had fallen against.

There had been no gunshots from him, he didn't have a gun, the Captain took it the first time he slept.

But the Captain had been a fool, down in the hull were tools, tools that, with enough time being left alone in the dark, he'd fashioned into weapons.

He was no master of the dagger, that had been Aria's thing.

Wren would of kicked his balls in if he'd tried to take sniping from her.

But these fools, every single one of them, couldn't hold a candle to him, especially not when he was angry and wielding a pipe, steel chain, large ball joint and welded on nails, which he'd fashioned into a spiked mace.

Angry had long since left the equation by now though.

He'd long surpassed seeing red, his rage had lit itself alight like that of a planet sized inferno.

No amount of blood shed would quench it, at least, not until he finally killed the bastard currently clawing at his arms.

He'd tossed his makeshift weapons away, and taken two seperate gun shots to the abdomen, but he didn't care.

All he cared about was watching the man beneath him turn slowly more purple, his gurgling rasps not pulling in any air against his crushing hold on his throat.

The windpipe was more than crushed, but he kept going, kept squeezing, squeezing, his knuckles were white from the force, they would be if they weren't caked in blood that is.

Finally he heard and felt it, that satisfying half pop, half snap.

A final death gurgle, and the nails digging in his flesh went limp.

The body still twitched.

He panted as he rose, with a hard kick he flipped the body over.

As one final measure, he raised his steel capped boat, and brought it right back down.
Gore splattered, teeth shattered against the unforgiving metal of the cargo deck.

Dead, he'd killed enough to know the bastard was dead, if not from the suffocation, or the spinal break cutting off the rest of his vital organs, smashing the brain in was always a rather instant kill.

No point having the bodies go rotten though… it would take a while, but it wouldn't be too much effort to push them all overboard, then wash all the blood away with acid, he'd seen gallons of the stuff being transported below decks. Even with the acid, he had a lot of corpses to get rid of...

What he wouldn't give for one of the twins clean up crews right then.

That's when a sound cracked the silence open.

A clap, then another, a slow, mocking, clap.

He turned his head, then his upper torso to look behind them.

There, standing ramrod straight, hands slowly clapping at about waist height… was a woman he thought he'd never have the misfortune of meeting himself.

Windswept fiery red hair, mismatched eyes, towering figure that put him a head under them, pristine white lab coat, black business trousers, violet undershirt and equally black overshirt, all finished off with a look of only partial interest.

"Ivan, so glad I can finally put a face to such a... simple name... my you look haggard darling, a spot of gin will fix you right up." The woman remarked, humour in her tone as she mockingly drawled at him. "Maybe then we can figure out how to steer this colossal behemoth, now you've thoroughly slaughtered everyone here that knew how. I can hardly complain though can I? Such a wonderful specimen of human primal and brutish nature... I'll admit it was certainly an impressive display of caveman brutality you just put on. I can certainly see why the mob hired you."

The urge to curl his fist and punch the woman clean through the face was staggering, but he held back.

Normally he wouldn't hesitate to throw a well deserved punch…

But not this time, he was well aware of who stood before him, and he promptly moved to put his back away from her. "Moira O'Dorian Halloran." He addressed, she didn't bother with his full name? Fine, he'd show her just how pissed he was even having to say that woman, no, that witches full name.

Moira raised a hand to her chest and gave a quick, mocking laugh, before waving him off. "Oh hush you brute, we both know I'm not the one scared for my life right now."

He scowled, damn that witch. "Was pretty certain he was the last alive on the ship." He kicked backwards to send the dead man's body further from him, closer to the edge for later dumping, unsurprisingly his lower jaw didn't go with the rest of the body, shorn off where bone had fractured, tendons had been torn thread bare and now hung loose on either side, blood slowly oozing from the graphic injury.

Moira smiled, never a good thing. "I was in my lab when I heard the commotion, you don't seem to know to look behind yourself, a dangerous weakness, I could easily of put a needle in your back and knocked you out large some rampaging ape. But blind rages are hardly a state where the mind is sharp… And I couldn't miss the opportunity to take notes." She added almost as an afterthought, gesturing to the little notebook hidden away in her breast pocket, looking oh so innocent.
He glared at the offending little pile of papers.

Realising his slip, his gaze shot right back to the scientist.

A little hint of mirth flickered in her gaze. "Now…” She put a finger to her cheek, as if pondering something. "What might cause the Beast of the Wastes to snap and murder upwards of forty people?" Her features twisted into a smirk as she snapped her fingers. "Ah! Perhaps, it has something to do with the Captain's daughter currently lying as a, decomposing, bullet riddled, corpse, on her bed? And the body of the last Orichiono being scavenged on by the creatures that lurk below this ship?" She leaned her upper torso a bit closer, and he spotted a flash of mania dart across her blue and red eyes.

He bared his clenched teeth.

Her smirk grew larger. "Hmm, I can't blame you for murdering my case study then. If someone murdered something I'd become that emotionally invested in, I'd murder them all in cold blood too. Luckily for the world, I've never been one for such foolish sentiments."

A flash of light against metal and she was twirling a hypodermic needle between her fingers, the cap gone, the needle glinting in the sunburst that broke through the clouds over them both.

He didn't speak, he just let her keep talking, eventually she'd get to the fucking point.

The smirk became a scowl. "Be glad this was only a side experiment, and that now I've made contact, I intend to hire your services."

He snorted, breaking his silence. "You'd have better luck teaching a Croc to Tango."

An eyebrow raised. "Oh, but I think you'll find our goals line up, quite well, you and the last Orichiono, you were looking for the missing Harpies… my what a mess their disappearance made of the global scene… Hardly on the scale of what happened fifty odd years ago, but… it's certainly a mess all it's own…"

He blinked, apparently she'd gotten off track.

"... Well that's irrelevant to the conversation now. You, see, like you, I'm looking for the Harpies, no, more accurately, I'm looking for one of them, my daughter? Red hair? Eye mutation? Taller than you? Nasty penchant for violence and should probably be wanted in half the countries in the world for something between petty theft, and blowing up an embassy? Though you probably just know her as 'Ira'."

Oh like hell was he helping this psycho get her claws back on Ira. "Doesn't ring a bell, last I checked, I worked with the Estrada's, you've probably heard of them?"

That smirk grew. "Well of course I have, the Bunkers are echo chambers, despite the isolation, we hear quite a lot."

He jumped on the subject. "Speaking of the bunkers, shouldn't you buried somewhere in Siberia?"

Moira chuckled. "I'm hardly un-contaminated, when I learned of Ira's… disappearance… as… strange as it was, I decided to investigate, and try to locate her."

His scowl grew more hostile. "So, you've lost this daughter, didn't know a monster like you even found someone stupid enough to fuck you."
Moira's smirk was a toxic, vile thing, her features telling as she took a step closer, just one, but it was enough to make him feel trapped, the captain's dead body behind him taunting him in its purple oxygen-starved state.

"Fifteen. I've had Fifteen children… Ira was just the only one I bothered to name. The only one contaminated, considering I first conceived her before I and my… partner, were cleared for the Bunker… the other fourteen, spotless, blank slates, perfect for exposure trials."

Cold fear bit into his head, and he stared at her in growing horror. "You… you monster…"

She shrugged. "We were able to confirm with them the sickness couldn't be passed on, it's not hereditary, it's exposure based, it doesn't contaminate unborns in quarantined environments, even if the host is infected, a fascinating discovery no? Unheard of in medical science."

Something about how she said that… It took a few moments, before it dawned on him. "No… You didn't…"

"You only need one blank as a control Ivan, the thirteen contaminants were all fated for the rot, they didn't develop a physical mutation in the womb, it was… the humane thing to do. The snow killed them quickly if it helps you sleep at night."

He dreaded to ask. "And the one you kept?"

Moira shrugged. "Killed themselves, broke into one of my cabinets, and wanted to drink the colourful drinks… a whole bottle of arsenic."

Bullshit, he wanted to call bullshit, no one left a bottle of arsenic in reach of a child by accident, but something kept him quiet.

She turned and started to walk back towards the back of the ship, where all the crews quarters were. "Clean up your mess, then join me on the bridge, considering you slaughtered anyone who knew how to steer this goliath, we're going to have to learn quickly."

He grumbled something even he didn't really know the meaning to, before hefting the body of the captain up and tossing the limp body over the side of the ship, letting a small smirk cross his features at the satisfying sound he heard when the body hit the churning atlantic waves.

Unbeknownst to him, Moira had pulled out a notebook.

- Subject shows advanced tolerance to pain and normally fatal wounds, doesn't seem to be aware of the multiple gunshot wounds he's suffered.

- Subjects behaviour is erratic, not consistent with most rot cases.

- Subjects assumed ties to the Harpies confirmed.

- Subjects high probability of knowing Test Subject 1R4-001 confirmed.

- Possibility standing the surviving generation may have developed a tolerance to the sickness… tests must be run to confirm or deny this hypothesis.

She capped the pen and stuck it in her lab coat pocket, humming an old tune to herself.

It was a nice little tune she thought, she would've taught it to Ira if the girl hadn't run from her whenever she started it.
Monaco, France

He was here… he was here.

And Annie wasn't.

Something twisted in his chest like it had been since that night, causing him to let off a little pained whimper.

A hand that wasn't Annie's patted his dashboard, he glanced over to Molly, who'd met him to 'claim him' at the Airport. "We'll get through this doll, don' you worry." Her southern-belle accent was a nice grounding… but he still worried.

Molly, Selena and Narrisa were all over sixty, sixty, that's older than his Annie by a decade!

They were even more fragile… and all three were going to be in the same city as him as he tried to find his own kind…

Given his first encounter, he couldn't not worry. "How can I not worry Mol's? Annie's going to be in hospital for months! Thank God the insurance company came through but… now you, Narisa and Selena are in the firing lines…"

"Prowl."

He gave her his undivided attention.

"One, we all could have backed out that day Maria told us her new deputy found ah giant robot in the dessert, you know, after Sophia stumbled in on you two and passed out from the shock, but did we all back out then?"

"No…?"

"No, an' we cetainly ain' bailin' now… And second... You missed the turn off for the hotel."

"Ahhh shit." Prowl muttered, looking now for a place he can turn himself around.

Molly laughed at that, and patted his dashboard again. "June says Annie's already on the way to recovery, and the skin grafts are taking well. So don't worry, she'll be back in your arms before you know it."

Prowl nodded, but sighed. "I know… it's just… that… that thing… shook me up pretty bad…"

Molly nodded, and glanced around, he looked better, they figured him scanning a Mercedes Benz SLR probably helped his systems bang out some of the damage, though apparently everything still felt very tender to the bot.

Which is fair considering a fighter jet stomped his spine in.

They all thanked their lucky stars Maria had been on the way to visit, and was still as terrifyingly good with her pistol as she always had been.

Molly had to bite her tongue not to laugh at how the seasoned sheriff had simply remarked she'd 'Hit a Bullseye'.

Like she hadn't shot an alien jet fighter robot in the eye.
Or more specifically, shot Starscream in the optic.

Prowl took the right turning this time, and within a few minutes, his human projection was stepping into the spacious apartment that his friends had booked for their stay in Europe.

Molly had barely shut the door when they were set upon.

"Prowlie!"

"Prowl! Darling… Good lord look at the state of you!"

Narisa and Selena were already fusing over him, their seemingly never ending energy contagious as he found himself chuckling. "I'm fine, really… I'm feeling a lot better now."

Selna scowled, grabbed his chin and jerked his head down.

If he was human, he was half tempted to think she'd of broken his neck with that little pull.

The short, 5'2' woman 63 year old stared him dead in the eyes. "Prowl. You look like shit."

The take no shit response cut his attempt at placating them down, and he felt himself deflate.

"I… I couldn't protect her…"

He wasn't sure when the sisters picked him up over their shoulders like they weren't over sixty, but within five minutes he'd been wrapped up in about five different duvettes and handed a mug of hot chocolate to drink.

He glanced at the three older women, and couldn't help but give a weak smile. "Thank you…"

Molly huffed. "Just don't forget about us when you find your people… you got that darlin'?"

He nodded and smiled. "Of course! Who knows! They might even help me get my memories back!"

All three smiled, and moved to settle themselves down, Selena turning on the news so they could have something to debate about.

Narisa ended up sitting on the sofa with him, so he took the chance to shuffle over as best he could while wrapped in duvettes, and rested his head on their shoulder. "It's good to see you two again."

He couldn't see her smile, but how she scratched the top of his head in the way that made his engine purr, well, that was more than enough.

Orichiono Manor

"Nuit down."

The massive doberman whimpered, pointed ears flopping back as she tried to give her mama the biggest puppy dog eyes she could, the smells of her mama's cooking driving her nose wild.

Aria huffed. "I swear we trained them better than this."

Wren was leaning on the counter, barely keeping a grip on Noir's colar, the larger hound was salivating, as Wren kept his front legs off the ground, they both knew if he got traction he'd lunge
the moment the food was in reach, at least they'd had the forethought to keep Hera attached to their back so she wouldn't be in trying to steal the food too. "They're hungry."

"Hmm… you're telling me." Aria mumbled back, opening the oven door and pulling out the steaming hot roast that was finally done, using her hip to keep Nuit from jumping up and snagging the meat.

It smelt… alright… but it was taste that was the important part. "Alright Wren, take the gravy off the heat and turn off the hob, then, pour it into that jug over there." Aria gestured with her nose.

Wren nodded, getting up and latching Noirs collar to a short leash that was in turn bolted to the kitchens island, said dog whimpered, but she wagged a finger. "No, you have to wait, let Aria carve it, then you'll get your share."

Noir whimpered and whined right along with his more well behaved sister, who was now sitting on her haunches dejectedly.

"Hey Aria! Tha feas' done ye'?!" Ira shouted over from the dining area.

Aria rolled her eyes as she spun on her heel, raising the roast to show of that it had, in fact, just come out of the oven, it was a delicious cut of gammon, glazed in apple cider, golden treacle and honey. "Ha! Let me carve it first! So sit still and wait, you rabid animal! You're almost as bad at patience as the dogs!"

Both dobermans barked then, it almost sounded like they were laughing.

Ira threw her head back in a laugh of her own at that, grabbing her knife and fork to bang them against the mahogany table. "FOOD! FOOD! FOOD!"

A whack over the back of the head from Kia stopped her, for half a second. "Hey! Who do you think you're… oh sorry, forgo' yah were doin' somethin'."

Kia rolled her eyes, bringing the tablet she was going over with a frown. "I haven't been able to keep up with Barricade's reports, that gang war in Zimbabwe stole a lot of my focus."

"And the twins gettin' fucked in tha head."

"Yes, that too."

"We're right here~, making you food~, you know?~" Aria called over, carving knife and fork in hand as she continued to slice the roast, the twins dogs whimpering getting even louder.

Bateleur and Red Kite rolled their eyes alike. "Ah come now, yah know we're jus' pullin' yah leg."

A few minutes of banter and updates being passed around later, steaming hot plates of roast were placed before all of them, and the scraps were already being wolfed down by Nuit and Noir like they hadn't just eaten a few hours prior, and had instead been starved their whole lives.

Ira licked her lips. "Alright… let's hope ah got tha taste down this time."

"Can't be as bad as the first time we tried eating with these."

Ira shot Kia a withering look over the clump of roast potato she'd skewered on her fork, now hovering before her open mouth.

Aria and Wren glanced to each other from across the table, their shared amusement telling over
their bond. "Ira, let's just eat." Aria cooed, breaking the tension with those few quick words in a soft tone.

Ira's tension slumped, and she shoved the whole potato into her mouth, and began to chew, face screwing up in concentration.

Kia and the twins all leaned in just a little bit, eager for the verdict.

The anticipation hit its crescendo when Ira swallows, holds a moment for emphasis, then smiles like she just won the lottery. "Fuckin' nailed it."

The joy and relief was palpable, and the Harpies dug in.

"Mpphhmmhmhhmmmmm~" Aria practically melted on her seat, eyes rolling back in her head in bliss and euphoria.

Kia smiled at her friends. "Congratulations are in order, to Ira, for finally getting Aria's roast dinner down, to Aria for knocking it out of the park again, and Wren, for not setting the kitchen on fire."

Wren sent her a withering glare. "Last I checked, it was you who was banned from the kitchen. Misle feu à la cuisine... et puis quoi encore. C'est Aria qui a laissé le four allumé à Mayfair." She grumbled, then grabbing another bite of the gammon off her own plate.

The banter continued through the rest of the meal, interrupted only when Nuit and Noir had finished wolfing down the scraps, and then began a full frontal offense of cuteness to try and score more from their mamas, whimpering and putting on their best puppy pouts.

Aria almost crumbled, but Wren kept her from doing so, no exception to the rules, otherwise they'd see it as them being clear to be even more disruptive.

Eventually, everyone had their 'fill' and the twins set to collecting the plates and taking them back to the kitchen for them to be washed later by one of their staff.

Only, the plates weren't fated to get a good wash.

Just as both twins were stepping across the divide in floor types between kitchen and dining room, something happened.

Ira had gone to ask Kia something, Kia had turned to receive the question.

There was a strangled half formed scream, two toned, and the shatter of plates, Nuit and Noir started barking as they jerked to alertness.

They turned just in time to watch as the twins holoforms, confused, eyes blow wide and teeth gritted in a near rabid snarl as their physical forms twisted and warped, crashing together and separating in showers of sparking pixels, the only sound leaving them now like some dying eldritch speaker.

Ira shouted after them, sending her chair crashing to the ground as she slammed her hands down on the table to propel her upwards and towards them faster.

The tablet Kia had been holding for the entire meal dropped as her grip when lax in shock, watching on with wide gold eyes as the holoforms finally gave out, dispersing in a blast of pixelated textures.
"T-twins…?" Ira mumbled out.

Kia's horror stricken face turned slowly to Ira. "The Matrix?"

Ira's holoform let out a shuddering breath. "Tha bunker… ge' tah tha bunker!" Her holoform snapped out of existence not a moment after saying it, following the smaller Harpies lead, Kia's own snapped out of existence not a moment later.

Their holoforms reformed in the bunker in time to witness Optimus being body checked and slammed to the side by the twins, their form vanishing down the flight tunnel at breakneck speed.

"TWINS!" Ira screamed after them, but no hesitation came, their form quickly vanishing into the darkness, the lights hadn't been finished in that area yet…

Optimus groaned from where he'd crashed against the wall, half slumped down as he rubbed at his helm. "What… happened?"

Kia spoke. "We don't know… Their holoforms fritzed out upstairs, and then, this."

Ironhide stepped over to help Optimus back up to his pedes. "Well they were in a slaggin' hurry to get somewhere."

It was then that Kia got a ping, a message from Barricade, the first in a week.

She had to read it three times, and stare at the picture that was sent with it for a few long moments before it clicked, and dread pooled deep in her spark.

She heard a little whimper, but it wasn't from her or Ira, she ignored it. "I know where they're going."

Ira, who'd been furiously trying to open up every possible CCTV cameras in the city to see which way the twins were going, cursing out the poor video quality under her breath, turned to regard the Bateluer. "How?"

Kia sent the message to her.

Optimus and Ironhide watched as realisation dawned on Ira's own features, quickly replaced by a strange mix of joy and terror.

The red kite turned to regard the Bateleur. "You need to move… now…"

Kia nodded, and their holoforms vanished.

Ironhide turned to Optimus. "I hate it when they do that."

Somewhere on the Portuguese Coast

Barricade grunted, cursing his luck as his energon level warnings gave him another ping.

Serves him right for doing what he just did.

Next to him, the mech he'd dragged across the bottom of half the Atlantic was busy purging all the seawater and organic life from his tanks, spluttering and hacking everything and anything out of his mouth.
He'd been trying to get some signs of life out of the mech for over an hour when desperation had him hook up his engine to what he could only guess was the general area of the mechs own engine, and discharging half of his remaining reserves straight into the other mechs systems.

It had worked, somehow, and after a mass of convulsions, the mech had opened his mouth to let out a bubbly groan, had his optics, green behind the navy visor, blow themselves wide, before he thrashed onto his side, and started purging.

He eased down onto his own aft, and finally let Frenzy clamber out to take a look at the navy blue, light blue, tan brown and dark teal green mech.

He was certainly different from Kia and Ira, the two Harpies he had a visual to compare with.

Unlike them, he seemed to only have one set of Protrusions, that ran down the centre line of his helm from front to sweeping back.

His neck was long, really long, with two light blue bands of metal accentuating the length.

Then there were those tail feathers, longer than the rest of the mech was tall by a significant margin.

The mech groaned, slumping back down, evidently not caring he was getting at least half his helm covered in the stuff he'd just purged.

Evidently the mech needed some time to come fully back to the land of the living.

They had time, he thought, as he prepared a message to send to Kia alerting her to the fact that he was somewhere on a beach of a country called Portugal, and that he'd found a mech at the bottom of the ocean, picture included.

He sent it, and turned his attention back on the mech. "You good mech?"

The mech groaned. "Shit… feel like shit Ivan…" The mech groaned.

Looked like the mech thought he was someone else, Ivan was a human name, he wanted to be insulted, but he didn't have the energy.

The mech was probably gonna be really out of it for a while, considering the state he found them in.

So, he waited, letting Frenzy skitter down to stand on all fours on one of his pedes, watching the mech as he continued to groan and shift around with all the coordination of a sparkling.

Finally the mech seemed to gain enough bearings to lift his helm, optics squinting out at the darkness of the beach that surrounded him. "W-where… " He mumbled, before groaning into a full frame shudder.

He didn't hide his grimace at the sound, thankful that he's climbed out on an abandoned beach that seemed to not be infested with human living spaces.

He let the mech be, his attention turning to a new ping he'd received from Kia.

Apparently she was back to replying rather swiftly.

He opened it.
'Stay where you are, wait for me, and for all things holy, do not, under any circumstances, touch him.'

The optic ridges over his four optics raised. That was oddly… ominous.

He glanced back to the mech, who still hadn't really noticed he was there.

And then, the mech started to laugh.

Strained, confused, distressed… it was an odd laugh.

He was staring at his right wing, which his motions had brought into view, allowing him to slowly follow it back to the rest of his body.

"W… wh-at…"

He kept quiet, Frenzy did the same, just watching as the mech tried, and inevitably failed to push himself off his front, only for his wings to slip on the loose sand and put his face back into said sand.

A leg kicked out uselessly from under the tail feathers and dropped back to the ground.

The mech laughed again, just as strained, he seemed to be getting even more distressed, if not hysterical.

And he was mumbling, the sand was muffling it into noises he couldn't make out.

Just great, for all his luck this one was going to be as nuts as Fernando.

Deciding it would probably be a good idea not to let this mech have a mental breakdown on the sand, he spoke again. "Mech, you're only going to clog your vents doing that."

The mechs helm finally swung around to face him, considering it was dark out and he couldn't really make out much, save those green optics widening at the sight of him, before scrunching back up in confusion. "What the…" He seemed to ponder something before he was hit by some sort of realisation. "OH! I'm hallucinating! Wow! Four eyes, am I in surgery or something? … No, I'm probably dead... I was shot right? Right? Or is this all one fucked up nightmare, and I'm gonna wake up at home with breakfast in the air again?"

Barricade couldn't help but stare, was… was this mech serious? "This is real life mech."

The mech made an attempt to roll over sideways, but the struts in his right wing prevented it, he grumbled. "Stupid dream…"

Were it not for the specific order not to touch, he would have slapped the mech, knock some sense into him.

But he couldn't, so he just sat back and watched as the mech continued to try and get himself somewhat upright.

It took about a human hour, but the mech finally managed to sit up, and was staring in intrigue at his own dual joint pedes, flexing the four talons at the end of each and chuckling about it 'feeling weird'.

Frenzy got bored at some point during that time, and for the first time since the Air Force One incident, scampered off to find something, anything to keep him entertained while they waited for
this mech to realise that no, this wasn't a drug induced hallucination, and no, he was not going to wake up from this and have everything be normal, this was the new normal, and like Barricade and Frenzy, he was going to have to deal with it.

Barricade noticed that the mech would periodically rub at his chassis, expression one of confusion, before getting distracted again with something new on his frame he’d spotted.

Now though, he'd run out of things to distract him, and was rubbing more insistently at his chassis.

The mech looked back to him. "I feel… weird… happy… scared… desperate… kinda tired… but I don't know why? Is that normal? Am I dissociating in my own dream?" The mech exclaimed, and proceeded to bang the side of his helm with a wing, causing him to wince. "Oww, ow, ow."

Barricade shrugged. "No idea kid, I just found you at the bottom of the ocean."

The mech's helm tilted to the side, and something dawned on him as he rubbed his front. "Oh! Right! Heh… yeah I guess getting shot through the chest probably leaves some left over stuff… wait… bottom? I wasn't floating?!"

Barricade rubbed his optics. "Mech, stop thinking your human, you ain't any more."

When he pulled his servo away, he noticed the mech wasn't even paying attention, that row of protrusions that ran along the centre of his helm had flared up.

"Do… do you hear that?"

Barricade upped his audio settings, and then yes, he did hear it, the familiar sound of wingbeats.

Only this time, they sounded a lot more… hurried?

He looked up, night had already fallen, and clouds blotted out the lone moon and stars above, leaving the beach they sat upon shrouded in darkness.

All of which added to the fact that he couldn't see anything, until something burst out of the clouds some distance off, and he realised it was heading straight for him.

It took a minute, but he recognised the silhouette. "Kia?"

"Kia?!" The mech perked up, helm swinging all the way around and up to look behind him at where Barricade was looking.

Then the mech looked back to him with a look of suspicion on his features. "How do you know Kia?"

Barricade scowled. "How do you?"

The mech huffed, whacking his front with his wing. "Because she's my big sister's friend, duh, Kia De La Estrada, heiress of the Estrada family… wait… Kia can't… fly…?"

His reply was cut off by a shout from the inbound Harpy. "MOVE!"

"What?" Barricade exclaimed, jumping up to his pedes, Frenzy perked up from where he was foraging through the high tide line.

The mech just perked up more, trying and failing to stumble to his taloned pedes. "That is Kia! KIA! KIA! You're alive! Oh I can't wait to tell Ivan you're alive!"
Kia didn't seem to hear, her frame bending to drop into an arch that led her to fly right over the other mech, and throw her pedes down into a landing that's momentum sent her hoping right into Barricade's personal space.

Which was apparently the intention when her wings caught him under the arms, and in a display of strength that floored him, she spun and lobbed him further down the beach away from the mech.

"MOVE YOU IDIOT!" She screamed as she proceeded to run after his tumbling form, managing to grab him again by hooking a wing strut around his waist, spinning on her axis, and hurling him even further.

The other mech seemed to react to this with a great deal of alarm. "KIA! KIA! Where are you going! Kia! Please! Don't go! KIA!" He was really trying to get up to his pedes now, wanting desperately to chase after the Harpy that was quickly vanishing into the darkness of the night.

Barricade finally came to a stop in a gouge his frame had carved out of the sand on impact, his helm swimming as Kia was on him again, only this time when she grabbed him, it was to wrap her wings around both of them, and poke her helm out to scream. "STAY THERE! STAY. RIGHT. FUCKING. THERE!"

The mech let off a keen of distress. "But Kia! You're alive! Me and Ivan were looking for you!"

Barricade saw Kia grit her denta. "Derrick, please, please, please stay right there… They're coming, I promise you, the twins are coming."

The mech, Derrick, seemed to almost come fully alive at that. "The… my… my sisters! They're… They're alive?!"

Kia nodded, though with how dark it was, the mech probably couldn't see much more than a silhouette. "Yeah, and… well… you know how they get with you… so we're gonna stay over here, okay?!"

The shouting was decreased, but as Barricade managed to find a gap to look out through the wings, namely by parting some of the feathers, he found him unable to see much of anything, save Derrick's face, which was illuminated by the glow coming from his optics.

Derrick seemed to catch something that he didn't, as his optics seemed to widen, and his protrusions flared again.

A few minutes later he started to vibrate on the spot. "I hear them! I hear them Kia!"

Kia didn't reply, just tucked down over the top of him further, completely obscuring him from view.

There was a screech, a crash, a few grunts as metal clashed with metal and rolled over loose sand.

Evidently, the Harpies he'd yet to meet, had arrived, and not even bothered with a proper landing, simply tackling the, comparatively much smaller mech in a desperate hug.

He watched on as the larger Harpies ended up bundling the mech, around two thirds their size, against their chassis with the fumbling motions of their wings, sounds leaving them that seemed to range from happy screeches to worried chitters as they managed to mech handle the smaller mech around, checking every single part of him before apparently coming to some of their senses when they realised he wasn't mortally wounded in some form or another.
Which was the clearance they apparently needed to shake the mech hard enough for his helm to flail around in ways Barricade swore should of snapped it in at least three different places. "YOU IDIOT!" The much larger silhouetted femmes yelled, continuing to the shake the mech.

Being shaken in such a way made it a little hard for the mech to get coherent words out, but given the larger femmes reaction it had been a question. "What did you do?! What did you do?! YOU IDIOT! YOU GOT YOURSELF SHOT!" They were becoming more than a little hysterical, screeching the accusation with a degree of anguish in their voice, that it caused Kia to flinch above him.

The larger femme stopped shaking him now, and gave him the chance to properly reply. "How did you know about that?!"

"How did we? How did we?! IT'S BEEN OUR NIGHTMARE FOR TWO SOLID WEEKS! DO YOU KNOW HOW LITTLE SLEEP WE'VE HAD?! WE'VE WATCHED YOU DIE THIRTEEN TIMES OVER!"

Barricade nudged Kia. "Should… should we give them some privacy?" He whispered

Kia hissed in a vent and then replied at a much quieter whisper. "No, if we move, the twins will notice us."

Barricade looked back out. "And that's a bad thing… because…?"

Kia seemed to gulp down some air. "Because last time someone moved, they lost their head, very, very quickly, too quickly for me to get airborne with you weighing me down. And we are still very much within striking range."

Barricade grimaced, that meant they were stuck, him Kia and…

"Frenzy." He muttered, fear rising in his systems.

Kia's helm snapped down to look at him. "What?!" She hissed out.

Barricade looked to the high tide line. "He went scavenging on the high tide line."


Said minicon was apparently not even paying attention to Kia, his full attention locked on the other Harpies on the beach.

Probably because the hysterics had returned, and were joined by what Barricade could only describe as ugly crying as the larger Harpies smothered their younger brother.

This went on for upwards of another hour, by which point Barricade swore humans should of come to investigate the noise, and he found himself becoming very stiff in the crater he'd made in the sand as Kia's crowding forced him to hunch over.

At some point the hysterics had ended, and now the reunited siblings where practically pressing the sides of their helms to the other to whisper into each other's hidden audios, which at this distance was completely inaudible.

He found his reserves were steadily dropping lower, and a state of drowsiness was starting to cloud his focus, so, he tapped on Kia's wing to get her attention. "Runnin' low…"
Kia nodded, and took the break in silence to ask a question. "We'll get you some energon in a bit… where did you even find him? We've been looking for him pretty much ever since the twins started seeing their little bro get offed in their sleep."

He'd ask about that last bit later. "Bottom of the ocean, happened to pick up a weak energy signature, carried him here."

Kia tilted her helm at him, apparently re-analysing him. "And then you jump started him, sending a shockwave through the newly reformed sibling bond and give both the twins a nasty jolt."

Barricade just shrugged, his helm lolling to the side.

Kia picked up on this, and the arms attached to her chassis shifted out to catch his helm. "Easy there, the twins will be safe soon, then I'll see if I can carry you back to Barcelona."

He just nodded, he was cold, being so deep under the ocean for so long had left the softer parts of his internal systems saturated, and the cold air was only making him even colder.

It was just as he watched the larger Harpies rise, wings hooked on the smaller mech, helping them up, that he finally slipped into recharge, too tired to keep his four optics online any longer.

Kia remained alert, watching on as the twins finally seemed to notice the other presences on the beach. "Kia?" Wren called, lowering her wing so that Derrick could lean his new chassis against it for support as they walked closer, their little brother needed it, his new legs were going to take a while for him to get used to, it had certainly taken a while for them.

Kia regarded the twins, slowly unfurling to reveal Barricade, now in recharge and slumped against her. "He found Derrick at the bottom of the Atlantic."

The twins let out a vent of air that was half way between a noise of surprise, and intrigue. "Do tell us when he wakes, we'd like to thank him for that."

Derrick leaned over his sisters wing to try and make out the other Harpy, he found it funny how their Triage titles had become so much more literal. "Hey Kia!"

Kia smiled, stepping up and over her operative to offer her own wing. "Hey Derder."

Derrick groaned at the old nickname. "Still not letting me live that one down are you?"

Kia snorted, and gave the side of his helm a light knock. "Nope, and never will." She looked to the twins. "You good?"

Arien practically beamed, looking to their little brother. "Yeah, we're good."

Kia looked back to Barricade. "Okay, so… how are getting these three back?" She enquired, glancing to Frenzy and Derrick in turn, the former had scuttled back to Barricade, and was hiding under the mechs arm.

The twins frowned, and glanced to their brother, none of them had been able to get flight right on the first try, and the distance to Monaco had too high of a risk of him crashing.

They also wouldn't subject their little brother to being stuck in a trailer, no matter how short the journey was compared to their own stint in Optimus' trailer.

That meant only one thing.
Something that made the sensors in their frame ping in warning.

They ignored them. "Looks like we're going to be carrying them."

Kia sighed but nodded, she'd already accepted her fate.

That got a chuckle from the Orichino siblings.

Frenzy watched all of this with weary optics, hoping against hope that he would survive whatever these entities had in store for him and his guardian.

On impulse, he sent a ping down the line of his strained creator bond, wanting nothing more than for his sire to appear out of nowhere, scoop him up, and get him as far away from all of this as possible.

But that was not to be, they were still so, so far away.

Too far away.

Before he could stop himself, he let out an involuntary keen.

The Harpies noticed, and Derrick regarded him with a look of sympathy, pushing past his sisters wing to somewhat stumble into a kneel, and offered his two wings to the minicon. "Hey there little guy, you okay there?"

"Derick." Aria mumbled out a quick warning.

Frenzy didn't hiss, anyone of these Harpies could snuff his spark, and he was not ready for that.

But that didn't mean he came any closer.

The newest Harpy seemed to deflate a bit, and pushed back off the sand a little too hard, letting out a noise just as his sisters wing caught his back.

"Alright, it's time we head home." Kia announced.

The twins nodded, and the process of setting off began.

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Woo! So many new faces in this chapter!

For any and all curious, this is what Derrick looks like now
Until next time!

Moon
Woo! Chapter 41 is done so I finally get to post this one! Hope you all enjoy!

Soundwave sighed to himself, his HUD was on, and his attention trained to it, his servo reached up, and stroked the holographic image that had sat on the top left since he’d onlined in his own frame once more.

His digits went right through, she wasn’t in front of him, just an image displayed in a way that made it look like she was there.

Her smiling face haunted him in a way, he saw her in his recharge, heard her voice, that way she’d whisper sweet nothings in his ears when she thought he was asleep… even now he could feel her ghostly touch, gliding across him in a way that had him shutting down his motor functions so he didn’t shudder… made his treacherous, wounded spark yearn to turn around and go back to her.

But there was no turning back… not even once he’d gotten Frenzy back…

The human dead did not rise, no matter what their horror genre suggested.

And he was certain, even though it pained him even more, that she would of moved on… she was too incredible not to, to not sweep another of their feet like she had him...

Ravage was curled up in his lap, and glanced up at his motion. “Sire?”

Soundwave let his optics shutter behind his visor for a moment, before glancing down at his eldest. “Yes Ravage?”

Ravage’s audios folded. “You’re…. You’re thinking about carrier…”

Soundwave felt the words stab him in the spark, no, he hadn’t been… but… he couldn’t tell Ravage that… that he’d moved on, and still left behind his second love… “Yes…”

Ravage nudged further against his chassis. “We all miss her… when you vanished… it all came back… it all hurt so… so much more…” He found himself holding his eldest, letting their bond pulse with love and apologies.

He pulled the large Cygar even closer. “I’m sorry…”

Ravage returned the gesture, nuzzling close. “Can you… can you tell me about when you met Carrier for the first time…?”

He knew why Ravage asked, it was one of his little’s favourite stories, a time before Shrike brought them all to him.

Back when he was broken.

He nodded. “I can do one better.”

He’d been getting more experienced at sharing full memories over the spark bond.

The rest of his littles were recharging in their chosen room, it would probably give them a nice recharge.
Of course, it would warp for them, but they’d still see her.

Iacon Central Spire

He was lost.

The two mechs dragging him by his arms knew where they were going, but he didn’t, his pedes just dragged along the ground, helm hung low, just as limp and lifeless as when they’d grabbed him out of the gutter of that place he’d finally stopped walking at.

He’d been looking for them… his littles… where were his littles?

He knew where… but where were they?

They weren’t with him… his chassis was empty, a void that pulled at the surrounding armour, at his very spark…

He sent a weak pulse down the bonds…

Their severed ends returned no reply…

He keened, the sound hidden within his chassis by the fact he no longer had the strength to open his mouth.

His optics flickered on and off…

Where had he left them?

They’d been so tired… he promised he’d find them energon… he’d started walking… looking for energon to take back…

They’d been too weak… where were they?

Why weren’t they replying on the bonds?

The guards were talking above him, somebot had approached, was speaking to them in hushed tones.

His faceplates were grabbed, his optics shuttering on and off, barely there red didn’t move to look into inquisitive blue.

The mech nodded, speaking, what he couldn’t understand…

There was a noise, a scream, a shout, something was thrown and hit something that shattered into a thousand pieces.

The noise came from ahead, muffled in its distance.

The new bot chuckled weakly, fearfully.

His helm was dropped, left to hang, doors were slid open, and the guards threw him inside, the metal of his frame screeching and sparking against the floor for a few short moments before his limp form came to a stop.

They’d brought him to be offlined… Whatever was in here was enraged.
Something was running towards him, bipedal, the heavy fall of pedes shook the ground.

It lunged, launching over him, clearing him entirely, it’s focus not on him at all.

The doors slammed shut just as it’s shoulder crashed into it, the impact sending this other entity stumbling back.

The entity made one last over worldly screeching below, one last charge that he swore likely dented the doors, before all fell silent for a moment.

He could hear them re-aligning armour, muttering to themselves and pacing for a moment next to the door, but he was so tired... so... so tired...

He could feel optics on him.

A piece of him tried to reach full alertness, but it only lasted a moment as the entity stepped over to his side, and then one more step to his front, where they kneeled.

He was laying faceplates down on the ground, strewn out as he had fallen.

Wickedly pointed digits worked together to curl around the underside of his lower jaw, and slowly tilted him up.

Flickering red optics met harrowed blues.

The agony in that gaze... for a moment his spark keened at the presence of a kindred spark...

“By the pits below... where... where did they find you?”

The femme, it was a femme, with curved yet pointed armour, painted in a gradient of different purples from a light one with hints of pink, to the dark purple of dusk.

Their voice wasn’t soft, there was a hardness that played well with their accent, Praxian... what was a Praxian doing in Iacon?

What was he doing in Iacon?

The femme looked away for a moment, and he swore he saw them wipe lubricant from one of their optics.

Slowly, the femme lowered herself, broad pedes with wheels at the back, and claw like bracers on the other three sides, shifted back and out, it was an awkward sitting position if he’d ever seen one.

It mattered little though, when her four servos, two attached and two floating, he noticed, an odd mod if he’d ever seen them, reached down his backstrut, grabbed servo fulls of metal and loose protoform, and pulled him up into their lap.

His helm thunked against their shallow chassis, and it was with all his strength that he managed to stay online as his helm tilted out to the side.

Just in time to hear her speak again, looking in the same direction. “They’re gone Sol. It was just Shockwave and some guards”

He watched a femme peak out from behind one of the counters in the room, one covered in datapads and scientific measuring equipment, was this a lab?
The femme was tiny, femmes were naturally on the small size, but this one would of had to of stretched to reach his hip… he’d never seen a frame type like it, but then again, he hadn’t seen the frame type of the one holding him before either…

Wide fearful blues glanced around, only just visible over an off black mask that hid the vast majority of their faceplates, not quite believing the words of the one holding him, evidently.

Finally they seemed to sag, and came stumbling over, before dropping to their own knees right at their side, only then did a sound come from the femme, no words, just a sound.

He watched as their narrow abdominal plating shrunk further, and a trill like sound escaped the mask. It sounded like a squeak mixed with some high pitched laser blast, yet somehow came out as inquisitive in it’s tone.

The femme holding him stroked one of their servos down his helm and on down his back strut. “Yeah… ah know… can you grab some energon for him? He’s… he’s looking faint… I’ve already commed Dust, she’s on her way.”

The little femme nodded, her colours were one soft blue, one darker blue, and a teal, as she scrambled back up, he noted the fact she had cloven pedes, and two panes of even darker blue tinted glass hanging from her hips, decorative, exaggerated the sway of their hips, a trait often used to draw the optic he noted.

She scampered off then, stumbling as she bumped a table in her haste to get to an adjoining room, the glass pane was clearly made of strong stuff as it only dully thunked at the impact.

It was only when the little femme vanished from sight he slowly craned his helm back up.

His optics met hers again, and sure enough, there was more lubricant as she pulled him up to press a chaste kiss to the centre of his forehelm, and whispered. “I’m sorry… I’m so sorry…”

Why was she sorry?

She’d done nothing to him… she wasn’t the reason he was so… so low on energon.

The femme glanced over to where the smaller one, Sol, came running back, the cube held in her servos, making it look comically large for her small frame, sloshing as she dropped back to her knees and skidded the final distance to pass the cube over.

One of those floating arms easily grabbed it and pulled it to him. “Drink.” The larger femme half ordered, half requested.

He parted his lips, and his right servo struggled to raise to take it, but he hadn’t the strength, and it only twitched on the ground.

He could practically see the sparks of the other two twist when they saw this, and slowly, the larger femme tilted his helm back with one servo, and slowly started tilting it for him.

It was high quality, perfectly refined, the best he’d ever had, but he was too desperate to swallow to pay the taste or texture any heed.

Already his fuel gauge started to ping up.

By the time the cube was dropped to the side empty, his gauge pinged just shy of the halfway mark.
The doorway slid open before he could say anything, if he even could.

He felt the ground shake with steady, calculated steps, as a new bot entered the lab.

He turned his helm, and realised he’d have to look a lot further up to see the faceplates of the mech.

Half way up, past the towering heavy pedes, he realised suddenly that what he was looking at wasn’t a mech, but a femme, a really, really big femme.

He had a strange feeling that he was in the presence of both the smallest and largest femmes on Cybertron at the same time.

He also spotted a second femme, another small one, near identical to Sol, sans colour, a twin? Split sparks?

Split sparks were known for being smaller than average…

The new femme was perched on the giant femmes shoulder.

“Dust…” The purple one spoke.

So this was the one they’d called.

Dust nodded, and slowly eased herself down onto one pede, and looked him over. “Obvious case of severe starvation and malnutrition, the vast majority of his armour is beyond repairable…” The medic tapped the side of his shoulder, he didn’t need to see to know a chunk of it hit the floor. “He’ll need a full plate replacement, going to hook him up to a drip to get his tank up in the meantime, can’t do anything drastic until his internal systems won’t crash if I put him under for an extended period of time... You were right to give him a cube, but his tank’s gonna have to take the rest slowly.”

The femme holding him nodded, but didn’t let go. “Shrike…” Dust warned.

Soundwave watched the femme on the medics shoulder jump down, landing foul and scrambling on all fours for a moment, before she righted herself and joined her twin, their expressions near identical from what he could see from their optics.

Both wore those off black masks.

The new twin let out a chitter, a little half there noise, directed at the one holding him, who he guessed was Shrike.

Her hold tightened.

Dust, the medic, he couldn’t see her right now, busy looking up at the one holding him, his lower jaw resting on her chassis, looking past the broad neck guard she wore.

She was looking right back at him, gaze conflicted, before she sighed, eased her grip, and let the towering medic heft him up like he weighed nothing.

“Clear a table, I’m going to have to do a full check over... Primus only knows what he might be carrying in his systems, if they did drag him out of the gutters.”

The twins scampered off to do just that, both seemed to be unsteady on their pedes, grabbing the tables for support as much as they were grabbing measuring devices and rushing off to put them
Shrike mumbled something about not being able to find any of the moved stuff later, but it didn’t matter.

He was set down and the medic snapped her pointed digits to get his attention. “I’m going to put you under, it will let your systems recalibrate to the influx of energon, alright? I’ll monitor your read-outs in case something happens.”

He gave a weak nod, and let his optics power off.

He’d found energon… now he just needed to find his littles and bring some back to them...

He sent a little pulse down his bonds, wanting to let them know.

Dead silence replied… and in a single moment, clarity struck.

They were gone… his littles were gone...

He hadn’t been fast enough...

He felt a prick in his medical port, and everything shut down, just as his whole world shattered.

Ravage sniffed and nuzzled against his side as he came back.

His hold was just as tight as before, even if the experience had drained them.

“I forgot they were all there…” Ravage mumbled.

Soundwave knew what he meant.

The four femmes, the lost femmes, it was still difficult to accept they were all gone…

He didn’t speak, he just held his oldest close.

Something nudged his side, glancing down over the seat, he spotted Rumble, under the red visor were two little tracks of lubricant.

His spark keened, and over the bond he sent a pulse of soothing love, even as he let go of Ravage with one servo and hefted Rumble up to join the hug.

Buzzsaw and Laserbeak were already there, curled up on his shoulders.

There was a spot empty for when they got Frenzy back…

And… if he deceived himself well enough, he could imagine the chair was Shrike, covering him from the back, the helm rest her helm, fallen back instead of against his shoulder plating.

Somewhere in the mess of limbs, he could also imagine a final form, about the size of rumble, but taller… curled up with one hand splayed out against his chest…

Not exactly how they’d shared a bed… but close enough…

Close enough… he thought, as he allowed himself to slip into recharge.
Monaco

Optimus wasn’t sure what to do.

The fact that had become a recurring issue wasn’t one he was blind to.

But he found solace in the fact that neither did Ironhide.

Who was currently watching Ira, who’d arrived in her actual form about three hours previously, bounce around happily on her pedes, with an air of suspicion.

They’d rarely if ever seen the smallest Harpy be so… animated and happy, the reasoning of which was alluding them spectacularly.

The fact she was still being so bubbly and happy for three straight hours was also very much alarming.

By the sheer fact that every attempt they’d made to find out what that incident earlier in the night was about, had been replied to with a winning smirk and a ‘You’ll see yah impatien’ buggers.’

Some seating had been installed for them a few days ago, and though they had needed a bit of reinforcement, they now took his weight easily.

So he sat, and watched the primary runway/exit with Ira, audios and optics trained to spot something in the dark void the tunnel became.

Ira picked it up long before he did.

An excited trill and she was bouncing on the spot, helm shaking from side to side and causing the rest of her frame to shake happily.

He watched on, expression shifting into attentive focus.

With a final flare of her wings and ruffle of her feathers, she stilled, and with the end of her motions, he was able to hear it to, he and Ironhide.

Wingbeats, slow, shallow, but just as powerful as ever.

He spotted the silhouette of the twins approaching the entrance, the very longest of their feathers brushing the sides of the tunnel.

A high screech caused him to wince, and there was a quick shower of sparks.

They’d hit the roof of the tunnel with their ridged back struts.

After a moment longer, he realised why.

Clamped awkwardly in their talons, was a large mass.

One that was dropped just as the Monochrome femmes entered the main base, and crashed fully to the ground, another screech of metal against concrete, longer than the last, frame going into a full roll across the concrete, dragging on that horrid screech of metal, before finally coming to a stop, vents laboured and flared wide to let plumes of hot air and steam rise from their sides and cause the
air around them to wave in the heat.

He rose, just as Ira went to the Harpies side.

Stepping over, he noticed the mass shifting, and a helm rising to shake, a single line of protrusions flaring and a set of optics flickering back online as they opened their lower jaw wide to yawn revealing the hooked blades of metal within.

He had to stop for a moment, just staring at this new femme.

Plump lipplates, unlike that of the other Harpies narrow ones, and decorative navy blue markings running down her faceplates, her optics accentuated by fluttering optic covers.

Then, the navy, tan, dark green and bright blue femme turned their helm on their incredibly long neck, one broken up by two separate light blue bands of metal, and spoke with the voice of a mech. “I told you you didn’t need to carry me the whole way.”

Optimus looked to Ironhide, who was obviously just as taken back.

He gave a gesture to just step back and watch, this was… odd.

Ira was fussing over the largest Harpies. “Oh jus’ loo’ at tha sta’e ah yah, yah flew all tha way back whouth stoppin’ once didn’ yah?”

Wren mumbled something.

Ira huffed. “Six hours of flying with one one hour break ain’t good for yah wings yah nutters. Surely ah taugh’ yah tha’.”

Both twins huffed.

The new femme/mech huffed as well. “I kept telling them they could let me go. I’ll have to figure out using these at some point.” They remarked, showing off one of their wings, primarily brown feathers ended in darker blue flight feathers.

Then there seemed to be a moment where the new commer regarded Ira in curiosity before he gasped. “Wait a minute… IRA?!”

Ira threw her helm back and laughed. “Took yah long enough! Ge’ ova here yah bugger!” She exclaimed, opening her wings up to the other.

The mech let off a happy noise, and promptly fell on his own chassis the moment he tried to get up. “Ow…”

Ira tried not to laugh, but the choked noise that came out was tell enough.

Again he glanced to Ironhide, who just shrugged.

For the next two hours, introductions took place.

This newcomer was, as luck would have it, the twins younger half brother, a concept that Ira had had to explain to them, he had apparently washed ashore on the coast off Portugal, where he finally came online, hence the twins manic departure at having his presence suddenly show up on their sibling bond.

Then came the awkward discussion of why said mech, apparently designated Derrick, looked more
like a femme than any of the actual femmes.

Which lead to a theoretical discussion about sexual dimorphism in birds, Cybertronians, and apparently a human thing called androgyny.

From Ironhide’s exasperated expression, Ratchet was probably taking notes and having his mate pay attention to every little detail.

At some point early in this discussion, the twins had dropped into recharge, and had been left to rest on the ground where they’d ended up.

Optimus knew they hadn’t been recharging well recently.

Apparently with their family member returned to their presence, they were making up for lost recharge.

Which left them with Ira, who was also showing signs of recharge having a strong hold on her, and the new comer, who’d managed with some help to sit on his aft, legs splayed out haphazardly, wings held close to his front, and a mass of excessively long but very vibrant tailfeathers trailing behind him, who’s full attention was locked on Optimus and staring at him and Ironhide in unabashed awe, jaw hanging only slightly.

Ira let out a groan, catching all of their attention as she stretched and yawned. “Ah’m bea’... Der’ ge’ ova here.” She mumbled as she stepped over to the twins, and half crouched, half fell down on top of the larger Harpies, helm burying into the mass of feathers of the others wing. “Ah’ll sor’ ou’ yah holoform tomorrow… maybe...”

Derrick tilted his helm to the side, then smiled, and shuffled over, folding in and using his wing to lift Wren’s own, and carefully slid under the giant limb.

The twins grunted in their sleep, wing coming down and pulling him flush to their side, a low content rumble leaving them in their recharge.

Optimus turned away, and Ironhide followed his lead after a few more moments of watching.

Optimus made a decision then, nodded to his weapons specialist, and went to the lift that would take him up to the garage, he was going to go for a drive, and check in on Lena.

He’d learned over the last month or so the woman could be up at any time of the day, and was always happy to chat, no matter the hour.

Considering how long this day had been, he desired a little bit of human normality before he retired for the night.

Jasper Municipal Hospital

“Evening Annie.” June greeted, stepping into the private room, half a filing cabinets worth of papers tucked under one arm.

Annie gave the nurse a smile. “Evening June. How’s Jack?”

“Oh you know, being a typical thirteen year old. Really wants a motorcycle…” She sighed and shook her head.

Annie reached out a gauze wrapped hand, and June carefully took it as Annie brought her other
gauze wrapped hand over to pat the top of June’s. “Kids want to feel free. He’s probably itching to go somewhere. Take a few days off to make a long weekend, and just, drive with him, windows down, go somewhere, doesn’t matter where, and just… let what happens, happens. Unless someone tries to murder you, then you have my full permission to use the second amendment and pump that bastard full of lead.” She knew full well June kept a safety locked handgun in her drivers side glovebox, Jack’s father and her hadn’t parted on good terms.

June huffed and shook her head. “Why you decided against kids will forever allude me.”

Annie shrugged as much as she could. “And leave Prowl and Maria as the only two officers while I’m on maternity leave? June please.”

The scandal in her voice got a laugh out of the nurse. “Alright, fair… on… that topic… you know that um… case you and Prowl dealt with a few months back?”

Annie gave her a blank look. “Which… one?”

June shook her head. “No it’s nothing, don’t worry about it, Maria’s handling it.”

Annie sighed, and sent June a look, who held out for all of five seconds. “Oh fine! The Esquivel case opened up again, Marcelo Esquivel broke his restraining order and tried to break into Mr and Mrs Esquivel’s property in broad daylight… they’re youngest came home from a walk and got spotted. A neighbour called it in and the boy just got out of surgery… neither of his parents have been able to get out of work… and I was wondering if you’d be okay with him being brought in here? I mean, you’re really great with kids and…” She trailed off, blushing somewhat.

Annie processed June’s verbal output for a minute and then sighed and nodded. “Yes, he’s going to want company.”

June nodded. “Good! Good! Um… oh! I’m here to change your bandages!”

Annie chuckled, but then sent June an imploring look. “I meant it about taking a break June, you’re getting worn down.”

June glanced away.

Annie’s gaze narrowed. “June, please, for me? For Jack?”

June crumbled, and turned to start changing the bandages with a pile of clean ones that had been brought in earlier and left to just sit there.

Annie watched the whole process, eyebrow raising slowly as she regarded the burn scars.

They looked a lot better than she thought they would.

June seemed to notice that too. “Hmm… odd… your skin seems to be regenerating faster than I anticipated…”

Annie shrugged. “I’ve always been a quick healer June, you know that.”

June nodded, she did, but she was a nurse, not a fool, there was scar tissue yes, but a lot more already than there should be with third degree burns…

The process only took about twenty minutes, and with a final strip of medical tape being put in place, Annie’s arms, legs, neck and abdomen were re-bandaged.
Laying face down as she had been had saved her face from much of the worst burns, those patches that had been seared were already passed needing bandages.

June clapped her hands together. “Right! I’ll page Dr Riverford and let him know you’ve agreed to give Rafael company.” Annie nodded, and watched as June scampered back out.

Sighing to herself she eased herself back further into the pillows that propped her up, she didn’t want to tell June, but she was beyond bored.

Maria was pulling favours from the sheriffs of other districts to help her, with both deputies out of commission for the foreseeable future, the woman was wearing herself ragged trying to keep on top of all of Jasper.

She’d been taking a few minutes to visit every few days, but Annie could tell Maria was under a lot of stress.

Annie could empathise with her boss, she was just as worried, for both Jasper and her husband.

Prowl had sent an email to her personal phone, which sat on the bedside table, that he’d arrived safe in Monaco the day before, but such different time zones might as well have put them on separate planets, Prowl was going to be up when she was supposed to be sleeping and visa versa.

He’d still yet to wake up if the fact her final message in their chat had yet to be answered, one asking about what the food was like.

Bella was her most frequent visitor, coming at least once a day with entire books of time taking puzzles and the like.

She appreciated it, but she was starting to worry she’d never be able to finish them all, there was already over twenty in her bedside table!

And goodness only knows Bella had given the local florist a significant financial boost since she’d been hospitalised.

The doors swung open, catching her attention as they wheeled a second hospital bed into her room.

Annie watched with only partial interest as June and her co-workers set up all the machinery that came with the young boy.

About ten minutes later they dispersed back out, revealing the small, frail looking form of the youngest Esquivel, sleeping soundly, likely still under the influence of narcotics they used for his surgery.

Everything was covered by a hospital sheet save the nasty black eye the kid seemed to have.

Annie winced, the poor kid was going to have to go to counseling after this for a good long while at the very least.

She could empathise, she’d had to do the same when she’d moved back to Jasper over two decades ago.

A buzz came from her phone then, reaching over she picked it up, and couldn’t help but smile.

‘Gorgeous sunrise here, wish you were here to make it jealous.’

Not a moment later the picture loaded, and instead of said sunrise, it was her Prowl, his human
form on a balcony, golden eyes crinkled at the edges as his face was bathed in gold by the morning sun.

Her heart did a few somersaults in her chest, and further inspection revealed Narissa, or was it Selena? One of the sisters strewn out on the visible sofa inside, mouth open and likely snoring loud enough to rouse the dead.

She had to laugh, and sent a message back. ‘Honey, you’re doing it for me.’

There wasn’t an immediate reply, but she knew he’d probably just had his whole face go red.

A minute later another message. ‘God I love you, just so fucking much.’

‘Ditto partner, ditto.’

‘...Are you ever going to tell me what a ditto is?’

It hurt to laugh as hard as she just did, but she didn’t care.

‘Nope ;P’.

‘Annnnnnnnnniiiiiiiiiiieeeeeeeeee’

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Thanks everyone for reading, as a final thing, I actually drew something for the flash back scene. Welp that's all for now! Until next time!

Moon
Phew! Another one bites the dust! Hope you all enjoy this latest chapter!

Monaco

It was late in the afternoon when the silence of the manor finally ended.

The peaceful lull ended suddenly, with the shift of navy blue metal, and the unholy inhuman scream that followed, interspersed with the sounds of lines tearing, and plating shifting around.

Ira and the twins snapped awake, jerking bodily away from the noise that now assaulted their protrusions and had their helms ringing like struck bells.

And then the situation dawned on them.

Ira flung herself away from the Orichiono’s, acting on impulse the moment they caught that first guttural bellow that was building within the twins lower chassis, the plates of their face shifting around and aside to allow them to fully bare those hooked razor sharp plates hidden behind.

Derrick was in agony, writhing on the spot as his back continued to transform, lilac energon spraying out and across his flaring wings and thrashing helm and neck.

Ira's back hit one of the walls of the bunker, and she held as still as she could, vents labouring as she tried to process what the unholy hell was happening.

The twins were a growling snarling mess of limbs, half rising onto all fours to fully cover their younger brother, ridged back flaring and the scythes of their wings snapping out from beneath the feathers that normally hid them.

She heard a noise then that made her spark drop, and almost without thinking she sent a ping to Ironhide and Optimus.

"IF YOU CHERISH YOUR CONTINUED EXISTENCE, STAY THE FUCK IN YOUR ROOMS!"

By some miracle they apparently decided to heed her warning.

Which left her stuck pinning herself to the wall as the screaming slowly died out, Derrick dropped limp on his side, and the twins one track mind put it's focus on him and not any outside threat.

Didn't mean she moved a single millimetre away from the wall.

The twins suddenly went lock still, helm upside down under themselves staring at something Ira couldn't see.

But she could hear it.

Warbling, from a much smaller source.

It hit her then, and she almost laughed, but by some miracle was able to swallow it and keep her head.

Turns out Derrick hadn't been alone at the bottom of the ocean.
The twins shifted back and pushed themselves up onto their legs fully, their chassis drizzled in the lilac energon of their younger brother, which was already starting to solidify and grow crystals, they'd fall off in time.

There, laying in a rather confused state, was a mechanical peacock, looking rather racked off and soaked in drying lilac energon.

Ira swallowed the laugh that wanted to come out, it would seem they had found Derrick's companion, the little bugger had been latched on from the get go.

She thought back to when they'd had to open their spark chambers, how they had lines that ran in ways that caused them to tear when they opened the plates.

Looks like that was the case this time.

She then thought about Keeley, her companion had been attached to her front when she first came too in that forest in Germany.

To say it had been unpleasant and very much gorey the first time Keeley had detached was an understatement, tore a bunch of small lines under her chassis and around her side plating when she broke away.

When she'd slid into the spot on her back for the first time, there had been just as much of a mess.

Safe to say Derricks little buddy had latched onto the back during the jump over, and had only now figured out how to separate himself.

Which from her personal experience, was something she still hated having to do.

Feeling something or someone else slides part of their anatomy through her own? Nope, a hundred thousand nopes.

But, they all needed to have hands sometimes, and companionship, so they all had to live with it.

Given Derrick had had no time to get such a warning about all of that, it was no wonder he'd screamed unholy bloody murder when a good chunk of what he probably thought were his own insides decided to vacate and tear through a whole chunk of his circulatory and nervous systems.

Given he wasn't moving, he'd probably passed out from the shock.

The much smaller peacock chirred, helm tilted back and back and back further trying to look at the comparatively gigantic twins who seemed to be trying to process what it was in fact that they were seeing.

They were probably safe again now, so she spoke, "Twins?"

She noted the minor shake that went through them, a half flinch at the new voice, and turned to regard her slowly, still keeping one of their optics on their younger half brother.

Okay, that was good, they hadn't gone for a killing lunge, good, she was safe. "Looks like it was more than just yah little brother Barricade dragge' across the Atlan'ic." She remarked.

The twins somewhat numbly nodded, as the plating of their own back shifted, and Hera dropped free, transforming fully into her own form.

The peacock trilled in alarm, and struggled to rise, the ground around him still slippery despite how
quickly the energon was crystallising.

Hera crooned, dropping her head down in a placating manor.

The peacock seemed to jolt in alarm, and warbled back.

What followed was an illegible conversation as Hera slowly eased herself closer, before finally dropping a wing over the others back, and using her head to help push the similarly sized bird up onto it's longer legs.

The new companion was unsteady, but Hera's bulk was enough for the other to lean against.

Ira huffed, like handlers like companion apparently.

She sent a ping to Optimus and Ironhide then. "It's safe to come out now."

She picked up the sound of the two hanger size doors sliding open and the two mechs cautiously stepping out.

Optimus arrived first, catching the twins gaze when they turned at his approach, still standing over their energon coated sibling, slowly Wren gestured with her wing to Hera and the new companion. "They figured out how to separate from Derrick."

Ironhide glanced out from behind Optimus, Freedom perched up on his shoulder trying to get a good look at the scene too. "The kid alright? That's a lot of energon."

The twins nodded, nudging the smaller mechs side with Wren's wing tip. "Yeah… the shock of it just knocked him out."

"It?" Optimus inquired, still trying to process what he was seeing.

They pointed to the new companion that Hera was now grooming, running her beak through the iridescent feathers of the new companion.

"Ah…” Optimus muttered, glancing to the twins and then Ira, after a moment he stepped over to the smallest Harpy, and offered his servo to help her up.

Ira happily took the offer, grunting a bit when her joints and gears popped.

Unsurprisingly, sleeping strewn over the twins wasn't the wisest of decisions.

Metal hardly had the same give as warm flesh.

Letting out a muttered cuss as one of the joints in her left leg jammed for a moment, Ira glanced up to the worried expression of the Prime. "Don'cha worry abou' li'l ol' me, jus' slep' funny yah know."

He seemed to let it rest when the final joint finally unjammed itself and full motion was blessedly returned.

It took a few more minutes for Derrick to start coming round, and if Ira subtly put herself between the twins and the two Autobots? Well that was just a little coincidence.

By this point Hera had mostly succeeded in getting the energon off the new Companion, and had nudged him back over to settle next to his handler, where he remained perched just to the left of where Derrick's own helm rested.
Which meant when Derrick's sea green optics slowly cycled back open, the first thing he saw was the smaller Peacock, leaving him to mumble. "Epsi?"

The smaller Peacock warbled happily, and jumped back up to turn and start nuzzling his smaller helm against his handler, tail feathers ruffling and flaring happily in a way that was strangely reminiscent to a dogs tail wagging

Despite the pain he was still in, Derrick could only laugh, clumsily trying to put a wing over his pet to pull him closer. "Epsilon! You're here! You're okay!" The surprise and joy was telling, as was the building sheen of lubricant visible through his navy blue visor.

What tension there had been in the twins frame seemed to just drop off them like a five tone block, and they slowly shifted around their younger brother to settle back onto the ground behind him so that Aria could stretch her wing over him and Epsilon to give them some privacy.

Seeing this, Ira nudges Optimus, and gestures with her helm to give the reunited family some room.

Catching her intention he nods, and gestures for Ironhide and Freedom to follow as he ambled after Ira, who's heading towards one of the few fully completed rooms in the Bunker, the energon storage.

It had been something of a priority to have that one set up quickly given Ironhide and Optimus' early move into the base.

Once the door to the store slid shut, Ira rubbed her wing struts together. "So… tha' happene', tha twins flipped because yah know, their little bro' jus' woke up screamin' bloody murder in their ear, with his back coming apar' a' tha seams…"

"Hence why you told us to stay in our rooms if we cherished our continued existence." Optimus added.

Ira felt a half smile quirk on the side of her face. "Hea' ah tha momen'."

There was a few moments of awkward silence before Ira sighed and spoke again. "Tha twins are gonna need some time tah catch up with Derrick, and he's gonna need help gettin' used tah all of this, so just give them space okay? I'll be flyin' back to Rome once the sun goes down, so if yah have any questions tah ask now we've all ha' some res', ask'em now."

Ironhide went first. "Yeah, should Ratchet get over here to check the kid over?"

Ira pursed her lipplates, none of them had needed medical attention specifically, but the fact that Epsilon was going to have to do a frontal latch at some point too… so that Derrick could have some dexterity... "If anythin' happens where Ratchet is neede', i'll be more tha' twins bookin' i' tah Barcelo'na with him. Yah know, li'e they did las' nigh'?"

Ironhide frowned, but nodded, relaying the message back to Ratchet over the bond, the CMO had already been halfway to the airport, despite how much of a nightmare Barcelona's traffic was.

Another beat of tense silence, Ira felt a headache coming onto her, this wasn't what she was good at, she was the hacker, she was good with computers not… this, whatever this was.

And Optimus was asking another question. "Are you doing well Ira?"

She stalled, glanced between the two mechs, and tried to prevent a grimace from showing.
She couldn't try and slip away, and she doubted any amount of squirming and diverting the topic would get her out of this, she'd backed herself into this corner to give the twins and Derrick some time to recover.

She'd made this bed, she was going to have to lie in it. "No… no ah ain'... well…"

Optimus glanced to Ironhide, and then gestured to one of the reinforced containers the crystalised pure energon was being kept in.

Ira didn't need to be told twice, and with a little hop and a grunt when her tail feathers caught, she was sitting on the crate.

Optimus slowly eased himself down into a kneeling position, and carefully reached out a servo to place it on Ira's upper knee joint, his optics for once level with hers. "Ira, do you wish to talk about it?"

She flinched and her knee jerked away from his touch on impulse.

Gritting her denta fully now she hissed out a sigh. "Maybe…" She got out, ducking her helm down into her neck guard to try and get out of the Prime's direct line of sight, but like a predator, they tracked her visor down.

Ironhide nudged Optimus to get the mechs attention, but spoke to Ira instead. "You wanna talk in holoforms upstairs?"

The perk in her protrusions was subtle, but it had a little smirk of victory form on his features. Ira finally nodded a full assent, and then her frame went limp, slumping against the wall behind the crate.

The two mechs exchanged a look, and shifted down into sitting positions themselves, before activating their own holoforms upstairs.

Surprisingly, Ira wasn't in the main kitchen or lobby, she was actually outside, pacing the side of the large pool the twins had added to the Manor before they'd moved in fully.

Ironhide stepped out the sliding glass screen doors first, catching the woman's attention.

Her distress was much more obvious now, features twisted in a grimace and sharp nails digging into the flesh of the opposite arm.

She stopped pacing, and instead moved to one of the poolside lounge chairs and sat down, form somewhat slumped in dejection.

::I'll go see about procuring something from the kitchen for her.:: Optimus sent over the com-link, letting Ironhide start whatever this was going to be.

Ironhide just nodded, focused both on Ira, and keeping his bond with Ratchet as open as possible to let his mate monitor her.

Ironhide eased his own much bulkier frame down onto the lounge chair closest to Ira, then in a move he hadn't had to do since he and Ratchet were still raising Bumblebee and Red Alert, he opened his arms out in the offering of a hug.

The look of shock and surprise on Ira's features was telling, as was the moment when her features
cracked, and she was practically throwing herself into his arms, her own wrapped around his neck in a vice like, desperate grip while his own trapped her in place around her back.

He could feel her fingers flex and clench into the fabric of the heavy leather jacket he was wearing, face pressed almost impossibly tight against his broad neck as she shook and whimpered.

It wasn't crying specifically, but it was close.

Ratchet sent a very subtle keen over the bond, the urge to more actively join in the comfort of the smallest Harpy even surprising the medic himself.

Looked like Ira had unintentionally wormed her way into their sparks and they hadn't noticed.

Ratchet sent a half humoured ping that it had probably first happened when she'd called him out and slapped him repeatedly during their first meeting.

He sent back a humoured confirmation, before putting his full focus back on the now very much crying form in his arms.

It was such a spark breaking sound, half sobs, half whimpers, all very much reminding him of when he and Ratchet had first taken on Bumblebee, when the youngling had done nothing but cry trying to call his creators back to him.

They'd never come back of course… but that didn't make the sounds then or now any less painful to hear.

Optimus appeared again some time later with a simple glass of water of something he assumed was an attempt at a sandwich, just two pieces of bread with some of the meat left overs from whatever the Harpies had had the night before in their holoforms.

Once Ira had calmed enough to register the offerings, they'd been chugged and gulped down before Optimus' had even properly recognised they were no longer in his holoforms hands.

Once he did, he let out a low chuckle, and eased himself down into a kneel next to the lounge chair. "Are you feeling any better now Ira?"

She gave a little nod, shifting to put her face back into Ironhide's neck for a moment before pulling back to properly answer. "Yeah… yeah ah'm betta now… jus' go' ah bi' shaken up yah know…"

They both nodded, allowing the sounds of the pool, the wind and the bird song drifting from elsewhere to fill the silence.

At some point Ironhide felt the tension leave the holoform resting against his side, and it took him a moment to realise she'd slipped into recharge.

He'd intended to, with Optimus' help, lay her down on the lounge chair and leave her to rest, but the moment he tried to pull away and rise, her hands clamped tight around his arm with a little whimper leaving her.

Ironhide glanced to Optimus. "I'll keep her company Prime, you go check on the Orichionos."

Optimus glanced back to the manor. "I think I'm going to go on a patrol actually, they've got two years to catch up on, I don't wish to disrupt that."

The weapons specialist hummed in understanding. "Alright Prime, take care out there."
The other holoform nodded, then flickered back out of existence.

Ironhide put his attention back on Ira, and eased himself to sit on the ground next to the lounge chair, letting her keep her vice like hold on his hand. "Don't worry kid, I ain't going anywhere."

Barcelona

He was pacing again.

Kia watched from one of the walls as Barricade seemed to war with himself over something or other.

Sighing she pushed off the wall and approached. "You'll have to go soon, I doubt Starscream will accept you being late."

Barricade scowled. "No offense… boss… but I really don't want to have to keep seeing your brother bringing in mutilated corpses."

Kia didn't flinch from the statement, she'd seen the reports now, she fully understood the situation. "We need an eye in there, and you're the only one who can do that."

Barricade regarded her for a moment and stopped pacing. "What's your endgame?"

Kia's protrusions flitted up for a moment. "I'm sorry?"

"Your endgame, what are you trying to do here?"

"End your war, of course."

Barricade snorted. "Good luck with that, once the Decepticons find Megatron, and he puts Starscream in his place, this war's just gonna start right back up again here like it did on Cybertron."

Kia didn't even flinch, she just turned, and looked to one of the large doors in the bunker. "Look in there."

As if activated by voice command, the door slid slowly open, revealing a dark room beyond.

Barricade couldn't see inside from his angle, and glanced to Kia. "You still need me online, correct?"

Kia raised an unseen optic ridge at him. "You think I'd really kill such a useful asset such as yourself? You've more than earned your keep, considering you've not only been dutiful in your orders, but you, albeit without really understanding the gravity of it, reunited the twins with their half brother, that on it's own puts you far off my personal hit list. And the Twins." She assured him.

Barricade regarded her for a few more moments, before seemingly accepting her statement, and walked close to the door, Frenzy even scampering out from his hiding spot to get a good look at what was inside.

Once he saw what was, as it turned out, the only thing in the room, Barricade froze, his processor stalling as the sheer… impossibility of what he was seeing, stared back at him.

Frenzy keened in alarm at what he too was seeing.
The grey of an offline frame, not the gunmetal grey he'd known for so long…

A vicious snarl still held in place, even if it seemed to be somewhat limp…

He looked down, waiting to see the rest of his former Lord, his former friend…

Nothing…

A clean cut, just below the helm.

Without even realising it, he stumbled backwards, Frenzy whined in alarm.

A wing caught him just below the door wings.

Words were being spoken but he didn't hear them.

The empty optics of Megatron glared back at him, just as offline as the rest of his helm.

His *decapitated* helm.

The wing coaxed him into a sitting position, Kia loomed over him, expression as impassive as ever, those protrusions for once laying flat to her helm.

Then, she walked away, leaving him to process what he'd just seen.

It was three hours before he shakily approached the Harpy, her attention had been on the gaggle of humans that had seemingly crawled out of the cement work, tools of all kinds in hand as she'd ordered them to continue work on the bunker whilst she supervised.

She'd noticed he was coming, but didn't turn to face him right away, still looking over the human construction crew as they readied to start blasting another room.

The joys of having the rebuild the families bunker from scratch, scaled up large enough to house alien robots.

"Yes Barricade?"

"Did… did you?"

"No, I wasn't the one who put him down." Kia responded. "That little act was the Twins, we ran a calculation, it was this, or him remaining, the... frozen lab rat of the American Government, allowing them to further discover the secrets of your kind. We determined that was a rather unfavourable option. Our alternative was, put him down, destroy all the research, and put us at such an advantage, and them at such a disadvantage, they wouldn't even try a full offense, the American Government hasn't sent more than a dozen spies to try and infiltrate us, the Twins also dealt with that dozen, they won't be causing us any trouble any time soon."

Barricade stumbled back into a half step, letting his processor struggle as it tried to run over all of that information.

Kia regarded him, and then a sliver of sympathy wormed itself free from her usually vice like grip on her emotions, and snuck into her hybrid heart.

Sighing she fully turned her frame to him, and sent a pulse to Nibbler to drop and re-attach on her front.
For once the Bateluere didn't try to protest, he dropped, shuffled between her talons even as he was still transforming, and vaulted himself up to latch onto her front, a shiver going through their combined frame as the frames re-attached to each other.

Once the secondary limbs were formed, and under most of her control, she reached out and rested one of the smaller limbs on his lower arm. "I'm… sorry… at the time your relation to him as friend or subordinate was not within the equation… but even then, we would of still ruled to remove him from the war, and of his own misery."

Barricade invented, and then released it back out with a rattle of his vents, shaking his helm. "He wasn't my friend… the Megatronus I once knew is long gone…" He glanced back to the dark doorway. "Just… More now than before…"

Kia felt her jaw clench, this wasn't something she was good at.

But at the same time, this was information being offered up at the small price of comforting this mech… a good trade in a way.

So she brought Nibbler's other merged limb up to rest on his other lower arm, and shifted her frame to bring her larger helm level with his, and, after a moment of hesitation, let her visor slide up and away.

The sound drew his attention, and all four optics snapped to attention, locked on the optics that had been always hidden by the impassive black pane.

Optics like molten pools of gold and amber stared back at him, framed by the deep rouge of their face, it was quite the contrast.

This whole time he'd assumed they'd be blue, the colour of the enemy.

Funny how nothing made sense, and anything he believed as true was becoming false.

"Barricade…"

Words failed her at that critical moment, so she just coaxed him into a hug with her wings, pulling his smaller form against her, his helm clanging against the panes of her chassis, after a moment of hesitation, she lowered her helm and rested her lower jaw on top of his helm, being careful of where the sharper edges of said helm were.

Barricade felt his four optics widen in surprise at the entombing embrace, and before he could stop himself, he was leaning in, arms going up to wrap around the tapered waist of the Harpy…

Only to stop when he realised he couldn't just push his arms through the feathers at her sides. "Err…"

Kia huffed above him. "The feathers hide all the workings."

Barricade just nodded and instead just allowed the hug to be given, he didn't want to look like some lovesick fool and try and get his arms around her neck to return the hug.

That's something he did with Dust, not this half stranger giving him some comfort.

He glanced to where Frenzy was now clinging to the side of his leg, keeping away from the Harpy as much as he could.
He looked just as shaken.

Sighing out a vent, he lowered a servo down and grabbed the minicon up by the scruff and gave him a little hug.

Kia watched this, her helm up and tilted down to observe.

That was when she made a split second decision. "You're staying here."

His helm snapped up. "What? You just said you needed me back monitoring those maniacs!"

Kia shook her helm. "No, I've run a new equation, one that takes you into consideration, specifically your mental well being. If my brother saw you now, with your emotions visible, he would tear you apart, without any hesitation, and with all the sick joy he can. We learned that the hard way a long time ago now, and I'm not putting my best asset in a situation where my own flesh and blood will ruin that, by flaying you alive!"

He stepped back out of the hug at the intensity of her declaration, and Frenzy looked to him in alarm. "What good am I here? Those Autobots will be moving in here soon won't they?"

The sound of another round of blasting put the starting debate on hold as Kia's visor snapped back into place, she didn't like showing her optics anymore, it was far too personal.

"That's a while off yet. And you will do plenty of good. If you wish to remain active, continue shielding your signature, and I will send you out to do work unrelated to Cybertronians."

He huffed. "Oh? Like what?"

The side of Kia's lips perked up in a smirk. "I'm still in the process of taking control of the Criminal Underground's organised crime, you can help me with that."

He perked up. "I'm listening."

She nodded, and offered a wing to cover him from behind. "Come then, we have much to discuss."

He nodded and let her lead him elsewhere in the bunker.

---

Orichiono Manor Monaco

Time had passed, the sun had set behind the mountains, and it was time for Ira to return to Rome.

She accepted the offered embrace from the twins, now much calmer after having their private catch up time with their half brother. Their protrusions didn't hide the guilt they were feeling though, so she made sure to have her own display her forgiveness, which seemed to calm them as they released her, letting Derrick shuffle over, he'd managed to get upright, but proper walking was going to take a while.

Unsurprisingly, it's a completely different method of locomotion and his centre of gravity was drastically off what he was used to. "Have a safe flight Ira, okay?"

She ruffled her plating. "Ah lay off it Der-der, i's har'ly an Atalntic crossin'. You jus' keep tryin' no' tah fall over yahselves. Got it?"

The Peacock Harpy nodded. "You got it!"
Derrick shuffled back into the cover of Wren's wing, and watched with no small amount of intrigue as Ira turned to Optimus and Ironhide.

Ira stepped closer, and opened her own wings as Ironhide did the same with his arms, returning the quick hug. "Don't be afraid to talk to us when you need to, you got it kid?"

Ira nodded. "Yes 'Hide, ah know, thanks for helpin' me ou' earlier, both of yah."

Both nodded, and with the goodbyes handled, she turned to the tunnel and began her running launch, disappearing into the darkness.

Once the sounds of wingbeats vanished from audible range, the remaining Harpies and Mechs turned to each other.

"We're going to call it an early night I think, come on Derrick, you can share our room for the night." Wren stated as they turned their attention on their smaller sibling

"Okay!" Derrick chirped, letting them push him along as he shuffled his taloned pedes.

The two Autobots watched them seal themselves away for the night, before Optimus turned to Ironhide. "I believe I will go on a patrol before I retire, recharge well old friend."

Ironhide nodded. "Same to you when you're done Prime. Don't be out too late."

They went separate ways then, Optimus leaving for the city, and Ironhide retiring for the night with Freedom.

Optimus was barely down the hill cut road down into the city when something pinged on his HUD, an Energon Signature, one he had a nagging suspicion he recognised.

He was never good at telling one from another, but one suddenly appearing, in Monaco, had alarm bells ringing in his helm.

So, he followed where it was coming from, hardly a challenge, it was completely unshielded, and seemed to be pulsing outwards from the parking area of a hotel not far from the middle of the city.

Over the past month or so, he'd become rather adept at navigating the city, meaning that it only took him about twenty minutes of navigating traffic to reach the underground parking area.

Only to come up short when he realised the entrance wasn't high enough for him to enter.

Humming out a vent, he reversed and parked on the opposite side of the street, and activated his holoform, and walked back inside.

There were easily a hundred vehicles inside, a number of which being higher end luxury sports cars.

And that's when he spotted it.

The white and silver car he'd watched Narisa Solvermore and her friends get into after she'd departed his holoforms company.

This was the hotel they were staying in.

Without even realising it, he was drawn to the vehicle, and ran a finger over the pristine bonet.
He was surprised to find himself disappointed when he realised that the vehicle wasn't the source of the Cybertronian signal.

No, that honor went to the rather, comparatively at least, banged up Mercedes Benz SLR with a black paint job, parked just to it's right.

It could of been the light playing tricks on him, but he swore he saw the vehicle shudder minutely under his gaze.

"There is no use hiding. I know you are sentient." He stated, regarding the vehicle.

Suddenly the engine revved to life, and with a squeal of tires it shot out of the parking space, reversed back further into the parking lot, and then began to transform.

Gold optics stared at him in unbridled terror from behind a soft blue and very broken visor.

"Please! Don't kill me!" The mech exclaimed, shielding his helm with his arms, that seemed to be almost… heat warped on the edges...

That was when he spotted the bright red cracked Chevron, and realisation struck him like a punch from Megatron to the face.

This was his lost Third in Command...

One believed offline for… for a very long time...

"... Prowl?" He managed to get out.

The fear didn't go away, but the arms lowered enough, and his TIC whimpered. "Please… please don't kill me…"

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Yes it's a cliffhanger, no I am not sorry, you'll just have to come back again to see what happens next, so until next time!

Moon
In the span of six days I cranked out the entirety of chapter 43, the vast majority of which I did in one day (yesterday) so now that one's finished and I can post this one! Hope you all enjoy! The plot thickens further!

Optimus stared at the mech in front of him, his missing, believed offline, Third in Command, with an expression caught between shock and confusion.

Prowl was not the mech he'd expected to stumble upon when he detected an unshielded energon signal.

His processor was trying desperately to figure out how this was possible.

But then it hit him, the Polaris.

The Polaris had vanished from its moorings around the same time Prowl had gone missing from the main Autobot Base in Iacon.

Both vanishing in the aftermath of the Tarn Refinery… when everyone had been so consumed by their grief and the recovery effort… no one had noticed the colossal ship, or the third in command vanish...

If Prowl was on Earth, it stood to reason, that the Polaris was too…

His spark soared at the notion, but then crashed back to reality as Prowl shifted further away from him in distress, still begging and pleading not to be killed.

"Prowl." He called, stepping slowly forwards, trying to be as non threatening as possible.

It didn't work, the mech stumbled backwards, hampered by the low height of the underground parking, and crashed down onto his aft, wincing and whimpering in pain as his doorwings were jostled.

He stepped back away, and properly took in the other mechs state.

Halfway to the slag heap was probably an overstatement, but not by much.

His door wings were dented, a large chunk of his external plating was showing signs of heat stress, there was a significant fist shaped dent in his lower abdominal plating, and he could spot a number of places where wounds had began healing without medical help.

He'd been attacked, recently.

"Prowl, who… did this to you old friend?"

Prowl's golden optics regarded him cautiously from behind his arms. "A robot… but… bigger… you're not gonna finish the job?"

He shook his holoforms head. "No. I would never strike down one of my own soldiers."

"S… Soldiers?" Prowl mumbled, peering further out at him. "You… you know me? Like? ...Know me?"
This was… beyond alarming. "Prowl… you're my third in command, do you… do you not remember?"

The Praxian's helm was shaking from side to side before he even finished. "N-no… I'm sorry… I… I don't remember anything… before waking up thirty years ago…"

Optimus nodded. "Okay… well, it would seem that I will have to introduce myself once more. I, am Optimus Prime, leader of the Autobots." He offered his holoforms hand out to the still weary mech.

After a few moments of pause, Prowl let one of his servos reach out, offering the tip of his digit to the holoform, and shaking it. "It's… It's nice to meet you sir… I came here looking for you actually…" He laughed, though it was a high nervous laugh. "But you found me before I could even start searching… funny huh?"

Prowl likely didn't realise he was putting off a signature that was pretty impossible to miss once you got close enough. "Indeed old friend. How did you know to come to Monaco?" Even before he finished, he was glancing at the white and silver car he'd been parked next to.

Prowl perked up, his doorwings bouncing up for a moment before he winced and forced them back down. "Oh… Some of my friends spotted you when they were doing a bar crawl a while ago." He pointed to the Autobot insignia on his left shoulder, scuffed up as it was, it was still visible. "They recognised the emblem and sent a couple pictures to my boss, she relayed it to me and my wife and…"

"Prowl?"

A new voice in the underground parking lot caught both of their attentions, and Prowl's helm swung around to look behind him as a set of fast foot falls approached.

"Prowl Honey? What happened?" It was an older woman's voice, not the one he remembered Narissa having, one of the others?

"Oh Molly! Look! They found me!" Prowl declared, shifting so his holoform and the approaching women were in sight of each other.

Another elderly woman stood before him, her expression one mixed with concern and worry as she continued closer to Prowl, until she was able to reach up and take his servo, only then looking away from his own holoform to look up to Prowl. "Prowl, back in your car form, this is a public area."

"Huh… Oh!" The mech exclaimed after a moment of confusion, shuffling just far away to transform back into his alt mode, and slowly return himself to the parking spot he'd previously occupied.

Whilst he was doing that, Molly eyed up Optimus suspiciously, and to the holoforms credit he only shrunk back slightly.

Prowl's driver side door popped open then, and outstepped a white haired holoform, one wearing attire that in no way hid the damage to his frame in it's representation.

Prowl reached back to nervously rub at the back of his head, while gesturing to Molly. "Um… Molly, this is Optimus Prime, Optimus Prime, Molly, she's a close friend of mine."

Molly looked past his holoform where his very out of place alt mode was parked just in view of the entrance to the parking lot, and realisation finally seemed to dawn on her, and in a moment she
went from mild scowl to gripping Prowl's shoulder and throwing her head back and laughing.

Optimus sent a confused look to Prowl, who was just raising an eyebrow at the older woman, evidently such a mood swing was not unusual.

Finally Molly seemed to regain herself and clapped Prowl on the shoulder again. "This is the one Nari helped pick out a drink for!"

Realisation seemed to dawn on Prowl after a moment. "Oooh! No wonder he was lost on the drinks menu!"

Optimus couldn't help but feel his pride smart a bit at that. "In my defence, I have only been on this planet for a few short months, my grasp of all things humans is still very much… developing." He tried to word.

Prowl chuckled. "Sorry sorry… I was the same back in the early days… So… what now? There's so much I don't know or remember." He glanced to Molly. "And as much as they've kept me safe from human discovery… my friends…"

"We can't protect him from things like the one that attacked him and Annie." Molly finished, glancing at Prowl with a haunted and worried expression before looking to Optimus. "He's one of yours, right? You'll look after him... right? That's why we brought him to Monaco, to try and find you."

He nodded. "I will do all that is within my power, to discover that Prowl is online… after so many eons of him being missing, I will admit it is quite a shock… and who is this Annie, she was caught in the crossfire when you were attacked?"

Both Molly and Prowl's countenances shifted then, Molly's to remorse, Prowl's to a deep seated worry.

"She's… she's still in the ICU… intensive care unit..." Prowl explained, left hand drifting to his right to run over two gold bands, one of which had a diamond inlaid. "She was… badly burned… in the explosion that destroyed our home… I had to leave her behind to come here..."

Optimus glanced to the ring, now he'd watched enough human media at this point to know that those rings had a significant importance… linked to the union of two… oh.

"Oh… you and this Annie? You're engaged?"

Molly snorted, Prowl answered. "No… um… we've been married for twenty five years… actually..."

Prowl shuffled awkwardly as Optimus tried to process that. "You're… you're not disgusted?"

That jolted the Prime back to attention. "What? No. No. You love her I assume?"

Prowl gave him a sad but love struck smile. "More than anything else in this universe..."

He nodded and tried not to focus on his spark twisting as he spoke. "I… I know that feeling intimately… come, I think it would be wise to bring you to where I and Ironhide are currently residing. Our hosts only recently retired so they shouldn't be too hard to rouse."

"Hosts?" Molly inquired.
Optimus nodded. "Yes, they were the ones who made contact with us when we arrived, and have aided us in staying... out of the public eye."

Molly leaned to the left to look past him at his bright red and deep blue alt-mode, and raised a questioning eyebrow at him.

He gave an awkward chuckle back. "They are my colours."

Molly glanced to Prowl, who'd raised his own eyebrow at her, and they both shrugged in tandem.

With that seemingly dealt with, Optimus took a moment to com Ironhide, asking him if he could see if the Harpies still in Monaco could be roused.

Ironhide replied that he would try, and enquired as to why.

Optimus decided against being vague, and gave him, and by proxy Ratchet, a run down of what had occurred.

Choice words followed, but Optimus was hardly surprised this was a very sudden and very unexpected situation that they were now having to react to, this was going likely going to be a shock to Bumblebee and Jazz when they too were informed as well.

Jazz more so than Bumblebee, the scout was still a youngling clinging to Ratchet when Prowl vanished.

With that dealt with, he and Prowl departed from the hotel, leaving Molly to return to her room to send out her own communications to the rest of their small in the loop group that Prowl had made contact.

Optimus had found himself somewhat put out when Molly had informed him that Narrisa and Selena had departed Monaco a few days prior, and were now in the Swiss Alps somewhere.

Twenty minutes of driving later, the gates of the Orichiono manor were opening before them, and he was leading Prowl up the winding driveway.

His third in command hadn't figured out how to use his com-link, hadn't even known what it was when Optimus asked him, so the journey had been relatively quiet, even as he pulled into the garage and Prowl parked to his right.

Prowl's holoform jumped out, looking around in awe.

He had his driver side door open, and he looked down from the seat to Prowl. "They're going to lower us into the bunker now." He remarked, gesturing with his holoforms head to the butler already going to the hidden control panel.

Prowl regarded him in surprise. "Oh... okay?"

Soon enough Ironhide was in sight, waiting in the main area and taking periodic looks behind him to where the doors to the private rooms are.

Once the lift finished moving, Optimus allowed himself to return to his bipedal mode, Prowl watching with rapt attention before looking over at Ironhide, a bug eyed expression on his holoforms features before it flickered out of existence and his actual form slowly transformed itself once more.
Ironhide stepped forwards. "Prowl? Is that really you?" The weapons specialist enquired, looking over the completely black coloured mech in cautious curiosity.

Prowl nodded. "I… I guess so? Sorry… who are you?"

Ironhide regarded him in surprise. "You really don't remember anything?"

Prowl shook his helm, doorwings drooping behind him. "No… I don't remember anything before waking up in the Messas of Nevada."

Ironhide glanced to Optimus, who Prowl had somewhat shuffled behind out of nerves, the Prime had been right, Prowl was… drastically different now, though some of that should probably be chalked up to the fact he had been attacked.

Another glance behind him reminded him of the thing Optimus had asked him to do. "Oh, Prime, I tried to rouse them, but… they weren't enthused at that idea, we'll have to bring Prowl to their attention tomorrow when they wake up."

Optimus nodded. "That is fine, it gives us time to talk." He looked at his amnesiac second. "Correct, Prowl?"

The smaller Praxian nodded. "Yup! I've got so many questions to ask!" Then he deflated a bit. "Just wish Annie was here with me to learn too…"

Optimus glanced to Ironhide, who looked to him in confusion. "Prowl… married a human woman, she was caught in the crossfire and is in hospital back in the USA."

Ironhide nodded in understanding before huffing. "The twins will probably be able to work something out." He remarked.

Prowl's helm tilted to the side. "Twins? The hosts who are letting you stay here are twins?"

Both of them nodded. "Yes." Optimus confirmed. "They retired for the night with their younger brother just before I began my patrol, which was how I located you, they will meet you in the morning, they'll likely insist on a patient transfer."

Prowl shifted nervously. "Are they… nice?"

Ironhide snorted. "So long as you watch what you say, they're rather… emotionally volatile."

Prowl nodded. "I'm familiar with the type, Sophia often has trouble keeping her emotions in check, it's why she moved out to the middle of Siberia, keeps her head cool is what she says."

Optimus and Ironhide looked at him in surprise, Prowl just shrugged. "If it is better to save this discussion for the morning, I'm more than happy to return to my rest… do you have any mats here? I've gotten rather tired of sleeping in my car form."

"Well… no we don't have… mats, we have berths." Optimus replied

"Are they squishy?"

"Um… no, they're solid."

Prowl sighed, and slumped somewhat dejectedly. "Guess it's car form again… we're under a massive manor, do you think there'd be a spare room to have my human projection sleep in? If I click the right things in front of my eyes, it transfers all tactile senses too it."
Ironhide answered. "Didn't get half of that, but the manor has more than enough spare rooms, I doubt anyone would notice."

"Perfect! Well, goodnight!" Prowl practically chirped, shifting back into his alt mode, and letting his holoform out to run over to where he'd spotted a lift that looked to go back up to the manor above.

Once the lift doors were closed, Ironhide walked over to Optimus and gestured him to lean down so he could whisper to the Prime's audio. "Any ideas which combiner hit him hard enough to cause him to be like… that?"

Optimus shrugged. "I am more concerned with something I realised not long after discovering him."

Ironhide nodded for him to continue.

Optimus steadied himself with a vent for a moment. "I have reason to believe Prowl came to Earth aboard the Polaris."

It took a moment for the weapons specialist to process that statement, before he regarded the Prime with a look of sympathy. "Prime…"

"The Polaris broke it's moorings not a cycle after the Tarn Refinery, Jazz reported Prowl missing when he realised he hadn't seen him in the number of cycles after the Refinery...They both vanished without a trace in less than half an orn Ironhide, tell me there isn't a high chance that with Prowl being on Earth with no other known way of getting here, because I know all other ships were accounted for… the Polaris is here too Ironhide."

Ironhide allowed himself a few moments to think this over. "The Polaris was a… one of a kind ship Prime, it needed… it needed two pilots to fly… only Prowl was accounted missing from the main HeadQuarters in Iacon..."

Optimus nodded. "I am well aware of that Ironhide, but the Polaris did have an auto-pilot for emergency situations, not an advanced one, but it had one."

"You think Prowl boarded the Polaris?"

"Likely to check the feasibility of new pilots being trained to operate it…"

"...And it triggered the emergency protocols and blasted off in a random direction that just so happened to leave it landing, or likely crashing, on the one planet we find ourselves living on?"

"We already found the Allspark and Megatron here, not to mention the relic the twins located… Earth seems to be a magnet to anything related to our species."

Ironhide sighed, Optimus was set on this now, there was a chance the Polaris was on Earth, and it would explain how Prowl got here…

And if it was here, and they did find it, the Polaris would be the greatest of assets, a trans galactic class battleship with offensive capabilities that simply were never replicated due to their complexity…

A complexity that required two pilots who were very in tune to operate to its full potential.

"We'll continue this discussion at a later point Prime, it's late, Ratchet's already asked Kia to get
him a plane here to give Prowl a once over in the morning, I think it's time we both retire for the
night."

Optimus nodded, patting his weapons specialist on the shoulder, it was late, and it had been a long
cycle for them all. "Recharge well then old friend."

They went their separate ways, and entered their berthrooms, allowing quiet to fall over the bunker.

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Rome

"Jazz... come to bed." Maggie mumbled, already changed and ready to retire for the night.

Jazz's holoform didn't really respond, he was pacing in their room, his holoform already changed
into just a set of tight fitting boxers.

Ira had arrived back about twenty minutes ago, and had given them a more detailed run down on
what had happened the last few days.

More detailed, as in, she'd explained that the Monochrome twins younger brother Derrick had
appeared out of seemingly slag all nowhere on a beach in Portugal.

Apparently the twins were still getting the story from him about how he wound up as he was.

No matter how Jazz tried to process this, something wasn't adding up.

Yes the Harpies obviously had families back in their own realities, Kia and Fernando were proof of
that, and proof that the four Harpies they'd aligned with weren't the only ones... but for another to
just, pop up out of nowhere?

He was happy for the twins getting their sibling back within reach, but the wider question of why,
and why now was pulling at his processor like an insistent itch, and it was going to drive him up
the wall.

Maggie watched him continue to pace, trying to crack open the situation with the little information
he had.

Evidently it was going to take more than just words to convince him to drop the topic for the night.

Pushing the duvet back off, she rose back and put her feet down on the soft carpet. "Jazz." She
called again, trying to get his attention.

He was still pacing.

Pouting, she thought for a moment, before an idea struck, and she reached up to Scitter, stroking
the little thing to coax him off what was left of her ear, it didn't hurt as much any more, especially
since Ira thought to bring out a metal file and take the edge off of his legs.

Scitter moved into the stroking, rolling out and into his carriers palm, looking up at her in
confusion with his one bright green optic. Pouting she started to talk to the sparkling. "Can you
believe your papa Scitter?" She nodded to him, still pacing. "So lost in thought I bet he wouldn't
even notice you clinging to his face."

Scitter, for his size, and lack of features outside one unblinking green optic, pipped and chirped as
he bounced up and down in the palm of her hand, excited at the suggestion.
Smirk forming, she strode over to where Jazz was pacing, and put her palm with Scitter on it in the way.

The sparkling tensed, then jumped and landed straight on the holoforms face, the sudden appearance of the sparkling jolting Jazz back to the present with a startled noise as he stumbled backwards before pitching back and landing heavy on his ass.

Maggie couldn't help it, she was clutching her middle and laughing while Jazz came fully back to his senses and registered the tiny sparkling now happily jumping around on his holoforms bare chest, slowly his gaze moved up to see his mate laughing, and after a moment he huffed a laugh out too.

They all shared a laugh for a few more moments before Maggie sighed, wiping a tear from her eye. "Now, will you come to bed? It's late."

Jazz nodded, scooping up Scitter and moving over to the vanity unit that sat between two sets of shelves, all built into the wall opposite the door out. "Sure thin' sweetspark, jus' gonna put the tyke down." He remarked, setting the sparkling down on the small bed Maggie had made out of an old necklace jewelry box, the top of the box had a soft padding added to it, and when closed, allowed Scitter to be kept warm through the night, while not waking Maggie up if he woke early and decided to transform, as he had done a number of times before they realised the sparkling was going to need his own place to recharge.

Scitter jumped the final few inches between Jazz's hands to the box, and Jazz in turn gave the tiny bot a soft pat on the head with a single finger. "Night yah little terror." He remarked, slowly closing the lid of the box as Scitter shifted back into the shape of a memory stick.

Maggie's arms wound around him from behind, and pressed herself flush to his back. "You know you can talk to me when something's weighing on your mind… right?" She mumbled into his right shoulder.

Jazz reached up, unwound her arms, and turned to embrace her properly, chin coming to rest on top of her golden locks. "Ah know sweetspark… but…"

"But?" She pressed, arms going around his middle to feel the contours of his back.

"Ah… Hmm… Just me over thinkin' things ah don' need tah be over thinkin'."

"That new Harpy?"

"Yup."

"You're worried he's dangerous?"

"Considerin' we both saw them tear at that Fernando mech like pit spawns possessed by Unicron, Ah'rn surprised you ain' worried as much as ah am."

"They saved Mikaela's life doing that."

"Yeah, that's my point, they'd known Mikaela at most a week, and they did that to save her, now they got energon and metal in the game? Primus I don't even want to know what those two might be capable of."

"Ohhh… Maybe… tomorrow morning we ask Ira? She's known those two and their brother for years, she'll have a good idea… considering how tired she looked, I'm shocked we got as much out
of her as we did without her snapping at us."

Jazz nodded. "'Hide commed me earlier today, told me the lil' lady had a bit of a breakdown from stress, Optimus and 'Hide helped her through it, my guess, she finally just let all the slag that had been making her so…"

"Bitchy?"

"Not the word ah'd use, but yeah, got that wrench out of her pistons so now she's in a better mood."

"Makes sense…" Maggie cut herself off with a yawn. "Bed? Please?"

Jazz chuckled, pulling his chin back away from her hair and dipping enough to press a quick kiss to her forehead. "Sure thing sweetspark, c'mon, Scitter's already out cold."

Maggie chuckled at the implication, but shook her head. "You horn dog."

Jazz joined the chuckle and pressed their foreheads together. "Ah'm your horn dog sweetspark, and frag do I love it."

Two doors down, Glen groaned, rolled over in bed, and buried his head under his pillow.

At least Ira didn't make a sound.

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Triage Earth Atlantic Ocean

The bridge was quiet.

Ivan's hands held the ships wheel, keeping the ship as steady as he could against the rolling waves.

Moira O'Dorian Halloran was also on the bridge, well within his line of sight, bent over a nautical map and mumbling away silently as she plotted their course.

On the distant horizon was Iceland, but that was no longer their destination.

Moira had stated her final destination had been Greenland, and that she had a contact waiting to collect her on a barren stretch of the frozen lands coast.

From there, the contact would get them to the airport, and they'd fly to Canada, where Ivan was going to locate one of the Estrada Safehouses, and confirm his location.

He was long overdue for a report in…

"Still absolutely certain you don't know my daughter?" Moira called from the navigation table, pushing herself up and throwing her interlocked hands over her head, arching her back which gave an audible crack as she gave a little sigh of satisfaction, before turning and resting her hip on the table to regard him, drawing that dubiously small notebook and pen out, flipping to a page Ivan couldn't see from his position.

"Yup." He replied.

"Hmm… Yet you were taking care of the Orichiono Heir… dangerous considering who is still hunting him. They won't believe you if you claim he's dead."

"I know."
"The Orichiono's took in my daughter when she fled the bunker."

"Never heard of that. I met the kid after the Orichiono's and Kia vanished."

"And you've made a lot of enemies for your employers by becoming his guard… the Aunts have a bounty on your head… I know for a fact my immunity as the head Scientist of the International Rot Association won't save you if they catch you. Before you reach a safe harbor."

Ivan grit his teeth. "Those rats can go die in a sewer for all I care."

"Hmm, same brutish view of the world as ever. The Aunts are holding the line on the Triage, they've made the vast majority of global leaders believe you kidnapped the boy."

One of the handles of the wheel snapped off, Moira raised an eyebrow, and jotted something down on that stupid notebook.

She flicked the pen shut, set the notebook back in her breast pocket, and regarded him with such a neutral look he had to double check to make sure she still had features on her face. "Ivan. I know you think you're protecting my daughter from me, by pretending you don't know her. I know that the disappearance of all four Harpies goes beyond what science and rational explanation can provide an answer for." He regarded her with a cold expression, dropping the broken handle on the floor and letting the rocking motion of the waves dictate which direction it rolled away.

She took her silence as clearance to continue. "I know you think my… actions towards my daughter, and my other children are callous… despicable… vile… torturous and cruel… and you are… correct…" She listed off each one with a finger, and then scowled down at them. "And I am fully to blame for the state my daughter was in when she fled the Bunker… believing death in the Siberian Tundra was better than… staying… with a corpse…"

He paused. "What?"

"Hmm… she never mentioned that it seems…"

"Yeah no, she didn't."

He wanted to kick himself the moment he realised what he'd said.

She just huffed, a sense of melancholy falling over her. "It's funny… the moment I lost her… those strings binding me were cut… and I regained myself…"

His expression shifted to distrust. "What are you going on about?"

Moira shifted, the confidence and poise sliding off her. "When… when I was very young… I was one of the first born after the sickness became globally known… I was the youngest in my year…" She gestured to her blood red eye. "I was… a target… of a lot of prejudice… and fear… and I became… so… so driven to find a way to… make my eyes match…" She paused again and sighed. "Looking back… I really should of been thankful."

Ivan nodded. He could see where this was going.

"The years passed, I threw myself into research, my drive for a cure drove me further and further… and… I left everything else behind… my mother… she was a single mother in Ireland trying to raise a child mutated by the sickness in a time before we knew the truth… I left her behind and… and I never looked back…"
Ivan sighed. "But then the first rot cases…"

"Sixteen is the average age… I knew in statistics I wasn't alone… Enough autopsies on murdered mutates was more than enough to show the population was split down the middle… Half got a physical mutation… Half got the rot…"

"And those like me?"

"Those like you? With bodies and minds already fully developed before the bombs dropped? You're immune. My mother is immune… I know that as a fact… I don't know… if she's still alive… Though."

"O'dorian…"

"I know… my daughter isn't dead… I know it was under drastically different circumstances… but when she ran… Just as I did from my own mother… it brought a painful clarity to my life… and I… Let her go too… Because… Because I know… That she will never feel safe with me…"

Ivan wetted his lips, took in a deep breath, and spoke. "She fell in love."

Moira's ground aimed gaze lifted to him, sapphire blue and crimson red eyes locking on him like he was a lifeline, standing tall and imposing like a mountain promising shelter from a violent storm.

"She… She did?"

Ivan nodded. "Smart kid… knew his way around computers almost as well as she did… real quiet… never muttered a peep when anyone but her was with him… Only met him twice."

"I… I never found any records…"

"She proposed… He said yes… Two months later… He was dead. That was three years ago now… A year before the disappearance."

"Oh… that would explain… the lack of documents…"

Ivan nodded. "Ira… She didn't… She didn't take it well… The Orichiono's had people living with her, and got her a therapy bird because she developed… Certain tendencies, and tried to keep her distracted with her anarchistic side."

Moira nodded along to all of this, before sighing and pressing her palms to her face, and slowly slid down to sit on the ground, clutching at her face.

He glanced to the wheel, locked the heading, and stepped away from the wheel, and over to the woman. "O'Dorian?"

"Please… Let me wallow in my self loathing… Focus on keeping the ship on course."

Ivan shook his head, and despite all his instincts telling him this was the stupidest thing he'd arguably done, a rather high bar to top, he did it anyway, moving to sit down next to her, and carefully dropped a hand on her shoulder. "I know for a fact that that wallowing ain't going to help you any."

Moira shrugged his hand off. "Considering the current situation, it is the only thing I feel capable of doing… My life is a ruin… The only family I have is gone… The world at large has gone to shite… And my drive for life feels like it was cut a long time ago now… I kept doing my research… I still am… Outside of the bunkers… I'm trying to find cases where the rules of the Rot
and Mutations are broken… But I can't get her eyes out of my head… How she looked at me when she escaped… I'll never forget those… How I could I? An eye mutation born from an eye mutation… Like iridescent hellfire… The fear in them… It branded me Ivan… And I will have that brand on my heart until the day I die. Maybe even beyond."

Ivan nodded along. "Once I report into the Estrada's… We can get back on the road, and keep looking."

Moira looked to him and pulled her face out of her hands then, and gave him a tentative smile. "Thank you, Ivan… I'm sorry about my first… Introductions… I'm… Still getting used to being… Human again… And not just a frozen hearted scientist."

He nodded, and offered his hand to her.

Her smile grew somewhat, and she lifted her own hand taking his and shaking. "Moira O'Dorian Halloran."

"Ivan Matar."

He got back up, pulling her up too. "We'll weigh anchor at sundown, after that, dinner, and then, maybe you can share some of your research? You probably don't get to talk to people about it much, do you?"

She gave an awkward chuckle. "Yes… And my hand writing is atrocious."

"Moira, I was raised in the outback, the nearest book was a hundred miles away I can assure you it won't be anywhere near as bad as mine."

"Oh? A wager?"

"Nasty habit I picked up from the Orichiono's, the twins were always in the mood for betting."

Moira regarded him in confusion. "Twins? The last generation didn't have twins?"

"Oh no, they did. They did and they hated it."

Alright! This one is kinda a filler chapter/catch up with some of the cast that hasn't got much attention recently chapter, but I digress, it has to happen sometimes, hope you all enjoyed it!

See you all next time!

Moon
Chapter 39

Sooo... Because of you all know what, my University closed up for the year about four weeks ago (it's a whole convoluted mess because I was also down with a 10 day Stomach flu (not fun)) so everything has been a bit up in the air and crazy for me now that I've moved back home for good. And in all of that time I've been slowly working on chapter 44, which I finished in a sudden burst of inspiration last night, so here I am posting 39, hope you all enjoy!

Abandoned Air Strip, somewhere in Germany

The standoff held a tension that was practically visible in the air.

It lasted all of a minute before Fernando cracked, snorting out a laugh at the state of the Seeker.

Starscream snarled. "Quiet fool!"

Fernando didn't quiet, he just laughed harder, gesturing with his left wing wildly at Starscream's face.

Specifically the blown out and molten remains of the mechs optic.

Starscream snarled and lunged at the Avian Mech.

Fernando saw it coming, and in a move that once more showed off just how quickly he could react, easily sidestepped the lunging Seeker, who's one optic wasn't providing the same depth perception he was normally accustomed too, and left him stumbling for a few moments as he tried to register the fact he hadn't managed to land a hit on the Avian freak.

Fernando laughed even louder, the shrill noise was grating Starscreams audios, Fernando let his frame sway from side to side, helm bobbing around as he took in the other mech. "Some leader you are! Bested by a human with a pea shooter!" He taunted.

Starscream answered back with a roar, spun, and lunged again, single optic burning with fury.

This time Fernando wasn't quite quick enough to dodge, the Seeker catching him on the waist with his sharp digits, tearing a chunk of the armour away, and causing a sluggish spurt of lilac energon to pool in the gouges.

Fernando screeched at the Seeker, the laughter gone in an instant and replaced with indignant fury in turn.

With a glass breaking screech, Fernando lunged in turns, the scythes hidden away launching out into view just in time for Fernando to slam his left taloned pede down, pivot on the point, and bring his right wing hurtling down in a diagonal line across Starscreams front.

The curved blades found their marks, and sliced through the other mechs cockpit, leaving behind five relatively deep gouges in the Seekers chassis, the glass of his cockpit cracked to the point one more hit would shatter it entirely.

They both jumped back from the other, and a stalemate formed.
Vents laboured as they stared each other down, snarls on their features and tension in their frames close to the snapping point.

The tension broke with a huff from Fernando as he tried to rub at his oozing side with his wing. "Okay… I somewhat deserved that…" He mumbled, watching in fascination as the oozing wound began to oxidise and crystallise, sealing it.

He glanced to the wounds he'd dealt to Starscream, still very much oozing out with no real sign of slowing. "Huh, even got different bloods." He muttered to himself.

Starscream was also paying attention to that fact, optics narrowed, seemingly examining the forming crystals from a distance. "You can self seal your wounds… without shutting down the lines that were damaged… maintaining optimum flow…"

Fernando shrugged. "Organic blood and energon, it turns solid on contact with the air, cool huh?"

Starscream slowly nodded, looking over the wound from a distance as he pondered it. "I need a sample."

Fernando grimaced at the phrasping, but with his wing knocked a piece of the crystal off, reopening the wound for a moment before the crystal started to form again, he proceeded to kick the shed piece across the ground to the other mech. "Have at it."

Starscream carefully picked the lilac piece up, smirk forming on his features. "Oh, I will."

Fernando huffed. "Whatever, I'm starving, gonna go find something to eat." He remarked, before turning and taking wing, leaving the injured seeker to ponder over the properties of the contaminated energon.

Orichiono Manor Monaco

Ironhide was the first one up the next morning, courtesy of Bumblebee wanting to drive Mikaela to work, and in the progress waking Ratchet.

Grumbling to himself as he shifted about, he stepped out of his room, optics almost instantly going to the Mercedes parked in the middle of the main part of the bunker.

Right, Optimus had found Prowl last night.

He should probably go try and track down his holoform before the Harpies discover him and mistake him for an intruder, he doubted that would go down well as a first introduction...

Deciding on that, the Weapons Specialist shifted down into his own alt mode, and activated his holoform up in the manor above.

Glancing around the main kitchen, living room and dining area, he realised there was no one present.

A check of the time reminded him that the sun had only just risen.

The sound of a door opening and closing from somewhere up on the second floor drew his attention, and he found himself walking over to the main staircase that led up to said second floor of the manor.

Sure enough, Prowl was coming up to the top landing, still looking like slag in an attire he hadn't
seen on the mech the night before, another clothing set?

"Oh! Good morning…. Iron… Iron…"

"Ironhide"

Prowl clicked his fingers together. "Right Ironhide! Sorry, heh, still waking up." Prowl mumbled, coming down the stairs, hand on the banister as he glanced around. "This place is massive, took me ages to find a room with a bed in it!" He added once he finally arrived on the ground floor and glanced around again. "Looks even nicer with some light in here…"

Ironhide went to reply, but then stopped, this was all just… too strange…

The Prowl he knew was a mech of hardened principle, cold and determined in a way that made him an incredibly effective third in command for Optimus.

This Prowl… seemed almost like the complete opposite, trusting, friendly, and well, skittish.

Prowl was looking at him in perplexion. "Um… is everything okay?"

Ironhide shook his holoforms head slightly. "No, no… just… just gonna take a while to get used to you being… like this Prowl."

Prowl's eyebrow raised. "Oh? Why's that?"

How was Ironhide supposed to explain this? Taking a moment to try and come up with something, all he could decide was that the landing of the staircase probably wasn't the place to have this conversation. "Come on, let's go find somewhere to sit, then we can talk."

Prowl gave him a bright smile. "Sure thing, lead the way!"

Ironhide sighed. "That is really going to take a while to get used to."

Luckily for him, Ratchet was already on his way to the Airport, he'd be arriving around lunch, and from there Prowl can be kept occupied by his mate.

Ratchet sent him a pulse of humor down the bond.

Prowl ended up sitting down on one of the sofa's in the living room, playing with his hands as Ironhide pulled one of the loveseats round so that he could face the other holoform. "So… Slaggit where do we even start with this…" He mumbled to himself.

Prowl shrunk back into the sofa. "I'm sorry… I wish I knew who I was… who you all are… but…"

"But you don't remember anything, right… well… designations Ironhide, Prime's Lead Guard and Weapons Specialist."

Prowl's head tilted to the side. "Okay… so you're the gun guy."

Ironhide snorted. "Pretty much yeah."

"And Optimus is the leader?"

"He's Prime, so, yeah, he's the leader… He'll explain 'Prime' later if you ask him."

Prowl nodded. "Okay… and I'm guessing it's more than just you two?"
"Yeah, not counting our hosts, there's Ratchet, he's the CMO… he's coming later to check over your injuries."

Prowl nodded again. "Cool, June gave me a look over my projection, she said there was some bruising on my spine, at least four bruised ribs, and my attacker kicked me in the face, most of that damage is already gone though." Prowl listed off.

Ironhide blinked a few times, before it dawned on him, of course Prowl would be using human terms to describe his internal systems, he could feel Ratchet taking note of the injuries Prowl had listed off and was translating them back to Cybertronian.

"Okay, so after Ratchet, there's Prime's lieutenant, Jazz, he's in Rome with one of the hosts. With Ratchet in Barcelona is our scout, Bumblebee."

"So there's five?"

"That's right."

"And our hosts?"

"As of yesterday, also five."

"Really?"

"You'll get introduced to them all later when they wake up."

Prowl nodded, before frowning. "Hey… do you have anything I can have? I'm getting pretty hungry."

"We've got a couple tons of refined Energon here in the Bunker… the Orichiono's still won't tell me or Prime where they're getting the stuff…" He mumbled.

Prowl raised his arm up in the air, like a child at school. "Urr… yes Prowl?"

"Two questions, who are 'the Orichiono's'? And what's 'Energon'?"

He could feel Ratchet's processor jam from the shock he was suddenly hit with.

This was going to take a while…

Wren was the first one to make an appearance, walking right past both Ironhide and Prowl, who'd fallen silent as the holoform walked down the same stairs as he had and started to go rummaging in the fridge.

Prowl, who'd been distracted from his hunger/cravings by Ironhide, watched now with rapt attention as someone he did not know, rummaged through a very packed looking fridge, he assumed this was one of the hosts, who had a rather interesting hairstyle and look that, were it not for the light tan of her skin, would convince him she'd jumped straight from an old film noire, he watched her pull out what looked to be the leftovers of some roast, plop down on the kitchen's island, and begin shovelling the food straight from the tub to her mouth with a fork.

She didn't seem to even notice they were both sitting there, watching.

At least until she turned to avoid the glare of the rising sun and spotted them.
A startled noise left the black and grey themed holoform, which quickly devolved into a choking noise as something seemed to go down the wrong way.

Three good whacks to her own chest and she righted, looked between Ironhide and Prowl, and then slowly set the tub back down on the island. "Ironhide… why is there a… stranger in my home?"

Prowl was a police officer, had been for nearly his entire remembered life, and he prided himself on being able to read people, and this time it was no different.

French accent, her pronunciation of the words sounded like English was a second language that she'd mostly perfected by this point in her life, given they were in Monaco that was hardly surprising, it was a global tourist hotspot for the wealthy, it didn't do not to be able to talk to people…

Given this was one of the owners of this massive manor up on one of the hills overlooking a very wealthy city state, money was likely no issue, and they were likely using said funds to help keep those like him secret.

Given her tone, his sudden appearance wasn't very welcomed right away, but he could hardly blame her, he was a stranger, she wouldn't know him anymore than he knew who he was.

So, before Ironhide could speak, he stood up, and offered his hand out to shake, and seeing as it would probably get him on her good side quicker, he quickly changed the language option he'd found two decades ago from English to what he knew was the French one. "Bonjour Madame! Je m'appelle Prowl, Ironhide n'a pas pu vous réveiller la nuit dernière pour vous prévenir de mon arrivée, c'est un plaisir de vous rencontrer!"

Wren jerked back a bit in surprise, blinking a few times before tentatively reaching out her own hand to accept him. "Bon… Bonjour Monsieur, je m'appelle Wren Orichiono."

Ironhide watched the slightly awkward scene unfold, he didn't exactly blame Wren for being confused and somewhat thrown off, when they had made contact with him and the rest of the unit, they'd been expecting them, to suddenly have a whole new holoform in her kitchen, and Cybertronian in her Bunker by proxy, was probably quite the curveball to wake up to, especially considering the last few days had already taxed her and her twin enough.

Wren turned to regard Ironhide again. "Keep him here… I need to get my siblings… it's about time Derrick used his holoform."

With that, she flickered back out of existence, causing Prowl to jolt and spin on him exclaiming. "I thought she was human!"

Given the questions he knew were about to come, Ironhide knew full well he'd have no issue keeping Prowl right there.

The sound of hasty claws of the wooden floor drew both his and Prowl's attention in time to witness one of the manors dogs, which one Ironhide couldn't really tell, making a break for the leftovers Wren had left on the island.

In a single rather impressive bound, the large Doberman was wolfing down the remaining leftovers.

Prowl chuckled. "Annie always wanted a dog… hey there puppy." He cooed, the Doberman glanced to him but didn't even growl, attention more focused on continuing to eat every scrap inside the tub, meaning it didn't bat an eye when Prowl started to pet and coo at the dog Ironhide
was fairly certain was trained to go for the throat if ordered to do so.

Ironhide regarded this with an air of caution, but accepted the dog distracting Prowl for a while, gave him time to send a pulse down the bond to Ratchet to ask a couple questions of his own, specifically focused around how Prowl might of obtained such a massive disruption in his memory banks.

He also finally broached to his mate what Optimus had mentioned the night before, about the Polaris.

Ratchet listened to it as dutifully as he could, though he was also trying to do something on the plane.

As far as Ratchet was aware, he'd not seen a case like this in a significantly long time, and he'd have to run a number of tests and scans to identify what might of been damaged.

When it got to responding to Optimus' assumptions, he felt his mate's spark twist much like his own had done.

Yes if the Polaris was on Earth, that would be an incredible boost to them, if and only if it was in operating order, and would respond to them as it's pilots.

But both recognised it as a pipe dream.

Maybe the Polaris had brought Prowl to Earth, yes the TIC and the Flagship had vanished within cycles of each other, and yes the Polaris had been fully fueled and in working order when it broke its moorings and vanished, but the ship was not equipped with an autopilot advanced enough to avoid taking damage during it's eons of cruising through space aimlessly, there was a A.I. but it only had access to things like creature comforts, the lighting systems, and the internal defense systems.

It needed two pilots to operate it and get it moving from point A to point B.

There was the chance that Prowl hadn't been the only Autobot who the Polaris had taken with them, perhaps Prowl and the unknown bot had managed to gain control of the Polaris, but had lost track of where Cybertron was.

Prowl was an Enforcer before the war, he'd never had to control anything larger than a bot transit vehicle along the roads of Cybertron.

A trans galactic starship is absolutely not something Prowl would've known how to operate.

Again, two pilots were needed, even if the other bot was specifically a Pilot frame... Ironhide and Ratchet both winced alike at the thought.

Pilot Frames were old, so old they'd only known two to be left online when War came…

The rest of the frame type had been replaced by Seekers back at the beginning of the Golden Age, forced out over time when the Senate decided it was done with ruling an empire with such massive borders, and instead, focused on pulling every drop of Wealth up to the top where they could gorge and look fancy on... signifying the end of the ever expanding silver age.

It was a well known fact that Pilot Frames hadn't died out on their own, the Senate knew them to be a very tight knit group, and as a result, word travelled fast within the group, and they did what they could for a time to get employment and keep energon flowing in their systems.
The smallest class not classified a mini-bot, 'accidents' were easily fatal for Pilot Frames, they weren't built to take a lot of damage, they were built to pilot ships that were built to traverse the endless cosmos, and by proxy, take any damage to their hulls that would easily offline their pilots.

Long distance travel tended to drive other frame types a bit balmy, the long periods of isolation with rarely more than just the ships AI for company.

In a time long past, a Trans Galactic vessel returning home, heavy with the harvested resources of distant solar systems otherwise outside of sane reach, were hailed as triumphs, often the Pilot Frames would return with knowledge of the cosmos that the Science Guilds fought to learn and properly document first.

This was all in a time long before either he or Ratchet onlined, back when Cybertron was a thriving multi-system empire that spanned the Cosmos.

What they did see, was the end of that great era, as slowly, but surely, the Senate's own greed overcame their interest in expanding the empire, in looking after the Bots they'd once long ago sworn to protect and watch over.

They witnessed the results of the last two pilot frames being snatched away from their own frame type, and forced to watch from afar as the two became nothing but shells of their former selves.

Solarstorm and Nebularburst were the last Pilot frames, and when the time came, when they finally took ahold of their destiny and created the Polaris in secret, it was like the return of a bygone Era, a triumphant return as the collosal, one of a kind ship rose from its moorings for the first time into view of the Universe.

Ironhide distinctly remembered Orion Pax trying to hide the lubricant welling in his optics as the biggest stupid grin was also plastered across his face.

The Polaris hadn't just been another ship, it had been a physical symbol of hope, of revolution.

Of personal and universal triumph.

It's disappearance so soon after the Tarn Refinery incident, only worsened the wound already felt by all, and furthered the downward spiral into the devastating all out war that had slowly extinguished the light of their homeworld…

A body apperating on the sofa right where Prowl had previously been sitting snapped Ironhide out of his and Ratchet's roaming musings long enough to recognise the fact that a new holoform he had a suspicion was Derrick had appeared.

He watched as a full body shudder seemed to jump up the other holoform, bright green eyes widening as he proceeded to completely ignore both himself and Prowl and instead toy with his hands and pull at the top he was wearing, which had a hole in the middle of the chest area for some reason.

Ironhide notted the vibrant green with blue tipped hair, rather long for a male human, seemed to twitch and bounce along with his expressions, likely mimicking his protrusions.

Funny how the other Harpies' hairs didn't do that.

Derrick was mumbling stuff under his breath as he poked and prodded at his holoform.

Ironhide looked to Prowl, who'd stopped petting the dog to look in intrigue at the newcomer, even
the dog had, the tub it had been wolfing down now empty of it's previous contents.

Not long after, Aria's holoform flickered into existence on Derrick's right, Wren following soon after on his left, an arm draped over his shoulders each as he pondered over his holoform.

There was a gleeful look in Aria and Wren's expression, and both raised their other hand to perform the universal symbol of quiet.

So, he, Prowl, and the dog, just held almost perfectly still as they waited for something to happen.

Aria spoke first. "So, any issues?"

Derrick pursed his lips to the side. "Hmm… no… I mean… it's weird…"

Wren hummed and then spoke. "Ira's still working on the more refined senses and tactile-ness, she's made staggering progress despite the complexity."

Derrick nodded, then paused, and the pursed lips became a muddled frown, pondering something.

Aria spoke again. "It's certainly done wonders for us after all."

Derrick turned to look at his white themed sister then, and Ironhide spotted it, a flash of shock mixed with a flickering hope that was quickly turning into a rather large blaze as his gaze slowly turned all the way to see his black themed sister.

Back to Aria sitting on his left, then to Wren on his right, he went back and forth a few times, before something seemed to finally dawn on him, a noise not far from a keen leaving him. "Oh… oh my god… you're… you… we're…"

Aria chuckled, and shifted to open both of her arms to him. "C'mon Derder, give your favourite big sister a hug!"

Derrick very nearly tackled his sister straight over the side of the sofa in his exuberance, the half woop half screech of joy that left him could probably be heard in the bunker as he proceeded to try and squeeze Aria's holoform in half. Causing Aria to let out a strained wheeze.

Wren remained as she was, just watching with a growing smile on her lips.

Derrick seemed to notice this fact, and turned, looked Wren up and down, and then choked out a laugh. "Oh wow… oh my god… I'm not dreaming right? Like, I've dreamt similar before… please, please tell me this is real? There's really two of you! There's two! Oh gods! They were all wrong! They were all wrong!" He seemed to be becoming somewhat unchained, and Ironhide spotted a building mania brought from the joy in the younger male, he'd try and enquire later what he meant, but he doubted he'd get anything from the twins themselves.

The only things he'd really learned was during his and Aria's now regular sparring matches in the morning, was she liked to use to toss him around like he didn't weigh anything.

His pride kept telling him that he just wasn't used to fighting in a holoform, there was a degree of dissociation from not seeing his actual fists.

Given she seemed to always be using a different fighting style from a different human culture than the last round also didn't help.

She was terrifyingly fast, and seemed to like targeting his knees right before the finishing move,
knocking him off balance just enough for her to toss him...

Aria, who was completely unaware of his internal thoughts, was still hugging her brother, squeezing just as hard back. "Yup! We're as real as we can be!"

Prowl tapped Ironhide's shoulder, and gestured over his shoulder for him to follow the amnesiac.

So, he did, the Orichiono's didn't even notice, Wren was already being dragged into the laughing, and somewhat tearful hug as they rounded a corner and kept going down the corridor until they both stepped into a room filled with padded chairs and low sitting tables.

Prowl sat first, then Ironhide. "So... what was that all about?"

Ironhide wanted to groan, he was not a good story teller... Ratchet or Prime were far better suited to explaining what madness had occurred since their own arrival on Earth.

Ratchet sent him a comforting wave over the bond, he'd be there soon, and once Prime finally woke up and made himself present, he'd be able to help explain things to Prowl too.

Ironhide was actually surprised the Prime wasn't even up yet... normally the Prime was up before even him.

It didn't really matter though, Optimus getting more rest was hardly going to doom them.

The Decepticons have been laying low since the Cosmopolitan, so there was no real rush to go off into battle.

It was a nice change really.

Prowl was still waiting for an explanation, so he just shrugged. "Those were the Orichiono's, former humans from an alternate reality who realised it would probably be best if we stayed hidden here with them than try to make contact with global officials, apparently they're not the most ethical individuals."

Prowl nodded slowly along, then paused, and asked. "Wait... did you just say... alternate reality? As in from another dimension? Oh man Sophia's gonna flip when she finds out..."

Ironhide sent him a confused look.

"Friend of mine, loves reading about scientific theories." Prowl explained. "You've just now stated, as a fact, that this scientific theory is true, and there is living evidence back in the kitchen? Like hell am I not going to tell Sophia the next time that woman locates a data roaming signal somewhere out in fuck all nowhere Siberia."

Ironhide nodded. "Can't really argue with that, they're already in on the big secret afterall... right?"

Prowl nodded enthusiastically in agreement.

Now that Prowl had seen the Orichiono's in their presumed entirety, Ironhide hadn't noticed them losing sleep over the rest of their possible relatives, he explained just what had been going down recently.

Prowl listened to it all with rapt focus, only asking one or two more questions where he wished an event or point to be elaborated on further.

When it got to the Cosmopolitan, Prowl's eyes had widened comically and well, it took about thirty
minutes to explain that whole mess in enough detail for Prowl to let him continue, only stopping again to ask about Megatron and the Allspark because he wanted to know more about their significance.

He was just starting to turn the conversation around to discussing what their own species was when a familiar latina popped her head into the room. "Ai, there you are Ironhide… and I assume this is Prowl?"

Prowl's attention jumped immediately to the latina, taking in every detail he could very quickly.

Cream nightgown, a bed hair that looked like it had been caught in a twister, and a look of recent waking of slumber that coalesced into a look of unholy murderous intent that seemed to be being held back by sheer will of being polite.

Reminded him of Maria after a busy night shift where she'd had to go without coffee, that was a face they all feared.

Ironhide stood up, grabbed Prowl by the shoulder and pulled him over. "Prowl, this is Kia, one of the-"

"Harpies! Why yes it's a pleasure to meet you! I've already somewhat met the Orichiono's but now I can finally ask you questions!"

Kia's expression had quickly become one of surprise as Prowl's sudden exuberance and excited prattle blindsided her.

After a few blinks she groaned. "Give me five… I need to hunt down the coffee machine."

Prowl tried to hold in his giggle, very much like his boss, he had a feeling he was going to like Kia once she was alert enough to answer his questions.

Kia turned and walked back towards the kitchen, and then seemed to stop dead in her tracks and call out to someone they'd spotted. "IRA PUT SOME CLOTHES ON GOD-DAMNIT!"

"'IS TAH EARLY IN THA' DAMN FUC'IN' MORN' TAH BE WEARIN' CLOTHES!"

Kia returned to the door way, grabbed the handles to the double doors, and slammed them shut in Prowl and Ironhide's face with what Prowl guessed was an expression caught between murderous intent and a polite/embarrassed grimace.

After a few moments of muted screaming, and what sounded like a TV monitor having connection problems, Prowl looked to Ironhide. "Should I assume that is the Ira you mentioned earlier?"

Ironhide took in a deep vent, sighed, and nodded.

Prowl chuckled to himself. "I think me and Annie are going to like it here."

Ironhide's head snapped to him with a face that seemed to be questioning if he was also mad on top of being amnesiac.

Prowl shrugged. "It's hardly going to be dull around here."

Ironhide wasn't sure if he wanted to laugh or cry.

Ratchet gave him the equivalent of a reassuring pat over their bond, he was only about an hour out now, they'd touched down and now was just the hassle of getting from the airport the town over,
and up to the manor.

As far as Ironhide was concerned, that was far too long.

Ratchet just chuckled himself.

Before Ratchet arrived, they'd all relocated back to the bunker, and Prowl got to meet the Orichiono's, officially.

Translation, Prowl lost his collective mind... apparently he rather liked bird watching.

Ironhide looked to Optimus, who'd finally joined their quickly growing group, half begging the larger mech to reassure him that, yes, Prowl, the Prowl, TIC of the Autobots, infamous pylon in tar Prowl, was squealing at the feather pattern of the twins wings, and Derrick's iridescent tail feathers. Which the younger male jokingly referred to as a 'Giant ass fan', which almost had Prowl on the floor in a fit of laughter.

Optimus sent him back a look that roughly translated to 'yes Ironhide, that is exactly what we are both seeing.'

At least Ratchet was finding a bounty of humor out of it all.

He took solace in the fact twins were also having a hard time processing all of this, and seemed to be making their best attempt to accommodate and answer the rapid fire questions Prowl was firing off while also trying to coax him away from outright grabbing ahold of one of their wings to look at it closely.

Prowl seemed to have enough of a room reading ability to know that he should avoid direct contact with the twins.

Derrick was absolutely another story all together, and if it weren't for the fact he was still using his sisters as a crutch to help him get used to walking, he would have rushed Prowl and begun asking just as many rapid fire questions as the amnesiac mech was.

"-Do you have hollow bones or are they incredibly thin but like, unbelievably strong? Like Spider silk levels of strong?"

"Um... hollow we're afraid."

Optimus stepped forwards then. "Prowl, Aria and Wren have not performed an autopsy on themselves, they will not be able to answer all of your questions."

He didn't miss the slight almost not there wave of relief he picked up from their EM field, which was a rather rare occurrence considering how little they let out into said field.

"Oh! Right sorry... I guess I did get a bit carried away... Annie normally stops me when that happens." He chuckled awkwardly.

Kia and Ira, who'd been keeping quiet and just watching the scene before them, looked to each other in concern, before glancing to the twins, a knowing and somewhat pensive expression on their features.

Every bot in the bunker noticed the twins helm tilt to the side, black and white lips part, and heard them ask. "Who... is Annie?"
And that's this one done! Smidge of world building, some character development, and new plot lines laid down, 'ticks off list'. Now onto writing 45! See you all in Primus knows when because life is crazy!

Moon.
So, I got hit with a major 'write you fucker' kinda mood, and I cranked out all of chapter 45 in under four days? So I guess I'm updating twice in seven days... cool cool, welp, hope you all enjoy!

"Okay... that was a bit... fast... so we're going to say back what we caught... okay?"

"Okay."

"Alright... You have 30 years worth of memories, and that's... it?"

"That is correct yes."

"And you met Annie on the fourth day of your living memory."

"Indeed ma'am."

"You've been married to her for the last twenty five years?"

"Yeah... she was the one to propose because she beat me to it on the Ferris wheel."

"Aww that's adorable! Oh back on track, right, for the last thirty years you've been a sheriff's deputy in a town called... Jaspy Nevada?"

"Jasper ma'am."

"Ah thank you for the correction."

"Next, some of your friends were in Monaco, and spotted the same emblem on your shoulders, only it was on Optimus' hood ornament, put two and two together, and let you know there were potentially others like you on Earth?"

"Yes, Narisa and Selena have very keen eyes, they were code breakers back in the cold war, and light aircraft pilots."

"Fascinating, and not once did they think to tell their superiors that you existed?"

"Not at all, for one thing they made a blood oath of secrecy when Annie and our boss Marria came clean to them all when Sophia walked in on me being obviously not a car and dead fainted, heh, didn't know humans could do that. Second, Maria and Annie would have hunted them down with the tenacity of bloodhounds."

"Good to know for future reference. Now back to recent events, you and Annie were attacked, by a Cybertronian with red optics, could fly, and who shot a missile at your home, you tried to fight back, but given you'd rarely had to throw a punch due to how quiet your town is, you were somewhat rusty and got your arse handed to you by a mech who's been fighting a civil war for the past few.... How long have you lot been fighting Optimus?"

"Roughly? Six million human years."

"Fucking hell, alright, so you got your arse handed to you, and your boss Maria proceeded to shoot, who we assume is Starscream, in the optic, and lived?!!"
"Yeah you should have seen her, the devil probably would of shat himself."

"Snk... okay, pfft... sorry sorry... so Starscream, got shot in the optic, and then bolted with his tail between his legs?"

"Yeah, was more focused on Annie at that point though."

"Right right, and she's currently in intensive care in Jasper Nevada Municipal hospital recovering from burns on a good chunk of her body?"

"That is correct."

"Did we miss anything?"

"No ma'am's."

"Good, how would you feel if we had her transferred to Monaco so you can be there with her for the recovery?"

"I'd want to hug you and thank you and probably spend the rest of my existence in debt to you."

"Heh let's not get too carried away on that."

40 missed calls, 167 unread text messages, and a degree of worry and concern boiling up from behind his phones screen, had Prowl figuring he was in the metaphorical dog house.

Biting the bullet, he hit call on his phone, which had been left in his passenger seat compartment.

It rung once before the call went through. "An-

"WHAT THE SWEET FUCK HAPPENED?!

"Huh…?
"DON'T YOU 'HUH' ME! I'VE BEEN WORRIED SICK ABOUT YOU... oh my gosh Raf I'm so sorry honey I didn't mean to wake you, Prowl finally remembered he had a phone."

"It's okay Annie, I know you've been worried."

"Oh I am beyond worried, I told you he gets turned around at the stop lights even after living in Jasper for thirty god damn years! He's almost as bad at directions as Bella!"

"Annie…"

"Oh right... are you okay Prowl? Did you find them?"

"Yeah... wait... Molly didn't tell you? She was right there?"

"I am going to strangle that woman next I see her... of course that's why you haven't been picking up... are you okay? Did you get your answers?"

"Some of them, others they're not sure about either, like how I got here, though apparently their leader has some ideas... Annie, you know I don't like saying private things over the phone..."

"Of course sweetie, take all the time you need, Maria's been able to get some open ended contracts going here in Jasper so the towns alright..."
"That's good to hear... Annie... an offer has been made, to have you to transfer to the hospital in Monaco, they'll pay for the whole thing, so I can still be with you while you recover, and get to know them and myself more... would... would you be okay with that?"

"I distinctly remember our original plan being that I'd already be with you in Monaco, I'll ask June if a transfer like that is possible... and would the Hospital in Monaco even allow that?"

"From what I've gathered, they have certain sway with the board that runs the Hospital. So yes."

"Alright... I'll check on my end next time June comes to change my bandages... woman still hasn't taken a long weekend off... I'm going to have to turn the nagging up..."

"Ha! Alright... I guess I'll be seeing you soon... they all want to meet you too."

"Oh god Prowl... how much have you exaggerated?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"I'll see for myself when I get there... alright... I'm going to end the call now, see you soon Prowl, love you."

"Love you too Annie, take care, and focus on getting better alright?"

"Alright, alright, I will."

She cut the call, Prowl sighed, popping the phone back where he normally hid it, and had his 'holoform' step back out of his vehicle to regard Ratchet. "That was the buzzing sound you were hearing while you were examining me."

Ratched nodded a bit numbly and waited for the mech to return to his bipedal mode so he could continue scanning the mech.

So far he hadn't found anything.

Barring the obvious recent damage he'd taken from Starscreams attack that is.

Now Ratchet wasn't an expert in dealing with the Processor, he was a medic, medics were trained in how to patch mechs who'd gotten injured, not mechs who had somehow purged their entire memory bank.

Which was what this was looking like to him.

Purging a memory bank wasn't something a bot just did because they felt like it.

The memory bank contained the translated data of everything they had ever experienced, sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures, it was what the processor used to keep itself and the spark safe by using old memories as reference.

To so completely purge everything one had ever experienced... there was only two things Ratchet could think of that might explain it.

Something had happened to Prowl, in the time between him going missing on Cybertron, and ending up on Earth, that was so universally traumatizing to his processor, so overwhelmingly destructive to his memory banks that they became corrupted, and the processor purged everything to get rid of it.
Much like how the frame tries to purge viruses by transferring them into the frames fuel tanks and expelling all of it in the hopes of getting rid of the invading entity.

Both methods of purging came at high risks, one left the bot without any idea of who or what they were, the other, if the purging was sustained, could drain themselves dry to the point of going into stasis lock, or worse, outright offling because not enough energon was left to go between spark and processor to keep either functioning.

The only other option he could think of, curled his tanks.

He hadn't found any microscopic incision wounds, but those were only visible until the frame repaired them around an orn later…

Nmemosurgery was not something he liked to ever think about, but he also knew Prowl, knew the mech enough to know he wouldn't of purged his memory banks willingly, he'd seen his fair share of horrifying things, and had always been good at handling them by way of just seeing everything from the most logical point of view…

The more Ratchet pondered over it he let his scans file themselves away from analysis later, the more he realised that Prowl very likely was the victim of Nmemosurgy… someone else had purged his memory banks, and left him to wander aimlessly without any identity.

A servo on his shoulder jolted him from his thoughts, he looked back over his shoulder to his mate, who's expression was solemn, Ironhide didn't speak to him though, he looked over him to Prowl. "Derrick's itching to hear more about this mate of yours, something about him being a, and I quote his sisters 'a hopeless romantic'."

Prowl, who'd been looking at Ratchet rather awkwardly as the medic zoned out, perked right up, doorwings bouncing so quickly he winced, though he hardly seemed to notice. "Oh! Thank you for telling me Ironhide!" The mech sent them both a bright smile, and then walked off to where the Peacock Harpy was standing with his siblings.

With the mech now distracted, Ironhide moved to take Ratchet's servo and pulled him out of the main area, down the corridor to the recently finished, 'meeting room'.

The chairs hadn't been installed yet like they had in the main area, so only a long table and a large screen on the opposite wall to the doors were inside, reminiscent of that board room in the Cosmopolitan.

Optimus was already waiting for them inside. "Ratchet… what did you find?" The Prime asked, right to the point of the matter.

It was as he came up to the table with Ironhide that he noticed Optimus wasn't alone, standing somewhat awkwardly on the table were the Harpies holoforms, specifically Ira and Kia, the twins were absent, likely staying as close to their younger sibling as had become their new norm.

Meaning they were likely in on keeping Prowl distracted while they talked.

Ratchet took in a vent to collect my thoughts. "There's no outright physical damage I can see to his helm, barring what he's stated Starscream did to him… so that rules out the data banks being physically damaged enough for them to no longer hold their contents, even if that was the case, Prowl would not be able to store new memory data in them if they had sustained that kind of damage, the frame is not able to repair such a drastic injury, considering it doesn't remember how… That really leaves only two other possible ways his memory banks could have been
emptied…” He took a paused, glancing to the holoforms on the desk, they'd each sat down cross legged at this point.

Ira made a gesture that told him to keep going.

"Either Prowl experienced something so pervasively traumatic, the entire memory bank had to purge itself just so it would stop tormenting him… there have been cases of this in the past, curing such a thing is arguably impossible in this case considering how much of his memory banks have since been overwritten with new memories… Now, I know full well Prowl wasn't the kind of mech to just, react to something in a drastic matter such as a full memory bank purge, so either something beyond our comprehension was enough to tip him over… or… the other option happened… Nmenosurgery."

He could hear the invent that Optimus took at the mere mention.

He hardly blamed the Prime.

Ira's head knocked to the side and she raised her arm to ask a question. "Tha' fuck is Nm…nmem nmenosurgery?"

Attention shifted to the two holoforms, Optimus was the one that spoke.

"It is a procedure… created to… control the masses, by having a Nmenosurgeon go into a Cybertronians helm, and alter the processor however they wished, normally to 'take the fight out' of the bot on the table, that those of the higher ranks believed were causing too much trouble…"

Ira shuddered. "Cybertronian lobotomy, gotcha… Don' go mentionin' this tah tha twins alrigh'?"

Ratchet frowned. "And why would that be?"

Kia and Ira regarded him with a haunted look.

"Cause when they were little, they were on the receivin' end of ah botched labotomy… that's what the scar above Wren's eye is… that's where they went in."

Kia nodded and added. "That botched lobotomy cost Wren."

They exchanged an alarmed look, and Ratchet asked another question for clarity. "You mean, they, when they were the equivalent of a youngling, someone ordered a human surgeon to…" Both holoforms were nodding before he finished, allowing him to trail off.

Ironhide growled and rolled his shoulders, his leviathan cannons purring as they charged up. "Sure would like to have a few words with that fragger."

Ira let off a morose chuckle. "Good luck with that, tha twins took um all ou' years ago."

Kia nodded in agreement. "It's what they do best after all."

Optimus leant down to be more on their level. "And what precisely do you mean by that Kia?"

Kia shrugged. "Just know they don't really let people who are a danger live very long after they became that danger… Didn't something happen to the operating staff of that botched procedure Ira?"

"Yeah, somethin' did, couldn' find anything past the odd coroners report though, sure won' be findin' mention of i' in ah differen' reality… But… we all saw wha' they were li'e after tha' relic
fucked with their head…”

They all fell into a somber silence at that, Optimus breaking the silence to adjourn the makeshift meeting, there was much to ponder over, with few to no possible answers in reach.

Making a personal decision, Optimus went to leave, he needed a while to just process this, Lena would probably be at her residence at this time of day he theorised.

Besides, he could already tell Ironhide and Ratchet were planning to head off to somewhere secluded to 'make up for lost time'. He could tell just from the brush of their EM fields.

A tap on his hip drew his attention to Prowl, who'd walked up to him at somepoint. "Um… permission to go pick up Molly? We did kinda leave her at the hotel and she doesn't know you brought me here."

Ah, that was a bit of an issue, well, he could work with this. "As it so happens, I was planning to take a drive to go speak with a friend, we can leave together if you wish… you will be able to find your way to the hotel and back… correct?"

Prowl nodded for half a second, paused, then rubbed the back of his helm. "Ur… no… I'm not very good with directions…"

"Ah can' help yah there." Ira piped up from where she'd wound up between their pedes, causing both to jump.

Kia piped up from near the elevator up to the manor. "Don't let her get ahold of your steering wheel! She's a maniac behind the wheel!"

"AI! FUCK YOU TOO!" Ira hollered back.

Prowl laughed at that, easily scooping Ira up into his palm. "A navigator would be appreciated, thank you Miss Halloran."

"Pfft, Miss Halloran was ma… ma mums name, just call me Ira. Go' i?"

Prowl nodded, and transformed around the other holoform, the ease in which she ended up in the passenger seat was obviously well practiced.

Optimus took that as his own cue, walking over to the lift back up to the manors garage, transforming into his altmode on the platform as Prowl rolled up to park next to them.

He spied Ira already speaking with Prowl as she fiddled with his radio.

This was going to be an interesting drive, he could feel it now.

Somewhere out in the cosmos

Soundwave couldn't recharge.

Long distance travel always caused Cybertronians not built for it to lose track of time, recharge cycles going into flux were hardly unusual… he thanked whatever being was out there that he'd found his littles, if he'd done this journey alone, he likely already would of gone a bit stir crazy.

But this was different, he's closed his bonds as much as he was willing to with his recharging creations, he didn't want to trouble them with the thoughts that were so heavily plaguing him.
He still hadn't told him about what he'd seen on that other Earth, sure he'd let them see the Hostel, Jack and Miko in particular... but the rest? He feared their reactions if he let them see what he had.

But if he didn't... it would weigh on his spark in all of it's quiet whispering state until that distant time when his spark finally gave out.

And of course he'd end up not being careful one cycle and their direct link to him will make it all too easy for them to see exactly what he's been keeping from them, and what has been haunting him...

Rumble had asked him recently what the humans had given him for a designation, curious to see what the 'stupid organics would think was a worthy designation for you' and he'd very nearly done another memory share before stopping himself and just telling Rumble instead.

The memory was tied to something he wasn't sure if he wanted them to know the truth about...

They'd noticed of course, they'd become used to him sharing memories of his time separated from them, they definitely noticed him avoiding it that time.

Ravage had sent him a look telling him he knew something was up.

It was only a matter of time.

That was what was keeping him awake, that looming dread...

It had become a part of him now... he was so used to it, it normally didn't affect his recharge, but this was different.

It was the dread that the truth would come out...

He untangled himself from his littles, carefully setting them back down in a pile so they could continue to share their frame heat, they were all in deep recharge now, they wouldn't wake for a long time yet.

He eased himself into the captains chair of the little ship, staring out at the space for a moment before his frame curled into itself, his servos clutched the sides of his helm, and he let the violent shaking he'd been repressing finally take over his frame, causing his armour and the chair to rattle.

He'd sealed the door, it was soundproof, they wouldn't wake to him just... letting the dread have it's time to consume him...

When it was done, he'd be able to recharge...

That was when he felt the ghostly touch on his shoulder.

Before he could stop himself, he was falling back into the memory.

An apartment... somewhere... a safe house?

He was shaking, eyes blown wide, pupils dilated, the apartment was a blurred mess as his lungs struggled to pull in enough air, how long had he forgotten to breathe? How long had he gone without that precious air?

A bad dream... a bad dream... it was all a bad dream...

No... a nightmare... his Frenzy... his son... hacked to pieces... his decapitated helm jerking around
on the gravel floor, only for the ‘hero’ to punt his son in his downed form, he heard the scream as he vanished off screen, the focus going right back to the human and his love interest.

Soft hands, smaller than his organic and metal ones, carefully smoothed over his shoulders, gently coaxing him to roll over, he was limp to her wishes, and soon enough his face was pressed into her collar bone, one of those soft hands carefully carding between his sweat soaked hair, the other plotting a circular path around the small of his back.

She enveloped him in her arms, she was taller than him, her long legs wound between his own.

Bare skin met bare skin, no barriers… they’d been in the throes of passion only a few hours earlier… but now that time of adrenalin fueled bliss couldn't seem any more lost to time.

She was there, that was what mattered.

His own hands, one made of flesh, one of metal, clutched at her, arms wrapped around behind her to cling onto her shoulder blades as he shook.

Her hand kept running through his hair.

She was singing, he'd only just calmed down enough to hear it, he let the soft melody wash over him, chasing the terror from him, allowing himself to focus on just how soft she could make her normally loud, vicarious voice…

He focused on the feel of her, how her creamy freckled skin gave under his grip slightly, well toned by muscle she'd worked hard to obtain…

She smelled of smoke… she had forged her life around the fires of rebellion… of fury and anguish, the smell now flowed off her, but he could also pick out her own unique smell, just as alien as the world he’d found himself carving out a new home for himself on.

At first out of necessity to stay alive… now… to thrive… to make the most of this new start… and the perilously short time he had left.

His lovers voice was so soft… he didn't understand a word of it… he was still new to her native language, so drastically different from the Japanese he'd woken up knowing fluently, that she used whenever she needed him to understand something.

Humans were fascinating, they could produce seemingly infinite different types of sound…

His love was testament to that… she knew so many languages… but it was only in her native that she knew how to speak softly, he didn't mind that, he was still learning, he had all the time in the world to learn it with her help…

"Teño, te ten Souma." She coed.

He let out an almost pitiful rasp of breath, clinging even tighter to her as she pet his head and rubbed the tension from his back.

"Quérote moito"

He huffed into her collar bone, he knew that one. "Querote moito." He mumbled back, his pronunciation still off… his words still… unstable… he’d broken his vow of silence months ago now, when he first let all his building emotions out for her to hear, when they were alone, under the stars, in a dark field they'd stumbled to in their haste to flee the authorities that had cracked
down on the protest they'd helped to organise.

He still wasn't anywhere near as vocal as her, he was her shadow in a way, quiet but ever present as she stood tall and proud, that snarling grin on her features as she'd toss the brick she was wielding.

His head rose and fell with her quiet laughter.

He'd get it right eventually, and when he did, he'd pull out that little box with the ruby inlaid ring, and he'd ask her to marry him…

The closest to a Sparkmate humans could get…

A dark thought twisted around his heart, even as the rest of him unwound at her soft touches.

He fought it back…

Shrike told him in that final message that she didn't want him to go it alone… she'd known him for so long… she told him, in that way that left no room for argument, that he was allowed to grieve, but not forever… the chance of love was still out there… he'd find it again…

He wished he could thank her for stating it as fact… he wouldn't have believed it otherwise… he would have just kept on grieving, he still did, he mourned Shrike… he always would…

But now… now he had found love again… just like Shrike had said.

One that liked to play with his short hair…

One who's eyes he'd never grow tired of getting lost in…

One who held him through his tremors and night terrors…

One who stood like a fiery beacon of rebellion, not the kind he'd known on Cybertron, but a different kind he'd fallen in love with, and became a part of without hesitation.

She spoke so softly when it was just the two of them… the bravado she showed the outside world tempered into softness in their shared presence…

She was lifting his head by the chin, two fingers cupped under it and coaxing it up.

He lost himself in the warmth of her eyes, as she leaned down and pressed her naked lips to his.

He came back to himself in the captain's chair, lubricant had started flowing from his visor hidden optics at some point… he rubbed at the trails to try and get rid of the evidence.

The ghostly touches were gone… They would come back again… they'd haunt him for a long time to come, he'd accepted that… he relished in it actually…

Knowing that at least a bit of her was still there with him on this journey…

Into the known unknown.

Welp that's the chapter, hope you all enjoyed! Until next time!
Moon

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