If Only You Knew

by MetallicGirl, transformersnewfan

Summary

When Skywarp becomes pregnant, a mysterious ghost from his family’s past begins to stalk him with intent to kill. Can the other Decepticons banish this otherworldly being in time to save Skywarp and his sparkling?

Collaboration with LadyClassical, whose work can be found here:
https://www.fanfiction.net/u/1006777/LadyClassical
https://archiveofourown.org/users/MetallicGirl/pseuds/MetallicGirl
https://www.deviantart.com/ladyclassical

Notes

Credits: Many references to the music written by Christopher Wallace; Edward Allen Poe, for his poem, The Bells; Gravechaser is inspired by Spawn by Todd McFarlene. All Transformers belong to Hasbro.
Prologue: By LadyClassical

Years ago she broke my spark
She left me here, forever dark
Now I’m trapped down
Underneath the ground
My hands may be tied
But by my memories I’m bound

Silence, quiet, walls of lead
Can’t calm the voices in my head
I don’t remember warmth or sunlight
It’s all the same, dark day and cold night
For years I never saw the skies
For I was a bad mech, in their eyes

I might have taken worthless lives
But they took everything from me
I have nothing left, my spark still cries
What you want, I cannot be

When they locked me up they pierced my spark
Turning it forever dark
When he shot me, he didn’t know
That it was over, long ago
My child, my sweetspark, they took it all
I see them once as down I fall

With no goodbye I finally die
Now I have my revenge.
“Come on, Darkwing, don’t be scared!” Skywarp reassured the frightened sparkling in his arms, “Don’t ya wanna learn to fly?”

Skywarp and Thundercracker were sparkling-sitting their triplet nephews again. This time, Starscream and Megatron were on Cybertron for a meeting with Shockwave, something about a new atrium to be built in Helix or something or other. Skywarp hadn’t paid attention.

As usual, Soundwave was left in charge of the Base, sitting at his usual place in front of the Computer Consul in the Control Room. The Coneheads were out on patrol. Laserbeak was at his perpetual spy mission at the Ark. Rumble and Frenzy were running around causing havoc.

So, while Thundercracker chose to read a sparkling datapad to two of the triplets, Dawning, and Darkmount, Skywarp chose to take the smallest of the trio out on the Tarmac for a flying lesson.

Poor little Darkwing was trembling in fear. He never really liked it when his Creators would leave on business trips and being separated from his two brothers wasn’t helping. He clung to Skywarp’s canopy, keening.

“Ah come on,” the black and purple Seeker told the little one, “It’ll be fun! I promise!”
"Ah, come on," the black and purple Seeker told the little one. "It'll be fun! I promise!"

Darkwing shook his head and made a little whimpering noise, eyes scrunched up in fear.

"Mommy…?" said the sparkling quietly. Skywarp felt a little sad looking at the tears in his nephew’s big crimson eyes, but he wasn’t willing to give up just yet. Prying Darkwing’s fingers off his cockpit, Skywarp set the little Seekerling down onto the grass.

“Maybe you need to see how it’s done, first,” Skywarp said proudly, and took off, transforming into jet mode as he did so.

Skywarp showed the little one everything he knew how to do—curliques in the sky, barrel rolls (those were his favorites), even using his jet fumes to form words or pictures in the sky, something Starscream described as “disgusting.” Skywarp finished his performance with a perfectly-executed nose dive onto the ground. By the time he got back to Darkwing’s place in the grass, the sparkling’s eyes were wide. Skywarp knew Darkwing thought it was funny when he teleported, so he teleported away from Darkwing, and then back to him. Darkwing giggled.

“C’mon! Do you wanna fly? Or do you wanna fly?” Skywarp said overly excitedly, picking the sparkling up and tickling him. Darkwing screeched with laughter and twitched his wings, so Skywarp let him go. Darkwing transformed to his own jet mode and began trying to imitate some of Skywarp’s tricks from earlier. Skywarp transformed and flew along beside him.

They spent the day flying, and Skywarp managed to teach Darkwing to perfect a barrel roll. Skywarp would make pictures in the sky of Darkwing’s favorite things, and sometimes he would challenge his nephew to a race. They played in the sky until finally, the evening shadows began to fall.

“See? I knew you would like it,” Skywarp told Darkwing, who was tired but happy as he sunk down into his uncle’s arms. “Now let’s go show everybody else what you learned to do!”

Skywarp carried Darkwing under his arm (something Starscream and Thundercracker had always warned him not to do, but he always forgot) and they came back into the living room, where Thundercracker had been reading to the other two sparklings. Skywarp wasn’t prepared for what he saw—Starscream was standing there, the other two Seekerlings in his arms, and he did not look happy.
Chapter 3: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

This is where "Thundercracker's Backstory" comes into play. If you haven't checked it out already, you need to before reading on!

Chapter 3:

By Transformersnewfan

“WHERE THE SLAG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH MY SON?!” Starscream shrieked as his younger brother walked in. The way Warp was holding the sparkling only served to make him angrier.

Little Darkwing again became frightened, more so than he was before the flying lesson.

Skywarp was a bit taken aback by the red and white Seeker’s tone, “Um, sorry…We kinda lost track of time.”

For his part, Thundercracker tried to stay neutral in this matter. He’d been doing his best to keep Starscream calm for the past hour, reminding him that Skywarp would never let anything happen to one of their beloved nephews, but at the same time, he understood that the triplets were ultimately not his or Skywarp’s, and were Starscream’s sparklings and his responsibility.

Starscream was absolutely furious, “I did NOT give you permission to take my son off the Base, Skywarp!” He narrowed his optics, “And don’t hold him like that!”

“Sorry, I forget you don’t like that.” He nervously adjusted the Seekerling in his arms, before saying sadly, “I’m sorry, Starscream, I didn’t think you’d be mad. I just wanted to show him how to fly.”

Starscream: “WHAT????”

Skywarp: “I was showing Darkwing how to fly.”

The red and white Seeker flew into a screaming fit, “You had NO BUSINESS teaching my sparkling how to fly! I’M their Creator and I and their Sire alone will decide how they learn to fly! You have NO RIGHT to do that! Do you hear me???”

The youngest Seeker was stunned, coolant tears threatened to burst from his optics, “S-Starscream, I didn’t teach him anything bad….” The little sparkling became upset and started keening. He secretly decided it was all his fault his mommy and uncle were fighting; he vowed never to fly again.

“That’s not my point!” the red and white Seeker insisted, “You had no business teaching MY son anything! You’re not his Creator!”

Finally, Thundercracker couldn’t stay silent any longer, “Look Starscream, you’re the one that leaves the kids with us to follow Megatron back and forth from Cybertron all the time. You wouldn’t do
that if you didn’t trust us.”

Starscream turned his ire towards their oldest brother now, “He had NO BUSINESS taking MY son outside to fly!”

Thundercracker: “Well, we ARE the uncles of those sparklings, y’know!” he was angry now, “It’s not like we’re the slagging Autobots here!”

The two other little sparklings were getting very nervous and whimpering in their mother’s arms now.

Starscream adjusted his little ones in his arms, “Look, Thundercracker, it's late, I’m tired, I’m leaving!” He was decidedly more respectful to his older brother.

Skywarp still tried, “I was only t-trying to teach him to fly…They’re already eight months, Screamer…”

“Listen to me, you little fool,” Starscream seethed with rage and got right in the younger’s faceplates, “NEVER, EVER teach MY sparklings anything! DO YOU HEAR ME?!”

TC approached now too, “Well if you’re so worried about the sparklings learning ANYTHING from us, maybe you shouldn’t leave them with us ANYMORE?! HOW’S THAT?!”

“FINE AT ME!!!” the red and white Jet abruptly snatched the Seekerling out of Skywarp’s arms stormed off with all three triplets to his quarters he shared with his Bondmate, the former Gladiator and currently Leader of the Decepticons, Megatron.

Skywarp stood there, looking down at the floor, “I didn’t…” he was ready to cry, but still in too much of a shock to let the tears fall just yet.

Two days later…

Thundercracker laid on his berth, staring at the ceiling. He always worried when his baby brother disappeared for days on end. After the blow-up with Starscream, Skywarp teleported out and hadn’t returned since. He sighed, Warp was most likely in New York, visiting Christopher’s children, and he was debating flying up there and bringing the younger Seeker back home. On the other hand, the young human teenagers had never screamed in Skywarp’s faceplates to never teach them anything. Mostly because, TC knew, they never saw his true form.

A bright purple glow suddenly appeared in their berthroom, and the blue Seeker was relieved, “Glad you’re back. I missed ya.”

Skywarp materialized, still looking as sad as the day he’d left, flopping down on his berth front first.

Thundercracker: “Where you in New York?”

Skywarp just nodded.

Thundercracker: “How are the kids?”

“Um,” Skywarp was sad yet, not looking up, “Ti-Ti’s done with her finals. I didn’t…y’know, wanna leave til she finished all her essays and stuff. Not that I’m smart or anything to help her.” There was a sob in his vocalizer, “S-She likes to talk things out and stuff, and I just listen.”

“That’s nice,” TC smiled, getting up to come over, showing interest in his little brother’s friends,
“I’m sure you helped by being there.”

Skywarp was still depressed, “I guess…”

Thundercracker sat on the edge of the berth, by the other’s hip, and started stroking the younger Seeker’s wings, trying to comfort him. He knew they were avoiding the subject of Starscream, and they would have to talk about it sometime, “You ever gotten around to telling her who you really are?”

“No…” the darker Seeker just sighed.

TC: “Maybe she knows…”

Skywarp turned to look up at him, “She doesn’t know! I never let her see me!”

“Maybe she remembers you. She was three and a half when he died after all.” Thundercracker shrugged, thinking out loud, “I remember a lot from when I was that age.”

“No,” Skywarp insisted, “She tells her mom that I’m an angel sent down from heaven by her daddy to look after her. I just let her think she’s right is all.” He started to cry again, “She’s eighteen… Christopher’s gone 15 years…”

Thundercracker tried rubbing his younger brother’s back, “I know, I’m so sorry. Doesn’t seem like that long.”

Skywarp was still crying, “H-His son looks just like him…”

Christopher was an African-American human that befriended Skywarp in 1985 when the young man was just twelve years old, and the Decepticons were in New York, back when Megatron attempted to commandeer the Empire State Building. The unlikely pair stayed friends for the rest of the human’s life, throughout his rise from the mean streets to a successful career in music. During that time, Christopher had two children, a daughter and a son, whom he always shared with Skywarp. Before his death in a drive-by shooting, Christopher apparently had a premonition of his own murder and asked Skywarp to always watch over his young toddlers if anything were to happen to him.

The black and purple Seeker had been devastated by his friend’s death and had never fully gotten over it. The son was an infant at the time, far too young to understand, but his daughter was nearly four years old, and would cry herself to sleeping sobbing, “I want my Daddy!!”

It broke the Seeker’s already hurting spark, forcing himself out of his web of grief and spoke to the girl, telling her that her daddy was in heaven now. She could only see his winged shadow in the alley outside her bedroom window at the time. Later, she would tell everyone that her daddy had sent an angel to watch over her, although most of the adults dismissed this as an imaginary friend.

“It’s nice that you’ve kept your promise to him…” TC noted, “I’m sure he appreciates it, wherever he is now.”

“Yeah, he never told me that they were HIS kids and to stay away!” Skywarp spat bitterly, “At least someone l-loved me o-once…” he was hurt and crying again, both for the loss of his friend and over their brother’s hurtful words.

“Well, you know I love you,” Thundercracker said softly, “If it means anything, I haven’t spoken to Starscream since. Megatron asked me if I’d take the kids tomorrow, but I turned him down, I told him I was busy.” He sighed once again, “I’m not gonna watch the kids if Scream’r’s so afraid they’ll learn something from his ‘evil’ uncles!”
“I-I’m never gonna try to help with his squalling brats ever again!” Skywarp sobbed, “H-He never used to yell at me like this, TC! E-Ever since h-he…he…”

“Yeah, I know,” the blue Seeker admitted, “ever since he Bonded with Megatron.” He had seen the change too, “Sometimes I think when they merged sparks, some of Megatron’s gruffness crossed over into his spark or something.” He tried to smile, “Eh, look at the bright side, kiddo. We don’t haveta be stuck sparkling-sitting every day!”

The younger Seeker didn’t say anything. He suddenly seemed to be very tired from his flight from the East Coast. Thundercracker saw this, so he stood and covered his little brother with a blanket, “Get some rest, Warp…” he told him softly before going back to his own berth.

An hour later…
Thundercracker was reading his datapad again when Skywarp suddenly was online again and stated out of the blue, “I want a sparkling.”

Thundercracker: “HUH?”

“I want my own sparkling!” Skywarp was very serious, “I’m tired of Starscream dumping his sparklings on us and snatching them away! I’m tired of being told how I hold them is wrong! I’m tired of being told not to take them off the Base or teach them anything, TC! I want my own sparkling!”

“Uh,” Thundercracker was stunned by this, “Skywarp…you know how much trouble a sparkling is?!?”

Skywarp: “I want a femme sparkling. Why not? He’s got three mechlings, so I want a femme!”

TC: “Warp…”

Skywarp: “I wanna name her Crystal, after Christopher.”

TC: “You don’t have a mate…”

The darker Seeker’s vocals were scared to ask, more scared of the answer, “Will you help me raise my sparkling, TC? PLEASE?? I know y-you can do anything…”

Thundercracker bit his lip components, “I…I…”

Skywarp was suddenly in love with the idea, “You can help me raise her! I’ll never tell you not to take her out or not to teach her anything! PLEASE TC???”

The blue Seeker was suddenly met with some bad memory files of his sparklinghood, and his own birth-Creator, “Skywarp, you know I never wanted any sparklings.”

“Why not?!” the younger flyer moped, “Just because your real dad kidnapped ya and stuff?”

“Well, yeah!” TC rolled his optics, “That kinda thing has a tendency to affect a Seeker, y’know?!”

Thundercracker’s own traumatic experiences had made him reluctant in adulthood to get seriously involved with any potential mate, preferring instead to just look out for his two younger brothers. Skywarp was four years younger than him and from his mother’s second and current marriage; Starscream was two years younger than him and two years older than Warp. They’d met Star at the Cybertron War Academy and became a Trine there. The three of them had never treated each other as anything lesser than full brothers. It was only after Starscream Bonded with their Leader that the
two younger Seekers seemed to butt helms.

“But you liked Dad and stuff,” Skywarp smiled, referring to his own Sire, “So it’s not like you’re gonna turn into that nutjob that took ya…”

“This isn’t about me!” TC got defense, “You’re TOO YOUNG to have a sparkling by yourself! He’s got a big Gladiator to help him!”

“I-I can do it if you’d help me raise her,” Skywarp begged, “PLEASE, I really, really want this! More than anything I’ve ever wanted in my whole life!!” he was keening and sobbing now, the sounds of this breaking his older brother’s reserve.

Thundercracker sighed, “You just like Ti-Ti and that’s why you want a femme sparkling of your own. But we don’t know anything about raising sparklings.”

“Christopher didn’t plan on having Ti-Ti, and h-he was a good Creator,” the black and purple Seeker insisted, “His girlfriend just told him she was carrying one day, and he said okay, that he’d figure out how to support them. H-He told me this himself! Thundercracker, if I came home and told you I was carrying, wouldn’t you help me?”

A thought suddenly occurred to the blue Seeker, “Are you carrying already?” looking over the other’s chassis suddenly, suspiciously.

“No, I’m…not,” Skywarp insisted, “but how is this any different. Wouldn’t you help me?”

“Of course, I would,” the other admitted. After a pause, he continued, “You know I’d do anything for you.”

The darker Seeker got up, “So, I wanna have my own sparkling and I’m asking you to help me!”

“Gimme a minute…” Thundercracker turned away, memory files suddenly flooding his processor of his violent bio-Creator, vowing to kill the sparkling their Mother was carrying. And…that time he’d stuck her and knocked her to the ground. She had almost lost Skywarp that day. Thundercracker couldn’t picture his life without his cheery sibling, who always seemed to find the good in others. Someone who loved his brothers so much; someone who told a young man in New York to follow his dreams of becoming a musician…

Skywarp: “TC?”

He was pulled out of his thoughts by his little brother’s vocals, “Huh?”

Skywarp: “Will you help me? I can get a donor spark. That way the Sire can’t come and take her away from us the way your dad did that time.”

Thundercracker’s processor was reeling now, “You really want a sparkling?”

Skywarp: “YES!!! PLEASE YES!!”

He couldn’t believe he was saying this, “I-If you really want a sparkling…then, I’ll support your decision.” He was suddenly glomped by his baby brother, sobbing for joy and keening, “THANK YOU! THANK YOU, TC!!! I’ll take care of her, honest! I promise! We won’t bug you and stuff! And you can teach her to fly or shoot the clouds or anything you want!!! I promise!!!”

Thundercracker was still hesitant but wrapped his arms around his brother and stroked his wings, “I’ll help you. I promise.”
“Well…here it is,” Skywarp said nervously, looking up from the map he held in his hands. “The Penis Fountain.”

Skywarp, who of course wanted a Seekerling, had teleported all the way from Earth to Vosnia, the native planet of the Seeker species, to obtain a donor. The donor bank was kind of hard to miss, being marked by a fountain that looked, eerily, like a certain male organ, with coolant spewing out of the tip. Very foamy, white coolant that resembled something else…Yes, this had to be the place.

“I was shocked, you know,” he would say later.

“Welcome to Speedwing Donor Bank!” chirped a happy femme as soon as Skywarp stepped in the door. “Name, please?”

Skywarp told her his name and waved.

“Nice to meet you, Skywarp,” said the femme, scribbling something on a little clipboard. “Are you here to make a donation?”

“No, um, actually, I-I’m looking for one,” said Skywarp shakily, a little put off. “I-I want to get pregnant.”

“Really? That’s great!” the femme cooed. “Would you like some Energon? You must be tired! Here, have a seat! Energon on the rocks coming up!”

Skywarp was shocked by her hospitality but sat down in the waiting room with the other Seekers there, all waiting to be parents. They were mostly femmes, but some mechs too. Skywarp reached out for the 1957 issue of Seeker Stock Exchange magazine provided for his reading enjoyment, but unless you liked looking at black-and-white photos of engorged mechs smoking and wearing business suits (not to mention outdated, boring charts and facts), it wasn’t that enthralling.

I wonder what all those numbers mean, Skywarp thought as he studied the information in the magazine. Skywarp had failed his required Economics class in Seeker School, as well as a lot of other classes. In fact, if it weren’t for his brothers’ help (Thundercracker was good at school in general, and Starscream was unmatched in science and math), Skywarp probably would’ve flunked out of Seeker School. It wasn’t that he didn’t care, not truly; he did care, but school was just super hard!

“The gross domestic product of Vosnia this year was 800 million credits,” Skywarp read. “This is partly due to the rising prices of Energon lately, as well as new openings in the job market that have caused the economy to boom…”

It was just like school all over again! Skywarp was relieved when they finally called his name.

The same accommodating femme from earlier escorted him into another room, where she handed him a big packet full of papers. Skywarp started to get nervous because that was what happened
whenever he had a run-in with large amounts of text, but then he found out there were pictures, so it was okay (sort of).

“These are pictures of Seeker mechs who have been donors here,” she explained. “All you have to do is pick one you like, read over his medical history, and then head on over to our gynecology department for the impregnation.”

“O-Okay,” Skywarp mumbled, shuffling through the pictures of mechs and their assorted medical histories.

“Don’t worry,” the femme reassured him. “None of the donors have a history of substance abuse or disease.”

Skywarp nodded and looked over the pictures of mechs and their backgrounds. One of them was wearing a suit, and he had glasses. The attached file told Skywarp that he was a lawyer with a degree from Crystal City College. Skywarp wasn’t so sure if he wanted a lawyer to father his sparkling...he didn’t like lawyers. Another mech was huge and handsome, but he was a shuttle, and Skywarp didn’t particularly want to carry and give birth to something that big! Finally, Skywarp settled on a mech who was an actor, and good-looking, although not too big. Even though he hadn’t been to college, he’d graduated Seeker School, and that was enough for Skywarp.

“I’ve selected the one I want,” Skywarp called through the door, and the femme came in again instantly. Skywarp wondered if she had been waiting outside the door for him.

“Excellent!” she cried. “Oh, you selected him! So many carriers do, y’know! I’m sure he has at least 500 children by now!”

“Um…okay?” Skywarp wasn’t sure if this was good news or not. “Now what?”

“Just come visit Dr. Candy in the gynecology room, and you’ll have a little sparkling inside you in no time!” Despite his struggles, the femme grabbed Skywarp’s wrist with a surprising amount of force and pulled him into a room that resembled a med bay. Skywarp felt a little embarrassed staring at all the various pictures of anatomy that covered the walls, but he walked in anyway—well, he was shoved in, more like, by a femme who was apparently determined to increase the population of Vosnia as much as possible.

The ob-gyn was a red-and-white striped femme Seeker with a friendly smile and a lab coat. She waved at Skywarp.

“Hello there,” she said. “My name’s Dr. Candy. I’m the one who will perform your procedure today.”

“I-I guess,” Skywarp mumbled, blushing.

“May I see the photo of your chosen donor?” Dr. Candy asked.

“Here he is.” Skywarp handed out the photo and medical records, still not looking at her. Goodness, he hadn’t anticipated how awkward this was going to be!

“Don’t be so nervous,” Dr. Candy told him, smiling again. “This is painless and only takes about ten minutes!”

“But what should I do?” Skywarp asked.

“Lay back on the berth,” she told him, pointing, so Skywarp lay down on the medical beach chair
provided for his “comfort.” She started humming quietly and looked over the donor’s profile, then pulled out his donation. Skywarp felt kind of weird about this already, but, he reminded himself, this mech did something good—he donated some of his CNA so that someday, someone somewhere would get a sparkling, even if they couldn’t have one on their own.

Or, he was just broke and desperate for a quick buck. Whichever.

It was a little uncomfortable—actually, extremely uncomfortable—for Skywarp to sit there with his lower armor off and his legs spread as the procedure was being performed, but he tried to think of other things. Unfortunately, the only thing that came to mind was the 1957 edition of Seeker Stock Exchange, complete with black-and-white Seeker mechs wearing suits and discussing important business things that Skywarp could never even hope to comprehend in an enormous conference room clouded with smoke from everybody’s cigars.

(Smoking mech number 1: We have to figure out what the gross domestic product for Vosnia is, and then write about it in our magazine.

Smoking mech number 2: Or we could just make it up. How much are 800 million credits?

Smoking mech number 3: Enough.

Smoking mech number 1: By the way, Norm, your cigar looks very handsome and business-y.

Smoking mech number 3: Thanks! Yours too!)

Skywarp shivered as he SWORE he felt the mystery actor mech’s CNA get infused into…wherever it went when it became a sparkling. Skywarp spent most of his time in Health class sleeping, so he wasn’t quite sure. But then he reminded himself that he was doing this so that he could have a sparkling, and soon it would be his, and they would be a happy family, just him and his daughter or son.

These thoughts were enough to entertain him until the procedure was FINALLY over, when Dr. Candy happily told him, “Well, we’re done! You can put your armor back on.”

“Oh! Great!” Skywarp said, jumping up. “That didn't take any time at all!”

“All right, now listen,” Dr. Candy told him, smiling...again. She had a big smile, “You can take a pregnancy test in two weeks to see if this worked. If not, you can always come back!”

“Um…thank you, Dr. Candy,” said Skywarp, putting on his armor and then shaking her hand. “I hope it worked.”

“Me too!” she replied. “And thank you for bringing a new Seekerling into the world! I’m sure he or she will love you for it.”

“I’ll love my sparkling for the rest of my life,” were Skywarp’s last words as he left the clinic.

With all the excitement, the black and purple Seeker didn’t notice a shadow that emerged from the ground as he left the clinic…

“TC?” Skywarp said awkwardly, stepping into the Seekers’ room. By pure coincidence, Thundercracker was actually reading the current version of Seeker Stock Exchange, since he actually was interested in those things, while Skywarp’s average reading material had about the same amount of intellectual content as the TV Guide. (Of course, Seeker Stock Exchange now involved less smoke and more color photos, but the same amount of boring charts and facts.)
“Yes?” Thundercracker didn’t look up from his magazine.

“I…I got my operation done today,” Skywarp told him nervously. “The ob-gyn told me I could take a pregnancy test in two weeks, and by then I’ll know if I’m pregnant.”

“Oh, so that’s where you were all day,” said Thundercracker. “Good job, ‘Warp.”

“I’m excited to have a sparkling, but scared at the same time,” Skywarp continued. “That’s weird, isn’t it?”

“Not really,” said Thundercracker.

“What’s a gross domestic product?” Skywarp asked, looking at the magazine.

“It’s the total value of goods produced, and services provided in any planet or city-state in one year,” Thundercracker explained.

“Whuh?” Skywarp found his brother’s explanation confusing…

“Never mind it,” said Thundercracker. “But anyway, now that you’ve had your procedure done, you need to tell someone. We need to find someone who can deliver the sparkling, of course. And surely you know we can tell Starscream, right?”

“I guess,” said Skywarp. “Is he still mad?”

“No.” Thundercracker shrugged. “I guess he’s over it. Besides, I’m sure he’ll be happy to hear you got pregnant. That way you’ll be spending more time with your offspring and less time with his.”

TWO WEEKS LATER…

Skywarp barreled at top speed out of the self-maintenance room and crashed full-on into Thundercracker, who was holding a cube of Energon. They were both knocked onto the floor, with the bright pink liquid spilling everywhere.

“What the slag, ‘Warp!?” Thundercracker yelled as he got up.

“TC, the pregnancy test was positive!” Skywarp held the test up in the air for his brother to see. “Isn’t it great?”

Thundercracker looked surprised. “Oh…yeah! That is great!”

For the past two weeks, Skywarp and Thundercracker were the only ones who knew about Skywarp’s little journey to the donor bank. They didn’t want to tell anyone else yet—after all, if the pregnancy test turned out negative, what was the point? But now they could tell whoever they wanted, although there was only one Seeker they had in mind.

“Starscream! Starscream!” Skywarp hollered, running out of the Seekers’ room and into the living room. Thundercracker rolled his eyes and followed.

“What IS it, Skywarp?!” Starscream demanded. “Use your INSIDE voice!”

Right now, Starscream was trying to get his triplets to go to sleep, so Skywarp tried to use his “inside voice.”

“Right, um, guess what? I’m pregnant,” said Skywarp.
“Huh—say what?!?” Starscream looked up in shock to stare at Thundercracker, who shrugged and nodded.

“I’m going to have a little Seekerling!” Skywarp was beaming now. “I’m going to raise it myself and love it forever and ever!”

“What’s sparkling is it?!”

“It’s a donor,” Skywarp replied. “I got one done on Vosnia. It was a little scary. But I got what I came for, after all!”

“Oh, um…congratulations.” Starscream was still staring. “But, y’know, pregnancy isn’t easy.”

“I know,” said Skywarp. “But I think it will be worth it.”
Chapter 5: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 5:

By Transformersnewfan

“Rough night?” Soundwave asked, almost chuckling, as he poured Megatron some Energon-coffee in the Control Room.

The Decepticon Leader’s optics were tired and flickering as he stared straight ahead, not looking at the various TV monitors. He and Starscream had been up more than half the night with their screaming sparklings, who for some reason acted as if they were tormented by an unseen force.

Megatron sighed, “I never knew raising sparklings would be so difficult, Soundwave. How the pit do you do it alone?”

“Well, you learn as you go, mostly.” Soundwave just shrugged, having raised six sparklings nearly by himself after the death of his Bondmate at the hands of the Autobot Elite Guard, spurring the two mechs into founding what would become the Decepticons, “You must be patient with them. They’re very young.”

Megatron: “Yeah, well, when I was in the Arena we didn’t need to think about patience. Just fight or die. I’m not cut out for this slag.” He drank some Energon-coffee, “By the way Soundwave, where’s that report on the Aerialbots I needed?”

“The Aerialbots,” the other stated to himself, tipping his digits, “Right…”

Megatron smirked, “You didn’t finish the report, didja?”

“No, not when I have so many duties to tend to as it is,” Soundwave groaned as he got up and called his sons on the Comm.-Link, “Rumble, Frenzy, go down to the basement. Retrieve all files on the Aerialbots.” He turned back to Megatron, “I keep telling you, we need to convert our files to a paperless system. Then I could just send them to your datapads.”

“Mmmph,” the Decepticon Leader just grunted, “It was on my to-do list. But then Starscream got pregnant with triplets.”

Said triplets came screeching in, looking for their Sire. They were hungry.

Megatron smiled at them wearily as they crawled all over him, they never gave him a break.

“Perhaps I can help,” Soundwave laughed a bit, “Would you like me to get their breakfast this morning?”

Megatron nodded, “Thank you, Soundwave…Starscream’s having a meeting with his Trine, and I could use a hand.”

The 3ic went to the kitchen and brought the sparklings each a cube of low-grade, sparkling Energon. For reasons known only to the triplets, they were calm around their honorary uncle.

With the newfound quiet, the Decepticon Leader began nodding off right in his chair, his helm slumping forward and back up several times.
“Dada dead?” Dawning asked, seemingly unconcerned.

Megatron was snoring at the table now.

Soundwave: “Megatron…”

“HUH?! WHAT?!” the former Gladiator jumped up, ready to fight, “WHERE IS HE?!”

Soundwave: “Who?”

Megatron: “PRIME! I just saw him lurking around the yard!”

The triplets giggled.

“Megatron, we’re in the Control Room,” Soundwave stated dryly, “It was a dream.”

The Decepticon Leader looked around, and sighed, relieved.

“Megatron, why don’t you go back to bed,” Soundwave offered, “I’ll watch them.”

“T-Thank you,” Megatron nodded tiredly as he got up and walked back to his quarters, “I’ll tell ya, Soundwave, sometimes I don’t know why I ever agreed to this. I honestly hope these are the only sparklings this Base sees for a long time!” It was a half-sparked statement from an exhausted mech, barely thinking as he passed his youngest brother-in-law in the hallway, “Hi Skywarp…”

The youngest Seeker was already nervous when he entered the Control Room, his Leader’s statement only finalized his decision to keep his pregnancy a secret.

“Hi Soundwave,” he tried to maintain his usual cheery disposition.

“Good Morning,” the 3ic stated distractedly as he cleaned up the sparkling Energon that Darkwing had dribbled all over himself, “Just watching the sparklings.”

Darkmount tried to grab a toy away from Dawning, who shrieked in anger.

“Now, now,” Soundwave corrected the little ones, “remember, sharing is caring.”

The sparklings seemed to listen.

Skywarp bit his lip components, resentful of Soundwave having the privilege of teaching the triplets proper behavior when he, their uncle, was banished from teaching them anything!

“I see you’re good with them,” Skywarp spat. “Starscream banished me from teaching them slag.” He was bitter and angry now, but it didn’t matter. He was going to have his own sparkling, and he could ban Starscream from ever seeing her. Yes, that would fix him!

“Well, you know you can speak to Megatron,” Soundwave shrugged, “Although I doubt Starscream meant such a thing.”

“Oh, it doesn’t matter,” Skywarp’s demeanor changed when he remembered why he came to speak to the 3ic in the first place, “I came to ask you a favor…”

Soundwave was looking down at the sparklings, fussing with one of them, and spoke offhandedly, nonchalantly, “About the sparkling you’re carrying?”

Skywarp: “HUH?!” He knows?
“My sensors picked up the foreign CNA in your systems,” Soundwave stated matter-of-factly, “It’s a femme by the way.”

“REALLY?!” the Seeker couldn’t hide his excitement, he had wanted a femme.

Soundwave: “Yes.” He picked up Darkmount to clean up the mess the little guy had made with his breakfast, “Congratulations.”

Skywarp: “I-It's kinda what I wanted to talk to you about. I want you to help me keep it a secret.”

“Keep it a secret?” the 3ic questioned as the Seeker pulled him to a nearby sofa. The triplets following them and chirping the entire time happily.

Soundwave just listened as Skywarp happily explained everything: How he went to the sperm bank, how he planned to raise the sparkling himself with Thundercracker’s help, and how he wanted to keep it a secret from everyone except his brothers and Soundwave. Everyone, including Megatron.

Soundwave leaned sideways on the sofa, trying to process all this, “I just don’t understand why you want to keep this from Megatron. He loves his own sparklings dearly and would gladly welcome an additional sparkling.”

“Because I don’t want ANYONE to know I’m carrying,” the other stubbornly insisted, “I wanna have my sparkling and THEN tell everyone so they can’t stop me or attack me and kill her or take her away from me!”

Soundwave: “The Decepticons adhere to a strict code against violence towards our comrades in arms.”

Skywarp just shrugged, “Then, maybe it’ll be the Autobots or someone else.”

Soundwave: “Well, I agree with keeping the sparkling safe from outside forces, but I fail to understand keeping the information from the Decepticons, especially Megatron.”

Skywarp got nasty, “Are you gonna help me or are you gonna preach from your rulebook to me?! HUH?!?”

“No, I’ll help you,” the 3ic sighed, “But after your sparkling is born. We’re telling the others. Agreed?”

The Seeker smiled and nodded happily.

“Alright, well let’s see,” Soundwave suddenly felt the weight of the Earth on his broad shoulders, “for starters, no traveling through the Space Bridge. And no teleporting.”

“HUH?!” Skywarp got upset now, “Why not?!”

Soundwave: “The effects on unborn are currently unknown.” He stood up and paced, trying to think. Skywarp made a pouting face.

Soundwave: “And no more junk food! Especially if you’re serious about hiding this from everyone.”

Skywarp: “That’s not fair!” he sounded like a bratty youngling.

“Look, I’m trying to think of everything that will help you bring a healthy sparkling to term.” Soundwave folded his arms, and looked stern, “We’ll just do the same as we did for Starscream
when he was carrying the triplets.” He paced more, “This shouldn’t be too hard. Listen, why don’t you go back to your quarters and lay down. I have to arrange everything.”

Skywarp happily jumped up and ran out of the room, “Thanks Soundwave!”

Soundwave: “Hey! Be careful running!” he groaned. This was going to be a long nine months.

An Hour Later:

After putting the triplets down for their nap, Soundwave sat at his Computer Consul, contemplating his next moves. Why the pit does Skywarp want to hide his pregnancy? This was only serving to complicate everything. And why couldn’t he have been a normal, horny Seeker and conceived with one of the Coneheads instead of a strange sperm-bank? Who knows what mutant baby they’ve injected into his systems?

The biggest worry was the Autobots harming Skywarp, either intentionally in order to harm the sparkling, or by accident during a battle. He would have to think of a reason to keep the Seeker safely on the Base. Besides, even if the other Decepticons discovered he was carrying, they wouldn’t harm him. Maybe laugh at him, but nothing more.

And how, Soundwave worried, was he going to convince Megatron to take one of their best flyers off of active duty for nine months to a year? “Ugh…Think, mech. Think…”

“Hey Pop, here’s all your papers!” Rumble announced as he and Frenzy walked in, each carrying an armload of old reports on the Aerialbots.

“Thank you, boys,” he sighed, “I keep telling Megatron we need to go green around here.” Suddenly, the answer came to him, “That’s it!”

Rumble: “Eh?”

Soundwave got up and went to Megatron’s office, “Thanks Rumble, you gave me an idea!”

“Hear that, Frenz?” Rumble smirked at his twin, “he thanked ME!” the other just rolled his optics.

In Megatron’s Office, the Decepticon Leader and his 3ic discussed a massive inner-office project: Go through all their hard copy files, sort them, and then use a scanner to file them into the computers electronically. Afterward, all paper material would be shredded and disposed of properly.

“After which, whenever you or anyone else needs a report, I will be able to electronically send it to your personal datapad,” Soundwave argued, “It’s going to increase our productivity by seventy-seven percent.”

“Well, I suppose it’s better to do this sooner than later.” Megatron nodded, “Alright, I’ll give you my official approval to start the project.”

With the first part of his plan in place, Soundwave had to get Megatron on board with the more unorthodox part of his agenda, “I cannot do this alone…”

Megatron: “Of course not, your sons can help you.”

Soundwave: “Actually, I would like to appoint Skywarp to assist me.”

Megatron flinched, “Why him? He’ll go stir crazy staying in the Control Room all day and night!”

“I’m sure he’ll be up for it,” Soundwave lied now, “I’ll need an adult to help me read through
everything.” He continued, trying to convince the other, “Rumble and Frenzy will never take the project seriously, and I don’t wish to take Ravage or the Condors off their recon missions. And Ratbat is far too young.”

Megatron: “How long is this gonna take?”

Soundwave: “Six months to a year.”

Megatron: “Soundwave, you do realize, Starscream’s gonna freak when you remove Skywarp from his squadron. I’ll be sleeping in the Control Room!”

Soundwave: “If you’d like, Megatron, I think I can pursue Starscream to agree to this new arrangement, that way he won’t blame you.”

“He’ll blame me for approving it though!” Megatron insisted, “He knows I’m the final word around here.”

Soundwave shrugged, “Fine; then I will tell him that I threatened to quit my job if I didn’t get your approval on this project.” He couldn’t believe what was coming out of his mouthplates.

“Y’know, that could work,” Megatron brightened, “Okay! Get to it!”

The sparklings wailed again.

Megatron: “Eh, sorry Soundwave, I gotta go. Good luck with your plan!”

“Affirmative,” the 3ic saluted before leaving.

Back in the Control Room, Soundwave couldn’t believe the house of cards he had gotten himself into: Skywarp had him proposing a project that would take the Seeker out of outside duties, and convinced Megatron to go along with this, only by convincing Megatron that he, Soundwave, would convince Starscream this was all a good idea. And all the while, he must care for a carrying Seeker and keep it a secret from everyone, including his own sparklings.

Soundwave: “This is going to be an interesting nine months.”
Chapter 6: By LadyClassical

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter 6:

By LadyClassical

Skywarp was lying in his bed, on his back. Against his will, visions of energon goodies danced in his head. Unfortunately, that was the LAST thing he wanted.

When the queasiness in his stomach didn’t go down, Skywarp turned on his side, hoping this would provide some relief. All he could think of to do was pull his huggy android closer, hoping it would comfort him. It was impossible to fall asleep.

Starscream had told him that having nourishment in his body would help make his sickness go away, but Skywarp thought that was crazy! How could he even imagine putting something in his mouth right now? In fact, he was too sick to even take the medicine that was supposed to cure him of the headaches he’d been getting nonstop.

Several minutes passed, with Skywarp feeling sicker by the minute, until finally Starscream and Thundercracker entered the Seekers’ room, with Thundercracker slowly shutting the door behind him.


“Yes…I’m awake,” Skywarp whispered back.

“Why are we whispering?” Starscream rolled his eyes and sat back on the bed. “Here, we brought this for you.”

“The throw-up pot?” Skywarp gratefully grabbed their shiny metal cooking pot out of Starscream’s hands. “Thank you. Now I don’t have to worry about making it to the bathroom.”

“Well, you’ve been pregnant for, what, a month now, right?” said Thundercracker. “So you’ll only have sickness for two more months.”

“I don’t know,” said Starscream. “I was violently sick for the first seven months of my pregnancy, remember?”

“Starscream!” Thundercracker glared at Starscream to make him shut up.

“Hey, I was just being honest.” Starscream shrugged, but his tone became a little gentler when he looked down at Skywarp. “Every pregnancy is different, though.”

“I must look like slag right now,” Skywarp said miserably, knowing that he hadn’t taken a shower in the past two days, he didn’t want to get out of bed, and he had been yelling at pretty much everyone in the Base. Starscream and Thundercracker had to constantly reassure everyone that Skywarp was just a little “under the weather.” Since Skywarp wasn’t very into the pregnancy yet, you wouldn’t think he was pregnant just by looking at him. But you would think there was something wrong with him.

“You don’t look like slag,” said Starscream. “But I know you feel like it, don’t you? I did too.”
“But you don’t have to worry about it,” Thundercracker told him. “We’ll always be here for—”

Thundercracker was interrupted by Skywarp frantically shouting, “I need the throw-up pot again!”

Starscream shoved the cooking pot to his brother again, and they both looked away as Skywarp emptied his stomach. Seriously…it felt like EVERYTHING was coming up. When Skywarp was finally done, Thundercracker took the reeking pot into the kitchen to get someone to clean it, and Starscream stayed with Skywarp. The purple Seeker had a few tears in his eyes, and he felt a little bit shaky, so he had to lie down.

“Get some rest now, Skywarp,” Starscream told him quietly. “I think you’ll feel better if you do.”

SEVERAL DAYS LATER…

Skywarp was sitting with Thundercracker on the couch, trying to watch TV. Starscream and Megatron were bonding with the triplets; being third-in-command it was Soundwave’s job to hold down the fort, so he was busy too. Thundercracker felt like watching a human movie, as usual. Skywarp wondered if the film’s violence would affect the unborn sparkling. Probably not, he thought, at least not at this age.

Thundercracker had chosen to skip the Energon popcorn for once, as seeing any kind of fuel would make Skywarp feel even worse, but Thundercracker was so engrossed that it wouldn’t have really mattered anyway.

That was when Starscream and Megatron came back. Starscream was holding one of them in his arms, Megatron was holding another, and the third was riding on Starscream’s back. Megatron, who of course did not know the true reason for Skywarp’s sickness, was kind of confused by what he saw.

“Thundercracker, turn that off right now,” said Starscream sharply. “I don’t want my triplets being exposed to your human flicks.”

“Sorry,” said Thundercracker, and stopped the tape.

“Skywarp.” Megatron’s voice was sharp. “I thought you were supposed to be helping Soundwave with his paperless-society project.”

“Huh?” said Skywarp, lifting his head off the couch for a split second.

Thundercracker and Starscream, by this point, had been informed of what Soundwave had told Megatron, so Thundercracker said, “Skywarp is just feeling a little sick, again, so he’ll help with the project once he’s feeling better.”

Megatron looked suspicious. “What is he sick with, anyway? It’s not anything that’s contagious, is it?”

“Oh, definitely not,” Starscream said. “So we don’t have to worry about the sparklings getting infected by him.”

“Why don’t you two put the sparklings down for their naps?” Thundercracker asked, picking up the remote again. “Then you can come watch TV with me.”

“If you’re watching ‘Top Gun’ again, I’m in,” Starscream smirked. “hold my calls.”
Chapter 7: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

Yes, the story has been all cutesy so far and Skywarp's pregnant, LOL! And now, we meet the antagonist of our story...

Chapter 7:

By Transformersnewfan

We will soon meet two new characters: Both are deceased. One had been a handsome Seeker. The other, an overweight, African-American human drug dealer. But before you make assumptions, the later had a heart of gold and rests in paradise, while the former descended to the depths of hell. These two individuals, in their own ways, have always shaped Skywarp’s life. And continue to shape his future...

First, we meet Gravechaser:

3:15 A.M.:
Nothing made Gravechaser fume more than seeing a carrying Seeker. It remained him of how Skywarp had destroyed his life.

From his hiding place in the attic of the Decepticon Underwater Base, Gravechaser glared down hatefully at the pregnant Seeker.

Skywarp was in a restless recharge in his berth, curled on his side and clutching his huggy android for dear life as he slept.

The image of Skywarp, carrying his own sparkling, yet still attached to a sparklinghood doll, was enough to drive the evil ghost into a roaring rage. He will end Skywarp’s life! If he could, he would do it on this very night, but it would take some time.

That wasn’t a problem, as he had plenty of time, being a ghost and all. He’d spent so many years wanting to destroy the bastard flyer. From the moment he’d learned of his existence, Gravechaser had wanted to snuff out his spark.

After all, it was only fair in Gravechaser’s demented CPU. Skywarp must be punished by death! An optic for an optic!

Skywarp had cost him everything: His Bondmate, his sparkling, his house, his freedom, and finally his life. Now Skywarp was going to pay with his own life.

At the time the black and purple flyer made his little visit to the Speedwing Donor Bank in Vosnia, Gravechaser had been languishing in the PIT, the Transformer equivalent of Hell, for many years—and for what? For killing two worthless cops? So what?

That would never have happened if Skywarp had not destroyed his family! And when the dead then-
Seeker sensed Warp’s presence on the planet and his reasons for being there, Gravechaser decided enough was enough. He had let Skywarp exist for far too long already. There was no way in hell the former Seeker was going to let Skywarp enjoy a sparklings of his own. And worse yet, make those slaggers grandcreators! Not after they’d all cost Gravechaser has own son! Now the dark Seeker was going to die!

The only time Gravechaser glanced away from Skywarp’s sleeping, pregnant form, was to roam around in the attic and peer down at the three sparklings that the red and white Seeker had borne with that Gladiator. Starscream, or whatever his name was, it didn’t matter. He wasn’t a factor here.

The sweet little triplets, all cooing in their sleep, brought Gravechaser no joy. They only served to remind him of the sparkling he’d lost so long ago. The irony of spending his days glaring viciously at Skywarp and the three little monsters, rather than make any attempts to somehow reconnect with his own son, who was right here on this very Base, was completely lost on Gravechaser. There was no trace of the Seeker he had once been. And any love he once had for own creation was long extinguished.

Gravechaser pulled an old photograph from his hyperspace. It was dog-eared on its corners and faded. An image of a once-happy family. His family. The handsome, muscular Seeker that he once had been; his paint job as deep a blue as the deepest of blue seas of Earth, and his classically handsome faceplates.

Next to him was his Bondmate, that femme who didn’t know how good she had it! That dirty, deceiving glitch! She and her back-door mech had made him a cuckold! Oh, but he had been sure she would have come to her senses eventually. And he, ever the good mech, would have been willing to accept her back when she did. He might have given her a whipping as punishment for her indiscretion, but eventually, he would have forgiven her. But no, she continued to see that, that, dirty mack of hers, and for what? Because he had a job with UPS? Because he made money? Oh, she lied that it wasn’t about his money, that he was ‘sensitive’ and ‘funny’ and whatever other bulls**t the glitching slut had said!

But still, he would have taken her back. Even if he hated her, he would have gritted his dental plates and tried to make it work with her for the sake of their sparkling. Their son. His son: Thundercracker.

Thundercracker. The innocent sparkling victimized by the adult Seekers in his young life. He was only two years old when this photo was taken. Once upon a time, Gravechaser—before he was Gravechaser anyway—truly loved the mechling. He was Thundercracker’s true and rightful Sire. Not that, that, big black flyer that had barged into their lives, wrongfully welcomed in by the sparkling’s tramp of a mother. It was wrong…

But still, Gravechaser would have taken her back. All she had to do was beg for his forgiveness. And in time, he would have forgiven her. For Thundercracker’s sake anyways. But then Skywarp happened.

Skywarp. The bastard sparkling that was the result of his wife’s illicit and careless fucking of that UPS mech! The true reason behind the dissolution of their once blissful marriage and for the affair to take its foothold in destroying their Bonding. Skywarp bore from Gravechaser’s wife’s dalliances and foolishness with her back-door mech! Oh, how he pleaded with her to terminate the pregnancy! He begged and pleaded! But she stubbornly refused! How dare she refuse her husband! The rightful mech of the house! She should never have kept that other mech’s sparkling! Then they could have still been a family. It was the sparkling’s fault. It was Skywarp’s fault.

Realizing his nonsensical mate refused to do right by her Bondmate, Gravechaser had tried to
terminate the sparkling himself! But the glitch prevented him from doing so! How dare she?! He was TRYING to get rid of this cancer on their marriage before was too late! But she had locked himself and their sparkling, HIS sparkling, Thundercracker in the bedroom.

That was the night Gravechaser remembered as the night he had lost his family. It was Skywarp’s fault. Nothing to do with Gravechaser’s increasing dependence on the High-Grade Energon, not the fact that he’d been out of work for over a year, not because his Bondmate had taken up with the UPS Mech, not because of the beatings, not because he destroyed everything in the house, not because he killed those wild animals his sparkling was keeping, no, none of those things. It was 100% Skywarp’s fault.

The next thing Gravechaser knew, his Bondmate had divorced him and married her other mech, the UPS Mech, the Sire of that illicit monster Skywarp, and they all had the gall to live in HIS former house, with HIS SON! He tried to maintain his relationship with Thundercracker, but apparently, they had reprogrammed him to love THEM and Skywarp instead! He had to do something! Gravechaser had to get his precious, innocent youngling away from those creatures that were turning his own son against him! So, one day, he snatched him.

But sadly, for Gravechaser, it was already too late. All Thundercracker did was keen and sob for his “Creators” and unborn brother: Skywarp. It was the brother that ruined things. UGH, it was the monster, Gravechaser corrected himself. He couldn’t bear to call Skywarp, the bastard spark sired by a sinful affair, as his son’s ‘Brother.’ It was a falsehood!

It was Skywarp that was the reason Thundercracker wanted to go back to those sinners! He had wanted that sparkling! It was Skywarp, the Destroyer of Sacred Marriage, that had also claimed Gravechaser’s son as his ‘Brother.’ And when Gravechaser realized this, he tried to once again drown his sorrows in the High-Grade. The rest was a blur: Policemechs barged into their motel room, and Gravechaser shot and killed two of them. The rest of the bunch dogpiled on him while one snatched his son away forever and returned him to the custody of his tramp mother and back-door mech turned stepfather, who, how ironically, had sired Skywarp.

Gravechaser never saw Thundercracker again. He was sentenced to life at the Iacon Correctional Center in the federal prison system. The worst jail on Cybertron, especially for Seekers. No one cared, but Gravechaser cried over the photograph every night for the next decade.

He tried escaping twice, only to be recaptured both times. He never got very far. Still, his desire to have his vengeance on Skywarp kept him online. That is until he himself was offline. It was a big, brutal groundpounder, who had paid a corrupt member of the Elite Guard to gain access to the prison. The huge mech stood before Gravechaser in his tiny, underground cell, and simply said, “Steve.”

“Who’s Steve?” Gravechaser remembered asking.

“Steve was my Bondmate,” the groundpounder answered, “The policemech that you shot in the chest and murdered in cold Energon, was Steve. And now, his name will be the last thing you hear! STEVE!” And it truly was the last word Gravechaser had ever heard.

It had taken Gravechaser over 17 hours to go fully offline. All the while, the Elite Guards looked in different directions as the huge mech beat him, tormented him, let him bleed out, and finally fade offline. THIS would be the torture he now planned for Skywarp. Gravechaser didn’t even blame that mech that had killed him. Because after all, none of this would have taken place if it was not for Skywarp.

Gravechaser’s raging emotions could be felt by Starscream’s innocent sparklings, and it frightened
them terribly. They were old enough to know their youngest uncle’s name but not old enough to vocalize what they were hearing. Darkwing began keening loudly, while the other two were frozen in fear.

“Awww, what’s wrong my little sweetspark?” Starscream cooed as he rushed to the babies’ crib.

Gravechaser had no use for this sappy scene and returned to watching Skywarp. His true target.

So, after his deactivation, he decayed in the Pit for many years—for killing the two policemechs and probably those damned wild animals—none of which, would have happened if not for Skywarp! The worst part was not being able to murder the black and purple youngling, who he never stopped picturing growing up in the house Gravechaser had once owned and lost in the divorce. The sparkling blissfully unaware of the pain and devastated his onlining caused so many.

But then, a bit over an Earth month ago, Gravechaser observed Skywarp had traveled to Vosnia for the purpose of an intro-fertilization. THAT WAS THE LAST STRAW!!! Gravechaser would deactivate him now. Slowly and painfully, just how he himself had been slain. Skywarp would never hold his own sparkling in his arms!

Time moved differently in the Pit. Far faster. In the space of a mare two Vosnian hours, Gravechaser had made a deal with Unicron: In exchange for his Spark (Cybertronian Soul), he would take the form of Gravechaser, an inter-dimensional hunter that could transmit himself to any planet he desired. He had promised he would return to the Pit to serve Unicron once his task was fulfilled. But what the Unmaker didn’t know was, Gravechaser planned to trap Skywarp’s Spark and replace it in the Container that Unicron had placed his own. Thus, betraying the Unmaker himself and freeing Gravechaser of any obligation to him, while torturing Skywarp’s essence for all Eternity. The Perfect Plan!

As the ghost, Gravechaser looked nothing like his former self as a handsome Seeker. His new appearance was that of a much larger flyer, of a darker blue—almost purplish blue really. White, pointed wings that curved to resemble half-moons, a black Van-Dyck similar to Unicron’s due to their unholy alliance, rectangular black—unlit—optics, and an overall much older appearance. The most disturbing thing though was the blood-red claws. The blood of the two policemechs.

And at the Speedwing Donor Bank, he took possession at different points of Dr. Candy and her nurse and did enough internal damage on Skywarp to ensure he would never survive the birth of that newling he was now carrying! However, there was no guarantee that that large Tapedeck-Transformer wouldn’t detect the damage and repair him in time, so Gravechaser had to do his damndest to separate Skywarp from everyone around him and die the lonely, miserable deactivated the bastard deserved! And no, Gravechaser had no feelings for the innocent little femme Skywarp was carrying, nor did he feel anything any longer for Thundercracker, who would no doubt be sparkbroken, but, Gravechaser narrowed his black optics, Thundercracker had chosen his side a long time ago. And THIS was the consequence!

Gravechaser then descended into the two Seekers’ berthroom. All the while, Skywarp and Thundercracker were recharging. TC was snoring loudly, and Warp was still very restless but sleeping as best he could. Gravechaser paid his biological scion no mind and entered the younger Seeker’s dreams.

In Skywarp’s nightmare:

Skywarp was indulging himself on his favorite Energon goodies, including rust sticks, flux, and chocolate-covered wheel-nuts.
Gravechaser approached from behind, “Skywarp…”

The black and purple Seeker didn’t immediately recognize the vocals but assumed it was one of the Decepticons. He didn’t stop stuffing his faceplates with his junk food.

Gravechaser: “You are going to die.”

Skywarp wasn’t immediately troubled by this statement, thinking it was a joke of some sort, “Eh?”

Gravechaser repeated, more forcefully this time, “You are going to die!”

“Why?” Skywarp still didn’t get it, and rolled his optics, “Cause Soundwave said not to eat junk food and that’s exactly what I’m doing?”

There was no humor in the ghost’s monstrous vocals, “Because you destroyed my family.”

This didn’t make sense to Skywarp, “Huh? I didn’t—” he turned around, but there was no one there. He shrugged and went back to his food.

“You will never see that sparkling you’re carrying.” Gravechaser’s disembodied vocal snarled.

Now Skywarp was upset, “Hey, how’d you know I was carrying?! I’m gonna kill those guys!” referring to his brothers.

Gravechaser growled his response, “I think you’ve ruined my son’s life enough already.”

Skywarp: “Huh? Who’s your—”

Before he could finish his sentence, the evil spirit appeared within inches of his own faceplates. He was the most frightening mech Skywarp had ever seen, and it terrified the Seeker.

And then, without warning, Gravechaser raised his red claws and took a swipe at the young flyer, tearing his innards from his body as Skywarp cried out in agony, “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAOUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUGGGGGGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”

End of Skywarp’s nightmare:

Skywarp’s optics snapped open as his vents hitched and he stifled his keening. His older brother was still sleeping, so apparently the Energon-curdling scream he thought he’d let out was only in his nightmare. His processor was pounding still from that headache he’d had earlier, and he wanted to vomit again. For the past few weeks, all he did was throw up.

“Oh Primus, No!”

“W-Why…?” the dark Jet sobbed as he stood in the shower, frantically scrubbing off all the Energon and oils off his legs. He’d apparently emptied his fuel tanks in his sleep, possibly when he’d had that nightmare. When he had realized what happened, he feverishly gathered up the soaked, ruined bedding and threw it into the sink, running hot water over it. Then he hurriedly took a shower; the sticky discharge was everywhere.

“I-I lost…” Skywarp’s coolant tears melded with the waters cascading down his faceplates; he couldn’t stop crying now; he felt so hurt. He miscarried the Seekerling he had wanted so desperately. Why did this happen to him? He wasn’t an alcoholic or a Dark Energon user. He hadn’t teleported or gone through the Space Bridge like Soundwave had said not to do. Soundwave…he had to talk to Soundwave. Maybe there was something he could do…”
Thundercracker banged on the wash rack’s locked door, “Skywarp?! What the slag are you doing taking a shower at three-thirty in the morning?!” Apparently, the noise of the shower woke him up.

“Shut up!” Skywarp yelled bitterly, “You sleep through a damn earthquake and you wanna yell at me now?!”

Thundercracker: “What the hell are ya doing?!” he sounded angry, but he really was concerned.

The younger Seeker grabbed a towel and wrapped it around himself, but was too upset to get dried off, “Leave me alone! I just lost my sparkling!” He opened the door, soaking wet and dripping water everywhere. He stormed past his shocked brother and into the hallway, “Just leave me alone!”

TC didn’t say anything. He was very sorry.

All was peaceful in Soundwave’s quarters: The big mech and five of his sparklings slept blissfully. The only member of the family missing tonight was Laserbeak, as he was currently on a scouting mission in Canada.

Then a loud banging rang through the darkened unit.

When no one responded, the knocking only became louder and more desperate.

“Pop, what’s that?” Rumble whispered from his berth.

“H-Huh?” Soundwave was still half-asleep.

There was harder knocking at their door.

“It’s the middle of the night,” Ravage growled, “Apparently, someone fails to know what time it is.”

Rumble got up and opened the door.

Skywarp was standing there, shivering and soaking wet with a towel wrapped around himself, “I-I wanna talk to y-your dad.”

Rumble: “He’s asleep.”

“Tell him to get his aft up before I rip his spark out!” Skywarp snapped. “I said I wanna talk to him!”

“Okay, okay,” Rumble hushed, “Ya gonna wake up Megatron.” He at least was cognizant of the Decepticon Leader in the next-door quarters. He went back in and shook Soundwave, “Pop, Skywarp’s out in the hallway.”

“Ugh,” the 3ic got up slowly, his chassis creaked and cracked. He looked at the clock and growled again, telling his sparklings, “Alright guys, you can go back to sleep. I’ll handle everything.”

Soundwave was annoyed, thinking of all the stupid things this could be about when he opened his door again and groaned, “Skywarp, its three-thirty in the morning, is the Base burning down?” But his agitation left him when he saw the trembling Seeker with coolant tears in his optics, “What happened?”

“I-I lost my sparkling,” Skywarp keened lowly, “I-I don’t know h-how it h-happened.”

“Wait a minute,” Soundwave stepped into the hallway, closing the door behind him so that his own family didn’t hear, “Hold still.” The big indigo mech’s optics made ticking noises as he scanned the flyer.
Skywarp was still too mortified and grieving the loss of his Seekerling to vocalize anything. He couldn’t tell Soundwave the truth, that some evil spirit he’d never seen before had ripped the baby from him in a horrific nightmare.

“No, you didn’t lose her,” Soundwave finally stated, “I still detect the same amount of foreign CNA levels in your systems. Your sparkling is fine.”

“LIAR!” the Seeker spat bitterly, loud enough to wake the others before dropping his vocals again, “I-I woke up all wet and sticky cause I leaked myself like a pig!”

Soundwave paused to think of the best way to answer this in a dignified manner, “Well, I’m sorry that happened to you but it didn’t—” he stopped suddenly and swung the door open again, startling Rumble and Frenzy.

The twins couldn’t stifle their laughter before their Creator heard them. When Soundwave burst the door open, they both stopped cold.

Soundwave ordered, “Rumble, Frenzy: No eavesdropping on medical situations. I said go back to sleep.” The duo didn’t argue.

Skywarp: “H-How did y-you?”

“Eh, I always hear them,” Soundwave shook his helm and re-closed the door, “As I was saying, you didn’t lose your sparkling.”

But the Seeker was still terribly upset; a new batch of tears streaking down his faceplates now, “N-No…y-you don’t under-s-stand…”

Soundwave just listened now as the other went on, “I-I had this d-dream t-that t-this, t-this…THING ripped her outta me! A-And that I-I woke and, and…”

Trying to act as a medic despite his exhaustion, Soundwave sought to reassure the frightened Seeker, “Was this accompanied by mild to severe back pains?”

Skywarp: “N-No…”

Soundwave: “Severe abdominal pains?”

Skywarp shook his helm no.

Soundwave: “Bleeding of any sort?”

Skywarp: “N-No…but it was so real!”

Soundwave: “You did not have a miscarriage. It sounds like it was some graphic nightmare that triggered a bed-wetting accident, but nothing more.”

The black and purple flyer wanted to believe him, but he was still too upset, “Well, how am I supposed to know the difference, HUH?” still switching emotions wildly, “You got six slagging kids! This is my first!”

Soundwave’s tone was dry, “Did you read the pregnancy datapads I gave you?”

Skywarp: “No…”

Soundwave: “Are you following the diet plan I gave you?”
The Seeker shook his helm shamefully, “I-I can’t eat…”

Soundwave: “Are you taking the medicine I gave you for your processor aches?”

Skywarp: “No…”

Soundwave groaned, “I’m trying to help you, but you have to listen to me. Did you at least ask Starscream?”

Skywarp rolled his optics, “No, I’m still mad.”

Soundwave: “What?”

Skywarp sounded like a brat now, “She was MINE!”

Now Soundwave was confused, “Who? The sparkling?”

“Yeah,” Skywarp went from bitter to grieving again, “She was gonna be MY baby! H-He doesn’t want me around his stupid brats, s-so I’m not sh-sharing m-mine.” He started to cry again, only now the chill in the hallway was making him shiver more.

“No, she’s still your sparkling,” Soundwave dropped his anger and tried to calm the young flyer, “And I told you, you didn’t lose her. But at least let us help you while you’re carrying…” The 3ic saw Thundercracker coming towards them down the hallway and he was glad; maybe he could reason with the slightly older, more level-headed Seeker.

Skywarp just looked down; he felt Soundwave didn’t understand. Yet, he couldn’t bring himself to tell him the full details of the monster he’d seen in his dreams, and what it said to him about how he’d never hold his sparkling. The poor Seeker was now convinced either he himself or his baby would die.

Soundwave: “He’s fine. Just a scare.”

Thundercracker let out a sigh of relief before whispering back, “Thank Primus, I didn’t know what was going on.” He went to pull Skywarp to come back to their quarters, but the youngest Seeker was having none of it.

“YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND!” Skywarp screamed now, “NOBODY UNDERSTANDS!”

TC hushed him, “Warp, you’re gonna wake up the whole Base!”

Soundwave: “At least let’s go somewhere else to talk.” But then he heard Megatron’s heavy pedes and the Decepticon Leader fumbling with his door locks, “too late.”

“Soundwave!” Megatron grumbled, holding his helm, “It’s nearly four in the morning! What the slag is going on?!”

Skywarp was suddenly, insanely jealous that this, this, miserable Gladiator got to enjoy THREE little Seekerlings his second older brother had given him, and he himself wasn’t even allowed to play with them anymore. Never mind that he and his daughter would probably be dead soon!

At the same time, against their Creator’s orders, Rumble and Frenzy opened their door again to listen in.

“Follow my lead,” Soundwave whispered to two Seekers as he moved towards Megatron. The Tapedeck then went into a bold-faced lie, complete with theatrics, “What do you think is going on?
We’re all looking for that file!"

“What file?” Megatron rubbed at his optics, “Primus Soundwave, it’s almost four in the morning.”

“The Mayor Berger file,” Soundwave folded his arms for emphasis, “There’s a seven-page report that was supposed to be part of the Berger file and its missing from the box! We can’t close the electric file folder on the mission until we scan in that report, and none of us can find it anywhere!”

Megatron, believing this, just held his helm, “Well, I’m sure it’s in one of those boxes in the basement.”

“We’ve been all over that basement!” Soundwave griped. Spoken like a true liar.

Playing along, Thundercracker added, “I still think it’s in the Central City files.”

Soundwave: “No, we already checked those files hours ago.”

“Okay, okay, you know what?” Megatron waved his arms, “It’s very late, why don’t you guys all call it a night and keep searching in the morning?!”

Soundwave, feigning disappointment, mumbled, “I suppose so.”

Megatron: “Yeah, I mean, we’ve put this paperless-society project off this long, I…” he suddenly noticed Skywarp, “Why are you all wet?”

The dark Seeker was at a loss; he was a lousy actor.

Thundercracker: “He was searching in all those dusty boxes in the basement. I told him to take a shower before he tracked dirt all over the Control Room.” Yeah, that was good.

“Oh,” Megatron nodded a little, “Well, I still say everybody go to bed. Myself included! The sparklings will probably be up soon anyway.”

“As you command, Megatron,” Soundwave said as he saluted before telling the two flyers, “Come on, I’ll walk you back to your quarters.”

Thundercracker yelled into the executive quarters, “G’Night Starscream!”

The red and white Seeker was sleeping soundly though.

“Pop wasn’t working on the files,” Frenzy noted with surprise as he and his twin went back to their room, “He was sleeping.”

Rumble was worried too, “I know, and it’s really strange that he lied to Megatron like that.”

Both boys got back into their respective berths as Rumble added, “Something’s definitely going on here.”

Ravage, as the eldest creation, always acted as a sort of second-in-command of the Cassettes to Soundwave, “Whatever Father is currently involved with is none of your concern. He will inform us when he sees fit.”

“If you say so, Rav,” Rumble sighed. But deep down, he intended to get to the bottom of things.

It took another twenty minutes or so for Skywarp to finally go back to sleep. He refused to go back to his berth, both because it was still moist and because of the nightmare. So instead, Thundercracker
had him sleep in his berth, laying an extra blanket over the still shaking flyer and brought him his huggy android. The blue Seeker also managed to get Skywarp to finally consume some Energon (he warmed up the cube in the microwave, hoping to make it more palatable) and take his medicine. Now Skywarp was sleeping peacefully under all the covers, albeit still thinking about his early encounter with an evil being.

After everything, Thundercracker spoke with Soundwave in the hallway again.

“I’ve never seen him like this, Soundwave,” TC moaned, worry clear in his vocals, “Do you think he’s gonna be okay?”

“Has he ever had a problem with wetting the berth?” the 3ic whispered back, “When he was young?”

“No, never,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “We’ve always shared a berthroom. I’d know!”

“Then it’s most likely anxiety over his sparkling,” Soundwave noted, “all the emotional protocols, morning sicknesses, it’s all new to him and he’s scared. I recommend he read the six datapads on pregnancy I gave him, and he should speak to Starscream about this too. At least then he’ll know what to expect next.”

“Yeah,” Thundercracker agreed, “And, what can I do to help him? He’s been pretty sick…”

Soundwave: “Well, for starters: Get him to take better care of himself if he wants to create a healthy sparkling! He doesn’t take his Energon. He doesn’t take the medicine for his headaches. He doesn’t rest, and he’s running around the hallways sopping wet, freezing to death! He needs to be careful!”

“You’re right, you’re absolutely right,” Thundercracker agreed sadly, “That stops now. I’ll, I’ll help him. I’ll step up on this! I’ll make sure he does everything in those books of yours, and…I’ll get Screamer more involved. They haven’t really…” He had to admit it, “They had a fight a few weeks ago and Warp hasn’t wanted to confide in him.”

“Oh, perfect,” Soundwave folded his arms, “Don’t tell me this pregnancy’s a secret from HIM too!”

Thundercracker: “N-No…he knows.”

Soundwave looked over at Skywarp, making sure he was indeed recharging before he dropped his vocals and asked the blue Seeker, “Do you mind telling me why we must keep his sparkling a secret? Especially from Megatron and Shockwave?”

“I don’t get it either,” TC shook his helm, “he said he was afraid somebody would try to stop him or make him lose the baby or something.”

Something else was worrying Soundwave’s CPU, “Did you accompany him to that clinic in Vosnia?”

Thundercracker shook his helm again, “No, he went by himself.”

Soundwave groaned, “I keep wondering if he went to some contaminated lab or some makeshift Med-Bay that wanted to experiment on him.”

This scared TC as Soundwave continued, “I hope they at least gave him CNA for a Seekerling. I’ll rip their sparks out myself if they’ve impregnated him with some kind of mutant being, like a damn Quintesson.”
“Do you think he should be in the Med-Bay or something?”

“No, not yet anyway,” the 3ic conceded, “but if he’s in any pain or anything else unusual, then yes, bring him in.” He turned to leave, “Now I’m gonna try to get another hour of sleep before my shift starts.”

Thundercracker, nodded, “Okay, thank you, Soundwave. And, I’m sorry about all this.”

Soundwave just mumbled something and left.

Skywarp apparently woke up again at some point, because when his brother laid down next to him, the darker Seeker immediately glommed onto him and buried his faceplates against his canopy glass.

“Sshhhh, sshhh,” Thundercracker hushed as he wrapped arms around his baby brother, petted his helm. He wanted to be more comforting; show Skywarp that he really did want him to have the sparkling. “Everything’s fine, Skywarp,” he whispered, “You’re fine, your baby’s fine. Now you gotta get some rest…”

Skywarp’s optics were so tired; he looked like he wanted to sleep but so afraid he’d have that dream again. He keened and whimpered before vocalizing, “I-It was s-so real, TC. I-It was like I could feel his claws…”

Thundercracker continued petting him and rubbing his wings, “It was just a nightmare…”

Skywarp: “Y-You ever have a n-nightmare like that?”

The blue Seeker hesitated before answering, “I used to, but not for a long time now.” This was when he was a sparkling. Although he didn’t add that he wasn’t so stupid that he’d wet the bed! Instead, he tried to be more comforting, “I’ll protect you…”

Skywarp: “W-What were y-you talking a-about with S-Soundwave?”

TC was trying to get the other to sleep, but he answered anyway, “Uh, he wanted to know why everything’s a secret. I didn’t know what to say.” Seeing that his brother was wide awake, he asked him, “Why exactly is it a secret?”

Skywarp curled closer and hid his faceplates, “I-I don’t know, I… I’ve just felt, I don’t know… from the beginning, t-that… that there’s someone I-I need to keep this from. I-I felt it even when I was at t-that c-clinic, TC… like t-there’s someone t-trying to kill m-me o-or hurt m-my baby…” he dissolved into more sobbing.

“Did somebody here threaten you?” Thundercracker asked, thinking he’d kill whoever it was.

“N-No…” Skywarp admitted, “I-It’s j-just… like I f-feel it. L-Like there’s something t-trying to kill us. A-And it’s n-not Megatron or anybody. I-I don’t e-even k-know w-who it is.” His vocals were sounding weak, “A-And then that dream…”

“Shhh, nobody’s gonna hurt you,” TC hushed him, pulling the covers up higher over their frames, “I’ll protect you, I promise…” he kept stroking the younger Seeker’s wings, “don’t be scared. I’m here… Big brother is always here…”

Finally, the combination of the warm Energon, the medicine, and the cuddling was enough to get the darker flyer back into his recharge cycle. And as the two brothers slept in each other’s arms, Gravechaser held his hate-filled watch from the ceiling.
Chapter 8: By LadyClassical

There was a knocking on the door. “Skywarp.”

“Whuh?” mumbled the black-and-purple Seeker, rousing from a fitful sleep. Since he hadn’t gotten much sleep last night, he had been making up for it by sleeping all day. When he checked his internal clock, he saw that it was almost three in the afternoon.

“It’s me.” Starscream entered the room and shut the door behind him. In his hand, he was holding his datapad.

Skywarp suddenly felt a little sullen. “What are you doing here?”

“I just…well, Soundwave and TC sent me to help you,” Starscream explained. “You see, neither of them have had a sparkling before. But I have, and all three of us think you have some… misconceptions about it that I want to clear up.”

“Misconceptions?”

“For example…” Starscream sighed. “Well, you know where the sparkling IS, right?”


Starscream resisted the urge to slap himself in the forehead. “Where WERE you in health class?!”

“I…I spent most of the time sleeping,” Skywarp admitted.

“Well, whatever. The sparkling is actually here.” Starscream pointed to the place underneath his canopy glass, around the location of his hips. “It’s called a gestation chamber. Everybody has one. It’s a special place made just for a sparkling.”

Skywarp looked fascinated. “Really?”

“Really,” said Starscream, and pulled out a human fruit he’d found at the grocery store, something called a watermelon. “This is how big your sparkling is right now, approximately, about 20 pounds—even though she might be born smaller or bigger. The average birth weight for a sparkling is maybe 300 to 500 pounds. Not to be graphic or anything, but half of your sparkling’s weight right now is basically just fluids and raw energon.”

Skywarp reached out for the watermelon and held it up to the place where his sparkling was growing, and Starscream could tell that he was trying to imagine the watermelon inside of him. “So…um…is that what she looks like?”

“No,” said Starscream. “Do you think she’s going to come out looking like a green ball?”

“Um, maybe?” Skywarp had the feeling that there was no right answer to Starscream’s question.

“I’ll show you what she looks like,” said Starscream. “This is part of what’s on the data pads.”
Starscream opened some windows and pulled up some of the pregnancy-themed documents Soundwave had forwarded to him. One of them was called “Your Pregnancy Week By Week.” Since Skywarp was by now about six weeks along, that was what Starscream opened first.

“What is that thing, a blob?” said Skywarp.

“It’s called an embryo,” Starscream told him, glaring. “It’s what your DAUGHTER looks like. See? There are some tiny bumps where the limbs will soon start growing…”

“What about the wing nubs?” Skywarp demanded. “I got it done on Vosnia! She’s a Seekerling!”

“Well, this is a week-by-week guide to a STANDARD pregnancy, so it’s supposed to cover groundlings and Seekerlings alike,” Starscream told him. “Also, at this stage, the wing-nubs haven’t developed anyway. They don’t come until maybe 10 or 11 weeks.”

“When do they start to practice transforming?” Skywarp asked.

“Hmm…15 weeks, I think,” said Starscream. “But you know what she’ll be, of course.”

“20 pounds. That’s so small.” Skywarp examined his watermelon again. It was about the size of his fingertip. “Sparklings are small when they’re born! It’s so hard to imagine that they’re even smaller before they’re born!”

“Let me show you something else,” Starscream said, grabbing the data pad and opening another window. “Look. This is what your daughter will look like right before she’s born.”

“Now that looks like a sparkling,” Skywarp said confidently, although his confidence soon depleted to nervousness. “But…but how will it come out?”

“What do you mean, how will it come out?” Starscream snapped. “You were at the birth of my triplets. It happened three times in a row! What, do you not remember?”

“I was closing my eyes and covering my ears the whole time, actually,” Skywarp admitted.

“Remember that area between your legs, Skywarp?” Starscream was feeling annoyed, but he pointed at the picture. “See? That’s where they put the sparkling in when you were at the clinic, and that’s where she’s going to come out when she’s ready.”

Skywarp was now staring intently at the picture. “But that’s a really small opening.”

“I know it is,” said Starscream. “That’s why it gets a little bit wider before you start pushing. But make no mistake, it really hurts…although I will say that pushing was better than just laboring—and twenty-four hours straight was slagging hell.”

“But that includes the pushing, right?”

“Yes,” said Starscream. “The pushing ate up about an hour and a half. It takes a little longer to get Seekerlings out, because of the wings.”

Skywarp was pretty sure that it wasn’t his sparkling making him feel sick right now. “Starscream, I’m super scared.”

“Don’t worry,” Starscream told him quietly, feeling his spark soften just a little. “I can’t tell you it doesn’t hurt or that you won’t wish you were dead. But I can tell you that you won’t regret it.”

“You’ll be there, right?” Skywarp asked, his voice squeaky.
“Why wouldn’t I?” said Starscream. “Although of course I will be covering my ears and closing my eyes the entire time.”

“Really?”

“No, not really.” Starscream laughed. “I was just making a joke. I didn’t mean to make you nervous about having a sparkling. If you know more about what’s going on, you’ll be less scared. Remember that college class we took together? ‘Decoding the Cybertronian Genome’?”

“I failed it,” said Skywarp.

“Yes, I know.” Starscream sighed and rolled his eyes. “But I aced it, and I know all about how sparklings happen. How do you think it happens?”

“Well, I asked my Mommy when I was little,” said Skywarp. “She told me that the storkoid brought sparklings.”

“Please tell me that’s not still what you think.”

“We went over it in health class in Seeker School, didn’t we?” Skywarp looked like he was trying to remember. “They showed us all these pictures of our private parts, and there was some video, right? I was focused more on the naked femmes. I remember TC and I spent a lot of time looking up porn while you were studying.”

“I don’t care what you two were doing,” said Starscream. “Do I have to go into Scientist Mode here?”

“If you want to.” Skywarp shrugged.

“When you were in Seeker School, you had a lot of ‘facing, right?” Starscream asked.

“Yeah, I know all about that!” said Skywarp enthusiastically.

“Okay, so you know how when you start to enjoy it a lot, you have your overload, right?”

“Yes.”

“And I told you about the gestation chamber? The special place where the sparkling grows?”

“Yes.”

“Well, another thing the gestation chamber does is, it makes cells,” Starscream continued. “Those cells are all numbered 1, okay? And the ones you expel—during your overload—those are all numbered 0. Usually, the 0-numbered ones will die out. But if the two different cells bond with each other, they’ll end up multiplying into lots and lots of cells—zeros and ones. That’s called binary code, and it’s essentially the programming that will turn your reproductive cells into a sparkling. Put simply; reproduction is not much more than coding. For example, that’s why most Seekerlings can fly only a few weeks after birth—they’re programmed to be able to do that.”

Skywarp was staring with his mouth hanging open, but Starscream was in full scientist mode and babbling on.

“Programming is what each and every one of us is made out of,” Starscream was saying. “The cells contain information, which is called CNA, or cyber-nucleic acid. It contains every single thing that makes you who you are. That’s why your traits are passed along to your sparklings, as well as the
Sire’s traits—or, in your case, the donor. The sparkling is attached to you by her energon cord, so you essentially support her life. So basically, the 0-numbered cells enter the gestation chamber via the valve opening, and if they’re lucky they bond with a 1-numbered cell, which is already inside the gestation chamber, and they combine to make a sparkling using binary code.”

“It’s always so surreal when you go into Scientist Mode,” Skywarp said, looking fascinated. “I had no idea about all of that. I always just thought the sparkling was in my stomach.”

“Well, now you know the real deal,” said Starscream. “I hope this is clearer to you now.”

“Hmm, a little.” Skywarp smiled.

“Now, get some rest,” Starscream advised before he left the room. “Pregnancy might be a great thing and all, but it sure wears a carrier out.”

SEVERAL DAYS LATER…

It was a nice day, and Skywarp was eating junk food in his room. Why? This was sort of confusing to him because he remembered how sick Starscream had been throughout almost all of his pregnancy, and yet at six weeks he never felt sick anymore, just hungry.

Skywarp didn’t notice Thundercracker opening the door at first, so focused was he on shoveling fuel into his mouth, but finally, Thundercracker said, “Skywarp, are you ready for your ultrasound?”

“Oh. I guess so.” Skywarp reluctantly put his food down. “I know…no food in the Med-Bay.”

Earlier, Soundwave had informed Skywarp that he was pretty sure the sparkling was normal, but he wanted to do an early ultrasound, just to make sure. Skywarp didn’t know at the time what an “ultrasound” was, but then Starscream told him he could see what his sparkling looked like now, and he agreed to schedule one.

When they reached the Med-Bay, Soundwave was already in cassette deck mode, but Starscream was waiting there.

“Just lay down on the operating table,” said Starscream. “Soundwave knows what to do.”

“But what is he going to do?” Skywarp asked.

Soundwave transformed a moment, so he could speak and informed Skywarp that, since his sparkling was still so small, it would be better if they inserted the probe directly into him rather than on top of him like they would with a late-term ultrasound.

“Lay down, and I will perform all tasks,” Soundwave told him shortly.

Skywarp climbed onto the repair table and lay down. Starscream removed his lower armor, and Skywarp asked, “Is that where he’s gonna…?”

“Yes,” said Thundercracker. “Calm the slag down; it’s not gonna hurt you.”

It was uncomfortable (it kind of felt like being penetrated by a mech, actually, only a lot colder), so Skywarp didn’t like being probed. That is until the sparkling showed up on the screen.

“See?” said Starscream. “There she is.”

“Where?” Skywarp yelled, but then he saw Soundwave’s screen. Just like in the picture, his daughter looked sort of like a little blob, but he could see the little bumps where her limbs would soon form…
Even her little spark was beating, loud and clear! Tears sprang to Skywarp’s eyes when he watched her.

“So…a real sparkling,” said Thundercracker. “Someday she’ll be born…and you can hold her in your arms…”

“Think of how wonderful that will be,” Starscream added.

“How long until she’s born now?” Skywarp asked.

“For a standard pregnancy, that would be approximately eight months,” Soundwave responded, and then, a little while later, “Sonogram complete.”

Skywarp had a souvenir tape from the appointment, and Thundercracker was glad that the sparkling was normal, and everybody could chill off now. But little did he or anyone else know…things wouldn’t stay simple for long.
Chapter 9: By Transformersnewfan

It had been a full month since Skywarp’s ultrasound, and he was still having difficulties believing this was all real. He had been replaying his souvenir tape every night for weeks, trying to process everything.

Part of his CPU couldn’t comprehend the idea that he was going to be a Creator; another part of him was terrified he wasn’t ready yet.

So, at night, he would read Soundwave’s datapads on pregnancy and sparklings. Some things were hard for him to understand, so he read them twice. Sometimes he would fall asleep at the desk with all the datapads open and wake up back in his berth. Apparently, Thundercracker would put him there.

But he didn’t mind staying up all night. Because when he didn’t sleep, he didn’t dream.

By now he was two-and-a-half months pregnant, or ten weeks, and he was worrying more and more. At some point, the others were going to figure this out. He was not what one would call ‘showing’ yet, but he would be soon. His waist was already thickening some.

He was so scared. Maybe it was his elevated hormone levels, maybe it was his heightened emotions, or maybe it was that he had suffered the nearly identical nightmare almost every time he closed his optics.

Skywarp’s bad dream was always the same: He was eating or watching television, and a mech he’d never seen before starts speaking to him and then materializes in front of him before attacking him in some brutal manner. Sometimes he’d dream of being impaled; sometimes it was falling out of the skies; the most disturbing were the ones featuring his sparkling being ripped from his body.

And the vocal…he could hear that same cold, vengeful vocal repeating the same things over and over and over:
“You are going to die!”
“Because you destroyed my family.”
“I think you’ve ruined my son’s life enough already.”
“You are going to die!”
“Because you destroyed my family.”
“I think you’ve ruined my son’s life enough already.”
“You are going to die!”
“Because you destroyed my family.”
“I think you’ve ruined my son’s life enough already.”
“You are going to die!”
“Because you destroyed my family.”
“I think you’ve ruined my son’s life enough already.”
What was this nightmare telling him, he wondered. He didn’t think he had ever destroyed anyone’s family. And who was this mech’s son anyway? The donor? “I didn’t hurt anybody…” he sobbed.

And then there was that feeling of dread that always came at the end of the dreams, that if he told anyone, ANYONE, it would get so much worse.

By 3:00 A.M., Skywarp didn’t want to fall asleep. He got up and paced around. Thundercracker was fast asleep and snoring as usual. The black and purple flyer didn’t care; he didn’t think TC would understand anyway, the only being that would have understood and been able to help the dark Seeker had been murdered long ago…

Christopher.

Christopher would have known what to do, what to say.

Starscream, on the other hand, was always confusing when he jabbered on about his science slag.

It was a terrible thing to think, but, Skywarp wasn’t entirely comfortable talking to Starscream about what he was going through, and it wasn’t just because of the red and white Seeker’s penchant for showing off his Seeker School degrees with his fancy language. His hurtful diatribe was the reason that Skywarp had decided to conceive the sparkling out of a desire to have his own little one without Starscream’s constant criticisms and always snatching his own triplets away. He hadn’t so much as gone NEAR the Seekerlings since the big fight that day.

“Listen to me, you little fool,” Starscream seethed with rage and got right in the younger’s faceplates, “NEVER, EVER teach MY sparklings anything! DO YOU HEAR ME?!”

Skywarp would never be able to forget that. And that’s why, when his own sparkling would be born, he planned to tell Starscream that he would have no say in her upbringing. The only mech he trusted in the whole universe was Thundercracker anyways…

“I think you’ve ruined my son’s life enough already.”

Skywarp: “Huh?” he could have sworn he heard someone speaking to him, “Ugh, maybe I should get something to eat again…” He grabbed his blanket and draped it over his wings before heading for the kitchen.

It’s 3:15 A.M., some humans call this ‘The Witching Hour’ because of the amount of spirit activity documented during this time.

But Skywarp didn’t think about that stuff. He was thinking of his sparkling-to-be and the human man she was to be named after.

“Should we start with the Energon-Spaghetti-Os?” he addressed his daughter for the first time, seemingly slipping into the Creator-Creation affinity with a natural ease, “I loved these when I was a sparkling. You’ll probably like ‘em too.”

It was too much hassle to warm them up in the microwave, so we just dumped two or three cans (or was that four?) into a bowl. Then he sat at the kitchen island and started stuffing his faceplates with the cold, gooey deliciousness. Oh, Primus, it tasted so good.

He started thinking about all the things Starscream had told him about sparkling development and all the information in Soundwave’s datapads: At ten weeks, the wing nubs were supposed to be forming now, “Tomorrow I’ll take you flying. Won’t that be fun?” He could have sworn he felt movement in his gestation chamber, even if all the datapads would probably say it was too early for fetal
“Okay, so um, you’ve got two uncles, Thundercracker and Starscream,” the dark Seeker said as he shoved forkfuls of Energon-Spaghetti-Os into his mouth, “but I’m not gonna let Starscream near you, okay? Because he’s a smart-aft and he’s got his own family. So technically, you have two uncles, but you’re only gonna meet Thundercracker.”

Skywarp suddenly felt an ice-cold breeze come into the kitchen, making him shiver and wrap his blanket tightly around his frame. He turned around to see if a door had been opened, but it hadn’t.

So, he carried on the conversation he was having with his daughter-to-be, “I’m gonna name you Crystal after my friend,” he paused momentarily to get the next part out, “He died years ago though…you would’ve liked him. He was a musician. But that was his day job. Before that he was um, a pharmacist,” he laughed to himself, “he hated it when I called him that. He was a drug dealer…”

Skywarp stopped suddenly and whirled his helm around, fully expecting to see someone there. But he was still alone. He shrugged and went back to his food…

Skywarp: “He used to write songs about me, y’know? So…I’m naming you after Christopher. Your uncle TC liked him. Your uncle Starscream didn’t like him, but so what? Huh? That doesn’t matter now…”

“I think you’ve ruined my son’s life enough already.”

Skywarp’s optics widened. He heard the vocal clearly. But was it in his processor or did someone just speak to him? He quickly finished his food, suddenly feeling like he was being watched.

“Hello?” he asked around the room. “Is someone there?” After a few moments, when no one answered, the carrying Jet felt silly for imagining things, “Must be the hormones like Soundwave says…”

So, he went back to the cupboards, looking for more food. The Energon-Spaghetti-Os were good but not enough. He was eating for two and finally felt like pigging out after weeks of nausea. “AHA!” he found what he was looking for: Energon-Hamburger mix and Energon-Macaroni and Cheese! He grabbed a few boxes of each and poured them into the same bowl he’d eaten the Energon-Spaghetti-Os out of. Again, not taking the time to warm anything up.

Gravechaser watched with abhorrence as the young Seeker chowed down on his impromptu main course. It was no surprise that those two wanton flyers raised such a disgusting slugoid! And impregnating himself by choice without even having a mate! Typical of a product of an affair…

“I’m not a slugoid!” Skywarp shouted at the ceiling, mouth full of food. “That’s what I liked about Christopher; he never criticized me when I ate!” He sighed, talking to himself more than anyone else, “And I never criticized him either. He told me so…” Considering the human weighed over three hundred pounds, that was saying something.

He sighed, still eating, wondering why he had these negative vocals that kept popping into his processor. His thoughts continued to go back to his deceased friend, the one he would name his sparkling after. “Wonder what he’d say if he knew I was naming you after him, Crystal?” Not that this was the first instance; half the baby boys born in Brooklyn in the past 15 years were named for Christopher.

“I’m sure Starscream will freak when I tell him what I’m gonna name you?” Skywarp continued to
talk to his daughter-to-be, unaware that they weren’t alone, “I still remember the day I met Christopher, that was thirty years ago…”

Flashback:


“Skywarp, where’d you fly off to?” Thundercracker asked through their Comm.-Link.

“Just had to get away from that slagger!” Skywarp spat back. The darker Seeker had a falling out with their Trine Leader while on a mission to New York City and decided to go out exploring the other side of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Thundercracker: “Alright kiddo, just remember what I taunt you if you ever get lost.” and with that, he closed the connection.

Yeah, he knew: Make a mental note of every landmark, so if you get lost, you can tell your family where to look for you. So Skywarp looked around at the human city block: Gyro Shop, ‘Poppy’s’ Barber Shop, Grocery Store, etc. “Fulton Street…” he noted.

By now, several humans had run screaming from the overhead shadow of a black Jet. But then there was a group that didn’t. They were too busy gathered around this one 12-year-old heavyset, African-American kid, who was regaling them with stories, exchanging bags of substances for cash, and even singing without music!

Skywarp had known from the human movies he had seen like ‘Annie’ and ‘West Side Story’ that New York-based humans sing in the streets. But this human was the best he had ever heard!

“My man, drop me a beat!” his seeming Trinemate said. And the young man obliged, singing rhyming lyrics he made up on the spot, and his two Trinemates provided the background sounds by blowing into their hands somehow. At least, that was all Skywarp could tell from his advantage point from the nearby darkened alley. The Seeker was too shy to come forward and say how much he was enjoying the show. Instead, he waited for the crowd to disburse and the fascinating entertainer was alone.

Christopher, wearing a red and black checked jacket with a matching hat and blue Lee jeans, began packing up his stash of opiates he had for sale for the night. Finally, the two beings were alone.

Skywarp: “I really like your singing.”

Christopher: “Thanks!” he turned, expecting to see someone there, but didn’t see anyone.

Skywarp: “Are you a professional singer?”

“Not exactly,” the young man shrugged, “I mean, I wanna be…” he looked at his suitcase filled with drug paraphernalia, thinking that this was his only future.

Skywarp: “I think you’re good enough to be a professional singer. I mean, you don’t HAVE to stay a pharmacist with YOUR vocals.”

“Pharmacist?!” Christopher rolled his eyes, “You shittin’ me?”

Skywarp: “Oh, are those yours?”

“NO!” the young man snapped, “I never get high on my own supply!”
Skywarp started laughing, “Oh, that’s funny!” he got the ‘Scarface’ reference.

“Think so?” he closed the suitcase and made his way towards the alley where the voice was coming from, “Yeah, this isn’t really what I’ve wanted to be doing and stuff.”

Skywarp: “And what do you wanna be doing?”

“Well, I—” Christopher stopped and stared into the darkened space and was completely surprised to not see anyone there. He approached and looked beyond the metal boxes (which, in reality, were Skywarp’s pedes) and still couldn’t find anyone. He looked up at the windows: Nobody was looking down from their apartments. The only thing that seemed to be out of the ordinary was that the building’s floodlights had red lightbulbs.

Christopher: “Where are you?”

Skywarp: “Here.”

The vocal was above the young man, but he still couldn’t see anything. Trying to play it cool, he cleared his throat and told his ‘friend,’ “Uh, hey listen, man, the cops are probably gonna be patrolling any minute. Why don’t you come outta there and we can chill somewhere else?”

Skywarp narrowed his optics, “I’m not afraid of your local law enforcement.”

“Yeah? Well, I AM!” Christopher threw his hands up and started walking away, “Listen, I may be the King of New York, but those jealous asses in the blue suits don’t know that!”

“Sounds like my brother!” Skywarp laughed, but was intrigued, “King of New York?”

“Um yeah,” Christopher shrugged, “I decided after the Decepticons took over the city and everybody moved down here to Brooklyn, someone had to be the King. Might as well be me!”

Skywarp gave a sneaky sneer: “Oh wow…you have no idea who you’re talking to, do you?”

The young man gulped, “You’re a narc?”

“Eh?” The Seeker didn’t know that word, “No, a Seeker.”

Now it was Christopher’s turn not to know a word, “Eh, yeah, well anyways…” he was seriously worried now who he had been conversing with, “My momma’s gonna wonder where I am…’” his mother was working at her second job, but whoever that was in the alley didn’t need to know that.

Skywarp: “I don’t need my mommy’s permission to talk to my friends!”

Now he was getting on Chris’ nerves, “Hey! I didn’t say I needed anybody’s permission!”

Skywarp huffed his vents, “How old are you anyway?”

“Twelve!” Christopher answered proudly.

The dark Seeker swallowed hard, taken aback, “You’re BIG for your age.”

“HA HA HA HA HA HA!” Christopher mock-laughed, “How about you quit hiding in the dumpster and say that to my face?!” He wasn’t afraid to face this person, not on his own tuff on Fulton Street!

"Of course," Skywarp smirked, knowing full well that the young human thought he was dealing with someone from his own planet, and decided to play along, “I’ll face you…”
The dark Jet stood to his full height and walked slowly, deliberately, stomping the ground and emerged from the alley to stand face to faceplate with the one they called the King of New York. He stared down at Christopher and folded his arms so that his Null-Rays were prominently displayed. The shadow of his wide wingspan fully eclipsed the husky young man.

For a long time, Christopher just stared. Time no longer had any meaning. It was probably only a minute, but it felt like a full day. Finally, he spoke: “You’re a Transformer.”

“That’s right,” Skywarp nodded, although he was puzzled at the human’s outwardly calm reaction. He had expected the young man to scream, or run, or pass out. Any of the things he had seen most humans do in his presence.

“You’re gonna kill me now?” Chris asked calmly.

But the Seeker just shrugged, “Why would I do that?”

The young man shrugged back, “Isn’t that what Transformers do?”

Skywarp: “Not always. Not when we…like someone.”

Christopher shuttered at first, but it was becoming clear that the winged robot had already had ample time to vaporize him if that was his intent, “So um…what do you want?”

Skywarp: “Well, you said we should continue this conversation somewhere else?”

“Oh, um, right…” Chris didn’t think the giant robot with wings would fit into his third-floor apartment, “How’s my building’s roof sound?”

The Seeker agreed.

They ended up talking on that rooftop until dawn broke.

Christopher: “So your brother Starscream’s on a power trip?”

Skywarp: “Yeah, he’s always telling me how stupid I am and how everything I do is wrong!”

“That’s screwed up, man,” Christopher lamented as he leaned against the stone façade, “Adults are like that with me all the time.”

The Seeker’s optics began to tear up, finally finding someone to confide in, “Everybody treats me like I’m dumb! Especially Starscream!” He stood and started ranting, “I graduated from the Cybertron War Academy!!! I graduated from Seeker’s School before that! And everybody just acts like my brothers did my homework for me!!! I’m fifth in the Decepticon Army!!! And I hear the Autobots say, ‘Oh look, it’s the stupid one!’ Do you know how that makes me feel?”

“Yes…” Christopher looked off into the sunrise, “Would you look at me…and know I was a straight-A English student?”

Skywarp considered his answer, “Well, yeah, you talk more grown-up than those other kids did…”

Christopher: “Think so?” he just shrugged.

Skywarp: “So why do ya sell drugs?”

“Money, Power, and Respect!” the large tween insisted, “It’s what every human wants, isn’t it?”
“I see,” the dark Jet nodded, “kinda like the Decepticon Credo…”

Christopher was interested, “That’s why you joined the Cons?”

“I joined because Starscream and Thundercracker said to.” Skywarp sighed, “I do everything they say…”

Christopher: “Do you WANNA be a Decepticon?”

Skywarp snorted, “Do you WANNA be a drug dealer?”

The chubby youngster bit his lip, “Not really…”

They were both quiet for a few minutes. Finally, Skywarp asked, “What do you wanna be ten years from now, Christopher?”

Christopher: “Ten years from now?”

Skywarp: “You wanna be a drug dealer?”

“What do I wanna be?” Christopher wouldn’t have told another human being this, “I really wanna be a Rapper.” There, he said it. It took a lot to admit that.

Too bad it was lost on Skywarp.

The Seeker smiled, “Oh, you wanna work at Macy’s?”

Chris blinked, “Huh?”

Skywarp smiled, “I just LOVE opening presents!”

“Oh…” Christopher pitched the bridge of his nose, feeling a headache coming on, “Not a gift wrapper. A Rapper! Rapping songs!”

“O-Oh, oh,” the Seeker nodded, “I see. Well, on Cybertron we have a different word for that. We call those ‘musicians.’”

Christopher: “We use the word musicians here too.”

Skywarp cocked his helm, “Well, why didn’t you say that first?”

Christopher’s jaw opened. There was a pause, “Okay, sorry,” he decided against calling the huge robot stupid, “I wanna be a musician…”

Skywarp smiled, “I think you’re really a great singer.”

“Yeah?” the young man smiled, “You think I could be famous?”

“Oh, famous isn’t the word for you!” Skywarp stood suddenly and flew up into the air, “You’re the King of Brooklyn! You’ll be the Greatest Rapper of All Time! Other musicians are gonna look up to you! The little kids in Brooklyn are gonna say, ‘He lived on my street!’ They’re gonna write songs about you!” He was using his hands for emphasis, “You’ll be more than famous…you’ll be NOTORIOUS!”

“Notorious…” Christopher smiled, “I like the way that sounds.”
End of Flashback:

Skywarp sat in the kitchen with coolant tears in his optics now, “I miss you, Christopher…”

Depressed now, he got up and raided the cupboard with the desserts in it. He pulled out all the wrapped packages of rust sticks, flux, and chocolate-covered wheel-nuts.

Their friendship had lasted for 13 years. It ended when his friend died on the receiving end of four assassin’s bullets. It happened when he was exiting a performance on a music awards show. His two trinemates, the same ones that knew how to make background music with their hands over their mouths, were in the car with him that night, but Christopher was the only one hit. “Where the hell was I?” he was sleeping in his quarters, cuddling his huggy android.

“Your friend is dead, is he not?”

“Uh huh,” Skywarp answered the disembodied vocal, unthinking, “Fifteen years ago…”

“Must have been YOUR fault. You waste of tin!”

“I-I guess…” the Seeker always blamed himself, even if he had no way of foreseeing what happened. It was easy to stuff his faceplates when he was so upset.

“Afthole.”

Skywarp: “Yeah…”

“You’re not fit to bring a sparkling into the universe!”

Skywarp didn’t answer that time. He WANTED this sparkling.

“I said, you’re not fit to bring a sparkling into the universe!”

Skywarp: “TC’s gonna help me.”

“All the MORE reason I’m going to kill you!”

The dark Seeker suddenly felt a chilly wind, “W-What?”

“And his name is THUNDERCRACKER, you disgusting creature!”

Skywarp was getting scared; he suddenly realized something: THIS was the vocal he’d heard in his recurring nightmares, “Holy slag, it’s happening when I’m awake now?!”

“You will NEVER see that sparkling you’re carrying!”

Skywarp jumped up suddenly, looking around for whoever was talking to him, “LEAVE ME ALONE!!!”

“I WILL destroy you…”

Skywarp shouted at the ceiling, “WHY?!”

“Because you destroyed my family!”

Skywarp balled his hands into fists, still backing up, “I never broke up any family!”

“YOU DID!”
Skywarp: “GO AWAY!!!”

“Not until you’re offline!”

Finally, cornered into the countertops, the young Seeker wrecked his processor on who this could be. He hadn’t offlined any Autobots or stolen some mech’s girlfriend. The only mech he could think of at that moment was the actor that was the sperm donor.

“Um, are you the g-guy with the f-five hundred sparklings?” his vocals cracked, coolant tears in his optics.

“That’s just sick.”

Skywarp was shaking now, his hands going to his stomach protectively, “Y-You can’t have her!”

“I don’t WANT your hideous offspring!” Gravechaser was pleased with how he was slowly breaking the young Seeker’s psyche, “You will NEVER burden Thundercracker with your foolish choices!”

Huh? This vocal didn’t want TC to help him with his sparkling? “N-None of your business!”

Gravechaser finally materialized, “MY SON’S LIFE will always be my business!”

At that point, it was unclear whether it was the spoken words or the grizzly appearance of the apparition that truly shattered the carrying flyer.

Gravechaser: “Stay away from my son!”

Skywarp just screamed. He screamed at the top of his air intakes, loud enough for birds on the waters’ surface above to fly away. He cried and cried, “HELP ME!!! TEECEE!!! STAR!!!!! HELP ME!!!! SOMEBODY HELP ME!!!! SOMEBODY!!! ANYBODY !!!”

Every mech on the Base woke up! The triplets began wailing in unison.

Megatron grabbed his Fusion Cannon and came running.

Starscream, momentarily horrified at the choice of his Trine brother and his sparklings, decided to grab them as best he could, thinking this was either a fire or some kind of attack.

“Lock the door!” Soundwave barked to his sparklings as he raced down the hallway, blaster in hand and cocked to fire.

But not surprisingly, Thundercracker was the first to rush to his baby brother’s side, “Skywarp!!!” he yelled as he rushed into the kitchen. By then, Gravechaser had vanished, and Skywarp was on the floor sitting in a fetal positing, crying his optics out. TC was at his side immediately, wrapping his arms around him.

After Thundercracker they all came, crowding into the kitchen. “Skywarp! What was all that yelling?!?” Megatron hollered, looking around in every direction for the source of the Seeker’s terror.

Skywarp was shaking like a leaf, burying his faceplates into TC’s neck cables, whimpering. The blue Seeker held him tightly, trying to figure out what had happened.

“What is it?! What happened?!” Starscream shrieked as he rushed in, gently letting down his sparklings and kneeling down to see what was wrong.
Soundwave scanned the room, but no threat was detected. Although he couldn’t help but notice all the empty junk food wrappers.

The room was freezing cold. And Megatron swore he saw ice or sleet melting on the counters.

Both Seekers were holding him, trying to find out what happened. When Skywarp finally calmed down enough to open his optics and look around, he saw that only the Decepticons were with him, “I-I s-saw s-somebody…”

“WHO?!” Megatron demanded, “An Autobot?!”

The Seeker just sobbed and cried more.

Several Cons began looking around the hallways, “I don’t see anyone, sir!” Dirge shouted.

“Who was it, Skywarp?” Starscream tried to speak softly.

“Were you attacked?” Thundercracker asked, stroking his wings.

The dark flyer rasped out, “I-I saw a m-m-mech…” he couldn’t bring himself to tell them who.

Soundwave: “Was it Mirage?”

Skywarp: “I-I s-saw blue and w-white…”

“That’s definitely Mirage!” Megatron growled, “That slaggard Prime, how the hell did his spy get into my Base?”

“I can detect his heat signal,” Soundwave insisted, “come on!”

Megatron told Starscream, “Take the triplets to your brothers’ quarters and barricade the door. I’ll find that slagger!”

Before following Megatron, Soundwave took a moment to give Skywarp a dirty glare and gesture at the wrappers, “What did I say about eating junk food?”

After Soundwave scanned the Seekers’ quarters to make sure it was safe, Thundercracker carried his still trembling younger brother in, while Starscream tried desperately to calm his terrified sparklings back down. They moved a dresser against the door while the Decepticon Leader and his 3ic did a room-by-room search for the offender.

Skywarp couldn’t stop bawling and keening. Something that scared him so bad. He couldn’t stop shaking. TC began looking him over for any injuries, “Is that…ice?” the youngest Seeker had melting ice on his wings, “Skywarp? Were you outside?” When there was no answer, Thundercracker took him by the shoulders to force his little brother to look at him in the optics, “Just tell us what happened!”

But he couldn’t tell him the truth. Not about Gravechaser being his…and what he said.

“Was it Mirage?” Starscream asked again.

This time Skywarp lied, “Y-Yeah, it was Mirage. H-He was yelling at m-me and stuff…”

Thundercracker: “Did he attack you?”

“I-I d-don’t k-k-know,” the darker flyer shrugged, “I-I was c-covering my optics…”
Starscream: “Did he shoot you with some kind of ice gun or what?”

“I TOLD YOU I DON’T KNOW!!!” Skywarp was getting upset with all the questions, “GO AWAY!” He brought his knees up to his chest and cried more.

Thundercracker sighed, again looking over the ice, “You need a hot shower.” He helped his brother to his pedes, took him into the wash racks, and ran the warm water over his wings.

Thundercracker: “When Soundwave finds Mirage, I want five minutes alone with that glitch! I swear I’m gonna break his smell receptors!” he took a washcloth and ran it over the still tender wings, “Look what he did to my baby brother…” When he was satisfied that the sleet was all gone, he shut the waters and wrapped the still catatonic flyer in some towels and took him back to their berthroom.

Meanwhile, Soundwave sat in the Control Room watching the play-back from the security camera in the kitchen. Skywarp was indeed attacked by someone invisible (The tapes failed to record Gravechaser’s image), but there was clearly a point on the film that the Seeker seemed to see his tormentor.

Soundwave took off his visor and rubbed at his optics, trying to process the evidence: This just didn’t add up! Mirage was not an assassin; he was an espionage specialist. Even if he WERE to somehow breach the Base’s security, he would stay invisible, steal whatever information he came for, and slip away. Why would he even confront Skywarp at all?

The 3ic had done an exhaustive search with Megatron for the Autobot but found no evidence he was ever even here. Finally, Soundwave sent Laserbeak to check on the Ark. And eventually, the Condor reported that Mirage was at the Autobot Base—in recharge in his own quarters. But Soundwave wasn’t sure if this was good news or not. Frankly, on the list of possible threats whoever was on their Base might pose, Mirage was on the bottom of that list.

Finally, Soundwave, still covering up for Skywarp, got up and spoke to Megatron, “Apparently, Mirage was on our ship. Skywarp heard something and got up to investigate, and scared Mirage off while he was stealing Energon from the kitchen.” The lies just kept on piling up.

“Prime’s gonna pay for this.” Megatron growled, “Where’s Mirage now?”

Soundwave: “Laserbeak confirmed his whereabouts at the Autobot Base, Sir.”

Megatron raised an optic brow, “How in the hell did he get away?”

The 3ic shrugged, “Apparently, he swam…”

Megatron grunted and left. But for Soundwave, there would be no rest tonight. He went back to his computer to research the Seekers behind the Speedwing Donor Bank of Vosnia and the mysterious ‘actor’ that sired Skywarp’s sparkling.

It was dawn by the time Megatron declared the Decepticon Base secure again, and by that time, everyone who had been on the search was frustrated and exhausted. Megatron was forced to postpone the raid on the power plant he had scheduled for that afternoon.

Finally, he knocked on the Seekers’ door to collect his mate and sparklings. Thundercracker answered the door, gun in hand. He was the one that had stayed awake on guard duty.

Starscream was fast asleep on the sofa bed with Dawning. Skywarp was asleep on Thundercracker’s bed with Darkmount and Darkwing.
“Looks like you guys had a rough night,” Megatron smirked, “How’d you ever get the sparklings to sleep?”

“Well, wasn’t easy,” TC yawned, “They were worried about Warp, but when he settled down, they settled down. Did you find Mirage?”

“He’s gone.” Megatron insisted, “But this is NOT over! I can promise you that. Prime’s going to have hell to pay.”

Thundercracker: “When you’re done killing him, you can give me Mirage.”

Megatron snort laughed, then looked back at his family, “So eh, do you mind if the little ones stay here? Or do I risk waking them up?”

“They can stay…” the blue Seeker yawned again.

Megatron: “Alright, see you later.” And he left.

Starscream woke up as Thundercracker was laying an extra blanket over him.

TC: “Sorry, you looked cold.”

Starscream: “Mhmmm…” he glanced over at their recharging brother, crashed out in a food coma with his huggy android and two of the triplets curled against his frame. The sparklings looked like they were afraid to leave his side.

Starscream sighed, “They love their uncle…”

Thundercracker nodded, “He really misses them, Star.”

Starscream: “I didn’t…I mean, I just didn’t want them outside, I…” he groaned, “Can you believe their first birthdays are in a couple of weeks?”

“No,” TC laughed. A year already?

Starscream, falling back to sleep, “Maybe…we could have a birthday party for them? Together?”

“Sure,” the blue Seeker agreed, “Maybe then he’ll wanna tell the others about Crystal.”

That’s her name?

Starscream: “Crystal?”

TC: “His sparkling.”

Starscream made a face, “Oh.”

TC rolled his optics, “Goodnight, Star…”

And with that, he flopped down close to Skywarp and wrapped his arm around the other’s middle.
Chapter 10: By LadyClassical

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter 10:

By LadyClassical

Since the kitchen incident, Skywarp refused to be alone. He had to be with either one or both of his brothers, or Soundwave at all times. It was almost as if they were taking shifts; Skywarp would have breakfast with Starscream, and they’d feed the red and white Seeker’s sparklings. Then during the day, he would help Soundwave with his paperless-society project, and then in the evenings, Thundercracker would come back from his scouting missions, and they would watch movies together. For weeks, no more incidents like the one in the kitchen had occurred, and the pregnant flyer finally began to relax again and tried to write off the frightening episode as a sleepwalking nightmare.

In the meantime, the paperless-society project was still a big deal to Soundwave, and even if he wouldn’t have chosen Skywarp first, it was good to have some help. But he didn’t want the knocked-up Jet lifting any of the heavy boxes, each containing hundreds of files.

“Just sit at the desk. Await further instruction,” the cassette deck directed. There were various papers stacked everywhere, all over the room, as well as the boxes they were yet to go through. It looked boring to Skywarp.

“Here, put these in order of date,” Soundwave instructed as he brought Skywarp a big stack of files, “Upon completion, return them to me, and I will scan them into the computers.”

“Okay, seems easy enough.” Skywarp shrugged. “So then what happens?”

“Then I scan the files into the system and we shred the papers. Once the information is uploaded into our computer, we’ll be able to access it by a searchable database.”

“COOL!” the dark Seeker shouted, loving the idea of being able to get information at the ready without hours of fruitless searching. Anything to make life easier! But then he wished he’d expressed his enthusiasm a little more quietly because they heard someone in the hallway.

“How are things in here?” Megatron opened the door. Skywarp jumped up and hugged his knees to his body. Since he was around 16 weeks along now, his sparkling had started to show, and it was getting harder to hide his little “condition” from everybody. Mostly, he solved this problem by only hanging around those who knew about the pregnancy—his brothers and Soundwave.

“Excellent, Lord Megatron,” Soundwave reassured him. Skywarp grabbed a big box and slid it in front of himself, then grabbed a file out at random and pretended to be reading it.

“Skywarp?” said Megatron.

“Um—um, it’s going great,” Skywarp said nervously. “I’m not hiding anything behind this box so don’t look there!”

Megatron looked confused (luckily he missed Soundwave’s facepalm) and asked, “I haven’t seen you around often, Skywarp. Is something a problem?”
“No!” Skywarp laughed, but he could feel his cheeks turning red.

“Nothing happens here without my knowledge,” Megatron reminded them and shut the door.

“If only he knew,” Soundwave mumbled, shaking his head.

…

Skywarp was a little more self-conscious after that. It was becoming clearer that he couldn’t just parade around the base like he did before his pregnancy started to show. So, he had taken to staying in his quarters most of the time, and when he dared to venture back into the world of the living, he wrapped himself in a bathrobe or a large blanket to keep his secret.

But at least he had something to be happy about today. It was the triplets’ first birthday, and he had been invited to the birthday party! Just another excuse to stuff himself with food…Obviously, he had to wear his baggy bathrobe to the party. Thundercracker told everyone Skywarp just wore it because he was cold.

Skywarp had been decent enough to bring a present, at least; he got them a set of blocks and some bubbles. Maybe when they learned to fly, they could pop the bubbles as they floated up into the air. Skywarp remembered playing that game with his Mother when he was a sparkling, where she would blow bubbles into the air, and he would try to pop them between his little fingers.

Starscream had organized plenty of sparkling-safe activities—dancing, for example, or Find the Toys (discovering toys previously hidden in a box or under a cloth). Starscream served out energon cupcakes, including a cupcake for each sparkling.

The triplets seemed to think the gift wrap and ribbons were much more fun than the actual presents. Starscream even let Skywarp play with them a little; he dangled one of the ribbons down in front of the sparklings, who enjoyed batting at it and trying to grab it. Finally, he dropped it and let them play.

But Skywarp’s favorite part of the party was, of course, the food. All his sickness had cleared up surprisingly quickly, and he was getting food cravings more and more. So when his cupcake was handed to him, he devoured it like a wild animal.

The triplets couldn’t get too close to their candles, because they were more likely to grab at the flame, not knowing what it was than actually blow it out. But finally, with everyone laughing, the three young Decepticons managed to get the flames out and stuff their cheeks with cupcakes, getting it all over their faces in a most adorable manner. Starscream and Megatron took pictures, and Soundwave volunteered to be the DJ.

It was nice to have a nice, fun day for once; Skywarp had been a little nervous about his still-unborn sparkling, and having an hour filled with sparklings and fun was just what the medic ordered. Even his past disputes with Starscream seemed to be mustard under the bun, at least for now.

SEVERAL WEEKS LATER…

It was Halloween: The base was mostly deserted today; Megatron was out on a mission, and Starscream had taken his sparklings out on a nature walk to pretend they were trick-or-treating. And Thundercracker was out practicing flying. Skywarp was wondering what to do.

“What do you want to do, Crystal?” he asked, rubbing his sparkling-bump, imagining that she could hear him. “Want to watch your sonogram again? Then I can get a good look at you.”
That’s a good idea, Skywarp thought to himself and headed to the Seekers’ room. Of course, his part of the room was usually messy, but he always kept Crystal’s sonogram tape in a special place on his desk.

“Where is it?!” Skywarp cried, throwing items aside at random as he searched for the tape. “I left it right here!”

Someone must have taken it! But who? Skywarp searched Starscream’s desk and Thundercracker’s, but the tape wasn’t anywhere in the Seekers’ room or anywhere else in the base. Skywarp turned the place upside down, but Crystal’s sonogram tape—one of his most prized possessions—was nowhere to be found.

That was when Skywarp felt a hard blow to his back that knocked him onto his hands and knees. The purple Seeker let out a scream as he heard someone laughing—not a nice laugh, an evil laugh, a horrible laugh that sounded of sick amusement, sadism, almost, like the very spark-beat of Unicron.

Tears flowed freely down Skywarp’s cheeks as he felt his head being lifted upwards as if moved by strong, invisible claws, sharp enough to pierce his chin and make purple energon-blood drip down his neck. The entire room had gone dark; not even the stars or moon shone through the window. Skywarp’s terror-filled red eyes followed clouds of smoke that quickly formed themselves into claws; a small purple hand was between one hand’s horrible fingers.

The hand of a sparkling.

Skywarp could do nothing but sob helplessly as he grabbed at the image of his still-unborn daughter hanging in front of him, cruelly just inches from his grasp.

“Give her back,” he wailed, “give her back!”

“Fool!”

Skywarp recognized this voice—the mech of mystery who had been stalking him for the entire pregnancy and who was taunting him now. Chills ran down Skywarp’s spine as he realized who he was up against.

“Please!” Skywarp cried, kneeling in a prayer position. “What do you want from me? Leave me alone!”

“Think again, pond scum!” It seemed like nobody else in the base heard this voice, but in Skywarp’s audios, it was as loud as thunder, as menacing as lightning. “You take something from me—I take everything from you!”

With that, the smoke cleared, the hands vanished, the voice was gone. The sonogram tape flew across the room and smacked Skywarp clean across the forehead, knocking him out cold.

TO BE CONTINUED…
Chapter 11: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

The following shows a painful argument that was done purely for drama, and I intend no harm or political message. Please continue to read and follow the story.

Chapter 11:

By Transformersnewfan

Some believe that on October 31st, known on Earth as Halloween, the veil between the world of the living and the world of the dead is the thinnest it is all year and allows spirits to come through more easily. This was probably part of the reason that Skywarp’s tormentor possessed such strength that evening.

Gravechaser materialized and stood over the object of his scorn. He evilly smirked as he admired his handiwork, “I really should have pursued that career as a baseball pitcher.”

Skywarp lay on the floor offline; his metal skull cracked and bleeding profusely from his forehelm wound. Within ten minutes, he was lying in a pool of his own Energon-blood. He had been kneeling forward when he was hit, and the impact of the sonogram tape to his forehelm had knocked him backward, so his legs were still bent backward under his body. If nothing were done, he would go into permanent shutdown, and both he and his unborn sparkling would perish.

“Justice has been done,” Gravechaser stated triumphantly. Yes, now Skywarp would pay for destroying the demon’s marriage and relationship with his son. He would pay by bleeding out on the hard ground, eerily (and intentionally) similar to the way Gravechaser himself had met his own end: Suffering and dying of Energon loss after being attacked by a mech seeking revenge for losing his loved one. Just the way Gravechaser had been murdered by the Bondmate of Steve, the policemech he had shot in the chest, who also, bled to death on the floor. Steve’s death, of course, was on the floor of Gravechaser and Thundercracker’s room at the Sleepy-Tyme Motel. Yes, but that Steve mech had not SUFFERED the way Gravechaser had! Steve was deactivated almost instantly! No, Gravechaser remembered how he had offlined after an agonizing seventeen hours.

Perhaps, the evil mech now wondered, if Skywarp was getting off too easy, being unconscious for his own death. He really wasn’t aware of his own suffering. And Gravechaser briefly considered rousing the young Seeker just to make him AWARE of the fact that he and his sparkling were dying. But he dismissed the thought because he realized Skywarp would most likely start screaming for help, just like he had done in the kitchen months ago. So, no, bleeding out to death on the floor this way would have to suffice.

Yes, Gravechaser had deactivated that way: He laid there, torn apart and bleeding on the cement floor. His Energon-blood was running out and seeping into the cracks of the concrete. His internal mechanics broken and sputtering. He had pleaded with the guards for help, begged, pleaded, cried… but to no avail. They didn’t care. They had already received their payoff from the big mech that was kicking and punching the life out of his Bondmate’s killer.
Gravechaser smiled inwardly at the sight of the Energon-blood slowly washing over Skywarp’s optics, smell-receptors, and mouth, and the Jet’s chassis shuttering every so often. But despite Gravechaser’s demented CPU telling him that this is satisfaction and revenge for what Skywarp had done to him, the vicious demon was still filled with rage over the past. It took all his strength to not rip the young Seeker’s helm off!

Gravechaser went over it again and again. Even in his original life as a Seeker, he often repeated himself. Death and taking on the new form hadn’t change that. He was now rehashing his final moments in his CPU: Dying on the cold, hard ground; sputtering for air as Energon seeped into his cracked air intakes; optics fading out…and through it all…for all those agonizing hours, there was only one Transformer he had wished to—

Thundercracker flung the door open and raced inside. “SKYWARP!” he yelled as he saw his beloved sibling laying in his own Energon-blood.

The blue Seeker had been out flying and shooting the clouds with his Null-Rays—something he had done since he was a sparkling—when he felt his baby brother’s weaken signal through their Trine Bond.

Skywarp: :Teecee...help...us...: The darker Seeker didn’t have to repeat the message.

Thundercracker dove to the floor, “Skywar, what happened?!”

Gravechaser had retreated to the closet before his biological son saw or felt his presence. Now he just watched with apathy.

There was no response, so TC began accessing the situation. He wasn’t a medic but being a soldier and First Lieutenant of the Decepticon Air Force; he had made sure he knew at least basic first aid.

First, TC tried rousing the unconscious flyer, “Are you okay?” When he received no response, he looked for vital signs: Skywarp still had all his colors, and Thundercracker felt for a corroded spark pulse in Skywarp’s neck cables. He was able to feel the faint signal under his digits. Skywarp was breathing slowly, but he was bleeding pretty badly. His older brother couldn’t tell where the bleeding was coming from, whether it was his optics or his smell receptors, or if he had been wounded. He didn’t try to clean or apply pressure anywhere in case there was glass, or an object embedded, or if his metal skull was damaged. Instead, Thundercracker called Soundwave on his Comm.-Link: “Soundwave, I found Skywar, and he’s bleeding pretty badly!”

The Tapedeck responded immediately: “I’ll be right there. Don’t move him!”

Since neither had any idea what had happened, Thundercracker resisted the urge to start shaking the younger Seeker to wake him up. He didn’t know if Skywarp had suffered a backstruct injury, so TC stabilized his brother’s helm and neck by holding his hands on both sides of Skywarp’s helm in the position he had found him in.

The black and purple moaned in pain but didn’t wake up.

“Skywarp, it’s going to be okay,” TC whispered, trying to keep his younger sibling calm, “I’m right here. Soundwave’s coming, and we’re gonna take you to the Med-Bay…Don’t be scared. I’m right here. I’m right here.”

As if queued, Soundwave came in with a medical kit and a stretcher he had retrieved from the Med-Bay. The ever-calm Tapedeck kept a cool processor despite their mutual worry for the carrying
Seeker and his unborn sparkling. He stabilized Skywarp’s helm in a hard-plastic brace gave him oxygen while Thundercracker stayed nearby and squeezed his brother’s hand.

Soundwave: “What happened here?”

Thundercracker: “I found him this way.”

“It was getting late,” Soundwave explained as he shook his helm, ”I sent him to his room thinking you were here.”

Thundercracker felt miserable with this, “I was out flying…I-I didn’t know. I didn’t mean to leave him alone!”

“It’s alright, Thundercracker,” the Tapedeck reassured him, “Just stay calm. We’re going to help him now.”

Together, they carefully lifted the injured flyer onto the stretcher and took him to the Med-Bay. All the while, Skywarp did not regain consciousness, so they knew it was serious.

Soundwave: “Listen, I need you to secure the Base. Get Ravage to assist you.”

“O-Okay” TC was shaking, but he obeyed. He took one long, last look at Skywarp, afraid it might be the last time he sees his young brother online.

So first, the blue flyer contacted Starscream, who said he would head back immediately; Megatron, on the other hand, was halfway around the world as he and the Stunticons and Combaticons were on a mission—they were scheduled to attack a science convention in Tokyo at dawn—and couldn’t get back until the following afternoon. The Decepticon Leader did, however, authorize Thundercracker to lock down the Base for security reasons.

By the time Thundercracker and Ravage got the Base secured, the remaining Decepticons were present and accounted for. And TC went back to the Med-Bay’s waiting room. He sat leaning forward, studying his hands, and waiting for word.

TC tried to keep himself composed, telling himself that Skywarp was in the best possible hands, rattling off Soundwave’s expertise in his processor, trying to reassure himself.

The image of his little brother, offline and bloodied, laying on their berthroom floor, wasn’t something TC could shake off easily.

“It happened again…” the blue flyer heard himself saying, “I can’t believe it…why?”

Thundercracker couldn’t believe the eerie similarities the scene had to a sparklinghood tragedy he had suffered.

When TC was three years old, his Creators split up. His Father, a High-Grade addict and in a roaring rage, had slaughtered the blue flyer’s pet helio-hamsters and his petrorabbit Harvey. And while Thundercracker had been spared the sight of Harvey’s remains (his step-father-to-be had discovered the petrorabbit’s body in their bathroom), he had been the one to find the two helio-hamsters’s broken, mangled corpses on his berthroom floor. He was so young at the time, but he remembered the whole thing vividly. His pets, the ones he was responsible for, had been brutally murdered…and what made it even worse, was that his own Father was the killer. His Father had killed Harvey too, and the three were buried together in their backyard. Their humble monument was still standing there today.

Starscream: “TC?”
The blue Seeker was pulled out of his thoughts by his Trine Leader’s vocals, “Hey Screamer…”

“What’s happened?” the SIC had his three little ones behind him, looking bewildered about why their Mother and uncle seemed so upset.

“I don’t know yet…” Thundercracker wiped the condensation from his forehelm, still upset, “I was flying, and I came in, and he was passed out on the berthroom floor.” He paused for a moment, “There was blood everywhere.”

Starscream closed his optics, “Oh Primus,” he got so scared; he sat down next to Thundercracker and wrapped his arms around his older brother’s shoulders. Thundercracker, in turn, reached up and grabbed Starscream’s hands. They cried together in silence.

Then after a few minutes, the triplets began to get restless. They could sense something bad had happened.

“Remember,” Starscream whispered, “Soundwave is an expert in his field. If anyone can help him now, Soundwave can.”

Darkwing approached his Mother and uncle; he babbled something that sounded like, “Whre Wop?”

The red and white Seeker swallowed hard, “Um, your uncle Skywarp’s in the Med-Bay right now, sweetspark.”

The little fella tilted his helm, not fully understanding yet what had happened.

Starscream tried to strengthen his outer resolve for his little sons, “Alright you three; I’d say it’s time for bed.” He was still very worried about Skywarp, but he didn’t want his sparklings to know how serious the situation was, “Hey TC, wanna help me get them to sleep?”

The blue Seeker nodded absentmindedly. Maybe putting the triplets to bed would get his processor off the images of his two helio-hamsters and his brother’s grisly scenes melding together like horror movies’ highlight reels.

An hour later…

After the two Seekers had bathed and changed Darkwing, Dawning, and Darkmount, they put them in their crib and pulled the covers up to little chins.

“Sleep tight, my babies,” Starscream told them as he kissed each of their helms, “Momma loves you…”

Darkmount: “Dadda?”

“Daddy’s away on a business trip, son,” Starscream smiled, “You’ll see him tomorrow afternoon.”

Dawning just looked worried.

“Whre Wop?” Darkwing repeated.

“You’ll see your uncle again soon…” he promised, “Now get some rest.”

For his part, Thundercracker didn’t say much. He was lost in his thoughts: Thinking about his young brother; thinking about the innocent, unborn sparkling he was carrying. He wondered now if the
sparkling was even still online.

He went back to the Med-Bay and sat down on the bench in a waiting area. Starscream asked Rumble and Frenzy to watch over his sparklings before joining his brother and sat next to him as they waited for word from Soundwave.

Unbeknownst to them both, Gravechaser watched from the attic. And from there, the vengeful demon silently fueled a quarrel between the normally close Trine Brothers with his unheard whispering.

“Energon-blood everywhere…”

Starscream sighed, “You were saying before that there was blood everywhere?”

Thundercracker: “Y-Yeah…all over the floor and stuff.”

Starscream was still trying to piece things together, “What was it, like he was purging blood and stuff?”

“Blood from his smell receptors or optics…”

Thundercracker: “Uh, it didn’t look like purging, it was all over his smell receptors…his optics and stuff…”

Starscream was surprised, “He was bleeding from his optics?!”

“I-I don’t know, it was either coming out of his optics or his smell receptors, I’m not sure.”

Thundercracker wrung his hands, “All I know is he was fine an hour before…Even Soundwave said so…”

“A bleeding aneurysm perhaps?”

Starscream got scared, “Do you think it was a processor aneurysm? And i-it started bleeding?”

“HUH?!?” TC looked at Starscream, “What are you talking about? He doesn’t have an aneurysm!”

“And how would you know that?”

Starscream: “Well, I mean, we don’t know for sure…”

Thundercracker was upset by this, “That’s right, we don’t know anything for sure yet.” And he looked away.

Starscream looked down, “I’m sorry…”

Thundercracker: “It’s okay.”

Gravechaser upped his game, “He’s a weakling… susceptible to aneurysms.”

Thundercracker sighed, “I really can’t think of why…I mean, why he would be susceptible to aneurysms.”

“Hypertension…”

Starscream: “Well, I remember when I was carrying, I read something about having to be careful of hypertension.”
Thundercracker: “Eh?”

Starscream started quoting his scientific studies, “Hypertension, it’s a common condition in which the long-term force of the Energon against one’s spark chamber chasing is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems.”

But TC shook his helm, “That’s for really old mechs.”

Starscream: “Well, technically yes, but…it could occur when one is carrying. It’s called Gestational Hypertension.”

Thundercracker just listened now.

“Yeah…” Starscream continued, “Studies have shown that high Energon pressure in the fuel lines can stress the spark and cause problems like pregnancy complications or even aneurysms. And maybe that’s what’s happened here.”

The blue Seeker closed his optics and prayed this wasn’t the case. After another moment, he tried to think positive, “Well, he might have to stay in the Med-Bay for a while then, but…we’ll help him through this.”

“Terminate the sparkling.”

Starscream bit his lip as he tried to broach the subject. “Thundercracker, we may have to make some disheartening decisions.”

TC wasn’t following, “What do you mean?”

“He’s going to die.”

Starscream stood and paced, not ready to meet his brother’s gaze, “Well, if his life is in danger…”

Thundercracker stared him down, not yet believing where Starscream was going with this.

Starscream: “If a pregnancy causes cerebral bleeding, I think we need to terminate it.”

TC shook his helm, “He’d never agree to that.”

Starscream: “Well, he may not be a position to decide…”

Thundercracker stood and approached Starscream, “No. We are NOT making that decision for him. She’s HIS sparkling.”

“Terminate the sparkling.”

But Starscream got on his science-degree high horse, “Look TC, it’s very serious when an Energon bleed occurs in the CPU, and—”

Thundercracker cut him off, “We’re not terminating his sparkling.”

Starscream was getting angry, “Do you realize that he could deactivate?”

Thundercracker: “I’ll wait and hear it from Soundwave.”

Starscream: “And then what?!”
Thundercracker: “And then we’ll talk to Skywarp about it!”

Gravechaser began to play the two against each other.

“So who’s the Trine Leader here?”

Starscream: “Look TC, I’m the Trine Leader here!”

“And who’s the eldest?”

Thundercracker: “And I’m the eldest, so what?!”

“Who here’s a scientist?”

Starscream: “Well, don’t forget I’m a scientist!”

Thundercracker: “Quit thinking like a scientist and start thinking like a Trine Brother then!”

Starscream was getting agitated, “I AM BASING WHAT I AM SAYING ON SCIENTIFIC STUDIES ABOUT PREGNANCY!”

“Never wanted the sparkling in the first place…”

Thundercracker: “THAT’S BULLSLAG! YOU NEVER WANTED HIM TO HAVE HIS SPARKLING IN THE FIRST PLACE!!!”

Starscream: “THAT’S A DAMN LIE!”

Thundercracker: “YOU’VE BEEN AGAINST THIS FROM THE START!!!”

“He didn’t get your approval…”

Starscream: “WELL HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN AGAINST IT FROM THE START WHEN I DIDN’T EVEN KNOW ABOUT IT FROM THE START, HUH?!”

Thundercracker: “HE DIDN’T NEED YOUR DAMN PERMISSION!”

Starscream: “IF HE HAD ASKED ME FIRST, I’D HAVE SENT HIM TO A DOCTOR!”

Thundercracker: “OH FOR WHAT? YOU THINK HE WAS CRAZY OR SOMETHING?!”

Starscream: “NO! BECAUSE HE WAS CLEARLY IN NO CONDITION TO START A PREGNANCY!”

Thundercracker: “HE HAD NO REASON TO THINK HE WASN’T!”

From their room, the triplets sobbed as their Mother and uncle fought bitterly. They would have cried out if they weren’t so terrified of the ghost walking on their ceiling. They could sense him standing right above the two adult Seekers.

Starscream: “AND NOW HE’S LAYING IN THE MED-BAY WITH A POSSIBLE STROKE BECAUSE OF IT!!!”

Thundercracker: “OH COME ON! HE DIDN’T HAVE NO STROKE!”

Starscream: “IT CAN OCCUR DURING A PREGNANCY!!!”
Thundercracker: “THAT’S RIDICULOUS, STARScream! MY MOTHER HAD TWO KIDS, AND DIDN’T HAVE ANY PROBLEMS! THAT’S JUST SCIENCE BABBLE!”

“This will not just go away…”

Starscream: “YOU THINK THIS IS SOMETHING THAT CAN JUST GO AWAY?!?”

“You just wanted to destroy it.”

Thundercracker: “YOU’VE JUST WANTED THE SPARKLING TO GO AWAY!”

Starscream: “DO YOU WANT TO LOSE SKYWARP OVER AN UNBORN SPARKLING?!”

Thundercracker: “IF WE TERMINATED HIS SPARKLING, WE MIGHT LOSE HIM ANYWAY!”

Starscream: “I’M TRYING TO THINK OF WHAT’S BEST FOR HIM!”

Thundercracker: “IF YOU WERE DOING THAT, YOU WOULDN’T BE TALKING ABOUT KILLING HIS CHILD!”

Starscream: “IT’S ONLY TWENTY WEEKS, IT’S NOT EVEN VIABLE!”

Thundercracker: “NOT IF YOU TAKE HER OUT NOW, NO!”

Starscream: “WE CAN’T KEEP IT, THUNDERCRACKER! IT’S KILLING HIM!”

Thundercracker: “AND IF WE KILL HER, HE’LL NEVER GET OVER IT! WE MIGHT AS WELL JUST KILL HIM WITH HER!”

Starscream: “IT’S NOT EVEN A SPARKLING AT THIS POINT!!! IT’S JUST A CLUMP OF CELLS!”

Thundercracker: “HOW DARE YOU!!! YOU HAVE THREE SPARKLINGS!!!”

Starscream: “SO?!”

Thundercracker: “SO YOU OF ALL MECHS YOU SHOULD APPRECIATE THE VALUE OF THE LIFE OF A SPARKLING!”

Starscream: “IT’S NOT ONLINE!!! IT’S NOT EVEN BORN!”

Thundercracker: “SHE’S GONNA BE IN FOUR MOUTHS!!!”

Starscream: “NO TC, I’M TELLING YOU! WE NEED TO TAKE IT OUT NOW!”

Thundercracker: “AND I’M TELLING YOU IT’S NOT YOUR DECISION, SCREAMER!”

Starscream: “HIS LIFE MIGHT DEPEND ON THIS!”

Thundercracker: “YOU HAVE NO DAMN RIGHT TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT HIS SPARKLING LIVES OR DIES! IT’S NOT YOUR DECISION!”

The two grabbed each other and began shoving each other back and forth, locked in a wrestling match.

Starscream: “THEN WHOSE DECISION IS IT? YOURS?!”
Thundercracker: “IT’S SKYWARP’S DECISION!”

Starscream: “AND I’M TELLING YOU, TC! HE MIGHT NOT BE IN ANY CONDITION TO MAKE THAT DECISION!”

Thundercracker: “THEN THERE IS NO DECISION!”

Starscream: “THIS IS SKYWARP’S LIFE WE’RE TALKING ABOUT HERE!”

Thundercracker: “YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT TERMINATE HIS SPARKLING WITHOUT EVEN TELLING HIM FIRST!”

They continued grappling each other.

Starscream: “I’M TRYING TO SAVE HIM! THINK ABOUT THAT!”

Thundercracker: “THEN THINK ABOUT HOW HE WOULD FEEL WHEN HE WAKES UP AND FINDS OUT WHAT HAPPENED?! YOU THINK YOU COULD LIVE WITH YOURSELF, SCREAMER?!”

Starscream: “THAT’S NONE OF YOUR CONCERN!”

Thundercracker: “YOU’RE RIGHT! MY YOUNGEST BROTHER IS MY CONCERN!”

Starscream: “WELL I’M ORDERING A TERMINATION!!!”

Thundercracker: “THE HELL YOU ARE!”

Starscream: “AND WHOSE GONNA STOP ME?!”

Thundercracker: “ME! THAT’S WHO!!!”

Gravechaser had been so busy watching the match that he didn’t realize Soundwave was coming. The Med-Bay doors opened suddenly, and the Tapedeck scolded, “What is going on out here?!”

The dead, former Seeker vanished in the nick of time.

And with the instigating demon gone, an evil veil seemed to lift and disappear, and the two brothers realized that the way they were fighting, they were both about to kill each other.

Starscream and Thundercracker each took a few steps away from each other, gasping for air to cool their respective overheating systems. Neither said a word now; they had never had such a fight in their whole lives.

Soundwave: “Quit all this yelling. You’re going to wake the whole Base!” He looked past them, “Where did Megatron go?”

Starscream, still very upset, shook his helm, “Megatron’s coming back tomorrow…”

Soundwave kept his composure, but was surprised by this, mumbling, “Could’ve shown I heard three mechs out here.” He quickly shook it off and motioned them to come into the next room. When they did so, the Tapedeck made the unusual move of LOCKING the Med-Bay’s doors.

“How is he, Soundwave?” Thundercracker asked, his vocals cracking.

Soundwave: “Right now, he’s recharging. He doesn’t appear to have any permanent damage. The
injuries to his skull will heal in a day or two.” He again checked the outside through the door’s window, “But catching the perpetrator needs to be a top priority.”

The two brothers looked at each other, then back at Soundwave.

Thundercracker: “It’s an…injury?”

Starscream: “Perpetrator?”


“STRUCK HIM!?” the blue Seeker shouted, “W-Who?! W-What?” His CPU reeled with questions of who could have done this to his little brother.

“W-Wait, wait a minute,” Starscream pinched the bridge of his smell receptors, “You mean this wasn’t a hemorrhage?”

“Negative. A hemorrhage wound looks nothing like this,” Soundwave dropped his vocals a few octaves in case there were any spies around, “His skull was struck with something at close range, and he was bleeding out. The injury was going inward, not outward. This was clearly a case of blunt force trauma.”

The two Seekers were in shock momentarily and said nothing.

Soundwave: “This bleeding had nothing to do with the pregnancy.”

Starscream felt so ashamed now for his thoughts of terminating the sparkling. He felt mortified. He couldn’t even look at his older brother.

But Thundercracker, for his part, was furious, “Y-You’re saying, some slagger attacked our little brother?”

“Affirmative,” the Tapedeck agreed, “He was struck in the forehelm with an object with such force, it knocked him offline.”

Starscream’s optics filled with coolant tears, “O-Oh Primus…”

Seeing that they were upset, Soundwave asked, “Would you like to see him now?”

Thundercracker: “Yes.” And Soundwave led the way.

Skywarp lay unconscious in a small, private room in the main ward of the Decepticon Med-Bay.

His forehelm had been reconstructed and the new metal welded in place and covered by gauze bandages encircling his helm. The poor flyer was wearing an oxygen mask and had been hooked up to a spark monitor. He also had a fetal monitor strapped around his belly to track the unborn little one’s sparkbeat.

Before letting them see their youngest brother, Soundwave explained all that was done: How he had cleaned out the wound by removing chipped pieces of metal skull with tweezers one piece at a time. And then welding the injury closed and bandaging it, “You will need to keep that clean.” He had also welded up an unexplained cut under the flyer’s chin. He went on to explain about all the tests that were done: How he had done an MRI instead of a CT scan because the later required a dye injection. Whereas an MRI would not affect the sparkling negatively since it was only Skywarp’s
processor that was undergoing testing. A lead mat was over his belly to protect the sparkling during the process. Although just to be safe, an ultrasound was then done to check the status of the unborn child…

Thundercracker: “And?”

Soundwave: “The sparkling wasn’t harmed.”

Both Seekers sighed in relief.

Soundwave: “However, Skywarp suffered a mild concussion, a form of traumatic processor injury.”

Starscream stared at the Tapedeck sadly; Thundercracker’s optics were locked on Skywarp’s offline form.

Soundwave: “Symptoms could range from dizziness, nausea or vomiting, blurred vision, sensitivity to light, to noise, behavioral or personality charges, possible memory loss.”

Starscream: ‘What’s the cure?’

The Tapedeck crossed his arms and sighed, “Rest mostly. He needs to limit his activities that require mental concentration, such as watching television or using a computer.” He shuttered at how Megatron would react to the latter.

Starscream: “Does a concussion hurt the sparkling?”

Soundwave: “No. Even if his symptoms are severe, it will not impact the fetus. Comatose mothers still deliver healthy sparklings.”

The red and white flyer was still trying to process everything. “And…Mirage did this to him?”

The Tapedeck didn’t know anymore, he felt it was a brutal and violent attack, one that he hadn’t seen before in the Formula-1 Racer’s style, but he didn’t want to cause undue panic until he was surer of his theory. So instead, he concurred, “He keeps breaching our security.” He turned and left, “Excuse me while I do a security sweep.”

“Check on the kids!” Starscream shouted suddenly. Normally he would check himself, but he wasn’t ready to leave his siblings.

But for his part, Thundercracker was overcome with sadness and guilt over what had happened to Skywarp. He couldn’t even speak. Instead, he just walked over to his brother and sat nearby.

Starscream watched the 3ic leave before approaching the youngest Seeker’s offline, hurt form. He stared at the two different monitors, beeping with each of the sparkbeats. He guessed that the second one was of his brother’s unborn sparkling. The one he had just referred to as ‘just a clump of cells’ in an unthinking moment of anger.

“So, this is the sparkling?” he asked nervously as he looked at the monitor.

“Uh huh,” was the blue Seeker’s rather cold answer. He was still very upset with Starscream for what he felt were his unfair views of their brother’s pregnancy. But instead of continuing their argument, he began rubbing the offline flyer’s helm in an attempt to comfort him.

Starscream sighed, “I’m so sorry about what I said before…” The red and white Seeker started rubbing the younger Seeker’s belly. He could feel the tiny lifeform inside the other’s gestation
chamber turned around as if to acknowledge his touches.

“Hello there, little one,” he cooed, and he swore the sparkling moved around at the sound of his vocals.

Starscream: “Hey TC, come here and feel this.”

Thundercracker tried to sound harsh, but his smile betrayed his true feelings: “Leave her alone, will ya?”

Starscream: “Come on, I think she wants to say hi.”

Thundercracker: “He doesn’t like that.”

Starscream: “What?”

Thundercracker: “Come on, he’s real shy about his looks, and he doesn’t want us touching his stomach.”

Starscream: “Yeah, but…he was always touching mine when I was carrying.”

TC just shrugged.

Starscream: “Come on, she’s moving around.”

Curiosity got the better of the blue Seeker, so he got up and laid both his hands on the youngest Seeker’s gestation chamber.

The tiny, 20-week unborn sparkling seemed to be wriggling her limbs around.

The blue Jet’s hardened exterior seemed to melt away. He smiled and spoke to his unborn niece, “Hello Crystal…”

Starscream: “Hello little sparkling…”

“Her name’s Crystal,” TC corrected playfully.

Starscream curled his lip components, “We can discuss it…”

TC: “Come on, Screamer…”

Starscream: “I’m just saying…”

The baby continued to kick at them playfully.

Between his chattering older brothers and his squirming unborn daughter, Skywarp came back online slowly, painfully, “Huhhhhh,” he whined, trying to turn on his side. Then the terrible pain tore through his CPU like a hot chainsaw; so bad that it made his optics water.

Starscream whispered, “I think he’s waking up.”

The black and purple Seeker struggled towards consciousness again, he couldn’t understand why his helm felt like it was on fire; such pressure; his whole chassis ached. The feeling of hands and cold medical equipment on his abdomen frightened him. Were they trying to rip out his sparkling?! He
started thrashing madly, like a trapped animal, screaming, “AAAUUUUGGGGHHHHH!!!”

Thundercracker: “Skywarp, calm down!” He and Starscream tried to hold him so that he wouldn’t hurt himself.

But from the youngest flyer’s perspective, he didn’t register yet what was going on. Where was he? The last thing he remembered was being in his room and looking for his…that THING was in the Room! Oh, Primus! That thing took his sparkling! “NO! DON’T TAKE HER AWAY!!!!”

Starscream: “Skywarp, come down…” he tried to grab the other’s shoulders.

Where was he? He thought he heard Starscream’s vocals, “STAR!!! TEECEE!!! HELP ME!!!”

“Skywarp, it’s us. We’re right here…” Thundercracker tried softly, “Wake up, buddy…”

His Trinemates were here? They were here with him. It was their hands that were holding him…but not holding him down…but like that…just holding him. He tried to unshutter his optics but was met with the horribly bright lights that burned his optics and temporarily blinded him. Where were they? Were they all captured by that monster?! He started keening again; pained sobs as the coolant tears rolled down his faceplates.

The two loyal brothers did their best to try to calm the youngest Seeker, rubbing his wings and arms. TC caught one of Skywarp’s shaking hands and squeezed it, “Skywarp, it’s us! Wake up!”

Finally, the black and purple Jet reached out and grabbed hold of one of their arms—Thundercracker’s, as it turned out—and glommed onto his eldest brother, burying his faceplates into his neck cables. TC held him tightly as Skywarp reached frantically for Starscream before grabbing the red and white Seeker and pulling him as close as possible. He was keening loudly as his two big brothers held him close and rubbed his wings.

“Sshhhh, shhh, Warp, you’re fine…” Starscream tried telling him as he held him, “You’re fine.”

TC wrapped his arms around his trembling little brother and hugged him tightly, “It’s alright kiddo…”

But Skywarp couldn’t seem to calm down. Instead, he was screaming and bawling his optics out, refusing to look up. That horrible sensation of hopelessness, being too late to save his sparkling, was the worst feeling the young flyer had ever felt in his life. The image of the cloud of smoke turning into claws, snatching his unborn daughter from his gestation chamber.

“He took my baby!” Skywarp wailed, “HE TOOK MY SPARKLING FROM ME!”

Thundercracker whispered, “No, no Warp…nothing like that happened.”

Skywarp: “HE STOLE MY SPARKLING!!!”

Starscream felt his own spark stink into his fuel tanks; he couldn’t believe he’d even considered a therapeutic abortion when he thought that Skywarp had suffered an aneurysm. The sparkling was moving around and responding to their vocals. How could he have even CONSIDERED destroying his own niece’s life? He had given birth to three mechlings of his own. He understood the sanctity of life. It was as if…as if someone…something…had put the words in his mouth.

“He took my baby femme!” Skywarp kept crying and repeating.

“No, nobody took your sparkling, Skywarp,” TC kept repeating softly, “She’s still with you…” He
shot Starscream a dirty glare as he told the youngest flyer, “I would never let that happen.”

The blue Jet scolded Starscream through their Trine Bond. :See what you did? He must’ve overheard us!:

Starscream shook his helm shamefully and hugged Skywarp again, “Please don’t cry, Warp. Your daughter is fine. She’s right here with you…with us.”

The darker Seeker continued to keen and sob, holding onto his beloved siblings as they attempted to reassure him. At one point, Thundercracker tried to tell him to open his optics and look at the sparkling’s life-force on the monitor screen, “Listen, listen, you hear that? That’s your child’s spark beat.”

Finally, Soundwave returned to the Med-Bay, “I wasn’t able to detach anything. Only significate item I can report is: I switched Ravage to guard duty of the triplets.” He came over and practically spat, “I instructed him to KILL anyone if he found it necessary.”

Skywarp kept keening, unabated, “HE TOOK MY SPARKLING!”

The Tapedeck rushed over, “I did nothing of the sort,” erroneously assuming the Seeker was referring to him, “your treatments were of no danger to your sparkling.”

The sound of his baby brother keening and sobbing tore Thundercracker’s spark into pieces. He blamed himself for not being there to protect Skywarp, just like when he was little with his pets and that…

“Skywarp, listen to Soundwave,” he murmured, “Nothing’s happened.” He stroked the back of the other’s helm, rocking him as he cried.

Soundwave tried scanning the young Seeker, trying to determine the cause of his agony. He sat down on the medical berth and explained calmly, “Skywarp, you’re in the Med-Bay. You have suffered a skull fracture, compounded by a mild concussion. The symptoms might be with you for a few days. But the good news is: Your skull’s been repaired, and the concussion has no ill effects on your pregnancy.”

He was safe? Skywarp tried to open his optics and look at his surroundings, but the harsh fluorescent lights again burned into his sensitive optics. He whimpered and again buried his helm into the crook of his older brother’s neck. “T-The light…hurts…the light hurts.”

Starscream was getting worried, “What’s wrong with his optics?”

Soundwave: “Sensitivity to lights and sounds are a common symptom of a helm injury.” He got up and shut the lights and then retrieved a spare visor, “Here Skywarp, try this.”

The black visor helped: Skywarp was able to at least open his optics, and even then, the digital lights from the various machines and monitors stung a bit. But at least he was able to see his family and friend and his little one’s strong spark beat on the monitor. He sighed and leaned against Thundercracker’s shoulder before the dizziness set in again.

Soundwave: “Do you remember anything that happened?”

The dark Seeker’s vocals were raspy from all the screaming and his weakened systems, “I saw the same mech from the kitchen…”

Thundercracker: “Is it Mirage?”
Skywarp: “It’s not…Mirage.” He started crying again. He loved TC; they had always been the closest of siblings and the best of friends. And yet this entity was proclaiming to be his brother’s Sire. He didn’t want to believe that. He adored his eldest brother from the moment they had met; as far back as he could remember. How could he comprehend that this evil being was somehow associated with his loving sibling? His protector? His best friend?

Starscream: “Do you recognize him?”

Skywarp: “I’ve never seen him…before.”

Soundwave asked a hard question, “Do you think he’s the Sire of your sparkling?”

Skywarp closed his optics, tired, “He’s not a…Seeker.”

“We need to tell Megatron what’s been going on,” the Tapedeck concluded, “We have a serious treat here!”

“Noooo…” the dark Jet whined, “You promised me.”

Soundwave tried to reason with him the way he would try to reason with one of his own sparklings, “Skywarp, you’ve been brutally attacked. On Decepticon grounds. Now we have been trying to take shifts to protect you, but this mech was still able to do bodily harm to you. He could have hurt your sparkling.”

“It’s my fault that he’s hurt,” TC added shamefully, “I shouldn’t have left without telling you guys.”

“Regardless,” the 3ic insisted, “Whoever did this was lying in wait for the opportunity.” He made Skywarp look at him in the optics, “Why is this pregnancy a secret? Who are you afraid of?”

Skywarp’s optics looked dim and tired behind the shades like he wanted to sleep, but he answered the best way he could, “I don’t…know, really. Just felt…like I should hide this from…somebody.”

Soundwave: “Megatron?”

Skywarp: “N-No. Just…” he sighed, “I don’t even know who…I-I wasn’t g-gonna h-hide her originally. I-It’s ever since I made t-that trip to the sperm bank. L-Like…somebody’s stalking me.”

Soundwave: “Do you think someone or something came back with you from Vosnia?”

Ordinarily, the black and purple Seeker would have joked that a little someone OBVIOUSLY came back with him, but he understood the question, “M-Maybe…I-I think I’m losing my mind.”

Thundercracker held him close again and tried to help, “Maybe it’s best we don’t tell Megatron yet.”

Starscream was surprised, “Why not?”

“Not tell too many mechs what we know.” Thundercracker shrugged, “See who knows about this attack without us saying anything. I mean, I don’t think Megatron himself is involved, but once we tell him, they’ll all know.”

“I-I see,” Starscream admitted, “He IS a gossip.”

Soundwave refrained from insulting his best friend, “Very well, then, for now, get some rest. It’s nearly one in the morning.”

“S-STAY WITH M-ME!” the young Seeker begged, grabbing at Soundwave’s shoulder while still
clinging to his brothers.

“Fine,” the Tapedeck groaned, not looking forward to sleeping upright in a Med-Bay chair all night but did realize that his telepathic powers were necessary to detect any potential threats. He told the two older brothers, “Just make sure he’s comfortable.”

An hour later…

Skywarp was keeping his optics closed under the visor, but he wasn’t recharging. He was still traumatized by everything that had happened to him and his unborn daughter. His Trine brothers agreed to sleep with him, with Thundercracker holding him and facing him, and Starscream facing his back and rubbing his wings. The red and white Seeker couldn’t help but notice how TC was avoiding optic contact with him, still steamed about their argument apparently.

Starscream: “You awake, TC?”

TC: “No.”

The Trine Leader didn’t want to reveal the project he had been working on secretly. But he felt now that it was the only thing that would get the blue Seeker to forgive him. At the same time, he noticed Skywarp whimpering and shivering every so often under the sheet.

Starscream: “TC, he’s freezing…”

Thundercracker got up to get a blanket.

Starscream: “Go to my quarters and get the fur blanket out of the cabinet.”

Thundercracker groaned, tired, “There’s probably one in the cabinet here.”

“No,” the red and white flyer insisted, “Go get the one in my quarters. And check on my sparklings while you’re there.”

TC: “Check on your own slagging kids.”

Starscream: “I’m asking you to.”

“Why?” TC narrowed his optics, “So Ravage will tear my throat out or something?”

“Ravage knows your CNA signal,” Soundwave commented, apparently still online while sitting upright in a chair under a blanket.

“Please TC?” Starscream asked again, “The top blanket in the cabinet?”

TC: “Fine…” The blue Jet stumbled in the dark and went to Starscream and Megatron’s quarters. As predicted, Ravage looked at him, then nodded, “Good evening, Lieutenant,” without killing him. TC checked on the sleeping triplets and went to the cabinet. He pulled out the specifically requested fur blanket when something pink caught his optics.

Back in the Med-Bay, Skywarp was still crying and upset. Pain radiated through his helm. Even the
little movements of his sparkling couldn’t comfort him. Starscream kept rubbing his arm and wings to no avail.

Thundercracker returned, smiling, with both blankets.

Starscream: “Hey! I just wanted you to SEE that! I didn’t say to bring it in here!”

TC: “This is so sweet of you, Screamer…”

Starscream: “It’s nowhere NEAR finished!”

TC: “I’m sorry we fought before. Sorry I doubted you.”

“I’m really sorry too,” Starscream signed, “I just wanted to show you that to prove that I DO want her.”

TC: “Look Warp, isn’t this cute?”

The dark Seeker reluctantly opened his optics again, adjusting the visor.

Starscream had been knitting a pink blanket for his unborn daughter.

“It’s not finished yet. And there’s a lot of mistakes,” the Trine Seeker mumbled, embarrassed, “I just didn’t want you guys to EVER think that I wasn’t supportive of you having your sparkling.”

Skywarp, who knew nothing of the argument before, looked at the pink afghan with a blank expression. He didn’t know if his child would live to use it, or if he would live to see her use it.

“See, the bottom part’s done,” Starscream explained, “and I’m going to use a purple yarn to knit the letters to spell out her name. When you decide on one of course.”

Skywarp: “Crystal…”

“Must you?” the red and white Seeker groaned, “I DO want to support you. It’s that NAME I can’t get past.”

Thundercracker spread the fur blanket over Skywarp, tucking his pedes under it, “Come on, Screamer, it’s a nice name.”

“But every time I hear it, I think of that guy!” Starscream insisted, “T-That, that, BIG human!”

“Hey, no knocking Agent Williams.” Soundwave interjected, “If it wasn’t for him setting us up in the old Pfizer factory in Brooklyn, who knows where we’d be today. I swear if we’d have set up shop in Chicago the way Shockwave had originally wanted us to, we’d have all been decapitated by the Autobots by now.”

TC: “Chris was a great guy. Getting us that factory; getting jobs for all his friends.”

Starscream: “Blah…”

Skywarp didn’t say anything; his helmache was getting worse, and the grief for his friend always made him want to bawl his air intakes out. TC saw this and got him to lay down and pulled the covers up to his chin before laying down next to his brothers, “There you go…don’t worry, Skywarp; everything’s gonna be okay.” He let his little brother lay on his arm and chest while Starscream again hugged his back and cuddled him. Skywarp didn’t want to say anymore. He just wanted to sleep now.
Three-Fifteen in the morning…

Gravechaser materialized in the Med-Bay, having witnessed his son’s loving care of his ‘brother,’ that wretched Skywarp, whom Gravechaser HATED with every fiber of his existence.

It would be easy to deactivate Skywarp now; the big Tapedeck guy was asleep. All Gravechaser had to do was walk over and slice Skywarp’s neck cables with his claws. Except…except, the black and purple Seeker lay in Thundercracker’s arms. Thundercracker…his son…his only son…how would Thundercracker feel when he woke to his brother, dead in his arms.

Gravechaser looked at his son…REALLY looked at his son. For the first time since he had arrived on Earth, in fact. Thundercracker had really become such a handsome young flyer. Gravechaser had missed so much, first from being imprisoned, then his death and years in the Pit. He hadn’t seen his precious mechling since he was four years old. Now the demon began to rethink his plans. He would definitely spare Skywarp tonight. At least while his own beloved son was present. Now Gravechaser wondered if there was any chance of reconnecting with Thundercracker: Perhaps come to him in his dreams, to tell him that he loved him. That he had ALWAYS loved him. That he had never STOPPED loving him. Gravechaser looked down upon his own, Unicron-given form, and wondered if his son would be horrified by his current appearance. Perhaps he could come to his son in a vocal and reunite with his boy. At the very least, warn Thundercracker that his Creator wasn’t such a pretty sight these days.

Gravechaser removed the picture from his subspace. The same picture he looked at every night while in prison. The same picture he kept with himself even in deactivation. The one of Gravechaser when he was a suave Seeker, with his wife and his sparkling. It was amazing how much Thundercracker now resembled the handsome young mech he himself was once…perhaps he could…

The demon’s thoughts were cut off when the Med-Bay doors opened. He retreated to the attic once again, and observed the scene:

It was one of the Tapedeck’s twins!

Rumble came over to the medical berth and shook Thundercracker, “Hey TC, your Dad’s on the phone.”

“His dad?”

“Oh,” TC rubbed at his optics, “forgot about the time difference.” He got up and went to the phone as Rumble left.

“Hey Dad, how are you?” the blue Seeker asked lovingly, “Oh, it’s nothing, honest! Skywarp bumped his forehelm trying to hang a shelf, and I insisted we get it checked out in the Med-Bay.”

“His dad…”

TC: “So how are you today, Dad?” He paused to listen; then starts laughing, “Dad, you didn’t!”

“You call him your dad…”

TC laughed, “Because Dad, he’ll go nuts if he finds out you and Mom know about Crystal!”

“You called him your dad four times in the past forty seconds.”
TC smiled, “Yeah Dad, I know. I know. We just gotta keep it secret is all. Don’t send the dresses until I talk to him.”

“Five times…”

TC laughed, “No, not yet, Dad…I was thinking of asking Starscream to go with me.” He again paused to listen, “Really? They don’t?” He paused, then grabbed a datapad and stylus, “Circuit and Fuselage Street?” He listened, “Oh that’s so sweet of you and Mom, Dad.”

“You know, I believe you already called him that.”


Soundwave had stirred with the sounds of talking, “Your Creator?”

TC: “Uh-huh, I guess Mom felt it when Warp got hurt yesterday, and they were waiting to hear from me before he called. I should’ve called them.”

Soundwave nodded, “I’m glad to hear you told them about the sparkling.”

TC dropped his vocals so as not to alert Skywarp, “Oh sure, I told them at the beginning, when he took the pregnancy test.” He started laughing, “Dad said they went shopping and brought seven little dresses and a sparkling swing already.”

“That’s nice,” Soundwave nodded, “I remember how much they sent when Starscream was carrying.”

TC: “I know! And this is the first femme, so Mom and Dad have gone a bit nuts, y’know! I guess they can’t help it. Two sons and three Trine-grandsons; they’d never went shopping for a little femme before.” He looked at his notes, “Dad wants us to go to this high-end sparkling store in Vosnia. He’s gonna send me the money to buy the crib and everything. Now I just have to convince Warp to let me and Screamer go there.”

Soundwave: “Hopefully he’ll come around once we catch this frigger that’s been harassing him.”

TC: “True…g’night…” and went back to his brothers.

Gravechaser could barely contain his roaring rage within his frame. It took all his restraint to not vaporize the entire Decepticon Base and everyone inside. It was very clear…CRYSTAL CLEAR…how fitting…that Thundercracker had long forgotten him. That ungrateful mechling clearly embraced that son of a glitch his wanton mother had started interfacing with during their marriage! The one that had begotten Skywarp! Gravechaser would NEVER consider sparing the black and purple brat now! He would destroy him! And Thundercracker too! ALL of them! He would get his revenge! He would punish them all! And then, oh, how he will laugh! He will laugh when Thundercracker looks at Skywarp’s twisted, grey, lifeless shell. He will laugh when those two heathens keen and wail when they must commit their bastard son’s remains to the ground on a cold, snowy day in Vos. And he will laugh when he takes Skywarp’s worthless spark to Unicron in exchange for his own and sentence the worthless wretch to an eternity of suffering in the depths of the Pit! Gravechaser crumbled and tore up the picture with his claws and tossed the remains away!

The next day…
Thundercracker returned to his quarters and painstakingly cleaned the floor of all the Energon-blood Skywarp had spilled the previous evening. He also straightened up and put things away, “Skywarp’s such a slob…” he joked. But he didn’t want him to come home to a mess. He did not find, however, the object his baby brother had been struck with; something he found odd at the time.

Skywarp was brought back to his quarters via wheelchair because he was still very groggy and out of it, falling back into recharge as soon as TC helped him into his berth. His big brother just let him sleep, making sure he gave him that same huggy android the darker Seeker slept with ever since he was a tiny newling. “You must’ve missed this,” he told him before tucking him in, staying close by to watch him sleep, “Love you, kiddo.”

Meanwhile, Starscream and Soundwave met with Megatron to discuss the violent attack.

“I have a suspect,” Soundwave told his Leader and friend as he showed him a photo of the mysterious actor from Vosnia, “His designation is Joey.”

TO BE CONTINUED…
“Joey?” said Megatron. “Who’s that?”

“The father of—” Soundwave cut himself off, remembering that Megatron didn’t know about the sparkling.

Megatron looked confused. “The father of who?”

“The— the father of acting, of course,” Soundwave replied, tap-dancing his way out of trouble, and sighed with relief.

“Yeah, he kind of looks like an actor,” said Megatron. “So, where is he?”

Soundwave: “Right now, he is on Vosnia.”

“Oh, great, Vosnia.” Megatron groaned. “I always hate going there.”

“If you want to meet my suspect, that is where we must go,” Soundwave told his leader matter-of-factly. “Shall I inform Astrotrain that we need a ride?”

“Oh on the double,” said Megatron. “I want to get this over with as soon as possible.”

…

Vosnia wasn’t too far from Cybertron (which was why Seeker explorers had chosen to colonize their own city, Vos, long ago), but it was a long way from Earth. Luckily, Astrotrain only had three passengers—Megatron, Soundwave, and Starscream.

Megatron had invited Starscream to come because they wanted a Seeker to help them navigate, and they would also need a translator when speaking to Joey. (Starscream was the only one aboard who fluently spoke Cybertronian and Vosnian.) They couldn’t invite Skywarp along; the Space Bridge was too unstable for a carrying mech. That, and mostly because if anybody saw him, it was pretty obvious that he was pregnant, and Megatron wasn’t supposed to know, and Joey would give it away anyway. So Skywarp and Thundercracker babysat Starscream’s triplets back home.

Soundwave knew it wouldn’t make any sense to ask Joey to meet them at the donor place since that would seem strange to Megatron, so they met Joey at his apartment, located in Vosnia’s capital city, Principale Civitatem (or Civit, for short).

Civit was a busy city, but it wasn’t hard for them to find a hovercraft. Megatron and Soundwave had no idea what anybody was saying or even doing, but Starscream seemed to know his way around. As they drove to a residential district, he pointed out some landmarks to them—an Energon shop, the Seekers’ Lodge, a playground. The cabbie finally dropped them off in front of a tall building; Starscream gave the cabbie some Energon cubes as a reward and thanked him in Vosnian, then the hovercraft sped away.

Joey’s apartment was on the top floor, so it was a long elevator ride up. Starscream was thinking that
Skywarp wouldn’t have liked this part. Even though he was long past the sickness stage of his pregnancy (in fact, it had ended before his first trimester was over) the constant jolting and all the fellow passengers bumping into them rudely probably wouldn’t have been good for Skywarp, not to mention the constant clashing of wings. Starscream always thought elevators shouldn’t be so cramped.

When they finally got to the top floor, the elevator was a lot less crowded, but they were still glad to be out. Megatron strode forward ahead of them and knocked on Joey’s apartment door. It was opened by the actor’s roommate, Chandler.

“Who are you?” he asked in Vosnian.

“We’re here to see your roommate,” Starscream said. “Joey’s a suspect of a violent crime.”

“Joey?” said the roommate, looking shocked. “What kind of crime would he commit?”

Starscream: “Well, we have reason to believe that he—”

“Starscream!” Megatron hissed. “What are you doing? Tell him we need to see Joey! Tell him we’re the police.”

“Fine!” Starscream told him in Cybertronian, then switched to Vosnian again to address the roommate. “We’re from the police department, and we don’t have time to talk to civilians.”

“Joey’s watching TV,” the roommate said finally. “I’ll go to my room, and you can talk to him.”

As the roommate showed them into the apartment, all three surveyed their surroundings. It wasn’t pretty, either. There were weird stains on the rug, paper towels stuck to the walls with water, and a TV playing a porn flick.

“This place is disgusting,” Megatron mumbled. Starscream ignored him and tapped on the Seeker mech watching the porno.

“Hey…how you doin’?” said Joey, looking up at Starscream’s attractive form.

“Um, fine?” Starscream raised an eyebrow at him.

Joey stood up and put one hand on Starscream’s shoulder. “Could I invite you in for some Energon…beautiful?”

Starscream was glad then that Megatron had no idea what Joey was saying because Joey would have been mauled. Starscream knew what Joey was asking for, so he shook himself free and sighed. “Sorry, I’m not interested. My friends and I need to speak to you about something serious.”

Joey saw the larger mechs, “Woah, they don’t look like Seekers.”

“We hail from Cybertron,” Starscream explained. “You know, we Seekers have our own city there. It’s only about a five-hour flight from here, on a spaceship.”

“STOP MAKING PLEASANT CONVERSATION!” Megatron yelled.

“Okay, to make it clear—have you been to Earth recently?” Starscream asked.

Joey: “What’s Earth?”

Starscream was taken aback. “It’s—it’s a planet.”
“Ask him if he attacked Skywarp!” Megatron elbowed Starscream. “I want to get out of here!”

“Would you shut up?!?” Starscream elbowed him back, then addressed Joey again. “Look…don’t play dumb with me.”

“Oh, he’s not playing,” the roommate was heard saying from the other room. “Believe me.”

“Thank you for the commentary we did not ask for, roommate,” Starscream said sarcastically, and rolled his eyes. “You might not have known the name of the planet you were on, perhaps, but you are a donor who has fathered over one thousand sparklings, right?”

Joey: “Huh?”

“Don’t you jerk off for money?” Starscream clarified.

“Oh, right!” Joey replied. “I do it when it’s hard to find an acting job. I’ve been struggling ever since they killed me off on the show I used to act in.”

“It must be awful to get killed off in a TV show,” said Starscream. “I couldn’t imagine that happening to me! But anyway, we have reason to believe that you have attacked my Trinemate, who is pregnant with one of your sparklings.”

“Not cool, man,” said Joey. “I would never attack somebody pregnant! In fact, I don’t like attacking people in general.”

“Look, my Trinemate, Skywarp, insists that a strange mech has broken into our base and hit him with the sonogram tape of his sparkling, which doesn’t make much sense to me, but I’ll take his word for it. And he claims he picked you as his donor. You would be great friends, seeing as you both lack good judgment.”

“Aw, that’s a low blow,” the actor mech replied. “As you know, plenty of mothers-to-be have picked me to father their sparklings! Are you saying they all have poor judgment?”

“Name the date when Skywarp got attacked, and then ask him where he was that day, just as real police do,” Soundwave told Starscream. “Then check with the roommate to see if his alibi is legitimate.”

Starscream nodded and did what Soundwave suggested.

“Oh, that day!” Joey laughed. “What a coincidence. I was making a donation that day.”

“I see,” Starscream whispered Joey’s alibi to Soundwave. “Why don’t we just see if your alibi checks out?”

Joey didn’t seem nervous, so he shrugged and nodded. Starscream told Megatron how to say “We would like to talk to you” in Vosnian, so Megatron said these words as he knocked on the roommate’s bedroom door. Soon enough, Chandler walked out, and Starscream came over to ask where Joey was on the day of the crime.

Starscream expected the roommate to say that he didn’t know where Joey had gone, or that he had mentioned something about going to another planet or seeing the mother of one of his children, or something like that. But that wasn’t what happened at all.

“Joey was doing his ‘side job’ that day,” said the roommate. “You know, making a donation. I drove him there because he failed his driver’s license renewal test. I waited for him in the waiting room. It
didn’t take him long, but I got really bored of reading six-year-old magazines put there for my reading enjoyment.”

Starscream: “Did he go anywhere else?”

“Nope,” Chandler replied, shaking his helm. “Why would he? I don’t like driving him around, and he’s still taking Driver’s Education all over again.”

“Thank you,” said Starscream. “That’s all we need to know. It seems we have the wrong apartment. Your roommate is innocent.”

“I could have told you that all along.” Joey’s roommate rolled his eyes and went back into the bedroom. “Police…”

Starscream then filled Soundwave and Megatron in.

“Blast!” Megatron pounded his fist against his knee. “All this way for nothing! I have better things to do with my time than going on joyrides to Vosnia!”

“This is indeed unfortunate.” Soundwave nodded. “Up until now, this donor was one of my top suspects.”

“So if we want some real suspects,” said Starscream, “I guess we’ll have to keep digging.”

TO BE CONTINUED...
Chapter 13:

By Transformersnewfan

“You shouldn’t have told him Skywarp’s name!” Thundercracker barked at Starscream as they spoke on their Comm.-Links.

The blue Seeker was sitting on his berth while the triplets played with their toys on the floor. Skywarp was in the shower, not hearing what they were saying. “I don’t want this douchebag actor coming after us looking for custody!”

Starscream meanwhile, was in a gift shop in Vosnia while Megatron and Soundwave waited outside. A crowd of autograph-seeking Seekers surrounded the former Gladiator, and it was all the Tapedeck could do to keep them at bay while Megatron signed autographs one by one.

“Oh, come on, TC, that’s not gonna happen,” the red and white Jet insisted, “He was such a total moron, he’d never even heard of Earth. And besides, sperm donors aren’t legally considered Sires.”

“He could be faking his stupidity,” Thundercracker insisted as he picked up Dawning, who had gotten himself dirty with the washable crayons. “I didn’t want him knowing Skywarp’s name! Now you told him where we live and everything!”

Starscream: “All I said was Earth, I didn’t say the Base!” he was browsing through the aisles of the store.

“THAT WAS STILL TOO MUCH INFORMATION!” the blue Seeker snapped suddenly, “Do you want this motherslagger filing lawsuits for joint custody?! Do you wanna drop Skywarp’s baby off at some seedy apartment building every first and third weekends and on birthdays and holidays?!”

His use of the profanity made the triplet sparklings giggle, with Darkmount babbling ‘mahdersliger!’ over and over, to TC’s cringe.

Starscream was confused by his brother’s anger, “Well, none of that will ever happen, I—”

Thundercracker cut him off, “Is he blue?!”

Starscream: “No. He’s white. Like, totally white with red optics.”

“Skywarp said the guy who hit him was blue.” TC paced around holding Dawning, “What about the roommate?”

“He was brown and green,” Starscream answered while looking over the femme sparkling section of the store, “he was such a jerk. Those two deserved each other.”

Thundercracker: “Are you SURE you didn’t slip up and give him our coordinates?!”

Starscream: “No. Trust me, the bio-father’s an idiot.”

“HE’S NOT A FATHER IN ANY SENSE OF THE DEFINITION, STARSCREAM!” the blue
Jet bellowed into the Comm.-Link, “A ‘BIOLOGICAL’ FATHER ISN’T WHAT BEING A TRUE FATHER IS ALL ABOUT!” he landed heavily on his berth, letting the giggling sparkling crawl around on the blankets before putting his faceplates into his hands. He felt like he was having a nervous breakdown.

The Trine Leader paused before asking sympathetically, “What’s the matter, TC?”

Rubbing at his forehelm and optics, Thundercracker didn’t entirely know how to answer, “I-I don’t know…Been thinking of my Father too much lately.” He was having nightmares again and finding his beloved brother on the floor of their berthroom felt like reliving the horrid experience of finding his helio-hamsters murdered by his Bio-Creator. “I know he’s been dead for years, but…”

“Hmmm, probably because there’s a sparkling on the way?” Screamer guessed. His optics spotted what he thought would be a nice gift for Skywarp. “Try not to think about him. He’s as dead as Sentinel Prime.”

“Yeah, I know…” TC sighed, “But that’s why I don’t wanna hear about this Joey slagger. He’s not a real father. Just like I don’t consider my bio-father my REAL dad. My Stepdad is my real dad. He was the one who raised me. He’s the one I could always count on. Even now, I feel I can turn to him for anything.”

“Of course, I understand,” Starscream nodded, “But we have a bigger problem now, TC. We need to find the mech who hurt Skywarp.”

“My money’s on Mirage,” the blue Seeker grumbled as he picked up Darkmount and laid him on the berth, starting to change the sparkling’s diaper, “He’s the only one it could be! He’s an Autobot spy, he’s blue, and he and I go WAY back! He must be doing this out of some twisted revenge scheme, I dunno, and getting Prime to approve it cause he’s coming back with the intel!”

“Alright, I’ll tell Megatron,” the red and white Seeker said as he went to the cashier, “I’ll see you later tonight.”

Gravechaser had not heard his son’s words regarding the hurt he still carried over his Sire’s actions. Nor had he heard the declarations of love and admiration Thundercracker had for his stepfather. Because at the time that Thundercracker and Starscream’s conversation took place, the blue demon was fixated on Skywarp.

Coolant tears were in the black and purple Seeker’s optics as he took his shower. He was still sick and extremely groggy from his concussion. He was so disorientated in fact that he had to sit on a chair in the shower. The hot, steamy waters raining down on his achy, carrying frame helped, but it couldn’t take the emotional hurt and physical pains away completely.

To top everything else, he had eaten too much at dinner, and he was bloated now. Fried Energon-rice was great going down, but digesting it was taxing his systems.

A sharp pain in his lower abdomen on the right side came and went in a few seconds. He wasn’t sure what that was about.

“C-Crystal?” he whimpered as he adjusted the spout to hit his wings, “Are you still t-there?” He worried when his unborn sparkling didn’t move every so often.

He felt the little movements as his daughter shifted around in his gestation chamber.
“J-Just s-sleeping?” he asked, “Did I w-wake y-you?”

There were more movements, but he figured out that it was more out of his baby responding to his vocals than really answering his questions. Still, he was talking to her as if she could understand him.

“T-They’ll get t-that m-monster that h-hurt us, C-Crystal,” he looked around in the steam and waters, wondering if they were alone, “T-TC and S-Star will get him. N-Nobody’s gonna h-hurt us a-again.” He was hoping to threaten their attacker—assuming the ghost was present—into leaving them alone in the future.

“I-I won’t let a-anyone h-hurt you, Crystal,” his vocals became stronger, more threatening now, “N-No one hurts my loved ones.” He loved his brothers; he loved his nephews; and…Christopher. He loved his friend Christopher. Fresh coolant tears formed in his optics as his thoughts went back to his human loved one. “D-Don’t be scared, Crystal. T-Think good thoughts…”

Flashback:

Damian had fallen asleep in a chair as Christopher and Skywarp played Super Nintendo on the floor of Christopher’s mother’s apartment.

Skywarp hushed his friend and pointed to the bathroom. Christopher nodded in agreement. The then-16-year-old got up, retrieved shaving cream from the medicine cabinet, and proceeded to squirt the substance into his best friend’s open hand. Then he gave Skywarp the ‘okay’ signal.

Skywarp made his vocals loud enough to wake Damian, “Oh hey, Megatron! So you finally came to Brooklyn?!”

“HUH?! MEGATRON?! WHERE?!” Damian shouted suddenly, jerked from his sleep, and promptly smashed the handful of shaving cream into his face. Much to Skywarp and Christopher’s amusement.

End of Flashback:

Skywarp laughed a bit at the sweet memory, “Damian can tell y-you more f-funny stories, Crystal.” He rocked back and forth a bit, “He’s the head of the East Coast Human Alliance Division.” Then he was sad again, “That was Christopher’s title before…before he died, I mean.”

Skywarp’s optics widened in terror. It occurred to him that his ghostly attacker may be Christopher himself! “B-But…why?” he wondered aloud. Was Christopher angry at Skywarp? Did he not want a femme sparkling named for him?

The young Seeker tried to calm himself, blaming his see-sawing emotions on the assault, coupled with his pregnancy hormones.

“N-Nah…couldn’t be him. T-The guy was b-blue…” He stopped. Christopher had an all-blue outfit once. It was what he was wearing, in fact, when he first visited the Decepticon Underwater Base. The day he joined…He remembered the day Chris joined the Decepticons’ Human Alliance Division. He had flown him to the West Coast in his Jet Mode:

Flashback:

“So how is it that you live under water?” Christopher asked. “Aren’t you like, all metal and stuff? Wouldn’t you rust?”

“No, we’re rust-proof,” Skywarp answered, “And besides, it’s not like we get floods or anything.”
“I see.” The young man, now 18 years old, looked out the window from inside Skywarp’s cockpit as the two flew over the West Coast, “Never been to this side of the country before…”

Skywarp: “Would you like to stay here?”

“We’ve been over this, Warp,” Christopher rolled his eyes, “If I’ve got to choose a Coast, I’ve got to choose the East. I live out there! So don’t go there…” Chris wore Lee blue jeans, a dark blue sweater and matching Kangol hat, a favorite combination for the aspiring musician.

“You already like TC and Soundwave,” the dark Jet explained, “I just wish we could see each other more often.”

Chris: “Hey, nothing’s keeping you from living with me in New York, bro.”

When they landed on the Tarmac, the dark Jet let the young man out before transforming back into his robot mode, “Ugh, think I popped a fan belt!” joking about his friend’s 300lb form.

“Shut up, Warp!” Christopher smirked.

Now inside the Decepticon Underwater Base, the young man marveled at the strange, purple hallways and various Transformers walking around, doing their business. There were other humans there too, who came, like him, to be initiated into the newly-formed Human Alliance Division.

“I can’t wait for you to meet Starscream!” Skywarp giggled as he took Chris into his quarters, “I just gotta warn ya, he’s still a little freaked out by humans.”

At the time of their first meeting, Starscream was un-Bonded and still living with his Trine Brothers. His side of the bedroom would be the space they would use for Crystal’s proposed nursery many years later. But on that day, the Trine Leader was laying down, recovering from a disastrous mission in which he was badly injured by Sam Witwicky.

“Wake up, Screamer!” Skywarp shouted as he jumped on the berth and began shaking his older brother, “We got company!”

“MEH!” the red and white Jet rolled over onto his back; his arm still bandaged; he had only been home from the Med-Bay for two days and was still weak, “Let me sleep…”

“I want you to meet my friend!” Skywarp shouted, “He’s a Trine Leader like you!”

Starscream was still half-asleep, “What time it is?”

Skywarp: “Four.”

“Ugh,” the Trine Leader moaned, remembering the initiations scheduled for the evening, “Fragging Megatron and his stupid new divisions! After that attack, the last thing I want to see is another—”

Christopher walked in.

“—human.” Starscream spat.

The young man narrows his eyes, as did the young mech’s optics. The loathing was mutual.

“You’re a BIG one!” the red and white Jet spat as he stood up.
“Well, you’re a bitchy one!” Chris shot back. “You always wake up like a crackhead?”

“HOW DARE YOU!” Starscream shrieked. “I AM STARScream! AIR COMMANDer AND SECOND-IN-COMmand OF THE DECEPTICONS!”

“And I’m the King of New York!” Christopher oozed coldly.

Skywarp meanwhile, was horrified by his brother and friend’s immediate hatred for one another.

“So, you’re the one my little brother’s been visiting in New York, eh?” Starscream scoffed, “Trying to get him under the human influence…”

“That’s right,” Christopher looked the larger being up and down, not scared in the least, “and from what I hear from Skywarp, you’re the one that’s always putting him down and calling him stupid.”

Starscream: “That’s none of your concern, human!”

Christopher: “Skywarp’s my FRIEND! And all my friends ARE my concern!”

Starscream seethed, “Well, there’s nothing you can do about THAT, now is there, Mr. Biggy or whatever your nicknames are!”

“Maybe there is,” the young man snorted cryptically. “After all, with the Decepticons’ new building in New York, we might end up seeing more of each other.”

“What are you talking about?” Starscream looked him up and down, “I thought you were a two-bit drug dealer.”

“I’m in the music business now,” Chris stated proudly as he pulled out his business card, “got me a manager, a producer, and my first album’s coming out in August.”

Starscream narrowed his optics as Christopher continued, “And now that I’m gonna be a Decepticon, I’m gonna be spending a lotta time on the line with Megatron and Soundwave.”

The Trine Leader knew about Megatron and Soundwave’s plans to buy the former Pfizer factory in Brooklyn to be the Decepticons’ new East Coast Base, no doubt stemming from information Christopher had passed on to Skywarp—who passed it to Megatron—but now it seemed that the young African-American man had even bigger plans in mind.

Starscream: “What are your intentions, human?”

“I want Skywarp to move to New York with me,” Christopher told him outright, “I want him to run the East Coast Division.”

“WELL FORGET IT!!!” Starscream screeched, “MY BROTHER IS STAYING RIGHT HERE WITH ME WHERE HE BELONGS!”

Christopher: “You’re always bullying him and running his life! You’re no sister!”

Starscream: “WHAT?!”

“Um, Christopher?” Skywarp whispered, “Starscream’s a mech.”

“Oh, it’s a guy?!” Chris laughed, “Damn! I’d fuck RuPaul before I’d hit that ugly af Vosian bitch!”

“THAT TEARS IT!” Starscream yelled, now livid, “GET OUT! GET AWAY FROM MY
BROTHER! GET OUT OF MY HOME!"

The black and purple Seeker quickly pulled his friend away, into the safety of the hallways.

Christopher: “Nice meeting you, girlfriend!”

Starscream: “AAAAUUUGGGGHHHH!!!”

Later, Skywarp explained to his friend, “Christopher, I…um, I know you want me to live with you in New York, but…I need to stay with my Trine. I don’t wanna be separated from TC and Star.”

“Well,” Chris sighed, “can you at least think about it? Maybe in a couple more years?”

Not wanting to hurt his friend, the young Seeker bit his lip components and lied, “I’ll think about it.”

“Thank you, Skywarp,” his friend smiled, “I just want all my friends to be happy, y’know? I hate the idea of anybody bullying you. The best way to stand up to a bully is to confront ‘em. Even if it is your sis—, eh, brother.”

“Brother!” Skywarp laughed, “And he won’t like you if you keep saying that!”

Christopher: “Whatever.”

End of Flashback:

“He won’t ever have hurt me…” Skywarp whispered as coolant tears rolled down his cheekplates, “I should have gone… I should have moved to New York… T-Then maybe…maybe…” his friend wouldn’t have been murdered.

“Or maybe, you should never have been born.”

Skywarp gasped in horror. The vocals were back! “N-No…” He saw a shadow of a mech standing in the wash racks with him. Shaking, he peeked out from behind the shower curtain.

The demonic, transparent form of Gravechaser stood among the stem in the small room. His faceplates were alive with hatred. His optics, or at least the holes for his optics, were black and dead as a doll’s eyes.

“GET AWAY FROM ME!” Skywarp cried out, “LEAVE US ALONE!” The being before him was clearly NOT the spirit of his deceased human friend, and the Seeker wondered how he could have ever imagined it to be.

Gravechaser: “Not until I personally snuff out your spark.”

Skywarp: “NO!” the room seemed to spin around, and he had to grab onto the chair before he fell and injured himself or his unborn daughter.

The evil spirit approached, he was going to finish what he had started.

“I-I s-said, GO AWAY!” Skywarp tried to sound tougher now. He was getting tired of being bullied. Christopher hadn’t wanted to see him bullied. He remembered what he had said,

“The best way to stand up to a bully is to confront ‘em.” Christopher had said.
So the young, carrying flyer pulled the shower curtain back again…and saw that Gravechaser was now Seeker-faceplates to black-bearded-faceplates to himself.

Skywarp whimpered, fear seizing him, he clung protectively to his stomach, but he tried to stay strong, “You can’t have her! She’s MY baby!”

Gravechaser snarled: “I’ve already told you, I have no interest in your offspring.”

Skywarp: “Then quit bothering us! Or, I’ll…I’ll…” he realized something, “I’ll tell TC who you REALLY are! And he’ll HATE YOU FOR THIS!” He wasn’t sure if he was imagining it, but he thought he saw the ghost give pause. So, he continued, “He already hates you anyway! I’ve heard about you, you know! You were a pretty shitty father in the first place!”

Oh really? Gravechaser thought to himself, did that shrew he had once called his Bondmate rewrite history to tell her worthless spawn some fairytale about her backdoor mech rescuing her from her rightful husband?! He laughed to himself now: Had he been cast as the wicked villain in her fantasy version of her own backstory?

“If only you knew…” Gravechaser chuckled. “If only you knew…”

Skywarp: “I bet you’re not his Sire!”

Gravechaser: “I am so his Sire.”

“No!” Skywarp screamed now, “You don’t look anything like TC! You’re just some ghost that followed me home! You’re just smoke!”

Gravechaser approached even closer, “Look…closely.”

The evil demon began to change, first glowing a pale blue light, and then another form transposed itself over his own, like a veil, the form was that of a blue Seeker, the way he appeared when he was in activation.

“Oh God,” Skywarp whimpered. He could see the resemblance. Even in that demon’s monstrous form, there was still some resemblance.

“Your slut of a mother will weep over your grave. And then I will laugh…oh, how I will laugh. And dance.”

“M-My brothers won’t let you hurt us!” Skywarp tried to be strong, “W-When TC finds out you were the one that tried to kill my baby, he’ll never forgive you! Not…ever!”

“I’m not the one that wanted to terminate your sparkling, idiot.” Gravechaser sneered, “That was Starscream who wished that be done.”

“LIAR!” Skywarp shouted, “YOU’RE A LIAR! Star would never do that!”

Gravechaser: “Are you certain about that?”

And suddenly, the poor young Seeker heard vocals, his older brother’s vocals, as if they were coming from invisible stereo speakers, attached to the wash rack’s ceiling.

Starscream: “I think we need to terminate it.”

Gravechaser had carefully ‘edited’ the Trine brothers’ conversation to eliminate the parts that showed Starscream’s clear concern that the pregnancy had caused a cerebral hemorrhage, making it seem that the red and white flyer’s words were twisted into an entirely different context.

Thundercracker: “He’d never agree to that.”

Starscream: “Well, he may not be a position to decide…”

Skywarp: “TC? Star?”

Thundercracker: “No. We are NOT making that decision for him. She’s HIS sparkling.”
Starscream: “Look TC, I’m the Trine Leader here!”
Thundercracker: “And I’m the eldest, so what?!”
Starscream: “YOU THINK THIS IS SOMETHING THAT CAN JUST GO AWAY?!”

That had been regarding Skywarp’s injuries, not his pregnancy.

Thundercracker: “YOU’VE JUST WANTED THE SPARKLING TO GO AWAY!”
Starscream: “WE CAN’T KEEP IT, THUNDERCRACKER!”
Thundercracker: “AND IF WE KILL HER, HE’LL NEVER GET OVER IT! WE MIGHT AS WELL JUST KILL HIM WITH HER!”
Starscream: “IT’S NOT EVEN A SPARKLING AT THIS POINT!!! IT’S JUST A CLUMP OF CELLS!”
Starscream: “IT’S NOT ONLINE!!! IT’S NOT EVEN BORN!”
Thundercracker: “SHE’S GONNA BE IN FOUR MOUTHS!!!”
Starscream: “NO TC, I’M TELLING YOU! WE NEED TO TAKE IT OUT NOW!”
Thundercracker: “AND I’M TELLING YOU IT’S NOT YOUR DECISION, SCREAMER!”

Skywarp’s resolve broke, “N-No…” How could they? How could Starscream…

Starscream: “IT’S NOT ONLINE!!! IT’S NOT EVEN BORN!”
Starscream: “IT’S NOT EVEN A SPARKLING AT THIS POINT!!! IT’S JUST A CLUMP OF CELLS!”
Starscream: “IT’S NOT ONLINE!!! IT’S NOT EVEN BORN!”
Starscream: “IT’S NOT EVEN A SPARKLING AT THIS POINT!!! IT’S JUST A CLUMP OF CELLS!”

Skywarp had lost all interest in Gravechaser. His spark completely ripped apart by the ‘revelations.’ He gripped the chair, sobbing, and keening, lowering himself to the shower’s floor.

Gravechaser smiled evilly, snipped his clawed fingers, and turned the shower waters ice cold, making the poor Jet cry out in agony.

Skywarp: “AAAAAAAAUUUUUGGGGGGHHH!!!!” He yanked the shower curtain off its rings and pulled it down on himself.

His oldest brother heard the screams, “SKYWARP!” he rushed in, thinking the worst had happened.

Gravechaser made an ominous threat, “If you breathe a word of this to Thundercracker, I warn you; I will offline those three maggots!” He then heard the door click open, and promptly turned into steam and evaporated.

Thundercracker came in, concern written all over his faceplates, “What’s wrong?! What happened?!?” he found Skywarp curled up on the shower floor, ice cold. Just like he had been in the kitchen weeks earlier.
“This water’s freezing!” he turned it off, “What happened here?! Did you fall?!”

The darker Seeker looked up: the ghost was gone, and the ghost’s son stood where the ghost had been. Fresh coolant tears were streaking down his faceplates now; Gravechaser was indeed his brother’s Sire. The looked like each other. It was true; it was all true.

“Warp, DID YOU FALL?!” TC repeated. He needed to know if his little brother needed to go back to the Med-Bay.

But Skywarp just shook his helm, brokenly, and wrapped the shower curtain around himself. He didn’t want to look at or speak to him now.

“Come on,” Thundercracker offered softly, “I’ll help you up.” He wrapped his arms around him and carefully lifted him off the floor.

“G-Get away!” Skywarp sobbed, still wrapped up in the shower curtain, “Don’t LOOK at me!”

TC rolled his optics, “I’m not looking at you.”

Skywarp: “GO AWAY! Aren’t you disgusted with how fat I am?! HUH?!"

“Oh please,” the blue Seeker pitched the bridge between his optics, “I didn’t mean anything. At least let me get you a towel.”

“NO!” the darker Seeker stormed out of the wash racks, still hiding his belly under the curtain. Their berthroom was cold, and he was dripping wet and shivering now. Their triplet nephews were giggling at him.

Skywarp hollered at them, “What are you laughing at?!”

Darkwing chirped, “You!”

Before he could take everything out on the sparklings, Thundercracker stepped in with a few towels, “Here, take that thing off,” covering the younger flyer with them and pulling off the shower curtain, “Now lay down.”

Thinking Skywarp was still traumatized by the previous attack, Thundercracker tried to calm him down, gently wrapping him up in the towels and blankets before getting him into the berth, “Shh, shh, it’s gonna be okay.” Petting his helm, he whispered, “Just relax now…all this stress can’t be good for your sparkling.”

The black and purple Jet wasn’t so much angry anymore as he was devastated. He had no idea his brothers had been debating like that while he lay unconscious and helpless to protect his unborn child. Skywarp had coolant tears streaming down his faceplates, "Thundercracker...did Starscream want to kill my baby?"

TC’s optics widened. How did he find out? He had suspected Skywarp had overheard their screaming match, but he hadn’t indicated anything specifically until now. “Why would you think that?” he asked.

Skywarp: “I-I heard it.”

“Um, well,” the blue Seeker figured honesty was the best policy, “We didn’t know what had happened at the time. And…we thought you had collapsed, and…”
Skywarp: “ANSWER ME!” he scared Dawning when he yelled.

“I AM answering you, Warp!” Thundercracker insisted, and stood up and paced around, “Look, Starscream thought you were dying, and he thought if we did an abortion that it would save you, okay? But then Soundwave came out and said how somebody had attacked you and how the pregnancy had nothing to do with anything! So…So we were sorry we talked about that, all right?”

“I-I don’t believe you!” Skywarp was still crying, not really to accept the answer, “Star wanted to kill my baby!”

“We don’t want to kill your baby, Warp.” TC shook his helm, “Starscream loves you AND Crystal. Honest. He was pretty sorry he said anything…”

The younger Seeker clinched at his pillow, “W-Why didn’t you t-tell me?” he wanted to add, ‘about your Sire’ but didn’t.

Thundercracker: “We didn’t wanna upset you.” He saw that Darkmount had now gotten himself tangled in the sheets on his berth and got distracted untangling the sparkling.

Looking at Starscream’s sparklings now just made Skywarp’s processor hurt. He turned over and grabbed his huggy android, still crying. Little Darkwing toddled over and crawled into the berth with him. The sparkling pawed at Skywarp’s middle, “Hi Baybee! Hi Baybee!” Exhausted both emotionally and physically, he hugged his little nephew and fell into recharge.

Thundercracker meanwhile, quietly laid Dawning and Darkmount on his berth and sang them a little lullaby to get them to sleep as well before he himself dozed off next to them.

When Starscream, Megatron, and Soundwave returned from Vosnia, it was well after midnight. The red and white Seeker, holding a gift he had purchased at the local gift shop, crept into their quarters, to collect his babies. He had a key and thought he could just slip in. He went to their berthroom and —

Thundercracker shot up in his berth and pulled a gun on him!

Starscream immediately put his hands up, “It's me. It’s me.”

TC huffed his vents and lowered the firearm, “Thought you were Mirage.”

“HMPH!” Star shorted, “May I have my sparklings, please?”

The blue Seeker nodded sleepily, carefully lifting Dawning and Darkmount without waking the babies and leaving to take them to Starscream and Megatron’s quarters.

“Mommy!” little Darkwing chirped.

“Hi, my baby,” he whispered, lifted him off Skywarp’s chest, “did you have fun with your uncles?” the little one nodded, smiling.

Skywarp wasn’t fully awake, groaning and turning over again, holding his stomach protectively.

“Do you like sleeping with your little cousin?” Starscream cooed, then he started talking into the carrying Seeker’s belly, “You like my little Darkwing? Guess what? He’s your cousin. Yes, he is… yes, he is.”

Skywarp moaned as his sparkling started kicking excitedly.
TC came back in the room.

“Are you awake, Skywarp?” Starscream smiled at him, “I got you something.”

“Um, Star,” the blue Seeker began, “you don’t wanna wake him.”

Starscream was confused, “Hmm?”

“He’s not feeling so good.” TC dropped his vocals, “He was yelling, and…he remembered hearing our fight.”

Starscream knew what that meant, “I see,” he stood with Darkwing, “Okay. Good night.” He was hurt, and unsure how he would handle this.

Meanwhile…

As much as Gravechaser hated to admit it, Skywarp had made a good point. He didn’t want Thundercracker knowing he was there. So, it was time to create a diversion. This Mirage character sounded like someone he could toy with for a while.

TO BE CONTINUED…
Chapter 14: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

Well, it’s been almost a year since my Collab partner abandoned the project, but I have her permission to finish the Collab alone:

Chapter 14:

By Transformersnewfan

The next morning, Starscream walked nervously to his brothers’ quarters. He knew he would have to address this now, and he was dreading it. He had been hoping the argument would be quickly forgotten…

The hallways in the Decepticon Base seemed unusually cold lately. But perhaps, the Seeker thought to himself, it was winter now, and maybe the heaters needed some work. He shivered as he came to their door, “It shouldn’t be this cold in the morning…”

Not wanting to get shot, he knocked first before entering…

Skywarp was still in his berth; he had woken up shivering. TC had covered him with another blanket during the night, but he was still cold. Also, he was still groggy from his concussion. He tried not to move around too much because his processor was still hurting. Amusingly, the more he tried to lay still, the more Crystal liked to squirm around playfully. He was half-asleep when he heard Starscream come in.

Starscream: “Is he awake?”

“Yeah, he’s awake,” Thundercracker answered, himself rather tired from the emotional roller coaster. “I couldn’t sleep. I kept waiting for that blue and white fragger to show up and try anything.” He was muttering now, “…Like ta put a bullet in ‘em.”

The darker Seeker thought of what Gravechaser had said, “If only you knew…”

“Hey sweetspark,” Starscream went over to the youngest Seeker, “You want to see what I got you?”

Skywarp had no interest in that, he got straight to the point, “You wanted to kill my baby.”

“I was scared,” the Trine Leader admitted, “All I knew was you were in the Med-Bay.” He sat on the side of the other’s berth, “I didn’t know what to think…I mean, I didn’t know anything about your attacker.”

Skywarp sat up slowly, just listening suspiciously.

Starscream didn’t really know what to say, “I-I’m glad you’re okay now.”
The darker Seeker wasn’t buying it, “You expect me to just…FORGET this, Star?”

Starscream shrugged, “I said I was sorry.”

“LIAR!” that only made the younger flyer furious, “You wanted to kill my sparkling! HOW DARE YOU!!! HOW SLAGGING DARE YOU?! HUH?!” He got up suddenly, almost making his still-recovering processor spin. The extra weight was also a factor.

“Okay, I understand that you can’t forgive me, but please, let me explain,” Starscream insisted, “I was only going by the information I had at the time. When I said that, I thought it caused a bleeding aneurysm. I just wanted to save your life…” He began pleading, “I was scared, don’t you understand?! I don’t want to lose you or TC for anything.”

Thundercracker was listening to all this, trying not to interfere.

Skywarp just closed his optics, ready to cry, “A clump of cells, Star?”

“Did I say that?” Starscream really couldn’t recall saying that, “I didn’t…”

Skywarp exploded, “YES YOU DID! I HEARD YOU SAY THAT!”

“Okay, okay,” the red and white Seeker tried to calm his still-sick brother, “I don’t remember saying that, but, but…I didn’t, I guess…” He realized he had gone too far, “Sometimes, with me, I wanna win an argument. You know? I didn’t think. I didn’t think about, you know, that yes, YES, she is your sparkling. And…if you really were in danger…I; I probably couldn’t have ordered a termination.”

He sat down, clasping his hands together, “I do a lot of talking, but really, I don’t think I could live with myself.”

That was enough for Thundercracker at least, “Yeah, that didn’t sound like you…”

Skywarp turned away, not ready to accept his brother’s apology. He folded his arms over his stomach and closed his optics.

“I apologize to you as well, TC,” the Trine Leader admitted, “I don’t like to lose control like that.”

The blue Seeker signed, “Yeah, we both…kinda got outta control there.”

Starscream: “It was like…the devil got ahold of us or something…”

It was just an offhanded remark, but the words made Skywarp’s optics snap open in horror! Gravechaser! It was Gravechaser instigating their argument all along! He started keening and hitching his venting in fear now. The black and purple Seeker started shaking; What was this ghost capable of?!

“I’m sorry too, Star,” TC was saying as Skywarp turned to look at them.

“Please Skywarp,” Starscream begged, “I want to know my niece…”

“Okay, okay, I forgive you!” Skywarp stated rather hurriedly, “I—I’m really scared now…I’m under attack.” They both listened as he continued, coolant tears in his optics, “I—There’s somebody here…There’s this blue guy that keeps yelling at me when I’m alone! H-He tells me I’m gonna die and that I’m worthless and that I never should have been born and that I—I’ll never see Crystal and, and, and…” He dissolved into sobs, “H-He was probably t-telling you guys what to think!”

Starscream’s optics widen, “TC, I just remembered something…Soundwave said he heard THREE
mechs talking when we were fighting.”

That was enough proof for the blue Jet, “Come here,” Thundercracker whispered as he took the youngest Seeker into his arms, trying to comfort him, “It’s gonna be okay…” In his CPU, he had no reason to think they weren’t referring to a living mech. “Don’t worry; we’re gonna get his slagger.” He pulled Skywarp to sit on the berth with Starscream, who joined in on the hug.

TC: “We gotta catch Mirage and NOW.”

Skywarp wanted badly to tell his brothers the ghost’s true identity, but the horrible threats still lingered in his concussion-suffering CPU. Fresh coolant tears strained down his cheekplates.

“I think he’s still in pain,” Starscream whispered, “Here, you should lay down.” The black and purple Seeker didn’t resist. Instead, he let his brothers take care of him.

TC helped change the bandage on forehelm, and Starscream made him a bowl of Energon-noodle soup. Skywarp sighed now, looking at the ceiling. The Trine Leader showed him the bag he had brought from Vosnia, “Ready to open your gift now?”

Skywarp looked at the bag curiously through bleary optics, “What is it?”

“Just something for you and your daughter,” Starscream smiled, “I wanted to bring a gift since, well, make the trip worthwhile.”

The darker flyer opened the package and smiled; it was a snow globe with a pink base. At the center, was a statue of a little femme Seeker that was flying to ballet music. Starscream showed him how, when you turn the snow globe, it played an old Vosian lullaby.

Skywarp was crying again, “I-I love it.”

Starscream: “I’m glad, sweetspark,” he tried rubbing the younger Seeker forehelm, trying to get him to fall asleep.

The pregnant flyer then fell into a restless recharge, trying to make up for another rough night. Starscream laid down with him and held him. And Thundercracker pulled up a chair and watched over his two younger brothers, guarding them, daring anyone to come near them, and contemplating what to do about the attacker…

As we pan over to the attic above the Control Room, Gravechaser sat in the exact same position, watching Megatron and Soundwave, debating HIS next move. The roach had made up with that screecher Starscream, so the wicked spirit would have to come up with another way of torturing his prey. He peered down at the Decepticon Leader and the Tapedeck curiously. He couldn’t get too close though, Soundwave would detect him. So, he just listened in from the darkness.


Soundwave rolled his optics, “Whatever.”

The two sat at the Computer Consul, going through their archives.

The Tapedeck scanned the next set of documents while holding Dawning on his lap. The sparkling had his rattle in his mouth but was much more interested in trying to reach the buttons on the Computer Consul at his optic level.
Megatron meanwhile, was holding Darkmount and Darkwing on his lap, while reading through the yellowing files. However, the former Gladiator would read and remembrance over past glories, rather than simply organize the papers by order of date and subject.

“Aw, I remember that day,” Megs chuckled, “I was competing against Cy-Kill for a spot in the finals. That bucket of bolts put up quite a fight, but I bested him!” His sons listened excitedly as he added with buster, “as always.”

“Did you find the file on the Trans Galaxy partnership?” the Tapedeck asked, getting annoyed.

“Uh, not yet,” Megatron admitted before going back to his Gladiator file. He then found an old datapad clipping of himself as a young warrior, “Ah, my old file photo from my Arena days. Boys, look how young your Sire was back then.”

Dawning giggled, Darkmount made an “Ooooo,” sound, and Darkwing seemed a bit scared by the photo, not really recognizing the mech with the unfurled, elaborate decorative panels on his helm.

Soundwave groaned, “Megatron, if you keep reading every file, we’re going to take TWO YEARS to finish scanning these documents into the system.” He adjusted the sparkling in his arms, “You’re making me miss my assistant!”

“I’ll bet you do,” Megs smirked knowingly, “how’s he doing?”

“His optical functions are still glitching,” the Tapedeck saved the computer files absentmindedly as he talked about the youngest Trine member, “and his processors are still sorting through damages.” He stiffened, trying to sound like a hardened medical officer, “It will still be several weeks before he’ll be able to read datapads for any length of time.” He paused, “Although, the way YOU stall around with the files, all the work will still be here when he’s ready to come back.”

Megatron waited for the other to continue. When he didn’t, the Decepticon Leader grinned and stated, “So when he is gonna say that he’s carrying?”

Soundwave turned and studied Megatron, taken aback, but not very surprised. His friend was, after all, a brilliant detective and had a talent for reading his opponents in battle.

“You knew?” the big blue mech asked.

“You knew!” Megs laughed. Darkmount laughed too. “I’ve known for months.”

Soundwave shrugged, chuckling, “So what gave it away?” He figured the Seeker’s belly was getting more visible these days.

“Lemme tell you something about Seekers, Soundwave,” Megatron chuckled. The Tapedeck deadpanned; he had been MARRIED to a Seeker of Vos and Megs always knew that, so it added to the joke as the Gunformer continued, “They’re highly secretive when it comes to their pregnancies. Skywarp acts just like Starscream did! The sneaking around, the junk food binges, wearing a blanket everywhere…believe me, I saw it all! Star forbade me to tell ANYONE for the first trimester. He was afraid of losing the sparkling. That was before we knew it was triplets, I mean. Slag, I wasn’t even allowed to tell Ma!”

“Well, he’s a little scared,” Soundwave defended his patient, “I’ve been trying to educate him on what to expect.” He groaned, “Did you figure out who the Sire is, as well?”

“No, I figured YOU were the Sire,” Megatron laughed, “I figured you two were working late on these files, and…” He elbowed the other, “You talked about Celene, he comforted you…Eh? Eh?”
“Well, that’s where you’re wrong,” the Tapedeck got smug, “He was already pregnant when I derived this project to keep him off the battlefield!” Soundwave then groaned, “He had gone to some seedy sperm bank in Vosnia and was already carrying. Personally, I would have liked him to undergo a physical beforehand, but…it is what it is.”

“So?” Megatron asked, “Any idea who the Father is?”

Soundwave sighed, “Remember Joey?”

“That pathetic loser?!” Megatron started laughing out loud, “He shoulda asked you!”

“Yeah, well,” the blue mech shifted Dawning in his arms, “As long as you know, you should tell him it’s okay. The poor guy’s an emotional wreckage.”

“Of course,” Megatron nodded, “I kept waiting for him to announce it and I was going to act surprised. I thought they were going to say something at the triplets’ birthday party, but…” he shrugged.

“Well, if he was, this whole thing with being attacked forced into to regress emotionally,” Soundwave admitted, then turned to his friend, “Well, since you’re the brilliant detective, who do you think is behind these two attacks?”

Now Megatron was serious, the smile fading from his lip components. He looked straight ahead at the screens, “I don’t wanna say…what I’m thinking…” He shook his helm, trying to shake off the thought, “Naw, it’s Mirage, that’s all, it’s the Autobots behind this.” He didn’t add, “I hope so anyway…” before continuing, “We just need to set the cameras to catch him in the act, then I can hit Prime where it hurts.”

“In the meantime, Sherlock-Bot,” Soundwave changed the subject, “You mind finding the file on the Trans Galaxy partnership?”

Megatron laughed, “Whatever!”

From the attic, “This Megatron will prove to be a formable foe,” Gravechaser determined. He would have to come up with a way to beat this, this…Gladiator if he were to cross paths with him. The demon then decided to lay low was best for the time being. And he needed to come up with a plan…
Chapter 15: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 15:

By Transformersnewfan

It had been over two weeks since Skywarp had last seen Gravechaser, and the now twenty-two weeks pregnant Seeker began to relax a bit. He spent a lot of time resting in his berth, recovering nicely from his concussion. TC only left his side when Starscream could stay with him.

However, the youngest flyer had stopped speaking to his beloved Thundercracker. The demon’s threats, “Stay away from my son!” and “If you breathe a word of this to Thundercracker, I warn you, I will offline those three maggots!” rang in his processor over and over again, making Skywarp’s spark clinch in fear.

TC: “You mad at me, Warp?”

He would just shake his helm and turn away, unable to confide in his best friend now. The ghost had made his orders.

He stared at the ceiling and sighed now, cuddling his huggy android for dear life. He was eating more. He knew he should stick to his diet plan, but he couldn’t help himself some days. He had always been what one would call a ‘stress-eater,’ but between his worries if he would be a good Creator, and the terrifying encounters with the demon that claimed he was once the Sire of his beloved brother, food had become the Skywarp’s crutch. Some days, he was stuffing himself until it hurt. And now, he had gained around the Transformer equivalent of fifty pounds. That was more than Starscream had gained at twenty-two weeks—with the triplets! Most of the time, he would sleep facing the window to hide his orb-like belly from TC or Starscream.

But, it wasn’t all dejection and melancholy. He loved laying still and feeling the little movements of his unborn sparkling in his gestation chamber. Sometimes, baby Crystal would stretch herself out and move her tiny legs against his ribcage playfully. Skywarp loved singing to her; they couldn’t play music because his audials were still hurting, so he would try to sing their favorite songs.

Skywarp: ♬ “You know very well…Who you are…Don’t let ‘em hold you down…Reach for the stars …” ♫ He sang it softly, whispering to her.

And in his spark, he felt he could hear her answer, :Momma, I love my Momma.:”

He thought he could feel her tiny hands reaching towards his singing. He couldn’t wait to see her sweet little faceplates and hold her in his arms.

More good news: The dark Seeker’s latest ultrasound showed everything was still progressing normally, but Skywarp was just glad the test could be done externally now that the sparkling was large enough. During the procedure, his thoughts drifted over all the issues: How and if he should tell his brothers he was being haunted?

Starscream, Thundercracker, and Soundwave, however, were more focused on the important things: Such as the sparkling!

“So, the baby’s alright?” TC asked.
“Affirmative,” Soundwave answered, “We’re at the middle of the second trimester, and the sparkling’s network of mechanisms are developing as scheduled. Also, her audials are maturing.”

“Ah, so she can hear us,” Starscream smiled, rubbing the carrying Seeker’s tummy, “I wonder if you can tell our vocals apart? Hmmm?”

Skywarp flinched at the sensation, “DON’T TOUCH ME!” his abdomen was very sensitive, “That hurts!” he whined.

“Oh, don’t worry, I know EXACTLY how you’re feeling,” the red and white Seeker chuckled, “Skywarp, do you remember what I told you when I was pregnant, and you would POKE me for hours at a time?”

“Was it really hours?” Skywarp wondered now. He didn’t answer; instead just tried to relax against the ultrasound equipment.

“I told you,” Starscream smirked, “someday when you were pregnant, I would be sure to prod and poke YOU just as often!” There was no malice in his tone though; just having fun getting even with his younger brother.

The darker flyer just groaned, looking away.

“Hey! I’m kidding you,” Starscream told him, laughing, “What’s the matter with you? Can’t you take a joke?”

Skywarp wasn’t in the mood, “SHUT UP!”

“Hey, hey, come on,” Thundercracker hushed them both, “Soundwave just told us the sparkling can hear us now. We gotta be calm, alright?” Unlike Starscream, who already had sparklings, TC was more nervous about everything going smoothly for the mother and baby. He looked Starscream in the optics as he squeezed Skywarp’s hand, “We need to be supportive here.”

He turned to Soundwave, whispering as not to upset the youngest flyer, “I’ve noticed his faceplates and hands are swollen.”

But Soundwave shook it off, “Mild edema is common at twenty-two weeks gestation,” he started removing the equipment, “it occurs when fluids build up due to increased Energon flow and uterine pressure on the vena cava.”

TC: “What’s the vena cava?”

Soundwave: “It’s the large Energon line on the right side of the chassis that returns Energon-blood from the spark to the limbs. There’s two of them, actually, inferior and superior. The inferior one returns Energon to the lower limbs, while the superior one has the upper chassis, including the processor.”

Skywarp stared at the ceiling, frightened now. He had had that pain in his right side twice now. The first time was right before Gravechaser confronted him in the shower, and the second was a few days ago, right after he had that Energon-fusilli bucati. Now he wondered if there was something very wrong with him…

“Eh,” Starscream brushed it off, “He’ll deflate as soon as he gives birth.”

“Tests are complete.” Soundwave told them as he removed the scanner from Skywarp’s stomach, “Everything’s fine. I’ll make you a tape.”
“N-No, wait…” Skywarp sputtered as he got up, “I don’t want the tape.”

Soundwave: “You sure?” They all understood that the assault was still fresh in the young flyer’s CPU.

Skywarp nodded, looking upset.

“Well, I don’t think Mirage can get BACK in,” Starscream told him.

Soundwave asked, “Did we ever find the first tape?”

TC shook his helm no.

“I-I don’t want a tape,” Skywarp repeated as he was putting his armor back on, “L-Less weapons.”

Soundwave: “How about photo captures?”

“NO!” Skywarp answered quickly, but Thundercracker answered at the same time, “Yes.” The darker Seeker glared, but TC answered, “For Mom and Dad.”

“But they’re not allowed to know!!” Skywarp bellowed.

Well, Thundercracker had already shared the good news with their Creators, and Starscream and Soundwave knew that, so the blue Seeker had to dance around that little fact to keep the emotional, carrying flyer calm.

“Well,” TC began, rubbing the back of his own neck cables, “IF say, they were told you were pregnant, I know that they would be very happy, and…” they were, “and…mayBE they would ask for some pictures from your latest ultrasound?” They had, in fact, wanted them for posterity.

“I-It’s their fault,” Skywarp sobbed, so quietly, in fact, the others didn’t make out what he was saying, “I didn’t ask to be born.” Coolant tears streamed down his faceplates.

“Aww, try to be happy,” Starscream told him, “you’re going to have a baby soon.” The two had drawn closer in recent weeks. Star thought it was because he was already a Mother and a scientist that could answer questions, but it was more so because Skywarp felt forced to shut Thundercracker out due to Gravechaser’s orders. Truth be told, the youngest Seeker was lonely whenever Star or Soundwave was busy.

“We want the pictures,” TC told Soundwave, who nodded in agreement. The Tapedeck went to his computer and printed out several still photographs of the little sparkling-to-be.

“I still have the ones of each of my kids,” the big, indigo mech chuckled as he handed them to Skywarp, “Anytime you want me to show them to you…”

The young Seeker smiled, liking the idea.

And speaking of Soundwave’s brood…

Rumble and Frenzy approached the Med Bay doors, determined to figure out what the big secret was.

“It’s probably about the Autobots’ attack on Skywarp,” Frenzy said to his older twin, “they’re probably questioning ‘em.”
“Nah, Pop was lying to Megatron MONTHS ago, Frenz,” Rumble told him, “Skywarp’s got some kinda secret and Pop’s covering something up!”

The twins hide in one of the medical supply closets and waited. When the door to the examination room opened, Thundercracker exited first, followed by Starscream, who was leading Skywarp, while the youngest Seeker was smiling, fixated on the still photos of the sonogram.

“So, you’re not experiencing any further symptoms of your concussion?” Soundwave inquired.

“Nah, I think I’m alright,” Skywarp answered.

Soundwave figured he’d ask, “Would you consider coming back to the paperless-society project?”

“Sure,” Skywarp smiled back, “It’s so boring in my room.” He was flattered by the invitation.

“Everything’s pretty much as you left it,” Soundwave admitted, “Megatron’s not exactly a speed-reader.” He shook his hand, “Glad to have you back in the Control Room.”

After all the emotional abuse from Gravechaser, Skywarp was so touched to have someone actually WANT to have him around. Someone that, for once, wasn’t just his brothers.

Rumble peered out from the medical supply closet and caught a glimpse of the scene. His optics widened; the Seeker was clearly pregnant. Skywarp didn’t know they were there and wasn’t covering up his sparkling bump the way he usually did. He motioned for Frenzy to look as well.

Skywarp snarled, his personality changing with every hormone, “Just make sure no one else knows,” now he was crying, “I-I don’t want anyone to h-hurt…”

“Don’t worry,” Soundwave told him, “I can hear anyone coming.”

The twins didn’t breathe, fearing detection, as Soundwave continued, “I’ll bring the boxes up from the basement. We can arrange them strategically to hide your frame.” He didn’t give away that Megatron already knew, “But Skywarp, remember we agreed, when the sparkling is born, we will tell the other Decepticons.”

“I know,” the dark Seeker rolled his optics, “just keep it a secret for now, okay?”

“Understood,” the Tapedeck nodded in agreement, before putting an arm around the smaller mech and leading him out, “my kids get to know first,” he joked dryly.

As soon as they were alone, Rumble turned to Frenzy and told him, “Skywarp is carrying, and Pop is the Father of his sparkling!”

The twins immediately called a family meeting with their siblings.

“But Father would have told us,” Ravage insisted.

“Skywarp doesn’t want to tell anybody he’s pregnant yet,” Frenzy told him.

“We have the right to know we have a sibling,” Laserbeak proclaimed in a way only he could.

“Yeah, yeah, I get that,” Rumble told him, “but it sounded like Pop was trying to keep him happy by not telling us.”

“Is it a boy or girl?” Ratbat, the youngest of the family, asked.
“Don’t know,” Frenzy answered.

“The way I see it, our biggest question is, are they gonna Bond with each other?” Rumble posed to the group, “Are we getting a stepmother besides a sibling?”

“Was there any indication that Father proposed?” Ravage inquired.

“Not that I heard,” Rumble admitted.

Ravage thought about it, “Then its most likely Skywarp will raise the sparkling with his Trine.”

“Well, is Daddy gonna get to see the baby?” Buzzsaw asked.

“I would imagine they will work out a visitation and custody arrangement,” Laserbeak answered.

“No!” Ratbat screeched, “I want the baby to live HERE with us!”

“You know how Seekers are, Ratbat,” Rumble told him, “They’ll never part with their young. The way I see it, the only way we’re gonna get to see the sparkling anytime soon is for Pop to Bond with him, and then they can live with us.”

“But how can we get them to Bond?” Frenzy asked.

“That’s up to all of us,” Rumble proclaimed, “The way I see it, we gotta let them know it’s cool with US that they’re together.”

“I would imagine that we represent a stumbling block in their relationship,” Ravage nodded, “We’ll just have to inform them of our stance. However, we MUST be subtle.”

“No sweat, Rav,” Rumble told him, “I’m the master of subtlety.”

Ravage stared at him, “HYMPH!”

1:30 P.M.:
Meanwhile, at the Seekers’ quarters, Skywarp just wanted to crawl back into his berth; getting up early and having medical tests always took a lot out of the carrying flyer.

Starscream had retrieved his triplets from his quarters, and he and Thundercracker were now playing with them.

Little Darkwing flew crookedly towards his favorite uncle, “Play-play,” he told him.

Skywarp groaned, just wanting to recharge. Still, he took the sparkling into his arms and sat him on his berth, “Well, I suppose we could count Sharkticons to fall asleep…” But as he moved the blankets, panic set in…

Skywarp: “WHERE’S MY HUGGY ANDROID?!”

The dark Seeker threw the blankets around furiously, looking under the berth, then around the floor, but there was no sign of his sparklinghood toy.

Darkwing, trying to help, looked under the blankets too. That’s when Skywarp lost his cool; he looked at the Seekerling hatefully, “Did you take it?!”
Darkwing whimpered, shaking his little helm.

Skywarp bellowed, “Didn’t your Creators ever teach you not to take things that didn’t belong to you?!”

Darkwing wailed, “WWWHHHAAAAHHHHH!!!!”

“SHUT UP!” the carrying flyer barked at his formerly favorite nephew.

Thundercracker came running, “Skywarp, don’t yell at him!” He quickly scooped up the sobbing sparkling into his arms.

“HE TOOK MY STUFF!” Skywarp hollered again, emotions raging.

Starscream eventually came over and barked back, “Don’t you dare yell at MY son!”

The two younger Seekers were in each other’s faceplates, screaming almost incoherently at each other.

Skywarp: “YOU DAMN KID STOLE MY HUGGY ANDROID!!”

Starscream: “HE DID NOT! AND YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO YELL AT MY SON!!”

Skywarp: “MAYBE IF YOU HAD TAUGHT YOUR SON NOT TO STEAL, I WOULDN’T BE YELLING!!”

Starscream: “SHUT YOUR MOUTH, YOU FAT SLUGOID YOU!!”

Skywarp: “GO TA HELL SCREAMER!!”

Starscream: “YOU FIRST!” Then he grabbed Darkwing and went back to the other two, trying to gather them, but Darkmount and Dawning were not having it. They both made shrieks of protest, wanting to play with their blocks and sparkling iPads on the floor.

“Fine,” the red and white Seeker grumbled, leaving them and storming out with Darkwing, shaming the door behind them.

Starscream ran back to his quarters with his sobbing baby. He sat down in his rocking chair and began cuddling the sparkling, rocking him back and forth while stroking his tiny wings, “Shhh, shhh, my baby…Momma’s right here.”

Darkwing let out several more keens before it died down to whimpers, burying his little faceplates in his Mommy’s canopy glass. Starscream looked around and found one the triplets’ musical toys within reach and gave it to his youngest son, “Here my sweetspark.”

The little guy began playing with it, distracting him from his sadness a bit.

“I know it hurts to be accused of something you didn’t do, my spark,” Starscream told him, flashing all the way back to his wrongful arrest for Skyfire’s supposed ‘death’ so many vorns ago. A different lifetime. Someday, he would tell his sons that story.

“No more ‘Wop,’” the baby told his Mother, his little optics serious. He never wanted to see his uncle again. Not ever.

“You don’t have to be with him anymore, sweetspark,” Starscream told him.
Their Trine had been so happy at the Med-Bay less than half a joon ago, now Skywarp sat crying into his hands, wondering if he was worthy of the daughter he was carrying.

“You should be ashamed of yourself,” Thundercracker scorned, exasperated with his younger brother, “You’re gonna yell at your own sparkling like that?”

Skywarp didn’t want to; he wanted to be a good Mother. He had thought he was a good uncle until just now, “N-No,” he sobbed.

The blue Seeker continued mumbling cuss words to himself as he picked up the blanket and threw it at Skywarp. Then he walked away, back to where the sparklings were playing.

Skywarp’s spark was racing; his hands shaking. He wondered if Starscream was going to tell Soundwave, or even worse, Megatron! He wondered if Crystal would be removed from his custody after birth!

“D-Do you agree with him, TC?” he sobbed.

TC: “On losing your temper?”

Skywarp: “NO!”

TC: “Then agree with him on WHAT?”

Skywarp: “T-Taking my baby?”

Thundercracker knew that wasn’t stated at all, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

The younger Seeker’s emotions were high, “You’re LYING to me!”

“No, I’m not,” TC kept his tone even now, thinking the other was nuts, “I don’t have to put you in a cage now, do I?”

Skywarp’s optics widened. Thundercracker would put him in a cage? A pregnant mech no less? “You’re gonna put me in a cage?” he asked.

“No, I wasn’t being serious,” the other told him tonelessly, “But you need to calm down!”

The black and purple Seeker keened and stopped talking. He figured he had better shut up now. This was Gravechaser’s son after all. So, he crawled into his berth and hid under the covers. Now Skywarp just cried. He tried to lay as still as possible, letting the coolant tears flow from his optics. He could hear Darkmount and Dawning babbling happily to each other, and it shattered him that he couldn’t be part of that now. He hugged his belly, hoping everyone, Gravechaser, Starscream, all of them, would just let him have his baby. He missed holding his huggy android, but, he figured it must mean he would have to be an adult now. Grow up. He knew he should; he was entering his sixth month of carrying. He just didn’t know everyone was going to be so hard on him. At some point, he fell into a restless recharge, followed by nightmares, as usual.

Thundercracker meanwhile, played with the kids on the floor. Dawning babbled enthusiastically about his stuffed bear, and for a moment, TC thought about when he was around that age. He had just been a year older or so than the triplets were now when he had his pets; his wild petrorabbit Harvey and his two helio-hamsters. He smiled, remembering how, when his Mother had first told him she was pregnant with Skywarp, he responded that he would make room under his berth for
another cage, which had made his Mother laugh. Funny how he hadn’t thought of that in years…

“Dawning, how about I get you guys a pet?” he asked the one-year-old.

“Yeah-yeah!” Dawning nodded, “Pet-pet!”

“PET!” Darkmount shouted excitedly.

TC laughed, “Great, now all I have to do is convince your Creators.”

Darkmount: “Uh-ohs!”

The blue Seeker thought about the past now, about his Father. He remembered how his Father would beat his Mother. He would call her names too. He remembered his Mother had a friend, the mech that would become his Stepfather, and he always treated his Mother with love and respect.

Thundercracker realized two things as an adult: The first, being that his Mother and Stepfather were having an affair while she was still married to TC’s Father, and second, that his Father had an addiction to High-Grade Energon. On the night that his Mother told his Father that she was pregnant with her second sparkling, he had tried to kill her. In retrospect, TC knew that his Stepfather was Skywarp’s biological Father, and that had been what had enraged his own Father, but still, Thundercracker felt, beating his Mother and trying to kill her and her sparkling was unforgivable.

He didn’t even realize he was speaking when he whispered, “Primus, I haven’t thought about him in years…”

The day went by, and Thundercracker took the sparklings to their nursery and put them down for their nap, joining their other sleeping brother. TC looked at them, thinking how the triplets may seem independent, but actually, they would never want to be separated from one another. Sort of like how their Trine used to be. Starscream and Skywarp never used to yell at each other as they did now.

The night that Skywarp decided to get pregnant, he had told Thundercracker that his relationship with Starscream hadn’t been the same since Star had Bonded with Megatron, and how Bonding with a former Gladiator had changed their Trine Leader, making him angrier, meaner…

He would have to play the peacemaker somehow…
Chapter 16: By Transformersnewfan

The day passed into early evening, and the sun began to submerge over the blue waters, turning them a blood red.

And a certain demon with blood red claws would awaken nightly.

“Well,” Gravechaser thought aloud, “that turned out better than expected.” He tore up the huggy android easily; the fluff flying around the attic. He laid the plush remints next to pieces of the photograph of his family and went off to work for the evening.

Skywarp woke up groggily to the sound of heavy pedefalls.

Thump…Thump…Thump…

“TC?” the carrying flyer asked, still half-asleep.

There was no answer.

The dark flyer rolled onto his back; his stomach felt heavy. He looked around and saw he was alone. Figuring he had dreamt the noise, he plopped his helm back onto the pillow tried to go back to sleep.

And again: Thump…Thump…Thump…

Skywarp’s optics shot open; he was wide awake now. He knew he hadn’t dreamt that, “H-Hello?” he asked the room, knowing fully it was the ghost. It had been a week since the spirit had made itself known…

“I thought he was gone…” Warp thought to himself. He had hoped by standing up to Gravechaser in the shower, that maybe he had left.

Thump…Thump…Thump…

The pedefalls seemed to be in the hallway outside their quarters.

Skywarp was scared, but he was still hoping it wasn’t who he knew it was. He got up, put his robe on, and slowly went to the door.

Thump…Thump…Thump!

They stopped right outside the front door of their quarters.

The carrying Seeker looked out through the peephole. There was no one there. So, he turned to go back to bed…

Knock! Knock! Knock!
“O-Oh God,” Skywarp whimpered, he knew there was no one there. And there was no way he was opening that door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Skywarp backed away, hands going protectively to his belly.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

The knocking became louder and louder! He tried his Comm.-Link, “Thundercracker, where are you?!”

TC answered, “I’m in the mass hall.”

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Skywarp sobbed, “There’s somebody trying to get into our quarters.”

The blue Seeker could hear the urgency in the other’s vocals, “I’m coming!”

And with that, the knocking stopped.

“Ugh,” Warp sighed in relief. And then, there was wrapping at the window…

TAP! TAP! TAP!

It was coming from the window next to his berth. The Decepticon Base was underwater, and there was the occasional fish or sea life that bumped against the ship occasionally, but nothing ever, EVER sounded like this.

TAP! TAP! TAP!

To Skywarp, it sounded like crawls tapping, and then…

SCRATCH!

A scratching sound against the window, sounding exactly like fingernails against a chalkboard. It made a shiver go all the way down Skywarp’s backstrust.

Skywarp was afraid to move; he felt like he was being watched.

The window began rattling violently as if something was trying to get in! The glass sounded like it was going to shatter, which would immediately flood the room!

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUGGGGHHHH!!!!” Skywarp screamed and ran to the door. He figured the ghost was at the window, so he flung the front door open and rushed into the hallway, terrified for his life and for the life of his sparkling!

Thundercracker ran into him in the hallway immediately, “What happened?!” he demanded, “What did you see?!!”

Skywarp was gasping, trying to catch his air intakes, “S-Somebody was knocking…t-then, somebody was at my window…”

TC raced into their quarters; he went to the window in their berthroom and opened the curtains, but there was no evidence anyone had been there.
“Whoever he was, he’s gone,” the blue Seeker sneered, hating whoever it was out there.

Now Soundwave came running, “What happened?”

TC: “Skywarp heard somebody trying to break in.”

“I’ll check the cameras,” the Tapedeck told them as he went back to the Control Room.

Skywarp stumbled back inside, grabbing a chair by its arms and sitting down carefully, afraid he’d fall down.

“Are you alright?” Thundercracker went to him, grabbing the other’s shoulders.

The darker Seeker nodded, but he was still scared. Oh, how he wanted to confide in his beloved brother. But Gravechaser… That Gravechaser…

Soundwave’s vocals came through their Comm.-Links: “Negative. There’s no activity outside the Base.”

“Um,” TC began as he returned to the window, “Maybe a swordfish bumped into the glass or something.”

Skywarp sighed, nobody believed him; he curled up in the chair.

Thundercracker knew his brother wasn’t telling him everything but didn’t want to push him, “Well, actually, I was getting your dinner,” he muttered as he left their quarters.

Alone again, Skywarp kept the curtains open. It was less scary when he could see who was out there. Later, over Energon-Spaghetti-O’s, he didn’t talk to his brother. He was becoming more and more isolated by the ghost’s behavior. Away from TC, away from Starscream, away from even Soundwave. Just himself and his sparkling. Right where Gravechaser wanted them.

Then it was nighttime, and Skywarp, laying in his berth, could barely keep his optics open. He moaned, “How can I be tired when all I did today was sleep?”

“Pregnancy would be my guess,” Thundercracker shrugged. He looked up and down their quarters, down under their berths, their desks, etc. But he couldn’t find his little brother’s sparklinghood doll.

Skywarp looked so hurt now, “My Dad bought that in the hospital gift shop for my Mom the day I was born.”

“I’m sorry, kiddo, I looked everywhere,” TC told him.

Skywarp was suddenly serious, “Somebody took it.”

Thundercracker was open to the idea, “One of the guys thinks this is funny, eh?”

Skywarp didn’t want to say who it was, so he changed the subject, “Does Starscream hate me?”

The other shook his helm, “Just mad, that’s all.”

Skywarp: “Does he know I heard something at the window?”

“I told him about it,” TC shrugged, “he wasn’t interested.”

“So, he hates me,” the darker Seeker moaned.
Thundercracker sat on the edge of the berth and stroked his little brother’s forehelm, “It’ll be okay,” he whispered, “I promise.” Skywarp reached for his hand and held it until he fell back into recharge.

3:00 A.M.:
The two brothers were both sleeping in their berths, and Gravechaser materialized. His latest form of torture: Walking back and forth. Heavily.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! The demon walked from the foot of Skywarp’s berth to the head of it, Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Back and forth; back and forth, disturbing the young flyer’s much-needed rest.

Skywarp’s optics snapped open. He whimpered when he saw the blue cape of his tormenter as he walked by. He hid his helm under the covers, and peaked out as best he could:

Gravechaser again walked by, Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! He would stop, give the pregnant Seeker a hateful glare with his dead, black optics, and then walk back to the foot of the berth. He had not only a look of disgust but of frustration, strangely enough, almost as he was frustrated by Skywarp’s continued existence.

Thundercracker was snoring loudly as usual. He didn’t seem to hear the loud stomping. Skywarp guessed that he was the only one that Gravechaser was making himself known to. Skywarp was paralyzed in fear, but humor had always been his best defense.

“Can’t sleep, clunky boots?” he tried to sound tough.

Gravechaser shot him a look, “How can I when your overweight chassis still breathes?”

Ouch! The ghost had bite. Skywarp pulled the blanket down to look at the being. The demon was just as horrifying and threatening as he had been on previous occasions, but Skywarp tried to stay strong.

“Well, get used to it, blackbeard,” Warp smirked, “Cause I’ve got like, three months to go!”

Gravechaser seemed to pay his comments no mind, returning to his pacing. He began mumbling, “Stupid, fat Seeker…you disgust me.”

Skywarp just wanted the ghost to go away. He thought if he could just ignore this monster, maybe the being would lose interest in him and go away.

But Gravechaser persisted, “You a fat slugoid!” Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! “All you do is annoy others with your very existence!” Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! “You are SO STUPID!”

Skywarp tried to cover his helm with his blanket and ignore the verbal abuse. Deep down, the words hurt his spark as hard as a fist.

Gravechaser: “Starscream will hate you for the rest of your life!” Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! “You know that, don’t you? DON’T YOU?!”

Skywarp didn’t want to believe that. Then again, Starscream didn’t check on him after he cried out he was under attack.

Gravechaser: “Thundercracker will tire of you as well!” Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! “And that’s if he hasn’t already!”
Skywarp squeezed his optics shut as tight as he could, trying to get back to sleep. He tried pulling his pillow over his audials.

Gravechaser: “You’re a screw-up! No one wants you around!” Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! “You’re going to be expelled from the Decepticons very soon! They don’t want you around!”

Skywarp could feel Crystal wake up and squirm nervously. He could tell she was scared, “Ow, he woke up the baby…” he moaned. He turned over to his right side, hoping that pointing his belly away from the noise would help. But as he put his weight on his right side, that same sharp pain hit him again. It made him howl in agony, “OOOOWWW!”

Gravechaser: “You’re pathetic! You’re a failure as a soldier! A failure as a brother! A failure as a sitter! And I have no doubts you’ll fail as a mother!”

“S-Shut up,” Skywarp whimpered.

Gravechaser: “Maybe you didn’t hear me the first time!” He snatched the blanket down to the carrying flyer’s ankles. “You’re a failure as a soldier! A failure as a brother! A failure as a sitter! And I have no doubts you’ll fail as a mother!”

Skywarp curled around his stomach, protecting his sparkling. When he looked back, Gravechaser had disappeared. But now, his vocals were coming from outside his window.

Gravechaser: “Stupid, worthless wretch!”

The black and purple Seeker began sobbing. Then Skywarp’s side of the berthroom became ice cold. He started shivering, afraid to move to get his blanket. He could hear Thundercracker snoring blissfully, which told him that only HIS space was being frozen by the ghost. After a few more minutes, Skywarp was shaking so hard; he couldn’t stop.

The ghost, meanwhile, continued his harassment, “They’re going to find you frozen by morning…as cold as a jail cell at the Iacon Correctional Center!”

Skywarp couldn’t take anymore, “TEECEE!!!!!!” he keened loudly. He had thought that staying away from his beloved older brother was what the ghost wanted, and by doing so, Gravechaser would spare the emotional, carrying flyer any further pain. But the monster had continued his abuse, worse in fact, than before. Shutting Thundercracker out had done nothing except give Skywarp an ache in his spark. He cried out again, “TEECEE! HELP ME!”

The blue Seeker jerked awake, “W-What…What’s the matter?”

“TC, I-I’m freezing,” Skywarp moaned.

Thundercracker, knowing nothing about what had happened and sleeping in his own warm berth, yawned, “Come on, buddy,” and held the covers up.

Skywarp leaped up, scrambling into TC’s arms, clinging to him for dear life.

“SKYWARP!” his older brother hollered, “You’re freezing! What the hell?! Were you outside?!”

Warp shook his helm between trembling and dentra plates rattling, burying his helm into TC’s
chestplates and canopy. Thundercracker frantically bundled the pregnant Seeker up in the blankets, making sure his wings were fully covered. He wrapped his arms around him and held him, trying to warm him up.

:Skywarp, please, tell me what’s going on?: TC pleaded through their Trine Bond, :What’s wrong?:

:T-The noises are b-back, TC.: Warp told him silently, :I-I heard walking, and, and, the room got freezing c-cold…:

Thundercracker looked around their berthroom; he didn’t see anything unusual, but to him, it sounded suspiciously like an intruder had opened a door. “Stay right there, kiddo,” he whispered, securing the blankets around him.

The blue Seeker got up very quietly, relieving his gun from between the mattresses. He had started sleeping with it loaded as of late. He crept to the window near his brother’s side of the room and was immediately met with a frigid temperature drop!

“G-Geez,” he couldn’t believe it. He went to the window, yanking the curtains back. And finding it was sealed shut. “Something’s open somewhere,” he thought to himself, “A vent, something…” He checked the heating vents in the floor, but there wasn’t any cold air coming out. He opened the door to Skywarp’s closet; it was cold in there too. Thundercracker looked up, noting the trap door to the attic, wondering if that was the problem.

Gravechaser watched carefully from the attic, trying to anticipate his son’s next move.

Thundercracker suddenly felt like he was being watched. He knew it was a crazy thought, but he felt like someone was seeing him through the ceiling.

He went back to Skywarp, “Let’s go in the living room,” he whispered.

The carrying flyer was still scared. He wrapped the blanket around himself, “You, you saw something, TC?”

“No, but I’m not sure what’s going on,” the blue flyer told him, helping him up.

While Skywarp sat bundled up on the sofa, Thundercracker opened the front door. The hallway was pitch black and empty. TC sighed now, shutting the door, “If I wake up Soundwave again, he’ll think we’re both nuts.” He went again to the closet, half expecting an Autobot to be in there, but again, nothing. Still, he propped a chair against the knob. He retrieved another blanket, “Hey, maybe we can sleep in here tonight? Huh?”

Skywarp was terrified still but nodded. He got up and let his brother open the sofa bed. TC got his little brother settled in the blankets, making sure he propped him up with the pillows, trying to get him comfortable.

“You need your rest,” TC told him, “I think I’ll stay up for a little while.” He sat up on the sofa bed, intending to keep a protective watch over his little brother and niece-to-be.

Skywarp looked around; no sign of the ghost, “Hey TC?” he asked.

Thundercracker: “Yeah?”

Skywarp: “Are you scared?”

The blue Seeker shook his helm no.
“What do you think is going on?” the darker Seeker asked, hoping against hope that somehow, his brother knew the truth.

“I don’t know yet,” TC shook his helm again, his uneasiness growing, “Somebody…maybe somebody’s trying to break in. Mirage, I don’t know….” He shook it off and tucked the blankets around the other’s wings and shoulders, “All I know is I wanna keep you safe.”

The blue Seeker waited to see if he could hear anything or see anything; or…FEEL anything. He waited and waited.

Skywarp knew though; nothing ever happened when TC was there. And by dawn, both Seekers were exhausted. Thundercracker tiredly laid down next to his little sibling and cuddled him, “Weird night, huh?” he tried to chuckle.

Skywarp was feeling better now, laying on his left side, facing TC, “She’s calm when you’re right here.”

Mommy and baby could forget about Gravechaser when they felt safe with their protector.

“Oh yeah?” TC smirked, “that means you’re not sore at me anymore?” He was referring to how the younger Seeker had virtually ignored him for the past several weeks.

“No…I just, um,” he had to tell him, “TC, I was never mad at you. I just get…When I get scared, I don’t know how to make it stop.” He curled closer to the other, nestling against him.

The blue Jet petted Skywarp’s tummy affectionately.

“I love you, TC,” the darker flyer sobbed, “I don’t wanna be away from you…” he wanted to tell him so badly.

Thundercracker wasn’t stupid; he knew something was going on, “Is somebody harassing you, Skywarp?”

The younger Seeker nodded against his brother’s chestplates.

“Is it the same mech that hit you with the videotape?” Thundercracker asked, putting the pieces together.

And Skywarp nodded again.

“And he told you to stay away from me?” TC’s vocals were stern; the thought of some glitch hurting his carrying little brother made his circuits sizzle.

Still unable to spit out the whole story, Skywarp did admit to one important item, “He said, I was ruining your life, and that he didn’t want to see you taking care of me and Crystal. And…” he had to say it, “And that if I told you about him, he would hurt the triplets.”

“WHAT?” Thundercracker shot up, stunned, “Why didn’t you tell me?! Somebody’s threatening you like this, and you didn’t say anything?!”

Warp looked pathetic and scared, on the verge of keening, “I was too…I was too afraid.” He sat up, “P-Please, please Thundercracker, don’t hate me!”

The blue Seeker sighed, “I don’t hate you, Warp.” Seeing the other’s fear and sadness, he pulled him into a hug, “Do you know who’s doing this to you?”
“I don’t know his real name,” it was a half-truth, “He’s really been hassling me for a while.”

TC: “How long?”

“Ever since I got pregnant,” Skywarp admitted.

“Joey…” he whispered angrily; he held his baby brother closely and rested his chin on the other’s helm, “That sperm bank you went to must be running some scam.” He figured out the rest of his theory, “Some mech was invisibility powers harassing carrying mothers…until what?” He smirked angrily, “Maybe until we pay them off to keep the baby? Those slagers.”

For a moment, the theory made perfect sense to Skywarp. Perhaps the whole Thundercracker’s-dead-Father-thing was a ruse. Even though he didn’t entirely believe that, oh, oh how he wanted to believe it.

“You think that’s it, TC?” the younger flyer asked.

“All I know for sure is, NOBODY is gonna hurt you, your sparkling, the triplets, ANYBODY, under my watch!” Thundercracker barked, pulling away to look his brother in the optics, “Got it?”

Skywarp smiled, “Got it.”

By morning, Thundercracker gathered everyone for a meeting in the Control Room: Megatron, Starscream, Soundwave, and Skywarp sat on the couch, still hiding his belly under a pillow. Boxes of yellowing papers littered the Command Center.

TC made himself as strong and tough as possible, thinking if Megatron in any way objected to another sparkling, he would not only leave the Decepticons, he would take Skywarp with him and return to Cybertron as soon as Crystal was born, and it was safe to travel.

“As some of you know, Skywarp has decided to start a family,” the blue Seeker began, “and I fully support his decision.”

Megatron assumed this was the reason for the meeting, “Thundercracker, it’s alright,” the Decepticon Leader stated calmly, “Tell him it’s alright. I already knew.”

TC was surprised; for a moment, he didn’t know what to say now. Starscream was expressionless throughout, still very angry with the youngest Seeker.

“Starscream told you?” was TC’s answer.

“Nah, I figured it out for myself,” Megatron smiled, “you guys can all stop sneaking around now.”

“He’s an emotionally unstable glitch, is what he is,” Starscream sneered.

“Well, so were you.” Mегs smiled; he then went over to Skywarp, who was looking down, tired and scared.

“Skywarp, listen to me,” Megatron told him, “You don’t have to hide anymore. I’m the Leader here, and I welcome your sparkling. He or she is going to be our sons’ cousins.”

“S-She,” was all he mustered.

“Oh, it’s a femme?” Megatron nodded a little. He took the other’s hand, “It’s okay…”
“Well, that’s not all,” Thundercracker continued, rubbing the back of his neck cables, the relief of their Leader knowing about the pregnancy not sinking in, “Somebody from Vosnia has been stalking him.”

“You’ve got a name?” Soundwave inquired, “How’d you find it?”

“Skywarp finally told me,” TC gestured at his little brother, “Apparently, this son of a glitch came from the sperm bank in Vosnia.”

Suddenly, Megatron stood, his faceplates white as a…ghost, “What do you mean?”

Some mech with the power of invisibility,” the blue Seeker insisted, “He’s the one that hit him with the sonogram tape two weeks ago. And now, he told Skywarp not to tell us, or he’d go after the kids.”

Megatron took a deep air intake, about to ask a question, but Starscream interrupted, shrieking, “MY kids?! Somebody’s after MY kids?!” He was furious with Skywarp, “WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU DONE?!! WHO IS THIS GUY?!! TELL US!!!”

“I-I’M, I’M, I’m s-sorry, Star,” Skywarp burst into coolant tears, “I-I didn’t mean for any of this…to happen…I-I just wanted a-a sparkling of my own!” He buried his faceplates into his hands, curling into himself.

“Quit yelling at him, Screamer!” Thundercracker was by the youngest Jet’s side in an instant, “You think this is easy for him?! Instead of yelling, what I wanna know is, what are we gonna do about this guy?!”

Megatron paced around the boxes momentarily, debating vocalizing his crazy theory…no, it was too crazy. Too…Tarnian. “Soundwave,” he finally said, “We need to catch this mech in the act.”

The Tapedeck approached, listening.

“Can you set up extra cameras?” Megs asked, “Inside the Base, I mean?”

“Of course,” Soundwave told him, “It will take a few hours, but I can get something going by this evening.”

“Excellent,” Megatron told him, “And when we find him, I’LL be the one to blow his helm off!”

“Get in line,” Thundercracker reiterated.

Well, all this attention—save for Starscream—was comforting to Skywarp, even if the others thought they were looking for a living mech. And, he hoped, maybe they were right? Maybe TC was right all along? Well, either way, he sighed with relief, he and his baby daughter weren’t alone anymore.
“They have NO IDEA who they are dealing with,” Gravechaser snarled angrily. Oh, he would still kill Skywarp. Oh, how he would make him suffer…but now, now the demon would have hurdles to overcome. Namely, Megatron and Soundwave. The one known as the Leader was evidently brilliant; first figuring out that the wretch was knocked up, and now preparing to catch the invader on camera. “It wouldn’t be long until he figures out who I am…” This was indeed a problem. The last thing the former Seeker wanted was for his own son to find out his true identity. He would have to play it smart now.

Gravechaser pondered from his attic hiding place, and pondered, and pondered. He then made his plans…

He knew exactly what to do now. He plotted out everything…right down to the last details. Including how he would destroy Skywarp right out from under them. He would just need one final component…

Shockwave was in a status report call with Megatron in the Conference Room, while Soundwave and the Reflectors set up the cameras all day, drilling holes into the walls, mounting cameras and listening devices, activating wireless connections to the Control Room computers, giving the Tapedeck a view of every angle of the interior of the Decepticon Underwater Base: The kitchen, the mass hall, the hallways, the conference rooms, the basement, etc. He didn’t, however, go into the private quarters of anyone, citing their soldiers’ right to privacy, but figured he could see anyone in the hallways trying to break in.

Soundwave walked up and down those hallways now, trying to sense for any foreign presence, and finding nothing at the moment. To prevent hysteria, he opted not to tell his own sparklings about the intruder.

His sparklings in turn, watched his actions, and simply assumed it was more of the actions of an expectant Father once again getting ready to welcome an addition to the family.

“Adding security, Pop?” Rumble asked, grinning.

“We’ve had several attempts by the Autobots to break in, Rumble,” Soundwave lied again, “We’ll be ready this time.”

“Hey Pop?” Frenzy added, “I know what you should do.”

Soundwave looked at his red and black Cassette, waiting for him to speak.

“You should keep Skywarp with you in the Control Room,” Frenzy smirked, “That way, you can have him working on the files while you set up your cameras.”

“You know, put him to work for ya,” Rumble added for emphasis.
Soundwave narrowed his optics at them, reading for a lie or a trick. But his sons were good; they knew he could tell when they lied, but not what they would leave out.

“Good idea,” was all he stated.

The Tapedeck then retrieved the pregnant flyer from his quarters. He had been watching TV with Thundercracker, trying to get their processors off things. Namely, Gravechaser.

The twins smirked to each other, giving each other a high five. “The more time they spend together, the more we can convince Pop to propose,” Rumble grinned.

Skywarp and Thundercracker spent the day in the Control Room sorting through the old files, not talking about the night before.

“Better than addressing the elephant in the room, I guess,” TC mumbled.

“WHO ARE YOU CALLING AN ELEPHANT!” Skywarp bellowed back at him, “I’m not THAT heavy!”

TC facepalmed, “I meant your stalker!” He sighed, then laughed, “Although, that was funny.”

Ravage meanwhile, was appointed bodyguard to Darkwing, Darkmount, and Dawning, at all times their Creators weren’t around. The Cat’s orders were to kill any foreign presence.

One week. One entire week went by, and nothing. No activity. Nothing was captured on any of the cameras. No one heard anything. Or saw anything.

The only major news was Megatron, the gossiper that Starscream had predicted him to be, told every Decepticon on Base that Skywarp was pregnant.

The aforementioned carrying flyer began to relax again, sleeping with Thundercracker the first two nights, then feeling secure enough to return to his own berth, “Maybe,” he whispered, “That ghost will leave us alone now, right Crystal?”

The little sparkling would squirm in response to his vocals, but he liked to think she could understand what he was saying.

In a few days, the humans of Earth’s America would be celebrating the holiday known as Thanksgiving, followed by the important shopping day of Black Friday. The Decepticons had long adopted these traditions as their own, and the Constructicons were busy preparing a feast in the kitchen.

On Wednesday, Skywarp sat at Soundwave’s computer, reading over the files, while the Tapedeck brought more boxes up from the basement.

The Seeker had been spending all his time with the Tapedeck, feeling safe with the telepath, and…it was most likely his pregnancy hormones surging, but…he was finding Soundwave very attractive these days.

Skywarp watched as Soundwave stacked the boxes, some of which were covered in dust. The
Tapedeck growled in frustration at the sheer amount of paperwork they still had to go through.

“How many of those files are there?” the pregnant flyer giggled.

“Forty-four still in the basement,” the big blue mech grumbled, “Plus the twenty-seven here in the Control Room.” A box on the top of the heap began to spill its contents, forcing Soundwave to bend down and pick everything up, “Blasted, yellowing garbage…”

Skywarp: “When did you start all these files?”

“Well, a lot of this began in Nineteen-Eighty-Four, when we immigrated here,” Soundwave mused, “But then again, Megs and I had a lot of these files back at our detective agency, which would put some of these back to…Nineteen Seventy-Seven, I suppose.”

“WOW,” Skywarp pushed himself up to go look in one of the boxes, “No wonder you wanna computerize everything!”

Rumble, Frenzy, and Buzzsaw entered the Control Room as Soundwave told the Seeker, “Just don’t lift anything, these boxes weigh a ton.”

“You’re gonna have SO much room in the basement after this—” he saw the Cassettes, “AH…hey guys!” He dropped the files back in the box; he went to his left to hide behind the stack of boxes, but his belly was stacking out more and more than he had realized, and he could barely fit in between the towers of stacked crates of files, “I-I haven’t been flying lately,” he rubbed at his forehelm, “haven’t been exercising…”

Soundwave stormed in front of the trio in defense of his friend, “What did I tell you boys about coming in here when we’re working?!”

“It’s okay, Pop, really,” Rumble smiled, putting his hands up, “We already know all about the sparkling.”

Soundwave narrowed his optics, “Megatron,” he shook his helm.

“Nah, Pop,” Frenzy shrugged, “We hid in the Med Bay stockroom.”

Soundwave: “BOYS!”

“Relax, Pop,” Rumble was smooth, “We just came to tell Skywarp that we already know everything, and we’re cool with it.” The Cassettes were all still under the impression that their Father had sired the Seeker’s sparkling-to-be.

“R-Really?” Skywarp asked, “You don’t mind that I’m…?” carrying, he meant.

Rumble thought he was carrying his youngest sibling, “Of course we don’t mind! We had a family meeting and everything!”

“A family meeting without me,” Soundwave noted dryly.

“We just want you guys to know, we wanna help,” Frenzy told them, “Pop, we can move these boxes.”

“You sit down,” Rumble told the pregnant flyer, pulling him gently, “We’ll do this together.”

Skywarp smiled at Soundwave, thinking the Cassettes could be of help, “We’d be able to get this done by Christmas?”
Soundwave was skeptical about his sparklings’ motivations; he knew how sneaky they truly were, but, there WERE a lot of papers to go through, “Just as long as they don’t make you feel uncomfortable.”

“Pop, please,” Rumble insisted, “We have SOME class.”

Soundwave glared.

“No, it’s okay,” Skywarp told him, “I-I kinda like having all of us together, y-know?” He meant to keep the ghost away, but the Cassettes took it to mean they were becoming a real family.

As Rumble and Frenzy began moving the boxes, Buzzsaw, ever the precocious one, sat next to the Seeker, “So, is it a boy baby or a girl baby?”

“It’s a girl,” the dark Seeker smiled.

Buzzsaw: “When are you gonna have her?”

“March, right Soundwave?” he asked his doctor; the Bird thought he was asking the SIRE.

“The second week of March at the earliest,” Soundwave noted dryly, not enjoying his children’s interrogation, “Mid to late March is preferred for forty weeks though, but thirty-eight weeks for sure.”

Rumble had to stifle a laugh; he thought the flyer was due WAY sooner than that, considering he was so big already.

“Well, we’re gonna be your babysitters,” Frenzy told him, leaving no room for arguing, “We insist.”

“O-Okay,” the Seeker smiled. After all these months of hiding, having positive attention lavished on him and his baby was very comforting.

That night, Thanksgiving Eve, Megatron and Starscream had traveled to Cybertron, first stopping at the Vosian Pastry Shoppe for their annual Thanksgiving Bake Sale. All the while, they made it a point not to worry about Gravechaser.

“I REFUSE to celebrate Thanksgiving with that sparkling-abusing, swollen, whale!” Starscream hollered for the whole store to hear.

“Oh, so what?!” Megatron rolled his optics, “He’s not a strange mech you know, Starscream. He’s their uncle; he can discipline them.”

Starscream was gathering some Energon-pastries, “Well, I’m not letting him sit with our family!”

“He IS our family, remember?” the Decepticon Leader could feel the stares of strange Seekers in the Shoppe, some snickering, “Now, do we have everything? We still have to pick up Ma.” They would next be traveling to Tarn to get Megatron’s Mother, Esmeralda, before ending up in Iacon for Shockwave and his entourage.

“Yes, yes,” Starscream groused, “Ravage must be sick of sparkling-sitting, I’m sure.”

“I gave Ravage the night off,” Megatron admitted, bracing himself for the shrieks.

Starscream stopped, “Then, who has the triplets?”
Megatron muttered something before getting in line with the desserts.

Starscream: “Megatron, who has the triplets?”

He muttered again.

Starscream: “MEGATRON?!”

“Thundercracker and Skywarp,” the ex-Gladiator admitted.

“WHAT?!” the red and white Jet screamed, “I TOLD YOU! I WILL NOT HAVE SKYWARP AROUND OUR SPARKLINGS!!! HE LOST CONTROL AND ALMOST HIT DARKWING OVER A LOST TOY!!!”

“Oh, come off it, Screamer,” Megatron groaned, “The kid’s over it, I’m sure!”

Back on Earth, Darkwing clung tightly to Thundercracker’s canopy glass, “No more Wop.”

It was nighttime by now, and Soundwave had his kids stack the boxes up at one end of the Control Room in preparation for the various company staying over for the holiday weekend. Many of the guests had already arrived, and the Tapedeck was a bit nervous with all the extra Transformers around. It was harder for him to detect different CNA signals when there were visiting allies. A foe could easily slip in amongst the friends.

Soundwave checked and rechecked his cameras, making sure every angle was covered. Finally, he turned in for the evening, joining his sparklings in their quarters.

Gravechaser waited patiently for the telepathic Tapedeck to turn in, then went about stalking his prey.

Thundercracker, meanwhile, once again propped a chair against Skywarp’s closet door. Then locked and chained their front door; rechecked the windows, etc. The littlest Seekerling in his arms, sucking on his pacifier, looked up at him for reassurance.

“Don’t worry, little guy,” TC cuddled his nephew, “Nothing’s gonna happen on my watch.”

Darkmount had crawled up the blankets onto to TC’s berth, but Dawning was struggling on the floor, whining in frustration.

“Um, TC?” Skywarp was standing over the sparkling, “I can’t pick him up.”

The blue Seeker scooped the baby up onto the berth. Dawning then tackle hugged Darkmount, giggling and cooing.

But Darkwing shifted and turned away, not wanting to look at Skywarp.

“And to think, you used to be his favorite,” Thundercracker glared at his young brother angrily, “now he’s scared to be in the same room with you.”

Skywarp looked at the floor shamefully, hands clasped behind his back, “I-I can’t control myself sometimes, TC. Y-You know it’s the hormones and not m-me, right?”

“Oh, I do,” the other smirked, “But Darkwing doesn’t.” He turned the sparkling to face the darker Seeker, “Now apologize.”
“I’m sorry, Darkwing,” Skywarpr was very sorrowful now, “I-I don’t wanna yell…I don’t feel good.”

The youngest triplet only stared, then turned himself around and rested on TC’s canopy again. Not accepting it.

Thundercracker thought of something his Stepfather used to do to settle arguments between them, “Hey Darkwing, want me to spank him?” He swatted the darker Jet’s backside hard, making Skywarp whimper at the sudden pain, “Geez, even your aft is swollen with this.”

“L-LEAVE ME ALONE!” Skywarp keened, jumping into his berth and hiding under the covers, crying again. He was tired of everyone—even the kids—being angry with him. Didn’t they understand what he was going through? He needed their support more than ever. And it wasn’t about his pregnancy.

Thundercracker just shook his helm, “Never mind him, guys,” he set Darkwing down next to his brothers, and spoke in a much softer tone, “Now, why don’t we do something quiet.”

Dawning stuck his glossa out.

TC: “How’s about I read you guys a story, hmmm?”

“Y-Yeah, yeah!” Darkmount nodded, “Story!”

“Okay, you gotta get into bed first,” he told them.

The triplets hurried under the covers in Thundercracker’s berth, Darkwing was still a little unsure but followed his brothers’ leads.

TC sat on the edge of the berth and showed them the new datapad he had picked out, “It’s called, ‘The Curse of Maleficent: The Tale of a Sleeping Beauty.’”

Skywarp turned over onto his back, rubbing his carrying belly, deep down he wanted to listen in, just relax and be read to until he fell asleep.

Thundercracker began reading to the triplets in his softest tone, “Once upon a time…In a faraway land…There lived a beautiful princess…All she needed was True Love’s Kiss…But first, beyond this place there be dragons.”

While Darkmount was excited, and Darkwing hid under the covers up to his optics, Dawning seemed to look towards the ceiling. The demon was back.

“Sometimes,” the blue Seeker continued to read, “For all the ‘good’ and all the ‘bad’ creatures in the world. For as the saying goes, the difference between a hero and a villain often depends on perspective.”

As he began to read about the Moors, and a small young faerie named Maleficent, Skywarp began to recognize the story, “Ah, this is that new version with Angelina! Why are you reading them that?! Just read the REAL version! There have been so many dumb remakes of all the classic stories.”

The three sparklings all turned towards the black and purple Jet’s direction.

Thundercracker kept his vocals the same as when he read the story, “I feel that new versions of fairytales show new and different perspective. Things that we thought were bad years ago, we realize now were simply…different.”
Skywarp shook his helm, “She was like, the evilest witch Disney ever created when we were kids.”

“Well, this version shows her side of the story,” the blue Seeker insisted, “Maleficent was once good, and while she did a bad thing, she realized the errors of her ways, and she was redeemed.”

Skywarp just rolled his optics, turning over on his right side, facing his window. There weren’t any pains this time, and he tried to just relax. His hormones were raging again, and he felt he was getting nauseated.

“‘There you go,’ the young faerie said as she healed the broken branch…’” TC continued to read.

For his part, Gravechaser took the opportunity to set his plans in motion with everyone occupied by his son’s narration. He moved away, towards the Control Room…

The triplets seemed to settle in after that. TC assumed they were enjoying the story.

Thundercracker: “Suddenly, the Guardians alerted the girl to a disturbance on the west end…”

Without the uneasy presence of the ghost, Skywarp relaxed now, taking several deep air intakes and ‘hugged’ his stomach with his left arm. He couldn’t wait to actually hold his daughter in his arms. The bond of mother and child between them was growing stronger all the time; it was like no other feeling he had ever experienced before. He could feel his tiny sparkling-to-be trying to stretch out, and then try to pull or swim, however that worked, towards where Thundercracker’s vocals were coming from, :I like Uncle’s story!:

Thundercracker: “Maleficent flew to the west end to see what was going on…there, she saw Stefan, a young orphan, that was trespassing in the Moors…”

:Momma, I like Uncle’s story!: Skywarp could feel his little ones’ thoughts in his spark, “Hey TC?” he whispered, “I’m s-sorry I’ve been hard to live with and, mouthing off and stuff. Crystal really likes you reading to her.”

Thundercracker smiled and motioned for his little brother to come over. Skywarp got up and jumped into TC’s berth, snuggling under the covers, their nephews giggling and chirping. Darkwing continued to ignore him though, instead curling up on the blue Seeker’s lap. Thundercracker, in turn, stroked the Seekerling’s wings as he continued the story. Darkwing was the first of the triplets to fall asleep…

The difference between a hero and a villain often depends on perspective.

“How true, my sparkling,” Gravechaser thought to himself as he materialized in the Energon Storage area of the basement, “How true indeed…”

The former Seeker knew that the Decepticons—probably the entire galaxy if he was being honest with himself—would view him as a villain. After all, he had made it his personal mission to deactivate the pregnant flyer in the most painful way possible. Oh, he won’t just pick up a gun and shoot him. No, he didn’t just want to kill Skywarp; he wanted to torment Skywarp! Torture Skywarp! Make that blasted hellspawn WANT to offline! Oh, that monster will be begging to die when the ghost got through with him!

Gravechaser didn’t care that the black and purple Jet was carrying an innocent Seekerling, “What about MY innocent Seekerling?!” Skywarp had cost him his precious Thundercracker. He saw his beloved sparkling, the one he would lay down his life for, snatched away from him back at the Sleepy-Tyme Motel. It was Skywarp’s fault. Not the cops; Skywarp. Everyone had done what they had done to Gravechaser and Thundercracker was because of Skywarp.
It had been a miserable decade in prison, and another decade in the Pit. But nothing would compare to the misery Gravechaser would now inflict in his revenge. There was a reason it took the demon twenty years to have his revenge. The Seeker chose to become pregnant now; which meant several things were possible now that were not possible before: First off, Gravechaser was able to possess those fools at the sperm bank and perform the operation, setting up the internal damage. Second, Skywarp’s teleportation was now forbidden; so no escaping. In several more weeks, flying and transformation would prove impossible, making Gravechaser’s plans even easier. It wouldn’t be long now…

Still, being a demon had its own limitations: He was unable to possess Skywarp because of the darker Seeker’s shared CNA with Thundercracker, and that was because Thundercracker shared CNA with Gravechaser’s former self. He was forbidden to interact with his former form; the Butterfly Effect. Starscream having a Trine Bond with his son also ruled him out, and Starscream’s Marital Bond with Megatron connected the Decepticon Leader back to the Trine. Soundwave was also out of the question since he was a Telepath, powers that gave him total immunity over paranormal activity.

However, there were plenty of strong mechs on this Base Gravechaser could utilize when the time was right. He didn’t need them hardly, anyways. He was doing a great job of breaking the young Seeker into pieces all by himself.

Gravechaser stalked around the lower level of the Underwater Base now, making a mental note of all the different designated areas: The Energon Storage Room, the weapon and ammunition storage area, the base maintenance area, which was almost exclusively used by the Constructicons. That one section that was now partially cleared of storage boxes that contained their hard copy files. The Tapedeck and his paperless-society project, the ghost shook his helm at the nonsense.

Finally, he found an area he was looking for: And it was absolutely perfect.

It was nearly midnight now; everyone on Base had turned into their quarters, and Starscream and that Gladiator would be returning an hour or so from now, so it was about time for the ghost to get to work.

Gravechaser went to a trap door on the southern side of the basement, tampering with its lock, making it look like an intruder had broken in. Then he walked heavily up the basement stairs, before opening the main floor door, leaving it open. His plan was to appear to be a living mech for the cameras, hoping the Decepticons would suspect that Autobot they called Mirage. Just enough to buy the ghost some more time…Skywarp wasn’t due for three more months.

He opened the Control Room’s doors by picking the lock with his claws. He then made quite the show for the cameras: He moved boxes around, opening several and rummaging through papers. At one point, he opened a file folder and flipped through the pages, just long enough to simulate reading, before tossing them off to the side. At one point, he even simulating typing on Soundwave’s computer, deliberately typing in fake passwords, and triggered the systems’ locking mechanism. Finally, he took an important file out and placed it in his subspace. Then, he crept out of the Control Room. Perfect!

Time to check on Skywarp: Gravechaser entered the Seekers’ quarters. Skywarp and Thundercracker were both recharging on the blue flyer’s berth with the triplets fast asleep between them. The book TC had been reading still in his grasp. He was resting his helm on his arm, facing his little brother and nephews. Skywarp was hugging one of the Seekerlings (Dawning actually, but Gravechaser didn’t care to figure out which one was which.) to his chestplates. It disgusted the ghost just how fat the pregnant flyer was growing, but, he had to remind himself that that too, was part of
And then…suddenly, none of that mattered to Gravechaser. His dead, black optics didn’t want to stop focusing on his son. His son. Thundercracker. He loved Thundercracker. He never stopped loving Thundercracker. Not from the Iacon Correctional Center. Not from the Pit. Not now. He adored his sparkling from the day he was born. And he would forever.

The ghost, who had wanted to be so loud before, was now silent as the grave. He moved over to his son’s side of the berth to be closer to him. He looked down now at his son: He was such a handsome young mech, “You look like me,” he began, but then remembered bitterly that Thundercracker looked the same as he, Gravechaser USED to look like. He wanted to touch his son; gently run his digits over his elegant faceplates. Those beautiful, strong wings. But he was afraid to; he didn’t want to accidentally hurt him with the claws he now possessed. He studied his son now, taking in how twenty years had gone by since he had last physically held his sparkling. All the years lost with his son. He wanted to tell him how much he loved him. His dear, sweet boy, “Thundercracker…I just wanted to tell you—”

He wanted to say that he didn’t care about Skywarp; or about their Mother, his ex-wife. He wanted to tell his son that all he cared about was him, and that he loved him, and that he would love him for all entirety.

And he would have too, that is, if Crystal hadn’t woken up, :Momma! Momma! He back! He want hurt Uncle!:

Skywarp bolted awake, “OOwww!” his sparkling-to-be was squirming in fear. He gripped his aching stomach and turned onto his back, “W-What…where?” he opened his optics blurrily, and saw a dark blue shape standing over his brother!

“TEECEE!!” he cried out. Gravechaser, in mid-sentence, was forced to vanish into thin air, back to his attic hideaway.

“W-What?” Thundercracker woke up suddenly and looked around. Two of the triplets stirred a bit, but none woke up, “Shhh, Skywarp, you’ll wake them again.” Then he saw the other’s terrified expression.

“I-I t-think I-I-I,” Warp couldn’t get it out.


Skywarp shook his helm shakily, “I-I saw t-that g-guy. I-I I-I I-I mean,”

Thundercracker jumped up and looked around, “Where?!?”

“I-I d-don’t…know,” he wasn’t sure now what he had seen, he sobbed, “TC, I’m…losing it.”

The blue Jet looked around their berthroom: the closet was still barricaded. He got up and went to the front door; nothing was disturbed. So, he came back to bed, “It’s alright, maybe it was a bad dream this time.”

Skywarp just whimpered; he was so stressed out now.

“Shhhh, shhh,” the other told him, “Just relax, kiddo.” He coaxed his baby brother to lay back down and covered him up, stroking his right wing. Skywarp felt his baby daughter settle down and he calmed slightly. This scare wasn’t as bad as the others, so the black and purple Seeker fell back to sleep.
Thundercracker stayed awake though, watching over his family protectively. He sat up and leaned against the helmboard, trying to remember something. He had been dreaming of his Father again. And this time, he swore he heard the mech’s vocals…

Rage. Gravechaser didn’t know it was possible to hate Skywarp even MORE than he had before! He wanted to destroy the flyer tonight! Here he was, about to tell his son the truth, and that bloated slugoid had the gall to interrupt him?! What sort of slag was this?! He would make the little slag pay for that. Tonight!

1:30 A.M.:
Megatron showed his Mother to the guestroom in he and Starscream’s quarters, while Shockwave headed to his usual spare room on the Base. Everyone was careful to be quiet and not wake the others.

“Megatron, promise me you’re protecting the youngling,” Esmeralda told her son, “You’re strong, you can do it.”

“I am, Ma,” Megs reassured her, “There’s nothing to fear.”

“Well, you know I can’t help myself, son,” the Hooded Ma admitted as she set her suitcase down, “When you’re as old as I am, superstitions are hard to let go of.”

“Well, nothing happened with Screamer, and nothing’s happening now,” the Decepticon Leader smiled, “It’s just an old wife’s tale.”

“I’m an old wife,” she smirked, “Where’s Starscream?”

“Getting the kids,” Megatron nodded, “Hopefully they’re sleeping. If they see their old bag grandma, we’ll never get them back to sleep.”

Esme threw a pillow at her son.

“Give me my children,” Starscream snarled as he yanked Darkwing from Thundercracker’s arms.

TC was tired and becoming fatigued from staying up half the night, “Look Star, just because you’ve just spent five hours traveling with your mother-in-law, don’t take it out on me.”

“No more Wop,” little Darkwing repeated.

“It has nothing to do with my mother-in-law,” the Trine Leader insisted, “I told you before, I don’t want that fat slob near my babies!”

“That fat slob is our brother,” TC rubbed at his forehelm tiredly, “We can talk tomorrow.”

But Starscream had other plans, “Tomorrow, he is banned from the family table.”

“Oh come on, Screamer,” he tried not to raise his vocals too much, “Quit being so dramatic.”

Unbeknownst to them, Skywarp had woken up and heard every word they were saying.

“Shut up and help me with my kids,” Starscream insisted, “I can’t carry them all at once you know.”

TC turned back and looked at the other two triplets, who were still sleeping, “Well, um, take them one at a time then.”
“OR, you can help me,” the red and white Seeker insisted.

TC mumbled something. “leave him alone.”

Starscream: “What’s that?”

“I said, I don’t wanna leave him alone at night,” TC insisted, “Not after those break-ins, Star.”

“Oh come off it!” Starscream barked, “Soundwave’s locked this place down. Now help me with my kids!”

The blue Seeker went to check on Skywarp. The carrying flyer pretended to be sleeping.

“Well, I’ll be fast,” he whispered as he carefully lifted Darkmount and Dawning into his arms.

As soon as he and Crystal were alone, Skywarp began sobbing again, “S-Starscream…” his Trine Leader hated him. He knew it.

Suddenly, the room turned a frigid cold, and the pregnant Jet was seized by the throat by strong claws.

Gravechaser had both hands around Skywarp’s neck cables. The demon hoisted his prey up and rammed him hard into the wall. He flew them up, dragging Skywarp off the ground, his pedes swinging uselessly.

“You had the SHEER GALL to interrupt me speaking to my own son?!” Gravechaser scorned him; the baritone vocals sounded like they were coming from another world, “How dare you!” He tightened his grip even further and began shaking him, shaming his helm against the wall with an unearthly force.

Skywarp was gasping; struggling to get any air into his intakes. He tried pulling the claws off his throat, but Gravechaser was very strong. Too strong. He tried kicking the mech away, but there was nothing solid for him to push against, Gravechaser was transparent. He looked at the heinous faceplates and stared into the black optics: Cold, dead, like dusty marbles, like a shark’s optics.

Skywarp couldn’t breathe at all; he started turning blue in the faceplates. He got very dizzy suddenly, and the room seemed to spin around. He would have passed out in another few seconds, but then, Gravechaser released him suddenly, letting him fall. The young Seeker was prepared to land, but his pedes buckled under his weight and he fell hard on his knees and then his right side. The pain. That same pain in his right side was back again and gone again in a moment. He choked and coughed, gasping.

Gravechaser had only let him go because he sensed Thundercracker returning to their quarters. But before the blue Seeker entered, the wicked ghost knelt before Skywarp, seizing his faceplates to look at him in the optics. “Listen to me you little fool,” he was filled with hate and malice, “You feel that knife in your belly?! Do you?! Listen to me; you TELL NO ONE! You hear me?! TELL NO ONE! Or I will make it much worse!” And then, Gravechaser evaporated into smoke.

Back in his attic lair, the ghost cleaned off his claws. That felt good, having the wretch’s throat
between his sharp digits. That night, Gravechaser learned something new about his newly-acquired powers: He learned that if he balled up all his rage into an inferno of hate, he could physically overpower Skywarp on his own! He won’t need to possess anyone…“Although,” the demon flexed his claws, “getting others involved will definitely unnerve the little wretch.” He saw that his son was back, again propping furniture against their front door. There would be no more work for now.

So, the ghost retrieved the file he had stolen from his subspace, “Reading material, HYPH!” and began to study the history of the World Gladiatorial Games.

As Thundercracker entered their berthroom, Skywarp shakily got back into his brother’s berth, covering his helm with the blankets, and pretended he had been asleep the whole time. No easy acting task, considering he was shaking so bad and having difficulty catching his air intakes. He accidentally let a few gulps and hiccups escape his vocalizer as his brother laid down.

TC heard the crying and shook his helm, figuring out how Skywarp had heard what Starscream had said, “I’m sorry, kid. I’ll talk to him tomorrow.” He pulled his baby brother into his arms, trying to calm him down. The black and purple Seeker buried his helm into his brother’s chestplates and cried. He cried and cried, shaking. His sparkling was frightened as well, kicking him nervously.

Thundercracker sighed, gathering the crying Jet closer to himself, rocking him, “Come on, come on, let’s go back to sleep.”

Skywarp felt Baby Crystal reach towards her Uncle’s calming vocals, :S-She loves you…: he didn’t even attempt to speak.

“I love you both,” TC whispered, continuing to rock them in his arms.

The carrying flyer tried to settle down, at least for his sparkling’s sake; he had just been attacked and nearly killed, but…he tried to suppress his thoughts now. He needed his sleep; maybe the whole thing had been a dream…

They slowly fell back to sleep in each other’s arms.
Chapter 18: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

Credit goes to Raksha and any other writers who created the original character of Celene, Soundwave's late wife.

Chapter 18:

By Transformersnewfan

“I can’t believe this,” Megatron shared at the monitors in the Control Room, “with my own Mother sleeping ten feet away.”

“Obviously, our intruder took advantage of our loosened security because of the holiday,” Soundwave analyzed, “very disturbing.”

It was morning, and Soundwave had gone to the Control Room as usual, when he immediately realized someone had burglarized their Base: Boxes opened and rummaged through; the computer locked down due to hitting the maximum of incorrect passwords, etc. The Tapedeck immediately called Megatron, and now the two were reviewing the footage from the security cameras. Soundwave was rewinding the tapes of the Control Room cameras when they finally saw invisible movements.

“There!” Megatron pointed at the screen when it became evident that someone was in the room. The two then watched how a being had come in, rummaged through the boxes, tried to break into the computer, and then finally left with a file.

“Can you zoom in and see what he took?” Megs asked, referring to the papers.

“Of course,” the Tapedeck turned a knob and slowly moved in on the image. When the pixelation finished materializing, the words on the file folder were clear: Megatron’s Gladiatorial Records.

“MY FILE?” the Decepticon Leader bellowed, “He has MY file?! But, but, but, Optimus Prime KNEW me when I was a Gladiator! What the slag would he want with that?! There’s so many other files he could have stolen!”

“It doesn’t make sense,” Soundwave narrowed his optics, “unless…it’s not the Autobots.”

“What? It’s gotta be the Autobots!” Megatron insisted, “It’s obviously a Transformer and not a human-sized burglar!”

Soundwave: “Could be a Neutral.”

Megs was skeptical still; he shook his helm, “Go back and see where he came in.”

The Communications Officer did just that, and they viewed how the being had come from the basement.
“At least he didn’t go into Skywarp’s room again,” Soundwave noted. He had already called Thundercracker to check on them and was told everything was fine.

Megatron narrowed his optics at the images, “Show me the basement cameras.”

They searched for a while before finding what they were looking for: An awkward angle of the trap door on the south side of the Base opening and closing.

Megatron: “Let’s go!”

They immediately went to the basement and examined the trap door.

“This doesn’t make any sense,” the former Gladiator growled, “There would be water all over the place if this door was breached.”

“And this lock was broken from the inside,” Soundwave noted, “Unless…somebody’s trying to make it look like a break-in, and they were already on the Base.”

Megatron: “Then, how did he get in here?”

“Perhaps, one of our Decepticons is letting him in,” the Tapedeck stated darkly. “Think we’ve got a traitor?”

“I don’t know yet,” Megatron bit his lower lip component, “And today, we’ve got too many Transformers on the Base to investigate like we should be.” He looked around the basement, “For now, we need to keep this between us. Don’t tell Skywarp; he doesn’t need any more freak-outs.”

Thundercracker and Skywarp, meanwhile, were trying to catch up on their recharge. Everyone had the day off from their duties for the next four days for the Thanksgiving break, and there was nothing to do until everyone got together for dinner around two o’clock.

TC had fallen back to sleep right after Soundwave had called to check on them; Skywarp, though, was just opening his optics. He sighed, thinking about the ghost’s attack last night. He was hoping it was just a dream. He thought about it now; maybe it had been a dream, he had been in a restless recharge before, and after, so, the young flyer told himself, maybe he had imagined it all.

He snuggled in the blankets; curling next to his big brother, rubbing his tummy again. He was so hurt when Starscream called him fat; didn’t he remember what it was like to be pregnant? He was pregnant; of course, he was going to get a belly. He was sorry he lost his temper the other day, but…he had said he was sorry. Why did everyone keep throwing mistakes in his faceplates? Still, he was so glad to have his friendship with his beloved Thundercracker back. The blue Seeker had fallen asleep hugging his stomach protectively. Skywarp knew he would do anything for them.

Skywarp suddenly noticed a twinge of pain coming from his neck cables. He moaned and rubbed at them, thinking it must be another pregnancy symptom. “I need a shower,” he told his still sleeping brother. The black and purple Seeker got up slowly, keeping his hand under his big belly for support, and walked to their wash racks. This was probably due to sleeping without taking a shower the night before. He had a lot of aches and pains lately. But still, he loved carrying his first sparkling. It was just the haunting and the fights that hurt. Skywarp won’t have treaded being pregnant for anything.

He turned on the light and saw his reflection in the mirror. And stopped cold. His neck cables were badly bruised; claw marks, scratches, tiny Energon lines that had burst. “O-Oh God,” it wasn’t a dream after all. Gravechaser had nearly strangled him several hours earlier. He didn’t know what to
do; he couldn’t let the other Decepticons see him like this; he couldn’t let THUNDERCRACKER see him like this!

Skywarp jumped into the shower, running the warm waters over his injuries. He scrubbed and cleaned his neck cables with a washcloth; the dried Energon-blood washing down the drain. The young Jet felt like purging his tanks. He started heaving; he had to think of what to tell the others.

The shower woke Thundercracker up, “Skywarp, you alright?”

“Y-Yeah,” the younger Seeker called back, “T-Teecee? I-I don’t wanna come to the dinner today… I-I j-just wanna stay in our room.”

“Hmph,” TC got up groggily, thinking it was about the weight, “I’d hate to think of you crying alone in here, kiddo.” The bathroom door was locked; again, he figured the other was being shy again, “Think I’ll stay with you.”

Well, pregnancy cravings were, however, stronger than a ghost’s abuse, and Skywarp began thinking about the food, “C-Can you get me something, maybe?”

TC: “Sure, sure.” He was trying to be supportive.

Skywarp got out of the shower and looked in the mirror again: The injuries looked much better now, but they were still noticeable. He wrapped a towel around himself and a smaller one around his neck cables, thinking.

“Hey TC?” he asked through the door, “y-you think I could wear a blanket or something?”

“I think you worry too much about the others,” the blue Seeker told him, “Whatta they care so much anyways?”

Skywarp wanted to go to the dinner though, “Can you hand me my scarf?”

The blue Seeker did so, retrieving the younger flyer’s winter scarf from his closet. Skywarp opened the door just enough to get it before shamming it again. It covered the injuries rather well; but he had to make it seem like this was about his pregnancy and not the lacerations, “I read somewhere online that wearing scarves hides a pregnancy.”

“Yeah…” the other rolled his optics, “for the first week, maybe.”

But Skywarp was happy with himself, smiling into the mirror before opening the door, “You like it?”

“You look nice.” TC didn’t want to set him off.

The Decepticons began gathering in the mass hall for their Annual Thanksgiving Dinner. Long tables were used to accommodate all the extra guests. The main table was reserved for Megatron and his family. Megatron, his Mother, Shockwave, Starscream, and the triplets were a given. Starscream always had his Trine seated with him, but this time, the red and white Jet was adamant about only the older brother sitting with them.

“I forbid you to put Skywarp at our table!” Starscream barked at Bonecrusher as the Constructicon finalized the seating chart, “I don’t care if you put him on the Tarmac, but he’s not going to be around my sparklings!”
Ratbat had been flying around the mass hall snooping around and overheard the whole thing. The youngest of Soundwave’s Cassettes flew back to his brothers and reported to them.

“Hey Pop?” Rumble asked as he entered the Control Room, “Got a minute?”

“Sure,” Soundwave was a nervous wreck, rewinding the footage of the Control Room again, looking for more clues. He couldn’t shake the feeling that whoever had been on their Base was not of their worlds. It just…moved unnaturally.

Rumble saw what he was looking at on the screen, “Everything okay, Pop?”

“Well, for now, it is,” was all the Tapedeck would concede to, “you guys okay?”

“We’re cool,” the blue Cassetticon nodded, “I came to ask you a question, Pop.”

Soundwave listened as Rumble continued, “There’s some kinda fight going on between Starscream and Skywarp, and, well,” he smiled, “We think you should invite Skywarp to sit with us today.”

The Tapedeck was surprisingly touched by his sons’ chivalry, “I think he’d like that.”

“It’s probably better to keep him and the baby around you, y’know?” Rumble continued, “with the break-ins and stuff. You can feel bad stuff around better than anybody.”

“Agreed,” Soundwave nodded, “I’m assuming you know what happened here?” he gestured at the video on the screen.

“Just what we heard you and Megatron saying, Pop,” Rumble admitted, “We just want Skywarp and the baby safe, okay?”

“So do I, son,” the Tapedeck agreed, getting up.

2:00 P.M.:
A good three-hundred Decepticons clattered into the mass hall, each checking in at the registration desk. Skywarp, wearing his scarf, hid closely behind Thundercracker in the line, holding his brother’s shoulders and pressing himself into his back. Maybe coming here wasn’t such a good idea.

“You shoulda gone to Uncle Aerophage’s with Mom and Dad,” the black and purple Seeker sobbed, “you could tell me everything tonight.”

“Well, we’re here now,” the other told him, “Just let me handle Screamer.”

Skywarp could feel the stares of the other mechs; some snickering, some pointing, etc. He could hear the comments, “Geez, he’s huge.” And “Is he pregnant or just fat?”, and of course, “He’ll never get back into shape.” The darker Seeker leaned into his older brother’s shoulder, “I-I wanna go home.”

“Come on, come on,” Thundercracker turned and put his arm around the other, “Just ignore it.”

They finally got to the registration desk. Scrapper was sitting with Bonecrusher; he told Thundercracker, “You’re sitting with your brother. He’s not.”

“NOW LOOK,” TC bellowed at the Front-End Loader.

“I’m just following orders here,” Scrapper barked back. The two earning several looks.
Skywarp felt very hurt, but then in an instant, Soundwave came over. He was holding Ratbat, his youngest, in his arms.

Soundwave: “A request: Skywarp will be seated with my family.” He was not about to be argued with.

Thundercracker was ticked off, but he looked at Skywarp to see what he wanted to do. The darker Jet was surprised; he looked at the Tapedeck, “Y-You want me to sit with you?”

“I do,” the big indigo mech answered, putting his hand out.

Skywarp smiled, “O-Okay…”

“You’re lucky, shovel-tail,” TC grumbled at the Constructicon, before turning to the others, “Come get me if you need me.”

But Skywarp wasn’t thinking of Starscream anymore; his hormones still unbalanced, he was completely flattered by the ‘date’ with the handsome Tapedeck.

While Thundercracker sat cross-armed next to Starscream, refusing to speak to him, Skywarp was welcomed by all six Casseticons and their Sire at their table.

“I’ll get our plates,” Soundwave told his brood and his…date.

The young Seeker was very comfortable with the Tapedeck’s family: His belly seemed to be a hand-magnet for the youngest ones like Ratbat and Buzzsaw, while Frenzy and Rumble sat on opposite sides of him, chatter-boxing about themselves, while Ravage gave his nods of approval, and Laserbeak…well, Laserbeak was all business.

Laserbeak: “Will you be Bonding with Father?”

Ravage was mortified; he scratched at the Bird, “Will you show a little class, PUH-LEASE!”

Poor Skywarp, he hadn’t realized how Soundwave was feeling about him (Well, at least, that was the portrayal). He smiled, “Um, I-I would.”

“You would?” Frenzy smiled.

“Y-Yeah, I mean,” the young flyer blushed now, “I-I didn’t think your Dad felt that way about me.”

“Well Skywarp,” Ravage, as the eldest, spoke for the group, “Father hasn’t had any serious romantic partners since our Mother’s tragic passing. It is my personal belief that he is afraid of rejection, thus his decision to continue life alone. That is…” he grinned, “until he began working with you.”

“W-Wow,” he realized he was the first real serious relationship Soundwave had been in since his wife’s death; he hadn’t even thought of their friendship as ‘dating,’ but…Soundwave was seriously handsome, and…it would be nice to have such a big family for his little daughter.

“I-I really like Soundwave and…” he was flushing again, “He’s the only one I really trusted with Crystal.”

Of course, the young flyer didn’t know the Cassettes thought Crystal was their biological sister.

“So…” Laserbeak interrogated, “You learned of your pregnancy. And you told Father?”

Skywarp: “I told Thundercracker, then I told Starscream, and your Dad was the very next one!”
“Yes, my understanding of Trines are that they know first,” Ravage nodded, knowing that TC and Warp knew of Starscream’s pregnancy before Megatron did. First the Trine, then the Sire.

Finally, Soundwave returned with their food.

“I just got you one of everything,” the Tapedeck stated offhandedly as he set the plate down in front of the Seeker, not really thinking. His CPU preoccupied with thoughts of the previous evening’s burglary. After serving everyone, he sat down across from his pregnant apprentice. Not realizing his sparklings were marrying him off.

Skywarp couldn’t stop smiling at Soundwave, even during the Invocation, even during Megatron’s speech, even while gobbling down the Energon-turkey and all the trimmings.

Soundwave, on the other hand, had his sensors on high alert. He continued to scan the thoughts of the guests, looking for anything that might give away if one of the Cons had turned traitor and was passing secrets to the Autobots. Unfortunately, all he got was trivial conversation.

“Hey, Soundwave?” Skywarp began, “You think about your wife on Thanksgiving.”

“Oh sure,” Soundwave admitted, “you never forget your Bondmate.” He usually didn’t talk about her.

But Skywarp wanted to know more, “How long were you and Celene together?”

“Thirteen years,” Soundwave answered, picking at his food. His Cassette were watching him closely.

“And she was a doctor?” the young flyer was now curious about his predecessor.

“Yes, she was a doctor,” the Tapedeck rubbed at his optics under his visor, still trying to pick up any negative conversation around them, “She was more of a scientist really…She always wanted to research medicines, treatments.” he sighed, “She wanted to help Transformers. Sentinel Prime, and his Elite Guard, they were oppressing the Seekers.” Picking at his food again, he looked at Skywarp, “This was back when you were little, probably, but they used to torture Seekers in the prisons, especially by damaging their wings. Well, my wife…Celene, she did a lot of analysis in her student days, and she and her fellow scientists came up with the formula for reactivating damaging flight circuitry.”

“Oh wow,” Skywarp was taken aback, how could he ever measure up to this femme, “So, she helped a lotta Seekers.” He had heard stories of flyers that had lost their wings went insane from the lack of connection with the skies, “she must have been a hero.”

“She never took a dime for all she did,” Soundwave shrugged now, “Hence, why we were always poor.”

“You met her in medical school?” Skywarp asked.

“No…” the Tapedeck shook his helm, smiling beneath his facemask, “Back then I worked for the Cybertronian Telephone Company for that tyrant Ratbat. I was assigned to repair the phones at the Deceptitech Laboratory. And Celene was head of researching new medicines there…”

“Aww,” the Seeker grinned, “It was love at first sight?”

“It was for me,” Soundwave chuckled, “She needed some convincing.”
Skywarp seemed to want him to go on, so the big mech continued, “I kept finding excuses to come back to the labs. I told her I had to change the fuses, or light bulbs, or whatever.” He looked around at the room, “I asked if I could take her to dinner. She turned me down. The twenty-sixth time I asked, she said yes.”

“Basically,” Laserbeak smirked, “Mother decided to give you a shot before having you arrested for stalking.”

The twins laughed out loud.

Soundwave laughed too, “You asked me what Celene was like?” He pointed at the red and black Condor, “THIS one! He is her clone, I swear! He is JUST LIKE HER!”

The Bird was sly though, “Does that threaten you?”

But Skywarp was too busy having fun, “Well, he’s the second sparkling, right? Everybody says I’m more like my Mom than my Dad, even though I look just like my Dad!”

“Yep, he’s the second one,” Soundwave laughed along, “The twins were the youngest, and…” he gestured at Buzzsaw, “you know the story of how I adopted this one,” he rubbed Ratbat’s little helm, “And the little guy here.”

“You guys must’ve loved sparklings!” Skywarp laughed, “Did you get Bonded first or have them first?”

“Bonded first, actually,” Soundwave nodded, “We went out for a few months, and then we got married…we had a little apartment on Circuit Street…third floor walkup. She was pregnant with Ravage and taking classes at nights, going for her Masters.”

The flyer listening, resting his chin on his hand, while the older mech continued, “That’s how I got into the medical field really. I took courses in her fields, just so I could converse with her about her work. I ended up graduating after three years.”

“I never knew that,” Skywarp admitted, “And you guys were working, raising a family and stuff…and then she died?”

“Yes,” Soundwave sighed, “she died in the fire at Deceptitech. She was working on the third shift, trying to make more money. I worked all hours at the Phone Company too, but that night, I was off with the kids…Feeding our infant twins when I…knew.”

Skywarp knew what that meant, “You felt her spark offline?”

“You feel it when the Bond severs,” Soundwave nodded sadly, wanting to get off the subject, “It was instant. My only comfort is that she didn’t suffer.”

“I’m sorry,” the young flyer told him, then turned to the sparklings, “I’m sorry for you guys too.”

The kids just listened now.

“It was a bad time in your history,” the Tapedeck told them; he tried to steer the conversation to something happy, “So, what about your family?”

“My family?” Skywarp shrugged, not really having much to say, “Um, well, I’m the youngest. My Mom had TC from her first marriage, and then had me with her second marriage.” He was afraid to talk too much about Gravechaser, out of fear talking about the ghost might summon him somehow, “My parents have always been happy together. TC and I were always super close. And um, when
we applied to the Cybertron War Academy together, they paired us with Screamer, and we became a Trine.”

The Tapedeck enjoyed hearing this, “Your Creators liked Starscream as well?”

“U-Uh-huh,” Skywarp looked down at the table now, eating the last of his dinner, “They were really happy…Star’s Father was old, and he didn’t have a Mother, ever. His Father died right after we Bonded. So…He always lived with us and my parents. Then we joined you guys.”

Soundwave could see there was something more, “And?”

“And…” Skywarp got a little emotional, “Soundwave, we were always the best of friends. W-We, we would’ve done anything for each other. And after we came here, we were still closer than ever. But after he Bonded to Megatron, he’s real different. He got like, angry all the time; he looks at me like he hates me, Soundwave. He’s still got respect for TC and stuff, but he’s always angry with me.” He was on the verge of coolant tears now.

“Skywarp, when you Bond with another Transformer, the sparks become one,” the Tapedeck knew the Seeker knew this stuff, but he still felt to try and explain, “And, when one mech is very, very strong, like Megatron is, the spouse’s spark takes in all that power at once, and it can take some time to control it all. You understand what I’m saying?”

The young Seeker nodded, but still looked sad.

“I’ll get you some dessert!” Frenzy jumped up and ran; food solved everything.

Soundwave: “He got all of Megatron’s Gladiatorial training; all that strength, and rage, it was a lot. He can learn to get it under control with time though.”

“Was it a lot for you…to take in all Celene’s science stuff, I-I mean?” Skywarp asked.

“Well, no,” the Tapedeck admitted, “Knowledge is a different type of power.”

“What about her with you?” Skywarp asked now, more for himself, “Does it hurt to take in YOUR powers?”

“Not at all,” Soundwave told him, meaning for Celene, “my powers are inborn at activation, not acquired like fighting tactics. My wife felt nothing except how to fix computers.” He smiled a bit.

“Bet that’s a relief,” Rumble whispered.

The Tapedeck could see that the Seeker was getting emotional, so he offered to help, “Skywarp, would you like me to speak to Starscream about this? Perhaps hearing it from me would make him aware of his problems.”

“I don’t know, Soundwave,” the black and purple Seeker shrugged now, “he didn’t want me to sit with him today, but…” he smiled, “I’m really having a good time and you and the kids here.”

At this point, Thundercracker came over protectively; he had felt his little brother’s emotional surge through their Trine Bond.

“No, I’m okay TC,” Skywarp told him.

“Hey, get outta here!” Rumble barked, “He’s fine with us!”

“YEAH!” Buzzsaw shrilled.
So, the blue Seeker just glared at them and went back to Megatron’s table.

“Sorry, he’s worried about me,” Skywarp smiled, “He said to stay with either him or with you, Soundwave. Starscream too, but he doesn’t want me.”

“Well, we wouldn’t leave you alone,” Soundwave insisted.

Frenzy brought the desserts now, “I got everything.”

Soundwave: “Thanks for thinking of your Father.”

Frenzy: “Oops.”

The Seeker and the Tapedeck continued their loving looks and friendly conversations over the Energon goodies, Skywarp didn’t mind stuffing his faceplates with them now, even though he knew Soundwave wanted to keep him on a diet.

“Well, it’s a holiday,” the big blue mech shrugged.

Skywarp had forgotten all about Gravechaser; he forgot about his neck cables’ injures under his scarf; he even forgot the pains he was occasionally having on his right side. With his new boyfriend, he was calm, and nothing was bothering him.

Buzzsaw: “How’d you decide on the new baby’s name?”

“I’m naming her after Christopher,” Skywarp smiled, “I think it’s a pretty name for my little femme.”

Laserbeak wasn’t sure, “As long as Father approves. I do as well.”

“Hey, the Mother ALWAYS picks the name,” Soundwave pointed a digit at his second son, “Your Mother picked out all your names. Expect your baby brother.” Buzzsaw’s biological Creators had given him his designation, and Ratbat was named after Soundwave’s old boss. “Besides,” the Tapedeck continued, “Agent Williams was a friend of mine as well.”

“I still listen to his songs,” Skywarp told them, “Hey, that’s another thing we all have in common! We love music!”

“Oh, we definitely love music,” Soundwave nodded, “I’m always telling this bunch to turn the volume down.”

“TC’s the same with me,” the Seeker laughed, “He’s like, ‘Skywarp, you can’t play rap music around the triplets!’ and I’m like, ‘Ah stuff it, TC. You ever hear the lyrics to human nursey rhymes?!’” he was laughing while he was eating. “Crystal loves rap music.”

“Really?!” Rumble was excited, “Me too! Hey Pop, can I play my tapes for Crystal?”

“Oh, oh, we could play our tapes in the Control Room,” Frenzy shouted, “Wouldn’t that be cool, Pop?”

“Oh Primus,” Soundwave mumbled, “I’ll never get any work done.”

“Well, I think she’d like that,” the Seeker smiled, “She likes Chris’ music, and Tupac, and all the nineties’ rappers.”

“It’s a date!” Frenzy proclaimed.
They were all having so much fun together; they didn’t notice how many of the Decepticons had left the dinner. Some were leaving to watch television; others to explore Earth while they were in town, and some just hanging out.

“Wait for the major of them to leave,” Soundwave whispered to his friend, “you don’t need to get crushed in the crowd.”

Skywarp nodded, thinking of how much the Tapedeck was looking out for him and his sparkling.

As usual, Megatron’s table was the last to leave; the triplets were now screaming, having tired of the long day. Starscream took Dawning for a walk, not meeting optics with his youngest brother.

“Bye Screamer,” Skywarp said to his Trine Leader’s back as he stalked by.

Astrotrain and Dirge were seen talking in the corner, pointing at the family. Soundwave responded by staring them down, “I’ll escort you to your quarters.”

Skywarp liked walking with the Tapedeck; the Cassettes walking in front of them, chattering as they always did. Soundwave was focusing on the prying optics and instinctively put his arm around the Seeker’s wings. The younger flyer liked this, hugging Soundwave’s back in return.

“I’ve never really…hung out with anybody except my brothers,” Skywarp mentioned nervously, “I enjoyed hearing about your wife, and your family.”

“Likewise,” Soundwave shrugged, “It was nice being with you outside of work.”

They stood at the Seekers’ quarters door now.

“So, what are you gonna do now?” the Seeker asked.

“Well, I got some things to look at in the Control Room,” the big mech didn’t want to go into details, “And I think you should get some rest. Your systems could overtax easily.”

“You’re so good to us,” Skywarp blushed now, “You don’t treat me like I’m dumb like the others do.”

“I never thought you were dumb,” the bigger mech shook his helm, “In fact, I think you’re stronger than they think you are.”

“I’m not strong,” the black and purple sighed.

“Actually,” Soundwave turned and looked at him in the optics, “I think it’s very strong to make the decision to start a family on your own and go through with it.”

“Y-You mean that, S-Soundwave?” Skywarp was getting emotional again; his brothers never told him he was strong.

“I do,” the Tapedeck told him, “And I think you’ll make a great Mother to your sparkling.”

Skywarp glomped the bigger mech, hugging him and bursting into coolant tears, “T-Thank you, Soundwave, you don’t know what that means to me!”

“Hey, I don’t give compliments easily,” Soundwave told him, hugging back, “But you’ve earned it.”

From down the hallways, the Cassetticons all watched, smiling and high-fiving as they saw the two embraced, not knowing what the two were saying to each other.
“Yes!” Rumble did a fist pump.

“Where’s your brother?” Soundwave asked now, “I’m not leaving you alone after what’s been happening.”

“R-Right,” Skywarp sighed, having forgotten about Gravechaser. Now he wondered if he really wanted to kill the mood and tell his doctor about his near-death experience the night before.

Likewise, Soundwave didn’t care to mention the burglary in the Control Room, “You’ll be safe, Skywarp, I promise,” he told him as he stroked a wing, “Just stay close to Thundercracker or Starscream…or me. And, if none of us are around, you know you can trust my sons.”


Thundercracker came now, stalking in with a wrapped-up plate of leftovers, “That was a day in the Pit.” He was just relieved to be out of there, “You okay?”

“Uh-huh!” Skywarp smiled, “I loved it!”

TC nodded before addressing the Tapedeck, “Soundwave, I’ve had it with Screamer! I think he needs a frigging exorcism!”

“I’ve already told your brother,” the big mech nodded, “I’m going to speak to him.”

“GOOD!” Thundercracker was tired, opening their door and going in first.

“Just keep Skywarp safe,” Soundwave ordered, only then allowing the younger flyer out of his sight, “I’ll see you later.” He left then, with Skywarp watching him walk down the hallway, now madly in love with him.

Hours earlier…

At the dinner:

Thundercracker hated being separated from his carrying little brother. He wanted to protect him; make sure he and his baby were safe at all times. And the irony was that their Trine Leader had forced them to split up on the very day the earthlings Christened as the day to celebrate family.

At their table, Megatron sat between his Mother and Shockwave, keeping their tradition they had shared before his Bonding. Next to Esme was Starscream, and then TC, and next to him was an empty chair. It was completely cruel. The triplets were in their matching high-chairs between the adults.

Shockwave went on and on about his various projects on Cybertron, “I’m meeting with the contractors about the new highway in Helix on the twenty-eighth, but before that, I have a lunch date with the new City Commander of Polyhex.”

Megatron nodded, listening to his oldest friend prattle on. He was the only one that really enjoyed the Cannon-Former’s company, and the feeling was mutual. Shockwave lived alone in his Tower in Iacon, with only his Vehicon servants and staff members. When the two got together, they would talk for hours on end.

Esmeralda fawned over her little grandsons; the jewels of her optics.
But the Seekers…well, that was a different story.

“I think we need to keep our fights between us, Screamer,” Thundercracker whispered.

“I don’t have the slightest idea of what you’re talking about, Thundercracker.” Starscream was at his haughtiest.

TC: “Telling Scrapper and Bonecrusher not to sit Skywarp at our table.”

“Who?” Starscream was sarcastic, “Who is this Skywarp you speak of?”

“Primus, Star,” Thundercracker held his helm, exasperated, “Why are you doing this to him?”

The Trine Leader shook his helm, keeping his vocals down, “He makes me so mad, TC. He makes me so mad, sometimes…sometimes, I just want him out of my LIFE! It’s like, I wish he would warp away into thin air and never come back.”

The blue Seeker didn’t understand, “But…why?”

“WHY?” Starscream shrieked, “You saw him blow up at my child, did you not?!”

TC shrugged, not knowing what to say.

“It’s not just that, you know,” the red and white Seeker was visibly angry now, “He’s whining all the time. He acts like a child! He’s the emotional equivalent of a roller coaster—”

“He’s PREGNANT,” Thundercracker couldn’t believe what he was hearing from their middle brother, “He’s pregnant, Star, cut him some slack, will ya.”

Starscream was furious now, “But he’s always been ungrateful! We’ve bent over backward for him how many times, and he just expects it! He’s a selfish brat!”

“It never bothered you before,” the blue Seeker shot the other a look.

“What about all the other times, TC,” Starscream snarled, “What about the time he tried to kill me? Hmmm?”

“That was when you were under mind control,” the blue Seeker shook his helm. “And it was over twenty years ago, come on!”

Starscream: “And the time he went against the Decepticon Cause?”

TC: “You mean when he refused to destroy Brooklyn? He has friends there; we have allies there!”

“Thundercracker…” Starscream looked at him dead in the optics, “He shot you point blank in the faceplates.” He got upset, “Y-You…we almost lost you.”

“Well,” the oldest of the Seeker Trine remembered that day vividly, even though he didn’t want to…

[The following was taken from the events of All Hail Megatron, Volume #12]

“THUNDERCRACKER!” Skywarp bellowed as he teleported out of nowhere.

TC turned back to face him.
Back in the present, Thundercracker gave his most thoughtful answer, “He was punished for what he did. He was remorseful. He apologized…we forgave him.”

Starscream didn’t look convinced.

“You’re talking about something that happened over eight years ago, Star,” the blue Seeker was floored that this was coming up now. “We took him back into our Trine, we punished him, and then we forgave him. You don’t keep punishing someone after you’ve already forgiven them.” He could see the other wasn’t buying it, “So much has happened since then! You gave birth to three sparklings! HE’s going to have a sparkling! Life has never been better for us! Why are you bringing this up NOW?”

Starscream closed his optics and cycled his vents several times before answering, “Thundercracker, last night, I dreamt about that day. I didn’t just…dream about it. I-I…felt like I was re-living it! I was back in the Control Room when they…” he trailed off, “…told me. I was saying the things I was saying that day. I was back in the Med-Bay when Scrapper and Dragstrip…brought you to me. My brother…” he started crying now, “My brother…was laying there…your faceplates were all—”

“Stop it,” Thundercracker ordered. “We’ve been over this.”

“I-I telling you, TC,” Starscream was shaking now, “I was reliving what happened in my dreams. I-I thought…I thought I was over it, but, I’m…not.”

Under stress now, the blue Seeker shook his helm, “Star, we can’t keep going back to the past. How would you feel if I brought up how many fights you used to have with Megatron before you Bonded with him?”

“I know that,” Starscream was quick to answer, “But he never tried to kill me.”

The blue Seeker was thoroughly upset now; pushing away the food, “So what do you want me to say?”

“I want him out, Thundercracker.” Starscream was forceful yet thoughtful, “Out of our Base. Out of our Trine. Out of our lives. For good.”

“So…” TC didn’t want to believe what he was hearing now, “You want me to just…throw him out with a new baby?”

“You won’t have to,” the red and white flyer sighed, “I will.”

Thundercracker shook his helm, “I-I can’t let you do that,” inside, he was shaking hard, “I can’t…Skywarp is my family. I’m keeping him and his sparkling with me.” He made sure his vocals sounded forceful now; his deep baritone was carrying a gravity to his words, “Don’t. Bring. This. Up. Again.”

Starscream said nothing; instead, turning away from his older brother and concentrating on his sparklings. The blue Seeker refused to eat now; this was the worst Transformer Thanksgiving Dinner ever. The feedback in the mass hall was drowning any coherent words. The youngest triplet once again shouted his new catchphrase, “No more Wop!” The red and white flyer responding by putting the baby on his lap. Time seemed to swim. And long-buried thoughts his own Father floated to the surface. The anger in Starscream’s optics almost seemed like...

Dawning stole one of Darkmount’s Energon carrot sticks, and Darkmount slapped his brother in response. “WAHHHHH!!!” Dawning cried out. Starscream and Esme tried in vain to calm the little guy down; Megatron in deep conversation with Shockwave about the state of Cybertron’s economic
future, before giving his weak, “Son,” which stopped the keening immediately. Starscream put
Darkwing back in his high chair and picked up Dawning and left with him, going to put him down
for his nap.

It took a moment for Thundercracker to stand; the situation weighed heavily on him. Hurt quickly
turned to anger and determination though, and he resolved to fight for his younger sibling and niece.
Chapter 19: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

Special credit goes to Rap artist Christopher Wallace and his co-writers for the song, “Who Shot Ya.”

Chapter 19:

By Transformersnewfan

Thanksgiving early evening:

Eating again. Skywarp was eating again. This time chowing down on the Flux and Rust Sticks TC had brought him from the dessert table. Oh, they were so good.

While Thundercracker remained shell-shocked.

The two were sitting on their sofa together; the television was showing It’s a Wonderful Life, of all movies. Neither one was watching it though; Skywarp wanted to tell his brother all about his afternoon, while the blue Seeker just wanted to put the day behind them.

“Oh my God,” Skywarp spoke with his mouth full, “Soundwave is sooo interesting to talk to, TC. Did you know he used to repair telephones before he met his wife?”

Thundercracker, his expression blank, just shook his helm.

“Well, he was working as a telephone repairmech,” the younger Seeker babbled enthusiastically, “And he met his wife, and he ended up getting a medical degree just so he could talk to her at night!”

The blue Seeker wasn’t really listening; the other said something else but TC didn’t hear.

Skywarp: “Well?”

TC: “Huh?”

“I said,” Skywarp rolled his optics, “What do you think of him?”

“I think…” the other tried playing along, “that you should listen to him when he tells you to take care of yourself.” He smiled at him now.

“HYMPH!” Warp just pouted and dropped down into his brother’s shoulder, “it’s a holiday.” The warm, carbs-heavy dishes were finally putting the pregnant flyer into that food coma. He snuggled against his older sibling; falling into recharge in minutes.

Thundercracker reached over and pulled a blanket over his little brother, before gathering him in his arms. He didn’t usually cry; he just told himself to be strong. Eight years ago…that was so far away now. He wouldn’t tell Skywarp about what was said. Why did Starscream talk about this now? He had said something about having a vivid dream…
The youngest Seeker shifted in his recharge, curling closer to his brother for warmth. TC adjusted the blankets around his wings unthinkingly. How come Starscream didn’t remember the REST of the story? The parts where Skywarp sobbed how sorry he was, begging for their forgiveness. Or how they had shipped their little brother off to Iacon to work hard labor in a detention project for six weeks. And how hard it had been on the two older Seekers to have their baby brother so far away from them. And how they had been overjoyed to get him back; how they spent every waking moment with each other after that, vowing never to fight with one another ever again. And now… this?

Meanwhile, Soundwave and Megatron were together again in the Control Room; the recording devices ready.

Soundwave: “Ready when you are.”

The Decepticon Leader nodded, picking up the tapped phone and dialing.

At the Autobot Base, Transformers and humans celebrated a harvest bounty worthy of kings. Ratchet had prepared his special recipe of home-brewed High-Grade Energon, and Ron Witwicky had matched him with his donation of earth alcohol. Transformers and earthlings getting plastered all over the place; football and NASCAR on the multiple channels. Party, party, party!

Optimus Prime smiled, allowing his group this day to partake in their adopted homeland’s cultural rituals. He took the role of designated driver and watched the news on a small television built into Teletraan-I. He was enjoying a Boston Market commercial when Megatron called him.

Megatron: “What’s the big idea, Prime?”

“Megatron?” Optimus recognized his former friend’s vocals immediately, but was confused by the propose of the call, “What’s this about?”

“Don’t play dumber than you already are, Prime!” the former Gladiator barked, “You know you had Mirage sneak into my Base last night and steal our files!”

The Truck looked straight ahead, almost comically, “Megatron, have you been drinking?”

Megatron: “ANSWER ME!”

“I can honestly tell you, Megatron,” Optimus shook his helm, “I don’t have the faintest idea of what you’re talking about.”

Megatron: “So you deny having Mirage break-in last night?” he said this for Soundwave to detect the lie.

“If any of my soldiers were on your property, I can assure you, it was not with my authorization,” the Truck insisted, motioning the blue Formula-1 Racer over to the phone.

Mirage came over, smiling.

Optimus Prime: “Mirage, where were you last night?”

“Here, watching From Here to Eternity on WGN,” the Autobot didn’t think it was an odd question.

“Thank you,” Optimus Prime nodded before going back to the phone, “You hear that, Megatron?”
And hung up. “Sorry about that, Mirage. Megatron’s been drinking.”

The Decepticon Leader stewed now; he hated it whenever he had to call his contemporary. It was necessary for their investigation though.

Soundwave played the recording back on his helmphones; his expression unreadable.

“Well, Soundwave?” Megatron asked.

The Tapedeck tried to hide his distress now, “Optimus Prime and Mirage are speaking the truth.”

“What?!” Megatron’s optics bugged out in shock, “How can that be?! Then, then, if it wasn’t THEM, then who’s invisible and stealing my files last night?”

“I fear that the answer to that question is going to be rather disturbing.” Soundwave admitted, taking off the helmphones, “We might be dealing with an enemy previously unknown to us, with, as of yet, unknown resources.”

A chill ran up the Decepticon Leader’s backstruct, “I have to check on Starscream and the sparklings,” he got up suddenly, “secure the Base!”

“As you command, Megatron!” Soundwave jumped up and ran to the basement.

By nightfall, Megatron had put the Base on high alert for any intruders. Security monitors online everywhere; the basement’s trapdoor lock repaired and barricaded. The surprised guests were put on a ten o’clock curfew. Megatron’s family confined to his private quarters; he ordered an immediate lockdown of the Decepticon Underwater Base until the end of the holiday weekend.

Soundwave watched the monitors, intending to go to berth at some point, but thought he should keep on the lookout for a while. His thoughts went back to Skywarp, and part of the Tapedeck hated that the holiday break lasted through Monday. He found himself wanting to be with the Seeker again; have him by his side in the Control Room. Hear his vocals; hear his laugh…

The big indigo mech shook off his thoughts. What was he thinking? He sighed…he was thinking about being with someone for the first time since his beloved wife Celene had deactivated, that’s what. Soundwave wasn’t even sure he WANTED a new relationship; he was celibate after the death of his Bondmate. And Skywarp was barely of age. He was twenty; less than half his own age. Barely older than Ravage. And yet…who the slag cared? If Skywarp was okay with it, and his Cassettes were okay with it, then…should the Tapedeck be okay with it as well? Soundwave sighed; he would have to analyze this more now.

Thundercracker and Skywarp were in their quarters, unaware of the extra security measures. Soundwave had opted not to frighten the pregnant flyer any further. The younger Seeker’s neck cables had healed enough that he didn’t have to wear his scarf any longer.

That showed now, as Skywarp was blissfully sitting up in his berth, listening to his friend’s much-rotated album on his helmphones. He sang along, shouting out lyrics randomly as he usually did. His song choice, tonight of all nights, proved to be in poor taste.
TC was on his computer, looking up forgiveness on various spiritual websites.

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Who shot ya?” ♫ “Separate the weak from the obsolete.” ♪

Thundercracker’s anger rose now…

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Hard to creep them Brooklyn streets.” ♫ “It’s on Brother, fuck all that bickering beef.” ♪ “I can hear sweat trickling down your cheek.” ♪

The blue Seeker turned to look at the darker Jet with a sideways glance.

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Your heartbeat sound like Sasquatch feet.” ♫ “Thundering, shaking the concrete.” ♪

Thundercracker held his helm now; his CPU was playing back of the events of that day eight years earlier…

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Then the shit stop when I foil the plot.” ♫ “Neighbors call the cops, said they heard mad shots.” ♪

Fury now, how could Skywarp be so blithe about this.

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Saw me in the drop, three and a quarter.” ♫ “Slaughter, electrical tape around your daughter.” ♪

Thundercracker turned and stared the other down.

Waving hi nonchalantly, Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Old school/new school need to learn though.” ♫ “I burn, baby, burn like ‘Disco Inferno.’” ♪

TC went back to his computer, trying to ignore the rising contempt for his younger, brasher sibling…

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Burn slow like blunts with yayo.” ♫ “Peel more skins than Idaho Potato.” ♪

Thundercracker remembered how much the gunpowder burned…

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Brothers know: the lyrical molesting is taking place.” ♫ “Fucking with B.I.G. it ain’t safe.” ♪

Yes, he learned he wasn’t safe with him that day…

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “I make your skin chafe, rashes on them asses.” ♫ “Bumps and bruises, blunts and Land Cruisers.” ♪

“It was a little more than that,” TC remembered, “Broken canopy glass…optic replacement…”

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Big Poppa smash fools, bash fools.” ♫ “Brothers mad because I know that cash rules.” ♪

“Oh really,” the blue flyer whispered sarcastically as he shut his web browser.

Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “Everything around me two Glock 9s.” ♫ “Any motherfucker whispering about mines.” ♪

Thundercracker ran his hands over his temples, feeling a helmache coming on.
Skywarp’s singing: ♪ “And I’m Crooklyn’s finest.” ♫ “You remind this, Bad Boy’s behind this.”
♫ The flyer started laughing maniacally at his rendition of his friend’s song, thinking he was so funny.

“Skywarp,” TC began, acid reflux building in his fuel tank, “That’s not funny…”

The other didn’t hear his brother from under the music. He just kept laughing like an earth hyaena.

“I said shut up,” the blue Jet growled under his air intakes, almost sounding like his Sire. He stood and faced his younger sibling now.

♫ “Can’t talk with a gun in your mouth, huh?.” ♫ Skywarp skipped over the second verse because he couldn’t remember the lyrics, ♪ “What?.” ♫ ♪ “Who shot ya?.” ♫

“YOU shot me!” TC bellowed.

“Huh?” the black and purple flyer looked up, “You say something, TC?”

“I SAID, YOU SHOT ME!” Thundercracker roared now, “You’re slagging asking who shot me, and I’m answering you that YOU shot me! You shot me in the faceplates at point blank! You tried to KILL me! YOU SLAGGING GLITCH!!!”

Skywarp took the helmphones off and stood, a little off his balance, “T-Thundercracker, I-I…” he couldn’t understand why his brother was so angry at him, “I-It’s just a song…I-I…”

“You would THINK saying that stuff ta me would occur to you that it would trigger a reaction,” the blue Seeker hissed now, “But then again, YOU NEVER THINK!”

Coolant tears formed in Skywarp’s optics immediately, threatening to burst down his faceplates any second. He looked down at the floor, “I-I’m so sorry, Thundercracker. I-I’m so so so…sorry.”

Thundercracker: “FOR WHAT?!”

“F-For shooting at y-you,” Warp was shaking now, “I-I wasn’t m-myself th-that time…i-it was supposed to be C-Christopher’s birthday, b-but…” he had been hurting that day, an anniversary day since his friend’s death. He and Thundercracker had a fight and, “I-I got o-ooutta hand.” He didn’t mean it, “I-I didn’t mean it.”

“The barrel of your gun in my faceplates sure told me what you meant,” the blue Seeker snarled now, hatred in his optics, “You shoulda been court-martialed.”

“I-I went to detention,” Skywarp kept his optics down, feeling the shame and regret anew.

Thundercracker didn’t want to look at his brother anymore, “I need a shower,” he turned and left.

The carrying flyer, devastated by this sudden turn, fell back onto his berth and put his faceplates in his hands, sobbing his optics out. He didn’t know what to do now.

After a few moments, a familiar ghostly vocal was heard.

“I told you,” Gravechaser chuckled evilly, “My son hates you.”

Skywarp moved his hands away from his faceplates and saw that the ghost was standing before him. Something in the flyer knew that Gravechaser wasn’t going to attack him this time. Then again, nothing the ghost could do to him now would be more painful than how he was feeling about Thundercracker.
“You know, Maggot, Thundercracker never REALLY forgave you for what you did,” Gravechaser laughed, “Starscream neither. Oh sure, they tried to, out of misguided loyalty, but the reality is, they will NEVER feel the same about you.”

Skywarp nodded now, feeling that this was true.

“They hate you. They never cared about you or your sparkling,” the ghost continued to taunt the emotional flyer, “You might as well just die…”

The black and purple Seeker got up now, feeling dizzy and off-balance. He walked around the stationary spirit and went to his closet. He packed some provisions in his increasingly crowded subspace before taking some Energon cubes. He keened and whined loudly now; hoping Thundercracker would hear him. He wanted his brother to hold him and tell him everything was okay.

The blue Seeker’s shower drowned out any sounds though.

So, with nowhere else to go, Skywarp took what he needed and left their quarters. He didn’t bother saying goodbye to Starscream, knowing he felt the same. And from there, Skywarp, now six months pregnant, went to the Tarmac, transformed with some difficulty into his Jet Mode, and flew to the East Coast.

Gravechaser smiled in self-satisfaction. HE, of course, had been the one to make Starscream dream vividly about the aftermath of his son’s shooting, and in turn, drudge up the long-ago fight. Now he could relax for a few days.
Chapter 20: By Transformersnewfan

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Thundercracker emerged from the hot shower, drying the last of the waters from his pristine chassis. He went to his berthroom and saw that his younger brother wasn’t there, “Skywarp?” he called out. Nothing.

Still angry, he went to bed, figuring the pregnant Jet had gone crying to Soundwave or Ramjet. Well, for now, he decided to just get some rest. It had been a long day.

The blue Seeker woke up at around two in the morning, feeling strangely cold, and adjusted the blankets around his wings. He sighed, thinking that if he was cold, Skywarp was probably cold too. He should get up and give him an extra blanket.

“Warp?” he asked groggily. No response. He looked up and saw that the other berth was still empty. Skywarp had not returned.

“SKYWARP?!” he called out. Now he was getting worried. He sighed again, figuring he wouldn’t be getting back to recharge unless he knew Skywarp was okay; he got up and looked around.

Gravechaser watched his son with a blank expression from the darker flyer’s closet.

“Hey, Warp?” TC called out. He wasn’t in their living room, or the wash racks, or anywhere in their quarters.

Thundercracker unlocked the door and began looking for him. He was hoping the other had just gotten up to pick at the leftovers in the kitchen, but he didn’t find him there. He asked Dirge; nothing. Ramjet neither. He went to the Control Room, hoping his brother had decided to crash on the sofa. Nothing again. He knocked on Starscream and Megatron’s quarters, although highly doubting he was there. The Decepticon Leader answered, “No TC,” Megatron rubbed at his optics, “Haven’t seen ‘em. Try Soundwave.”

The blue Seeker began to panic, running to the Med-Bay to see if he was there. Nobody. Finally, worried sick now, he knocked on Soundwave’s door.

The Tapedeck was rather ticked off when he opened the door, “Yes?”

“I’m sorry to bother you,” TC was pretty upset by now, “I can’t find Skywarp.”

Soundwave was cold, and knew more than he was telling, “So, you just now started looking for him?”

Thundercracker: “Do you have him?”

“No,” The bigger mech let the other twist in the wind for another moment before finally showing his hand, “He filed a flight plan earlier. He’s in New York.”

“O-Oh,” TC was relieved, then worried again, “He got there safely?”
“I just said that.” When Soundwave wanted to be extra cold, he was absolutely icy.

“Um,” Thundercracker bit his lower lip component, “We kinda had an argument…”

Soundwave: “I figured.”

Thundercracker: “Do you know when he’s coming home?”

“Monday,” was all the Tapedeck would give.

“All weekend, huh?” he guessed it would be okay, but still, “You think it’s okay, I mean?”

“Well, if you have to ask,” Soundwave went from icy to mean, “Why did you kick him out?”

Thundercracker didn’t want to answer that now, “I-I don’t know…”

The Tapedeck just stared, burning a hole into the other, before the blue Seeker dragged himself back to his quarters.

TC didn’t get any sleep after that. Not until Monday.

Friday morning, the Cassette twins watched their Sire work in the Control Room.

“Poor Pop,” Frenzy whispered.

“That Seeker ran off with his baby,” Rumble spat before approaching Soundwave, “Hey Pop? He left without your approval.”

“I didn’t impose any flight restrictions, Rumble,” Soundwave noted, “Under thirty weeks is well within the normal range for a Seeker.”

“But Mom didn’t do that,” the blue Cassettecon noted.

“Well, no,” the Tapedeck shrugged, “It would be the other way around. I wasn’t allowed in the house for a week.” He tried to laugh, then seeing that his sparklings were serious, he told them, “It’s alright. I’ll talk to him when he returns.”

The twins grumped and left.

Privately though, Soundwave wouldn’t have shared his thoughts, “It’s for the best,” he was GLAD Skywar was away from the Base for a few days. Something wicked was afoot, and the Tapedeck was hoping he could solve what exactly was going on before Monday.

Skywarp had flown heavily to the East Coast; the trip was much more taxing on his systems than he had calculated it to be. He had been forbidden to use his teleportation to shortcut his trip and had to do the entire five-hour flight under his own power. It was interesting though, flying with his little ‘passenger’. Crystal seemed to enjoy their trip, :Momma, Crystal like fly! Crystal fly with Momma!: It was dawn when they arrived in Brooklyn, New York. Hometown of his friend Christopher, and home of the Decepticon East Coast Division, which operated out of the abandoned Pfizer factory.

Skywarp staggered into the Base; he could barely walk now, “Motormaster?” he called out,
“Dragstrip?” He looked around for them, but when he saw that no one was online yet, he just signed himself in and got a passkey for one of the spare quarters. He would explain why he was there later. He fell asleep the moment he hit the pillow.

Black Friday: 1:00 P.M.:

The human world was busy scoring deals on major electronic brands all over the country, while the Stunticons lounged around, glad they had a few days off from any missions from Megatron.

Skywarp woke up thinking about a couple of things: For one, as of today, he was twenty-four weeks carrying. Second, it may have just been the fresh air or the fact that he was exhausted when he got in, but it just felt as if he had one of the best night’s sleep in a while. He looked around the room, and he just knew. Gravechaser had not followed him to New York.

Was the ghost confined to the Decepticon Underwater Base? Was he somehow attached to Thundercracker? Did the demon leave now? Simply because he was satisfied that he had seen the two brothers break off their friendship? “Maybe,” the young Seeker shrugged. He watched and waited, but it soon became clear that the oppression and chill in the air were not present here in Brooklyn, “Maybe, Crystal,” Skywarp said to his daughter-to-be, “we should stay here.”

“So, Warp,” Motormaster began as he watched the television, “Haven’t seen YOU around here lately.”

“I’ve been kinda busy lately,” Skywarp smirked. His gestation chamber was swollen past his pedes.

Breakdown got right to the point, “Who’s the Father?”

“One-night stand,” the dark Seeker didn’t care to go into details, “he’s an actor.”

“Man, Chris would’ve been on the floor laughing right now if he were here,” Damian told him. He and James and other members of the Human Alliance Division had come to hang out in the lounge during the holiday break. Normally, Damian was the Chief Coordinator of the H.A.D., while James worked freelance in addition to his music career.

Skywarp always liked being with the two men he called Chris’ ‘Trine’ brothers. When they would get together, it was like he could still feel his friend with them.

“I wonder what he would’ve said about me now,” the Seeker wondered aloud.

“He would have been happy for you,” Damian answered.

Flashback:

1993 Brooklyn, New York.

Skywarp was so nervous; he waited outside for Christopher as usual, but this time, he would be meeting his friend’s sparkling for the first time.

When the young father emerged from the bedroom with the tiny infant, he presented her proudly.

The Seeker didn’t know what to do, so Chris joked, “What’s the matter, Warp? She ain’t THAT ugly.”

“Nah, no,” Warp shook his helm, “She’s beautiful, but…she’s so tiny is all.”
“They all start out that way,” Christopher smirked.

The Seeker took the little girl into his hand; he began petting her, much like how Thundercracker would pet his petrorabbit Harvey so long ago. He was a lot like his older brother, even though he didn’t know him when he had his pets. He laid her on his shoulder. The little girl drooled on him and stared into his optics. He didn’t want to move; he didn’t want to take his optics off her. He loved her immediately.

“Um, Chris?” his wife asked.

“I’m not gonna piss off a giant robot,” the musician whispered through his teeth.

After fifteen minutes or so, Chris finally asked, “You gonna give her back?”

“No.” was the Seeker’s answer.

The new parents simply waited. The baby girl sleeping in his hand. Finally, Skywarp told the couple, “Why don’t you two go on a date or something?”

“A date?” Chris asked, shocked.

“Sure, rekindle your relationship, or whatever humans call it,” he rocked the baby, “I’ll take care of her.”

While his wife was gassed at the idea of leaving her newborn daughter with the evil robot, Chris told her, “Guess we’re going on a date.”

“Have fun…” Skywarp told them, not intending to give their baby back anytime soon.

End of Flashback:

“Hey, where’s your brother?” James asked.

Skywarp was jarred from his memories momentarily before answering, “Um, at the Base back home…we had a fight.”

“The brother that would’ve done anything for you?” Damian gave him a sideways glare as he got some turkey leftovers.

“Damian, I don’t know if you’ll believe me,” the dark Seeker began, “But…In the last couple of months, my brothers have said and did stuff that’s scared me. And now they want me out.”

“Listen,” the older of the two ‘Trine’ brothers began, “You just do your own thing. Chris wouldn’t have let anybody push him out. When people told him he wasn’t good enough, he went back and MADE them respect him. And that’s what you gotta do now, Warp. You gotta go back there and stake your claim. Show them you can’t be pushed out.”

“Try telling this to my brother’s demon dad,” Skywarp thought bitterly, “I guess so…” He wanted to change the subject, “I’m gonna visit Mrs. Williams. I’ll be back later.”

As soon as the carrying Jet walked out, James burst out laughing, “Dude, did you notice Skywarp’s getting fat!”

Damian just sighed.
On Friday night, young Ti-Ti, the baby the Seeker had held in his hand; now a beautiful seventeen-year-old young woman took the stage at her high school’s Annual Thanksgiving Recital. She chose to cover More to the Story from Broadway’s Shrek the Musical. Her mother looked on proudly at her daughter.


In the darkened auditorium, in the back of the rafters, where he used to watch her father perform, Skywarp listened, hanging on every word. He rubbed his stomach, thinking how the next time he would visit the children, he would be a Mother himself.

“Crystal, that’s your human cousin singing,” he whispered to his sparkling, even though he could tell she was asleep at the moment.

Ti-Ti’s singing: ♩ “This is by the book.” ♪ “I knew it from the start.” ♩ ♪ “The ogre tries to hurt you.” ♩ ♪ “But I never knew they meant in the heart.” ♩ ♪ “And there’s more. More, more to the story.” ♩ ♪ “Now I know.” ♩

The young woman finished to a standing ovation, just like her father always did.

Friday evening:
Ti-Ti’s and Junior were home with their mother; now in the girl’s bedroom, they were laughing and talking about the evening. They were the best of friends; just like TC and Warp always were.

Skywarp hid on their roof, as he always did. He never let the children see his faceplates.

“You sang beautiful, darling,” his disembodied vocals told her.

The teens stopped talking immediately, realizing their ‘angel’ had come to visit.

“I knew you were there tonight,” Ti-Ti smiled, “How long have you been back?”

“Just today,” he liked being mysterious with them.

With Junior, he was always trying to get a look at their silent protector. He went to the window, but the Seeker’s dark features blended in with the night’s skies. They couldn’t see him, but he could see them through their skylight.

“I missed you,” Ti-Ti told him.

“Yeah, me too,” Junior agreed, “you haven’t been back in like, months, man.”

“Six months,” Skywarp agreed, “I wanted to see you guys. I’ve been thinking about your father a lot lately.”

Ti-Ti just knew; she didn’t know HOW she knew, but she just knew, that Skywarp would be leaving soon. She didn’t quite know how to process this. Her angel had been with her all her life.

Junior didn’t understand yet, “I always miss my dad, even though I don’t remember him at all.”

“I can tell you, he loved you,” Skywarp whispered, “He loved you both so much.” He loved them
too, just as much as he already loved Crystal. But something was different this time; Skywarp was wondering if he was going to get to meet his little sparkling. Or would Gravechaser succeed in snatching him away from her? Either way, he prayed she would survive somehow.

“I know that he wishes he could have seen you guys grow up,” the Seeker told them, “you’ve both kept his legacy alive...” He turned onto his back now, unable to sustain the kneeling posture with his heavy belly, “He’s never gonna be forgotten.”

He thought of something else now, “How was your finals, Ti-Ti?”

“I got a hundred!” the girl told him, “I got another one coming in January, and then graduation’s in June!” She would have something her father didn’t; her high school diploma. “Will you be there, Skywar?”

Thinking now, Crystal would be around three months old by then, so it would probably be nice to take his tiny newling on her first—well, not counting this one—trans coastal flight, and the two children would probably love meeting a baby Transformer. This could be nice.

But the Seeker’s thoughts went back to Thundercracker, Starscream, and Gravechaser. Would any of them let him just live and be happy with his sparkling? Three sparklings, as long as he was being honest.

“If I’m still on earth, I’ll be there, Ti-Ti,” he felt that was an honest answer.

“Can I have a graduating present?” she asked, smiling.

Skywarp smiled, “Anything, baby girl.”

Ti-Ti asked, “I’ll see your face?”

Well, he figured if he was dead by then, no harm in an empty promise, “You’ll see me.”

The Seeker and the teenagers spend a wonderful three days together, talking over the past, looking forward to the future, remembering their father and his friend, Christopher Williams, the one the world knew as the greatest hip-hop artist of all time.

Damian and James also visited. It was one of the best Thanksgivings everyone remembered.

But by Sunday evening, Skywarp looked out the window of his temporary quarters at the East Coast Base and knew the time was up.

BONNNNNNGGGGG

A clock struck midnight on Monday morning. The holiday was over. “We should head back, Crystal,” he looked out the window at the stars now. He wanted to stay; he felt so safe here; he could SLEEP here. He could have Breakdown’s Bondmate Knockout deliver his sparkling. Work here in New York; have his baby in daycare during the day but spend as much time with her as possible after his shifts. And he could see Chris’s children as much as he wanted, without all the United States between them. It could be so good...

Thundercracker. Starscream.

He missed them.
Skywarp was crying again; first time since his arrival. He missed his brothers, even though they hated him. And he thought about Soundwave, and the potential family he would be giving up by staying here. If he went back now, nothing would be ruined; it was just a Thanksgiving break. Staying any longer would have lasting complications though; possibly literally for his sparkling, and he was afraid of risking that. Changing doctors was always risky, especially since Soundwave knew so much more than Knockout did.

His nephews. He missed his sweet little nephews, especially little Darkwing; they used to be each other’s best buddies.

He had been ignoring Thundercracker’s pleas through their Trine Bond, :Come home, we love you.: One thing he would have to contend with was, of course, Gravechaser. That was the problem. He could work things out with his brothers, but first, he needed to stand his ground against the wicked ghost.

“Damian was right,” he told himself, “Christopher wouldn’t have let anybody chase him out. So, neither will I.”

With renewed determination, he went to the roof of the former Pfizer building turned Decepticon East Coast Base, transformed into his Jet Mode, and headed West.
Chapter 21: By Transformersnewfan

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What a weekend. While Skywarp spent the time relaxing and visiting, the Decepticons were going berserk.

The fight had put a damper on the festivities. Megatron took Starscream and his Mother shopping back on Cybertron—Iacon, to be specific—but kept the fact that his young, carrying brother-in-law had flown away a secret from his Creator, knowing she would demand her son to take action to protect the ‘youngling,’ as she always called him.

Soundwave, meanwhile, stalked the halls day and night, watching, and waiting for an intruder. And none ever showed. Gravechaser never stirred.

But poor Thundercracker had it the worst. He spent the entire time pacing; sending worried signals through their Trine Bond, searching for his baby brother, and leaving messages with Wildrider, who never gave away any news. The weekend had been a hell; and more than once, TC thought about having a cube of High-Grade Energon or two, just to calm down.

Starscream meanwhile, had some serious mixed emotions. He rocked back and forth in his late father-in-law’s rocking chair, trying to sort his thoughts out, “What’s wrong with me?” he thought to himself, “Why am I so angry all the time?” He had said…no, he had ordered, that Skywarp should leave their Base. That he didn’t want him around the sparklings because he had lost his temper. And then…that dream.

He didn’t know that Gravechaser had made him dream.

But when Thundercracker came to him to tell him that Skywarp had gone, Starscream immediately felt a deep sense of regret in his spark. The regret of how things had turned. One minute, they were happy; and the next? Starscream sighed now, the scientist in him desired balance and serenity. And yet, his emotions swung as bad as Skywarp’s sometimes. And no, he wasn’t carrying again like his little brother was. In fact, these emotions emerged well before the red and white Seeker had become a Mother. Years before. Around when he Bonded to Megatron, in fact.

Meanwhile, the blue Jet tried to busy himself; he cleaned their quarters: vacuuming, cleaning the wash racks, putting fresh sheets on their berths, etc. He was hoping against hope of finding Skywarp’s huggy android, to no avail.

When he finished, their unit was spotless. And he had a great idea.

As he straightened up their desks, he thought to himself that Starscream should finally move the rest of his science stuff out of their room. He had been Bonded to Megatron for a while now; at first the Trine Leader refused to move many of his personal treasures out of his side of their quarters, but after a good ten years, and three sparklings, Thundercracker huffed, their union should be secure enough to withstand Starscream considering Megatron’s spacious quarters his permanent residence.

“Star, when are you gonna take this?” the blue Jet pointed at the various books and items, some of which, were from his travels with Skyfire.
“I know about it, TC,” Starscream figured he would have to deal with it at some point, “Guess it was my way of keeping a pede in the door.”

“Star, listen, you can ALWAYS come back to Warp and me, whatever you want,” TC assured him, “I just have some ideas about this space.”

“Alright, help me get this stuff…” the red and white Seeker admitted. The two spent Sunday gathering up everything. They moved the desk out, then packed the books and moved bookcases. And finally got the space clear. Then TC cleaned the area thoroughly.

What a rough flight! Going back West had been harder than going East for Skywarp, as he was dreading returning home. He didn’t want any more bad words or hurt feelings between himself and his brothers. He stopped several times, once in Glasgow, Kentucky, and another somewhere in Oklahoma; he needed to catch his air intakes and gather his strength. It was freezing; colder and colder the closer he got to his home. The young Seeker wondered if Gravechaser had somehow made it so cold. An hour from home, the snowstorm began. He had to fight the high winds, and snow on his windshield and ice on his wings.

Finally, he saw the Tarmac and landed; transforming into his Robot Mode, and wondered if maybe, he should just leave it that way for the next three months. This belly was hard to squeeze in!

Skywarp went down the elevator and went to his quarters. The heaviness in the air was still there. The oppression of the ghost. It looked like Thundercracker had been busy, everything was clean.

“Teecee?” he called out. No answer; and yet, the pregnant flyer felt like he wasn’t alone.

Their quarters seemed dark. He walked to their berthroom; Gravechaser was right behind him.

Skywarp turned around suddenly, but there was nothing there.

He opened the door and looked around: All of Starscream’s things were gone. His own possessions were untouched, but being as beaten down as he was, he took it to mean that Thundercracker had purged their quarters of Starscream’s things and he and his sparkling would be evicted next. He sighed, wishing he hadn’t come back.

Skywarp looked at his berth; he wanted to sleep; he was so tired. So very tired. But he was still scared of being attacked by the ghost. And now, he didn’t know if he was welcome by his own brother. He thought about taking a hot shower to warm up, but again, he was too afraid. So instead, he took his blanket and went back to the living room. The pregnant Seeker curled up on the couch, shivering under his blanket, he closed his optics and just wanted to rest.

*Creek* *Creek* *Creek* *

It sounded like someone had stepped out of the berthroom. But…Skywarp whimpered as he opened his optics, he was just in there. Suddenly, he felt as if he was being watched. He knew it had to be the ghost! He looked out from under the blanket; there was a shadowy presence on the other end of the room. Skywarp rubbed his optics and looked again. There was nothing there.

He sighed heavily, figuring he was very tired. He turned back around…and then saw the shadowy presence on the OTHER end of the room! It was such a menacing figure; tall, black beard, wings that ended in sharp points.
Pregnant Skywarp had an awful thought: How frightened his own Mother must have been with that mech. His Momma never really talked about him much; she was very happy with his own Sire. But he realized, she had been beaten regularly by her first Bondmate. And then, she became pregnant with her second sparkling, himself, and what terror she must have felt when her ‘husband’ tried to beat her to death. Or at the very least, kill her sparkling. She must have been terrified, but she must have known she had to be strong…for her baby…and for her other baby, TC. It made the young Seeker feel so bad for her. And yet, he knew that if his Momma could defeat this mech, then so could he!

“You need to leave, Gravechaser,” he made his vocals strong and forceful, “You’re not welcome here!”

But the ghost was very strong, “I’m not leaving until I have your spark,” he approached, floating, now, “And then I will take you to the very depths of the Pit.” He was now inches from the pregnant Seeker’s faceplates, “YOU WILL NEVER LIVE TO SEE THAT SPAWN YOU’RE CARRYING!!”

Skywarp was in pure terror, unable to move. He hitched his air intakes, unable to scream.

Gravechaser vanished in a flash. Moments later, it was clear why he left. The front door clicked open, and Thundercracker came home.

“Oh Warp,” the blue Seeker came over, putting his arms around his baby brother and hugging him tightly, “I’m so sorry…” he got emotional, “I was so worried about you…”

The younger flyer began sobbing, both because of Gravechaser’s threats, but also relief that his brother didn’t hate him, “I-I’m s-sorry about e-everything, Teecee… I’m truly sorry! I’m sorry I shot you…I’m sorry I’ve…I’ve ruined your life.”

“You didn’t ruin anything,” TC whispered, pulling his young brother even closer, “I’m sorry I yelled at you. I know you’re scared because you’re carrying, and I go and holler at you.”

“I’m sorry I shot you,” Skywarp kept repeating, coolant tears streaming down his faceplates, “I’m sorry I shot you.”

“Forget it now,” the blue Seeker told him, “I forgave you eight years ago…I’m sorry too.” He sat down on the couch next to him, still holding him and rubbing his wings, “Listen, Warp, I’m really sorry about the fight we had. I know you were sorry, and I’m sorry I brought it up. I didn’t mean to make you run away to New York.”

Skywarp just cried now, leaning against his brother’s shoulder.

“I want you and the baby here, alright?” he gripped the other’s belly for emphasis, “This is OUR home, okay? You never have to leave here.”

The darker Seeker’s optics looked around the room; searching for the ghost, and not seeing him. Gravechaser never showed himself whenever Thundercracker was around. But, the threats lingered in his processor…and he knew Gravechaser meant every word of it.

“Come on; I wanna show you,” TC got up; he tried to pull the other up, but Warp resisted, “N-No…”

“Come on,” he told his little brother, “I’ve been working hard all weekend.”

Skywarp finally got up; he was curious why the furniture had been moved out. So, he followed TC
to their berthroom, careful to stay close.

“Okay, Star and I took everything out,” the blue Seeker began, “I wanna use this space for the baby’s room.” He stepped around the space, “I get that painting’s no good, but I’m thinking we could put some sparkling decorations up, y’know, like we had when we were kids.”

“Oh,” the younger flyer was a little relieved, “I didn’t think you and Star…I didn’t think you wanted us to stay here.”

“Of course I want you to stay,” the other told him, “And as for Star, well, I don’t think he wants you out. I don’t really think he knows what the slag he wants, but you and Crystal are definitely staying with me.”

Skywarp sighed now, “I’m just…really confused, TC. I don’t know what’s real anymore. I don’t know what to think.” He looked around, then sat down on his berth, “Hey, you didn’t happen to…see anybody…or hear anybody, didja?”

“Soundwave’s got the whole Base locked down,” the blue Seeker nodded, “Don’t worry, I talked to him, nobody can get in here.”

Still, Skywarp didn’t what to risk telling him the truth. Instead, he tried to ignore the presence of the ghost, “C-Can you stay close to me? I-I need a shower…” he shook his helm, “D-Don’t leave.”

“Okay,” Thundercracker nodded, thinking his little brother had been through a lot, with the fighting, and being away, all the while carrying, “You feeling okay? You look kinda pale.”

“I-I’m okay,” his fuel tanks were churning, “Just…sick again.” He tried to shake it off, “It’s not the baby, I-I just…don’t leave me.”

TC hugged his brother again, letting him sob in his arms for a while.

Skywarp was able to take a hot shower, and he had some Energon cubes for dinner. Finally, he fell asleep the moment he laid down in his berth, curled up around his stomach on his left side. Occasionally, whimpers escaped his vocalizer in his recharge.

As promised, Thundercracker stayed close by. He sat on the edge of the berth, and rubbed Skywarp’s wings and back, hoping it would calm him.

Someone was at the door, so TC got up to answer it.

The younger Seeker opened his optics, still not fully asleep. He heard Starscream’s vocals, “Hey, how’s he doing?”

“Sleeping now,” he heard Thundercracker say nonchalantly, “I think he’s feeling better.”

He heard them coming, so he pretended to be fast asleep.

“If he still doesn’t feel good tomorrow,” TC continued, “I’ll take him to the Med-Bay.”

Starscream went to the youngest Seeker; he stroked his forehelm several times before leaving, “Okay, I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He heard their Trine Leader leave and Thundercracker go to his desk, apparently on his computer again.
Skywarp tried to fall asleep, trying not to think about Gravechaser. His chassis calmed, and he felt his little unborn daughter turn around and reach her tiny hands towards him, :Momma, no sad, Momma.: She was telling him not to be sad, which only made him want to cry harder.

“Hey Dad,” he heard Thundercracker saying, “he came home alright.”

WHAT??!! Thundercracker, his beloved Thundercracker, was working with Gravechaser?!?! The black and purple Seeker’s optics flew open; his chassis practically falling out of his bed, getting all tangled in the covers, and finally sat up to see…Thundercracker was on the phone.

“I know, Dad, but I was worried,” the blue Seeker continued, “I know, I know…” There was a pause, then, “Hi Mom…”

Skywarp groaned and laid back down. His spark racing; his sparkling was squirming now. He rubbed his belly, trying to get his little Crystal to relax. Poor Warp felt sick; he couldn’t stand much more of Gravechaser’s psychological torment.

“You worry too much, Mom,” Thundercracker laughed, “I told you I’d call when he came back. And everything’s fine.”

Okay, his older brother wasn’t the two-faceplated monster he had just thought he was. He sighed now, finally able to sleep.
Chapter 22:

By Transformersnewfan

Skywarp, laying on the medical berth, arms raised above his helm, stared up at the Med-Bay ceiling, counting the holes in the tiles, out of boredom. He felt like he was being punished, having to undergo a complete physical.

Soundwave had drawn several vials of Energon-blood, ran tests, did another ultrasound, etc.

Finally, the Tapedeck had all the results, “You have a slight Energon deficiency, which is causing your exhaustion and fatigue.” He unhooked the equipment, “Most likely caused by your trans-coastal flights, and failure to keep up your Energon levels during your trip.”

Skywarp sat up, “I just wanted to get outta the Base,” he tried to sound sparkling-like; that tone always worked on his Creators and older brothers.

“You need to start taking better care of yourself,” Soundwave ordered angrily, “No more junk food, no more taxing your systems and no more screaming matches with your brothers. You’re six months pregnant!” The Seeker had made him furious; all he had done for him and THIS was the thanks he got?! “And if you pull a stunt like that again, I’ll put you on bedrest until your delivery.”

At that point, Skywarp didn’t just feel like crying; he felt so low, it was as such he couldn’t have felt worse as if he had no more coolant tears to cry. “A-Are you gonna make me stay in the Med-Bay?” he asked shakily.

“Just go to your room,” the Tapedeck spoke to him like he was talking to one of his naughty sons, “And don’t leave the Base without my permission again!” He went back to his notes until he heard Skywarp leave.

Once he was gone, Soundwave tossed his visor onto the desk in frustration. It was very hard, walking the fine line between friend and doctor, and he felt like he was failing at both. He had to sort out his feelings; try to find a balance. He was upset with Skywarp, but at the same time, he knew he was being too hard on him.

He sighed; maybe it was BECAUSE of his growing feelings for the Seeker that he had let his emotions get the better of him. He just wanted Skywarp and his sparkling to be healthy; maybe he should apologize…

The ultrasound photos printed off the computer now, but the Tapedeck opted to let things cool down before he spoke to him again.

Skywarp didn’t have to repeat things to Thundercracker. Soundwave had been so loud, that the blue Seeker had heard the whole thing from the waiting room. They went back to their quarters, and Skywarp locked himself in the berthroom, forgetting his fear of Gravechaser (but then again, it was daytime), and laying down. He cried, and cried, and cried more; sobbing into his pillow. Everyone hated him! WHY? Why did everyone have to be so mean to him? He had thought Soundwave was
more than that, and now, he guessed not.

The black and purple Jet turned over to lay on his back, twisting around and pulling the covers over himself. “I’ve made a decision,” he said to himself, “it’s you and me, Crystal. We don’t need anyone else. And I’m gonna be the best Mommy to you, baby girl. We’re all each other has…”

He pulled out the pregnancy datapads from the shelf and started reading them over again. Afterward, he was going to read the sparkling care datapads, for ages birth through six years old.

Thundercracker brought their breakfast, the usual Energon cubes, and left them on the end table, “I’m here if you need me, buddy,” he left him alone, not wanting to add any more stress. The blue Seeker decided to take an extra day off from work to be with his younger sibling. He wasn’t ready to leave him alone yet. He went to the living room and sat on the sofa, thinking…

There was something bothering Skywarp. He could tell. Someone was upsetting him; making him scared and cry all the time. It was especially heinous since the young flyer was carrying. He STILL didn’t entirely trust the sperm bank that Warp had had the procedure done at. There was something going on, “I keep thinking, somebody’s stalking him. Either that actor guy or somebody else.”

Later that afternoon, Thundercracker went to check on him, and found the carrying Jet fast asleep in a seated position, slumped against the wall. The empty Energon cubes were left at the foot of the berth, and datapads were eschewed all over. TC smiled, quietly gathering everything away and carefully laying his little brother down and covering him with his blanket.

Skywarp woke up later but purposely stayed in his berth all day. Wanting to hide from the rest of the world. He ate lunch and dinner in there as well. He didn’t have any contact with Starscream all day.

TC stayed close; not leaving him alone as he had requested. He checked on him every so often; something Skywarp was sleeping; other times, he was just lying there, being quiet.

“Want some company?” Thundercracker asked him.

Skywarp nodded; scooting backward and motioning the other to lay down with him; he looked so sad.

The blue Seeker did as he was told, and the younger flyer immediately buried his helm into the other’s chestplates. Thundercracker wrapped his arms around him and held him like a baby.

“He didn’t say you had to stay in bed, y’know,” TC whispered, “You can come out and sit on the sofa.” He rested his chin on the other’s helm, “or play on the computer or something.”

“E-Everybody h-hates me, T-Teecee…” Skywarp whined, feeling so alone, “Star hates me, Soundwave hates me, Darkwing hates me…YOU hate me…”

“I DON’T hate you,” the blue Seeker shushed, “I’m sorry we quarreled, and as for the others, well, I made Star pack up his stuff, so I think he knows where I stand. Darkwing’s just a baby, and if you and he spend some time together, he’ll like you again. And as for Soundwave, well…” he thought for a moment, “I guess he felt to exalt his point to get you to listen.”

“I thought he was my friend, TC,” the younger flyer moaned between sniffles.

“He is your friend,” the other told him, “You don’t think he cares?”

“No, I mean, I thought he liked me…” Skywarp kept his faceplates against his brother’s chestplates.
“Oh, I get it,” Thundercracker realized what he was talking about. He paused to think of a thoughtful answer, “Some mechs blow hot and cold. One minute they’re all friendly and attentive, and the next, they get all business and act cold. Those are the mechs that need to sort their feelings out before you can talk to them again.”

Skywarp looked up at his big brother, “Well I don’t wanna talk to him anymore, I want a different doctor.”

“Okay,” Thundercracker nodded, “We can ask around. Get a specialist maybe.”

“I-I’m tired of everybody treating me bad, TC,” the younger Seeker continued, still crying, the weight of the ghost’s abusive at the root of the coolant tears, “I-It hurts…I-I know that nobody wants to h-help me, b-but…I wasn’t looking for anybody to take care of Crystal for me. I-I’m gonna do all the work! I’ll feed her and change her and rock her to sleep, y-y’know, and I-I’ll teach her to fly and read and…teach her everything by myself. If everybody’s so worried they’re gonna get saddled with my sparkling, well, THEY’VE GOT ANOTHER THING COMING!”

Thundercracker held his little brother tightly as he cried out. Finally, he told him calmly, “Then slag them.” He adjusted Skywarp in his arms, “Listen, Skywarp, I really don’t think the others are thinking that stuff about you. And if they do, it doesn’t matter what they think anyway, does it?”

Skywarp sighed, then shook his helm.

“I’m here, alright?” TC made him look him in the optics, “I’m here. And when you want help with your baby, I’ll be here to help you. It doesn’t mean you’re not taking care of her. I mean, everybody needs help, look how much we help Starscream! And he’s got a Bondmate, and he can’t do it by himself! He just doesn’t wanna admit it.”

That made Skywarp smile a little.

Thundercracker: “Listen, I’ll help you feed her and change her and stuff, don’t worry. I’m right here.”

Skywarp felt so tired now, “T-Thank you, Thundercracker…”

It was around six-thirty in the evening, both Seekers were sleeping in each other’s arms when their Comm.-Links rang.

Thundercracker was the first to rouse, looking at the device on his left wrist, “Soundwave.”

“N-No,” Skywarp whimpered and moaned, “I’m sleeping…”

The devices rang again.

“I’ll talk to him, you can pretend you’re still asleep,” the blue Seeker told him before answering, “This is Thundercracker, what’s going on?”

“Um, hello,” the big mech had never sounded so nervous, “Is Skywarp there?”

The young Seeker’s optics opened, angrily thinking of his earlier scolding.

“He’s sleeping right now,” Thundercracker tried to sound like he was all business, “Is there anything I can do for you?”
“Well, maybe…” Soundwave sighed, “Um, listen, I think I was a little harsh with him this morning, and…I just wanted to check on him.”

TC watched the younger flyer for a reaction and only saw a confused stare, so he played it cool, “Well, he’s behaving himself, just like you told him to. He had his Energon, and now he’s in his bed, sleeping.”

“I see,” Soundwave wasn’t in his interrogation mode, nor looking for a lie, so he took it at face value and tried to speak to the blue Seeker, “Thundercracker, I realize that this is his first child, and, I know it can be worrisome when one is carrying…” he was rambling uncharacteristically, “And, I was wrong to exacerbate the situation by speaking in an aggressive manner. And, maybe if I had acted better this morning—”

TC: “Yes, you should have.”

“Right,” Soundwave sighed, “I called just to tell him I was sorry.” He paused, “I have the photo captures from the ultrasound this morning whenever you guys want them.”

“Okay, thank you,” Thundercracker told him as he closed the connection abruptly. He stroked his little brother’s back and wings now, allowing him back into his recharge mode.

Gravechaser was unable to resume stalking his prey that night, Thundercracker having a protective hold around the pregnant Seeker. Still, the ghost watched…all night long.

The following day, Thundercracker went out on patrol and Skywarp made sure he was early to his job on the paperless-society project. Careful not to do any heavy lifting, he took the files out of the top boxes little by little, and sorted them out by date, then subject, then subject alphabetically. A lot of the papers didn’t need to be in the files, such as the envelopes from the publications they were saving, so he would toss these in the recycling bin. By 7:30 A.M., he had sorted through two whole boxes.

Soundwave was surprised Skywarp was there before he was, “Hey, you’re here early.”

“Just trying to catch up,” the Seeker kept his optics down, reading papers, “You have a lotta work to do now…got everything ready for ya.”

“Thank you,” the Tapedeck nodded, seeing the work that had been left completed on his Computer Consul, “Your hard work is appreciated.” He sat down, thinking of how to breach the subject.

Skywarp kept sorting papers, “Uh-um…”

Soundwave asked now, “Did Thundercracker tell you, I called to check on you last night?”

“Yep,” the Jet was still acting upset.

“Come sit down, Skywarp,” the larger mech stated gently, pulling the empty chair back.

The pregnant flyer sighed and came over, sitting down. His lower lip component was sticking out, pouting.

“I’m sorry about yesterday,” Soundwave looked him in the optics and told him, “I’m glad you came
Skywarp’s emotions were up and down with the hormonal changes; one minute, he was angry and frustrated, and the next, he was docile and quiet, “You’re sorry?”

Soundwave put out his hand for a shake, and Skywarp took it. Things were peaceful again. The two worked together on the project, making headway, finally. Later, Buzzsaw and Ratbat joined them, and Skywarp enjoyed playing with his friend’s youngest sparklings. He couldn’t wait to hold his own daughter in his arms.

Ratbat made himself comfy leaning against Skywarp’s belly, poking at the tiny baby. She would turn over and push her tiny little thrusters against the gestation chamber’s walls, responding to the little Bat’s sharp pokes.

“Ratbat, you’re hurting the baby,” Buzzsaw scolded.

“Sparklings are well insulted by various layers,” Soundwave noted, not pausing in his typing, “Walls of the gestation chamber, alloy, tubing…”

Skywarp could feel Crystal responding, :Crystal play! Crystal play with Ratbat!: “I think she thinks it’s a game.”

He kept sorting files; then he came across an interesting one, “Oh, TC’s file.” He read through and found all the information to be what he always knew: Thundercracker’s school records, flight capabilities, shooting and hit percentages, etc. The smile left Warp’s faceplates.

“Any inaccuracies?” Soundwave inquired.

“Just…” these details now upset Skywarp, “You guys listed my Father’s name as his Father.”

“Dawning legally adopted him,” Soundwave answered, “Your Father is his Father in the optics of the law.”

“Yeah, but, you guys should put his real Father’s name somewhere,” Skywarp shrugged nervously, thinking that maybe THIS was what was upsetting Gravechaser so much, “Just in case, I mean…”

“But he’s deactivated, correct?” the Tapedeck tried to think of a reason to add the information. He couldn’t see the relevance since the mech had been dead for ten years.

“Y-Yeah, but,” the young Seeker was still afraid to come clean, “You might need to…um, list all that for medical stuff, y’know? Like, you need to know that his real Father was a psycho…Just in case TC goes psycho someday?”

“Thundercracker.” Soundwave didn’t believe that for anything.

Skywarp: “Uh-huh…”

“Turn psycho.” Soundwave continued.

Skywarp nodded.

“I don’t see that happening,” the Tapedeck chuckled, “Your brother’s fine. Your parents did a great job raising the two of you.”

“Yeah, but,” the young Seeker wondered if he could talk about Gravechaser, “Do you have any file on…his real Father?”
“Hmmm...Not sure,” Soundwave glanced at the still breaming boxes stacked up, “We might have something somewhere in here. He died in prison, didn’t he?”

Skywarp: “Uh-huh.”

“You know which one offhand?” Soundwave asked.

The black and purple Seeker thought hard; he had heard it at some point, but his pregnancy was making his processor foggy, “Um...I don’t know.”

“I’ve got files on all the Seekers that had died during Sentinel Prime’s reign,” the Tapedeck remarked, more for conversation and not really interested in long-deceased, criminal flyers, “We’ll get to those eventually. Right now, it’s more important to focus on our enemies in the Autobot ranks and human governments.” He went back to his computer.

Skywarp didn’t want to push the subject, not wanting to fight with the Tapedeck again. But now, he had a new source of information about the evil ghost that was stalking himself and his sparkling. He knew what he had to do: Work on the files as fast as he could, so that they would eventually HAVE to go through the files on the prisons and he could learn more, he hoped, something that could help him in his plight.
Chapter 23: By Transformersnewfan

Nine hours after he had begun sorting the papers, Skywarp was reaching exhaustion. The youngest Cassettes were playing on the floor.

“I think that’s enough for today,” Soundwave told him, “We cleaned out seventeen boxes. You must be in a hurry.”

“W-What? Why am I in a hurry?!” Skywarp sputtered. Did Soundwave figure out what was going on?

“To finish the project before your sparkling arrives.” Soundwave assumed. “Hey, so am I. You think I want to do this alone?” he smiled beneath his facemask, enjoying the Seeker’s company.

They had eaten lunch together, and the Tapedeck thought to call it a day in time for dinner, “We did a lot today. You must be tired.”

But Skywarp shook his helm, “I-I, um…I don’t like being in my quarters when TC’s out.”

“Well,” Soundwave figured there was no harm in asking, “Would you like to have dinner with the kids and me?”

“Okay!” Skywarp jumped at the idea; he was slowly trusting the big mech again, and, he liked his kids, and frankly, it was better than being alone!

“This is our second date!” the Seeker was so happy with the Tapedeck and his family. They had Energon cubes and Energon steaks and potatoes. Four of Soundwave’s Cassettes joined them, with the two eldest—Ravage and Laserbeak—out on espionage missions.

“Do you guys always sit down for dinner together?” Skywarp asked.

“Not usually,” Soundwave admitted, “Considering they all hate each other.”

The pregnant flyer just giggled and laughed; he enjoyed spending time with the family. And the kids enjoyed being with who they were thinking was going to be their stepmother and baby sister-to-be.

Later, they watched Netflix on the couch, with Skywarp curled up under a blanket with the twins, Buzzsaw, and Ratbat all curled up around him.

“Come watch the movie!” Skywarp told the bigger mech. Soundwave was at his desk, preferring to let his guest and his kids enjoy themselves together, “Ugh, I’ve seen Home Alone so many times.”

“Come on, Pop,” Rumble told him, “we haven’t watched it that much.”

“Three thousand, two hundred, and seventy-eight times, Rumble,” the Tapedeck stated.
“But Soundwave,” Skywarp smirked, “this is our second date.”

“Second date, eh?” Soundwave played along, “Guess its three thousand, two hundred, and seventy-nine then.” He figured he would humor his pregnant patient…friend, as long as he was being honest with himself.

The Tapedeck sat at the other end of the sofa.

“Come closer, silly,” Skywarp was in a playful mood, “Dontcha wanna play house with me and the kids?”

Soundwave looked at him.

“Come on! Let’s pretend we’re Bonded and watching a movie with our kids!” the Seeker just wanted some fun.

Soundwave couldn’t believe Skywarp had just vocalized that. He was even more surprised at himself for obliging.

By the end of the movie, Skywarp and all the sparklings were sleeping, while Soundwave kept watch over his little family.

Meanwhile, Thundercracker had finished his patrol for the day and was headed back to the Base. High winds and an impending storm seems to come out of nowhere, forcing the Seeker to divert course and lose a good hour of time. The blue Jet couldn’t help but wonder where the storm had come from!

“Can Skywarp stay with us tonight, Pop?” Frenzy asked.

The pregnant Seeker was in recharge on their sofa; Ratbat curled closely, under a blanket.

“Let him sleep, Frenzy,” Soundwave told him, “he can decide when he wakes up.” The Tapedeck was on his computer again, hoping his son would obey.

But, Frenzy being Frenzy, he decided to use Skywarp’s belly for a pillow. He leaned against the flyer, digging in, intending for a rousing game on his game console.

Skywarp jolted awake suddenly, “MMPH! HUH?!?” the weight of the Cassette against his right side had caused that sharp pain again.

“Sorry,” the little red and black Casseticon jumped away, “I didn’t mean it!”

The pain disappeared almost immediately, and Skywarp turned on his back and stretched, “Augh…it’s okay.” He realized where he was; he looked over and saw Soundwave working at his desk, “W-What time is it?”

“Seven-twenty,” Soundwave told him, “it’s not late.”

Skywarp thought that Thundercracker was probably worried about him, “I should go. TC’s back by now.”

Before Soundwave could think if the Tower had been raised, he felt Skywarp suddenly kiss him and
run out, “See you tomorrow!”

Shocked, the Tapedeck gasped; and then saw Frenzy ready to break out laughing.

“Not a word!” he warned.

The Cassetticon didn’t listen, “AHAAAAAAHAAAAAAH!!!”

Skywarp didn’t bother to worry about the ghost; he raced down the hallway as fast as his frame would allow. Teleporting was so much easier! By the time he reached his quarters and got inside, he was gasping and cycling his vents.

After a moment to catch his breath, he called out, “TEECEE?! I’M BACK!”

He saw Thundercracker standing by his desk with his back to himself, “You’re late.”

“Funny thing,” Skywarp laughed between trying to catch his air intakes, “Soundwave invited me to eat dinner with his kids.” He gasped more, “And then we watched a movie!”

The blue Seeker didn’t move a circuit. He simply continued to stare blankly at the wall, it seemed.

“So…” the carrying flyer bend over his knees as best he could, still catching his air intakes, “When did you get back?”

“A while ago,”

Skywarp thought his brother was acting a little weird. For one thing, their quarters was completely dark, like it usually is when they weren’t home. Why hadn’t TC turned the lights on when he came back? And…there was that chill in the air again. “You okay?”

“Fine.” the other answered.

It was just one word, but Skywarp could have sworn his brother’s vocals seemed different. He tried to shake it off, figuring Thundercracker was mad at him, this time for staying out late, so he tried to act independent, “Well, the movie we saw was ‘Home Alone,’ and Soundwave claims he’d seen it, like, thousands of times! But I wanted to see it, so he and I watched it with his kids and stuff.” He approached his brother now, “This is like, so weird, y’know? This is probably the most I’ve ever talked to Soundwave…”

That’s when Skywarp noticed something was very wrong. The other Seeker was a darker side of blue then what was Thundercracker’s usual color. The wings were different too; not enough that anyone except Skywarp or Starscream would notice though, but they seemed…pointier at the tips.

The younger Seeker stopped where he was. He didn’t know if he should say anymore. A chill went clean up his backstruct as the figure he had moments earlier believed to be his older brother slowly turned around…

The figure didn’t even MOVE right! He…It sort of turned with a slight creaking. As if it were a corpse. As if it was…dead. Slowly, it turned its chassis to face the pregnant flyer.

Skywarp felt that the faceplates were different than that of his brother’s. It looked a lot like Thundercracker, but…different. The facial features were sharper; sort of like what TC might look like without their mother’s soft features. And then…It grinned with a smile that would reveal The
Joker’s. The optics…were unlit. Pitch black. “Skywarp…” It said.

“And then, he kissed Pop right on the checkplate!” Frenzy gabbed to his blue twin.

“No way!” Rumble laughed back, “Score one for the Seeker!”

“Quit gossiping.” Soundwave ordered as he cleaned up their quarters, “You could do something constructive, such as washing the dishes!”

A buzzer alerted the Tapedeck. He held the dirty dishes and went to his computer. His personal PC was connected via remote access to the mainframe in the Control Room. So, when the Control Room was unmanned, any correspondence went to Soundwave’s personal computer.

It was from Thundercracker. And he was signaling for the Tower to be opened to allow him access. Soundwave immediately buzzed the Seeker in, and suddenly felt that something was very wrong.

The twins came out of their room and saw their Sire holding the dishes and bend over his computer, looking like he had just seen a ghost…

“You okay, Pop?” Rumble asked. Frenzy also, wanted to know.

Soundwave didn’t answer them; instead, he called one of the Reflectors on his Comm.-Link, “Spectro: When you were on duty tonight, who requested access to the Tower?”

“No one, Sir,” the triplet answered.

Soundwave realized that Thundercracker was just now coming home. And that Skywarp was alone.

Rumble and Frenzy saw their Creator drop all the dishes, letting them crash on the floor and break into a run down the hallway.

At this point, Skywarp was pretty sure that the mech he was with in his living room was NOT his brother. In fact, he pretty much knew who the other being was. He stood, frozen in terror, unable to do anything. He would have sworn he wasn’t online anymore if he didn’t feel his sparkling squirming nervously inside him. He knew he had to protect Crystal somehow. He had to get them both out of there.

The being, now facing Skywarp fully, began to walk towards him. And with every step, its form started to change. The wings became higher; pointier than even before. The hands changed to claws. The faceplates changed as well, until the Seeker fully morphed into the demon tracker who called himself Gravechaser.

“Did you honestly think it was him?” the demon asked in a mocking tone, “You’re even dumber than your Mother!” Then he laughed, and laughed, and laughed, sounding eviler by the second, “AHAHAHAHAHAHAAAA!”

Skywarp sunk to the ground, arms wrapped around his belly, hugging his child protectively.

“Where were you tonight?” Gravechaser’s vocals now seemed younger.

And Skywarp, watching Gravechaser grin down at him, heard his own mother’s vocals, as if on a playback loop.
“I was out! You don’t have to know any more!”

“You were with HIM again, weren’t you?” the male vocal shouted, “Staying out all hours of the night, interfacing with that mech again!”

“It’s not like I get any from you, now do I?” Skywarp’s mother shrieked back.

“YOU’RE NOTHING BUT A PLEASURE DRONE!” Gravechaser roared.

“Don’t you touch me! You hear me? Don’t you touch me!”

Skywarp curled into a ball, unable to bear hearing his mother’s anguish.

“YOU’RE NOTHING BUT A PLEASURE DRONE!” Gravechaser roared.

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The young Seeker scooted backward on his aft towards the door…

It seemed like hours. But in reality, it was mere minutes. Thundercracker stepped off the elevator, exhausted from battling the winter storm. He was over an hour late finishing his shift. He was hoping Skywarp would be asleep already, and the blue Seeker could just take a quick hot shower and crawl into his berth and just sleep peacefully.

From inside, Skywarp heard the front door lock opening, so he crawled towards it and was able to get to his pedes—no easy task—and open the door.

“Hey buddy,” TC smiled, “Sorry I’m late.”

Skywarp, traumatized, was more surprised that Thundercracker didn’t react to seeing Gravechaser in their home. He stared at his brother now, wondering if this was still part of the trick, and turned back…and, he wasn’t surprised, saw that Gravechaser had vanished.

Soundwave caught up to them, seconds later, “Skywarp, are you alright?”

“Um…” should he tell them, he wondered. Would they believe him? Or just get angry at him. He knew that Thundercracker had just gotten off a ten-hour shift and was always grumpy when he was tired. And he had just spent a nice evening with Soundwave, and he hated to see the memory of the time tarnished by yet another disappearing intruder. Would they continue to believe him? Would they tire of his strangled keens? Starscream…no help there. He had already washed his hands of the pregnant flyer. He didn’t even care to speak to his youngest brother again today.

So now, Skywarp made his vocals as calm and even as possible, “Um, I came home, and the whole place was dark. So, I came out to look for you guys…I don’t…I don’t wanna go in there alone.”

“Okay, Warp, no problem,” TC told him, “I’ll go in first.” He understood perfectly; the sonogram tape incident still fresh in their memories files.

Soundwave forced his way past the pregnant flyer and checked the berthroom, while Thundercracker checked the living room and the wash racks, “Nobody here,” the blue Seeker told them, turning the lights on. The Tapedeck checked under their berths, using his sensors, and didn’t find anything. Still, he could sense something was amiss. But he couldn’t put his digits on it. He
glanced at the closet; a moment and drew his gun. He opened the door, and only found their usual junk and nothing out of the ordinary. He glanced up suspiciously at the ceiling...

Skywarp rubbed at his arms, giving himself a hug, thinking about the latest attack by the ghost. This one used his family against him.

“All clear,” Soundwave told Thundercracker.

“Same here,” he agreed, “You can come in now, Warp.”

The black and purple Seeker came in reluctantly, still trying to keep from falling apart in front of them.

Soundwave was worried about his friend though, “Just make sure he’s comfortable,” he barked at Thundercracker, who nodded in agreement. The Tapedeck wasn’t ready to tell either Seeker about the pre-Thanksgiving Control Room break-in, feeling that Skywarp would never be comfortable in there again if he knew. Instead, he focused on what they already knew, “The burglar is still at large, so if either of you hears anything or see anything out of the ordinary, let me know.” When he left though, he made sure he looked Skywarp in the optics, and whispered sweetly, “Until tomorrow.”

Any other time, Skywarp would have been giddy when he watched Soundwave leave and would jump around excitedly telling his big brother about his new boyfriend, but, not now…not after being branded a ‘pleasure drone.’ The ghost cast an appall on the whole situation.

Thundercracker locked the door and then dragged a file cabinet from his desk area in front of the door. Finally, he hoped they could relax.

“You okay?” the blue Seeker asked, “You and him all made up?”

Skywarp nodded, not talking.

“You’re upset with me, buddy?” TC asked.

Skywarp shook his helm, finally speaking, “I-I’m tired.” He wanted to be held, but after what he had just seen, he wasn’t ready to trust Thundercracker. Granted, he was confident that this was the genuine article, he was just traumatized.

“Okay, okay,” the blue Seeker told him, “just let me take a shower, and we’ll go to bed.”

The pregnant flyer glanced at their berthroom, afraid Gravechaser was waiting for him in there. He didn’t say anything, but he followed TC into the wash racks. He brought a chair into their bathroom and sat on it while his older brother took his shower.

Thundercracker figured something had happened, but he didn’t want to ask too many questions and set the other Seeker off, so he tried talking to him, while he was in the shower, “There was a hell of a storm tonight…glad I’ve got the day off tomorrow.” He finished quickly, “Okay, your turn.” He had assumed Skywarp was waiting for the wash racks. Skywarp did as directed, but whimpered, “D-Don’t leave me alone…."

“Okay…” TC nodded as he dried off with a towel.

Skywarp was wondering when he was going to tell him; he tried to keep his emotions in check, trying to be strong, feeling like he was going to burst. His coolant tears were comingling with the warm waters from the shower. When he turned the waters off, his attentive older brother wrapped him in a towel and walked him to bed.
Once in their berthroom, Skywarp immediately jumped under the covers, shivering. Thundercracker helped him get the blankets all straightened out, “I’ll get you another one,” he told him before laying another blanket over his wings. He sat on the edge of the berth and rubbed his little brother’s helm, trying to help him fall asleep.

Skywarp looked up at him with hurt optics, “I wanna talk to our Mom…”

“Sure,” TC nodded, “You didn’t wanna come to the phone lately.” He got the phone and dialed, “Are you gonna tell them?” he smiled, hoping he and their parents could finally stop tiptoeing around the carrying flyer.

Skywarp looked confused, “Tell them what?”

Thundercracker rolled his optics, “Oh, I dunno, that you’re getting ready to pop a sparkling outta ya?”

Oh yes, there was that, “Um…Can you tell them first?”

Playing along, the blue Seeker nodded, “Of course.” Once on the phone, he faked his tone, tipping off his Creators to play along, “Hey Mom, you’re never gonna believe this…Skywarp wants to tell you he’s having a baby.” Their mother played along, telling her eldest that she’ll pretend to be surprised. He gave his little brother the phone, and Skywarp was relieved to hear his mother’s vocals. Her REAL vocals, not some ghostly playback. They talked for a while; mostly he wanted to hear her talk to him.

Skywarp: “Were you scared?”

She told him she wasn’t scared; that everything would be fine. She told him that he would love being a mommy…

After the phone call, both Seekers fell asleep peacefully. Skywarp almost always used to sleep facing his window, because he enjoyed counting the little fish swimming by. But nowadays, that would mean sleeping on his right side, and every once in a while, he would get that sharp pain on his right side. It was always on the right side; and he was getting nervous, he had the sharp sensation more and more frequently as his pregnancy progressed. He had tried looking up the pains in all his datapads on pregnancy and couldn’t find anything. He would have to tell Soundwave about it; but… Gravechaser had forbidden him from telling. Maybe he would ask his mother about it; he figured, now that she knew he was pregnant and all…

Also, he always wanted to sleep next to his brother whenever he was scared. But after seeing who he THOUGHT was his brother and carrying on a conversation with him before he turned into the demon ghost, well…
Chapter 24: By Transformersnewfan

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Addiction. Known by multitudes; experienced by far too many. Countless had succumbed, and many have suffered in witness.

The act of dependency on a substance, or activity, or even another living being.

The consensus on addiction is that it describes something you can’t stop doing, or rather, unable to stop. An addict takes a gratification with satisfying the addiction, only to go for their next indulgence in their activity.

When he was in activation, Gravechaser had been an addict. In his case, it was High-Grade Energon. His habitual intoxication actually had its roots in his school days, when he would go out on Friday and Saturday nights with the boys, and nearly miss his Monday classes in the aftermath of his drinking haze.

Bonding and having a sparkling should have quelled his habit, but the then-Seeker continued to give in to his love of the intoxicant. It was the mistress of his marriage. One could argue his affair with High-Grade Energon predated his wife’s affair with the UPS Mech.

And now, as a demon, his addictive personality had begun to rear its ugly helm: Hurting Skywarp had become his addiction. Tormenting the pregnant flyer was giving the ghost a high; a euphoria; and the trills that were exhilarating. And just as he had indulged in High-Grade Energon as a Seeker, the now-demon Gravechaser never knew when to stop.

Perhaps a few weeks earlier, a big scare would have satisfied the monster for a couple of days. Turning into the image of his son and changing into his current form had been traumatizing for Skywarp, enough that he was left crying for his mommy. But Gravechaser’s increasing cravings for more have tonight led the ghost to become careless. Until now, he had only shown Skywarp his paranormal activity-based abuse, and no one else, leading the other Decepticons to believe it had been a living mech that had attacked the carrying Jet. He had also wanted to drive wedges between the Trine. And lastly, it was also important to Gravechaser that his own son had never witnessed any of the abuse.

But tonight, that all changed…And in a hurry to get his next high, Gravechaser made his first mistake.

3:00 A.M. again…

♫ “I must have rehearsed my lines a thousand times,” ♪ “Until I had them memorized.” ♫

Skywarp turned over, groaning again, the loud chimes retching him from his sleep.

♫ “But when I get up the nerve to tell you,” ♪ “The words just never seem to come out right.” ♫
The black and purple Seeker sat up in the darkness, trying to figure out what he was hearing.

▶ “If only you knew,” ♪ “How much I do,” ♫

The music, chains of a xylophone, was coming from the snow globe on the shelf closest to his berth. It had been a gift from Starscream for Crystal, and it used to play a Vosian lullaby. But tonight, its tune was very different.

▶ “If only you knew…” ♪

Skywarp rubbed his optics, not believing what he was seeing…and HEARING! The snow globe was playing by itself, without anyone winding it up! He scooted backward, whimpering, clutching his stomach protectively.

The tune started becoming more sinister…The little porcelain Seekerlette inside turning slowly around, and facing him now.

▶ “If…only…you…knew…” ♪

And then…he heard a deep, growling laugh.

Skywarp didn’t want to move; his air intakes were hitching, he tried to convince himself that it was all a dream; or that it was all in his processor; or that he might be going insane. The coolant tears started flowing down his cheekplates.

▶ “Iiiifff…oooonly…youuuu…knewwwww…” ♪

The music became, for lack of a better word, warped; becoming more horrific.

The trinket stopped. And then, Skywarp saw something invisible wind the snow globe up again and begin to play over again.

▶ “Iiiifff…oooonly…youuuu…knewwwww…” ♪

From the attic, Gravechaser was fixated on his prey, and failed to notice…

Thundercracker opened his optics slowly. As the images came into focus, he saw Skywarp, sitting up on his berth, staring at something in pure terror. Then he heard the strange music and realized it was coming from the snow globe. “What…the…frag…” his vocals were low as he got up.

His little brother looked at him and was too scared to speak, so he asked through their Trine Bond, :Y-You hear it too, Teecee?:

Gravechaser realized that his son was awake! He tried to stop the wind-up trinket, but it continued to play. The object, forged in innocence, proved hard for the ghost to fully control.

▶ “Iiiifff…oooonly…youuuu…knewwwww…” ♪

Thundercracker stood now, staring at the snow globe. He whispered, “It just started playing by itself?”

Skywarp nodded feverishly, “U-Uh huh…I-I was sleeping, and…and…”

▶ “Iiiifff…oooonly…youuuu…knewwwww…” ♪

They watched the trinket slowly do its spin, playing the foreign song. The porcelain Seekerlette
moving in a counter-clockwise direction.

The pregnant Seeker, crying, just wanted it to stop. He clung to his audials now.

TC couldn’t stand it anymore. He grabbed the snow globe hard, stopping it from moving. The chime-like music ceased. He looked it over; he couldn’t see anything broken or tampered with, “I don’t know what happened to it.”

Skywarp was shaking, knowing full well what happened to his present, “S-Somebody was here…” he moaned through his coolant tears, “S-Somebody’s been in h-here, T-Teeceee…” He took the snow globe from his brother now, looking at it, “H-He broke it…”

Thundercracker’s optics widened, “Who?”

Skywarp didn’t know if he should tell him. Now, the trinket started playing the song again in his hands. The porcelain Seekerlette made a ‘CLICK” sound when it suddenly faced him.

“AAAAUUGGGGGHHHHHH!!!” the dark Seeker stood, throwing the snow globe to the floor, smashing it into a thousand pieces. The porcelain Seekerlette skidded across the room amongst the water and plastic snow.

That snow globe was HIS gift! It had been intended for his daughter! He felt hurt, and scared, but now, every pregnant emotion seemed to come to the surface, and something snapped.

“THAT WAS MINE, TEECEE!!” Skywarp screamed at the top of his air intakes, “IT WAS MINE! MINE!!! YOU HEAR ME!!!” His older brother grabbed him by his arms, trying to hold him back from walking on the glass, “THAT WAS FOR MY BABY!!!”

Gravechaser backed away now; he had accidentally wound up Skywarp too much, just as he had accidentally wound up the snow globe too much.

“T-THAT WAS MINE!!!” Skywarp continued to cry out, “STARScream GAVE ME THAT!!!!” He repeated over and over, “IT WAS MINE!!!!” Now he dissolved into keens and sobs.

Now Thundercracker was mad, “I’VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS SLAG!” Seeing his baby brother keening made him lose it now too. He angrily snatched up the broken base of the snow globe and stormed out of their quarters, “WHO THE HELL’S BEEN IN OUR ROOM?!”

“N-NO! TEECEE DON’T LEAVE ME!!!” Not wanting to be alone and at the ghost’s mercy, Skywarp ran after his brother, stepping around the glass and going into the hallway.

The whole Base heard those two hollering. Various Decepticons woke up startled; some picking up their weapons in reaction.

The blue Seeker pounded his fist on the Coneheaded Seekers’ quarters, “GET UP!”

Dirge opened the door, not knowing what to think.

“Somebody playin’ a joke around here?” Thundercracker seethed, holding up the pink snow globe base; its broken shards of glass inches from the other’s faceplates, “Somebody thinks this is funny, HUH?”

“I dunno what you’re talking about, TC;” Dirge told him.

Ramjet came to the door now, and the blue Seeker got in his faceplates, “You think this is funny?”
“Hey, hey, TC,” Ramjet tried, “I didn’t do anything.”

Thundercracker narrowed his optics; he was no telepath, but he didn’t think they were lying. Still determined, he bolted to the next doorway. This one belonged to a few of the Combaticons.

“Somebody around here thinks this is funny?! HUH? HUH?” again, waving the broken trinket around.

Vortex stared at the object, “Man, it’s three o’clock in the morning!”

“DID YOU DO THIS?!” Thundercracker roared now, waking up more mechs inside.

“No! Mech, calm down!” the Chopper-Bot waved his hands.

Meanwhile, Skywarp continued to cry out in misery, “THAT WAS MINE!!!! HE BROKE IT!!!! HE BROKE IT!!!!” he leaned against the hallway wall, finally sinking to the ground under his extra pounds, until his knees were pressed against his belly, and he sobbed into his hands.

Megatron and Starscream heard the yelling at the same time, with the former Gladiator going for his Fusion Cannon.

“M-Megatron, what’s going on?!” the Seeker was scared.

“Burglar’s back,” Megatron growled, “Get in the nursery and lock the door behind you!” He went to the hallway as fast as he could.

Starscream at first did as he was told, going to his whimpering triplets and tried to calm them down, but he recognized the keens as Skywarp’s, and worry flooded his spark. “SKYWARP!” he cried back, trying to reach them through their Trine Bond; neither answering at the moment. He picked up Darkwing and let Dawning and Darkmount out of their crib, the two braver sparklings toddling behind their Creator.

He threw his robe on and waited at the door, wondering if it was safe to come out.

Soundwave, for the second time in one night, ran down the hallway to the Seekers’ quarters. His heavy pedes shook the whole place as he headed towards the familiar crying. His sparklings were scared; Buzzsaw jumped into Frenzy’s berth and the two held in each in fear. Ratbat cowered under his blanket; his little wings trembling, and Rumble turned on his flashlight, waving it around the room.

“THAT WAS MINE!!” Skywarp cried out again.

Soundwave dashed over and knelt beside him, careful not to frighten him further, “What happened?”

“S- Somebody was in m-my r-room,” the pregnant flyer tried to get his words out between gasps, “H- He broke my s-snow globe!” He started keening again, grabbing onto the Tapedeck and hugging him around the neck tightly.

“Come on,” Soundwave whispered, “I’ll protect you…” He hugged the pregnant Seeker, carefully lifting him off the ground and helping him stand up, “Did you see where he went?” he assumed the perpetrator was still on the Base.

Skywarp shook his helm no.

Soundwave thought to keep him safe while still looking for the intruder, “Let’s go to the Control
Room.” He led the pregnant flyer there, keeping a firm hold on him.

Meanwhile, Megatron came now, “WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?!”

Thundercracker was yelling, inches from Bonecrusher’s facemask, “YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY?”

The Decepticon Leader grabbed the Seeker’s shoulder and turned him around, “Get a hold of yourself! What the slag happened here?!”

TC yelled back, “Somebody tampered with the damn music box because he’s getting back at him for some practical joke and I’m trying to figure out who’s doing it!”

“I didn’t do nothin’, boss!” Brushcrusher told them.

“YOU SHUT IT!” Thundercracker roared back, storming into the Constructicons’ quarters, much to their alarm, “Which one of you thinks he’s a comedian, HUH?”

“Thundercracker, stop this now!” Megatron scolded, “You’re not gonna get any answers by screaming at everybody.”

The blue Seeker ran out of the workers’ quarters, still fuming, “I’m sick of this, Megatron! Every damn night! Every damn night, there’s somebody banging on the windows or breaking into our quarters or scaring him one way or another!” He headed down the hall towards the basement, “Come on! Help me find ‘em!”

Knowing what he knew, Megatron paused, reluctant to go into the basement after what he’d seen on the tapes, “Thundercracker! Wait!” he wasn’t about to let one of his best soldiers be attacked, “I'll go first!” He brushed by the Seeker, Fusion Cannon humming, and crept down the basement stairs. He swung his weapon in different directions, using the glowing red barrel for a light source. The Decepticon Leader was sweating condensation now; ready for battle. Thundercracker followed him, intending to shove the broken base of the snow globe down the burglar’s throat!

Megatron, his Gladiator senses kicking into gear, checked every inch of that basement. He moved boxes; he went around corners; he checked the Energon stockroom, he checked the weapon storage units, he checked everywhere and finally, he shuttered, he had to check the brig…

The door was made of a heavy steel, and the lock being very old, made him struggle a bit to get it open. He peered into the wet, musty jail cells, holding his Fusion Cannon upwards for light, and, not seeing anyone…for which he was thankful for. That was the creepiest place in the entire Base…

He backed up, shutting the door in front of himself, and suddenly felt someone standing right behind him. “AUUGH!” he jumped and whirled around, ready to blow the mech’s helm clean off! Thank heavens his reactions were as sharp as ever, because if he had panicked and fired, he would have killed Thundercracker.

“HEY!” the blue Seeker yelped, ducking down and throwing his arm in front of his faceplates.

Megatron lowered his weapon immediately, “Slaggit, TC; I thought you were the prowler!”

“I-I’m sorry,” the other apologized.

“Let’s just get out of here,” the Decepticon Leader grabbed his arm and pulled him along, “This
place gives me the creeps.”

At the same time the search was going on, Starscream heard several vocals in the hallway and decided there were enough Decepticons online that it was safe to come out of his quarters.

Thrust met him first, “Your brother got attacked again.”

The red and white Seeker handed Darkwing to the Conehead, “Watch the sparklings, I’ll be back.” The three little sets of optics followed their Mother down the hallways.

Spectro Reflector, Long Haul, and Dirge were talking in the hallway. All the while, Skywarp could still be heard keening and screaming from the Control Room. Starscream had been so angry with his brother, going days without speaking to him, but now, concern washed over him. Worry for his youngest Trinemate; worry for the sparkling.

As he got closer, he began to make out the words through the static, “IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE FOR THE BABY!” And “STARCREAM GAVE ME THAT,” and the saddest of all, “THAT WAS A PRESENT FROM STARCREAM, AND NOW HE HATES ME, AND THAT WAS THE ONLY THING I HAD FROM HIM FOR MY BABY, AND NOW ITS BROKE, AND NOW HE’S GONNA HATE ME EVEN MORE!”

Skywarp was sobbing in Soundwave’s arms on the sofa. The Tapedeck had helped him to a sit and had tried his best to comfort him, wrapping a blanket around his wings.

“Oh Skywarp,” Starscream grabbed his little brother and held him tightly. He let the pregnant flyer keen as he held him close, caressing his helm over and over. Since there was no indication of any injury to Skywarp or his sparkling, Starscream tried to focus on calming him down, sending waves of comforting vibes through their Trine Bond. He tried to understand, through their emotions, what the other Seeker had seen. Only a Trine Leader could do that, and what he found was an intense fear of an unknown attacker, mixed with a profound sense of worthlessness and feeling unloved by everyone.

:Sweetspark, I love you so much,: Star told him through their Bond, :Please don’t be scared…If I’m the one that made you feel this way, I’m so sorry…so, very sorry.: 

Skywarp hugged back tightly, burying his faceplates into his Trine Leader’s neck cables; the stress of the situation overpowering him tonight. Now he just wanted to be held and protected from all the evils of the universe.

“Ssshhh, shhh, I have you,” Starscream kept repeating, “I have you…”

Seeing that Skywarp was okay with his brother, Soundwave could go to his computers and attempt to find the culprit. He rewound the tapes, trying to determine if anyone had been in the hallways that were snooping around the Seekers’ quarters. But there was no activity detected, prompting the Tapedeck to bring his fist against the Consul.

By now, Megatron and Thundercracker had come back from the basement and reached the Seekers’ quarters. The blue Seeker showed Megatron the scene in their berthroom, broken glass and all.

“It just started going off on its own,” TC barked in frustration, “and finally, he freaked out and threw it on the floor.”
The Decepticon Leader stared at the broken pieces, trying to make some semblance of sense to the matter. Why would someone break into their Base, risking life and limb, only to come into the pregnant flyer’s berthroom for the purpose of unnerving him during a sensitive time in his onlining.

“So, someone came in here, broke the snow globe, and left…” he was thinking out loud more than addressing Thundercracker, trying to deduce the evidence, “He didn’t go into the Energon supplies…” the terrible feeling that Megatron had yet to be able to shake for weeks now continued to bubble to the surface of his processor. But sharing such a theory without any proof could damage his reputation amongst his troops. He had to sound reasonable, so he fell back on his old standard: Blame the Autobots.

“If this is Mirage, like we believe it is,” Megs began, “any idea why he’s going after your brother like this?”

“NO, I can’t stand this slag!” TC waved his arms in frustration, “It’s like every night now! We can’t have a moment’s peace!”

“And…you’ve never seen him come in or leave?” Megatron bent down and picked up the ceramic Seekerlette off the floor.

TC: “No…”

“Unless,” the former Gladiator finished the thought, “he’s still in the Base.” He looked around, “Come on, we have to talk to Soundwave. You and Skywarp are spending the night in our quarters.”
Chapter 25: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

Sorry, this is a short chapter, but this was where to break it up. This focuses on Gravechaser's backstory and what happened to him. Pay attention to the clues, as they will be important later. And lastly, a question for the readers: Can you guess who the prison guard is?

Chapter 25: By Transformersnewfan

The Decepticon Leader and his Communications Officer stayed online all night. They watched the monitors, looking for any movement of any kind. Thundercracker wanted to assist them in any way possible, while Skywarp was taken to Starscream and Megatron’s quarters to get some much-needed rest.

“When does Laserbeak return from London?” Megatron inquired.

“Tomorrow evening,” Soundwave answered, “Ravage is due back from Texas this afternoon.”

The blue Seeker paced behind his two Leaders as they sat at the Computer Consul, rubbing his hands together nervously.

“As soon as he can, I want him to shadow Mirage,” Megatron ordered, “also, I want the Constructicons to check every inch of this Base. Seal off any openings; make sure NO ONE can breach our perimeters.” He desperately clung to the belief that this was all the doings of his former friend, Optimus Prime, and his Autobots, and that this was all an espionage mission.

Thundercracker was tired but was too tense to get any rest. “Hey,” he began, “what can I do to help? This guy’s been after my baby brother, and I wanna smash in his circuits!”

Megatron decided it was time to tell his younger brother-in-law about the earlier burglary, “TC, the night before Thanksgiving, there was another break-in.”

The blue Jet knelled down between the two and listened.

“Someone came in through a trap door in the basement,” the Decepticon Leader admitted, “he was in our Control Room, and he stole the file on my Gladiator records.”

TC was surprised, “Um, did you get it on the cameras?”

“We did,” Soundwave answered, “But the perpetrator was invisible.”

“So, it IS Mirage,” Thundercracker said lowly, fury boiling within him, “that son of a retrorat!”

“We hope so,” Megatron muttered darkly, “the question is, what does he want with Skywarp?”
“I don’t know! That’s the damn problem,” TC barked, “It’s been bad! That attack with the sonogram tape could’ve killed him, Megatron! And now, this guy’s coming in our quarters, and breaking stuff, taking stuff, I-I mean, I’m ready to fly over to the Autobot Base and strangle this guy myself!”

“No, that’s what Prime expects of us,” the former Gladiator insisted, “We need to lay low; gather intel against our enemy and determine how to conquer him.”

All the while, Soundwave continued to rewind and fast forward over the tapes, trying to spot something he may have missed earlier. And then…

Soundwave turned around suddenly, looking at the ceiling, but saw and sensed nothing.

“What is it?!” Megatron demanded.

“I picked up some foreign thought patterns,” the Tapedeck whispered, getting up.

Gravechaser had been attempting to listen in, trying to size up his opposition, but apparently came too close to the telepath’s extra-strong sensors. Realizing that he was making too many mistakes this evening, the demon fled the Decepticon Underwater Base.

The ghost emerged into the Earth’s night’s sky, trying to determine his next moves. He decided to leave Skywarp temporarily; leave the Decepticons and their Base in order to throw Soundwave off the tracks.

Time moved differently for Gravechaser; his dimension was that of the spiritual realm, and when he traveled, it could have been anywhere between an hour, to fifteen years.

He went back to Cybertron, the Iacon Correctional Center, specifically. The building was dilapidated, to say the least.

Flashback:

After his latest escape attempt, his second, in fact, Scourge had been placed in solitary confinement. It was a box, basically. A dark and tiny cell, with no window and the only light coming from a small, barred panel in the door. He was forced to remain there for twenty-three hours a day, with only an hour for a meal and a shower. Flying was forbidden, and visitors were nonexistent. After ten years, prison life seemed to only get worse with time. The Energon was sub-par; the guards never spoke to the prisoners. In fact, Scourge hadn’t made any friends among his fellow inmates: Some were released after their time was served; others were carried out in chassis bags, offlining either by their own hands or by other inmates. Sure, there had been mechs throughout the years that attempted to befriend him; to hear his story, but Scourge was far too embittered to have even a civilized conversation with a fellow Seeker. All he ever thought about were two sparklings: One, the light of his life; the other, his darkness and his destruction. His son, Thundercracker, was his light. He would miss his son every single moment. He fantasied about a guard, or even the warden, one day coming to tell him he had a visitor. And he would go to the visitors’ area and see Thundercracker there. He doubted that his wretch of an ex-wife would be decent enough to actually BRING their son to visit his true and rightful Sire, of course. But he hoped that perhaps when his little boy reached adulthood, he would seek out a relationship with his Father. It had been a full ten years. Thundercracker was now fourteen years old. Still too young to gain entry to the prison on his own, but by eighteen, he would no longer need parental consent. Scourge mentally calculated that it would be some one thousand, four-hundred, and thirty-two more days until his only son’s eighteenth birthday, and then, they could be reunited. But admittedly, Scourge had spent the majority of the past ten years not thinking of Thundercracker, but thinking of Skywarp, the sparkling that had driven the wedge between them with his very conception. He HATED the thought of Skywarp! The filthy
spawn of his former Bondmate and her back-door mech! The one that had the nerve to reside in his former home! They ALL resided in his former house! It filled Scourge with a burning hatred for the youngest Seeker, whom he had never seen with his own optics, but just the same, could picture perfectly: A mixture of the illicit couple’s coloring, with The Other Mech’s black features dominating, and his former wife’s lighter colors making a purple mixture. Scourge would fantasize vividly about hurting the boy. Frightening him first, then killing him. He would WANT Skywarp to see his own death coming. To know he couldn’t escape. The images would consume the dark blue Seeker for days on end.

Scourge sighed; he took out the picture of his family again, running his thumb over his little son’s faceplates. Why couldn’t he see his little Thundercracker again? Why could he—

“He’s in the corner cell,”

Scourge looked up as he heard the member of the Elite Guard speak.

“I’m gonna have some smoke outside, ah-right? Don’t be too long.”

A huge mech unlocked the door and stood over Scourge now. His Alt-Mode was that was a Tank. The huge groundpounder’s hatred seemed to trump Scourage’s. The mech spoke only one word, “Steve.”

“Who’s Steve?” Scourge asked.

“Steve was my Bondmate,” the groundpounder answered. “The policemech that you shot in the chest and murdered in cold Energon, was Steve. And now, his name will be the last thing you hear! STEVE!”

The rest was a blur of pain, Energon-blood, wiring being ripped out, parts clanging on the cell’s steel flooring, and the agony of feeling his lifeforce ebb away.

Seventeen hours, Scourge lay dying in his cell. The groundpounder had long gone, and the Elite Guards continuously ignored his pleas for medical attention. The particular Elite Guard, the one with the Southern drawl, laughed at him as he chewed his tobacco, saying, “I don’t give no sympathy to femme abusers and sparklingnappers.”

As Scourge attempted to scream out in his own defense, Energon-blood finally flooded his damaged air intakes, choking him within minutes. Finally, it was over.

End of Flashback:

Gravechaser was in present time again. He walked the prison halls now, easily passing through the strange objects left by some human visitors. His hatred for Skywarp renewed anew. One way or another, he would destroy the Seeker!

Back at the Decepticon Base, Soundwave stalked the hallways; his sensors reaching forth, trying to determine who he had sensed on their property. Behind him was Megatron, armed by his Fusion Cannon, and Thundercracker with his Null-Rays. The trio searched until the break of dawn. Many of the other Decepticons took part in the search as well, with none of the army getting any recharge.

By morning, everyone was spent. Energon levels burned up on the fruitless quest. The troops were exhausted.
Megatron stood before his soldiers now, “Alright guys, all planned assignments for today are canceled. Everyone: return to your quarters and get some recharge. We will inform you of any further developments.” Several of them muttered about the crazy pregnant Seeker.

Meanwhile, Skywarp and Starscream laid awake on the fold-out sofa bed in the Bonded Seeker’s quarters. The triplets sprawled around them in various humorous positions. Darkwing hadn’t shown any objection to being around his uncle tonight; he was, in fact, calmer with him safely in their quarters, for which Starscream was grateful.

“Try to sleep, little brother,” Starscream told him, “We’ve got the alarms on.” He continued to comfort his youngest Trine brother, rocking him in his arms. Skywarp had been so hungry for attention from Starscream; and now, he didn’t know if he could trust that Thundercracker was the REAL Thundercracker or the ghost.

:S-STAR,: the darker Seeker pleaded through their Bond, :Please, please…You have to stop hating me…I-I can’t take it…:

:I don’t HATE you, Warp,: Starscream insisted, :It’s only your hormones making you think that.: He did, however, know what the younger Seeker was referring to. He knew he would have to get control of his anger, somehow.

By the time Thundercracker came in to check on them, Skywarp had fallen into a restless recharge. “Hey,” TC whispered, getting in the sofa bed on the left side so that the pregnant Jet was in the middle with the sparklings. He draped an arm around Skywarp’s belly and spooned against him. “It’s cold in here, too…” he told Starscream.

“I know,” the Trine Leader threw the blanket around the blue Seeker, “It’s been like this. Sometimes, we get the kids into the berth with us, just to keep them warm. That, and…” he trailed off.

TC: “What?”

“They’re having nightmares a lot lately,” Star sighed.

“Mmm,” Thundercracker was dozing off, “So does Warp…”

Darkwing was awake; he seemed to look at Skywarp worriedly. Starscream also, was troubled, watching their little brother twist and whimper in his sleep.

“I want to replace the broken snow globe,” the red and white Seeker began, “I heard him say that I hated him, and I don’t want him to ever think that again. In fact, I wanna see him happy again. This is supposed to be a special time.”

TC thought about it, “Not only that, Christmas is coming.”

Starscream yawned, “Gonna be good sales…”

The flyers finally fell asleep. And by morning, Megatron returned to their quarters. He didn’t want to wake his Bondmate or his brothers, so he quietly walked to his berthroom, passed the living room and the sofa bed where they were huddled together with his little sons.

The former Gladiator’s gaze fell on his small family; his desire to protect them stronger than ever. He just wasn’t sure from Who he needed to protect them from. He carefully took hold of their comforter and covered Skywarp’s pedes, tucking the bedding under them. He then looked around, listening
carefully…his fighter instincts told him the battle was coming.

That afternoon, Scrapper and Scavenger examined the heating system in the Seekers’ quarters. “Our berthroom had been freezing cold,” Thundercracker explained, “I don’t know how we’re gonna bring a newling in here.”

Skywarp huddled under his blanket on their sofa the whole time the Constructicons worked. He was trying to catch up on his sleep; not doing a good job of it. His sparkling squirmed nervously in his belly, “It’s okay, Crystal…” he whispered, “Everybody’s here.”

After about two hours, the mechs finished working on the heating systems. They also resealed a trap door in Skywarp’s closet, figuring heat was escaping there.

When they left, Skywarp moved back into his berth and curled on his left side. He was so exhausted; so sick of feeling scared. It was comforting to have his siblings there to protect him.

TC and Starscream, meanwhile, moved some more furniture around, clearing the space for the family’s newest addition.

“Where are you gonna put the crib, Skywarp?” Starscream asked.

“H-Huh?” the pregnant flyer looked up.

“Are you going to put the crib over here?” the Trine Leader continued, pointing to the space nearest the two berths, “Sometimes, sparklings recharge easier when they can see their Creators.”

Skywarp, twenty-five weeks into his pregnancy, bit his lip components, “I haven’t…thought about it really.”

“Warp, your sparkling’s gonna be here in like, three months,” TC told him as he looked around the space, “we need a place for her to sleep.”

The black and purple Seeker have been so fixated on the hauntings, he was honestly scared if he would even live to complete his sparkling’s gestation. “Umm…” Skywarp began, “I just wanted, y’know, to have her, and…I figured we’d get her home safely and then I’d go buy a basket for her to sleep in.”

“Are your processors scrambled?” Starscream rolled his optics, “I can tell you for a fact that sparkling birth takes all your energy and you’ll need at least a few days in the Med-Bay and at least a week, MAYBE MORE, before you’re strong enough to travel to Cybertron!” He added, huffing, “Especially if you need a cesarean.”

“I’ll worry about that if I live that long,” Skywarp groaned, sitting up, “Maybe Mirage’ll finish me next time.” It was just easier to refer to the ghost as an Autobot.

While Thundercracker felt sympathy for his little brother, Starscream was more akin to brushing off his fears, “Oh come now,” he began, “You have to think positive. You’re going to have a sparkling, and she’s gonna need a lot of things.”

Skywarp wasn’t allowed to travel through the Space Bridge because of the instability. Any sparkling supplies would have to be brought to Earth by his brothers.

The blue Seeker agreed as he looked around, “Forget the burglaries for now. Come on, Star and I are
gonna buy everything. Dad sent me a lotta credits.”

“Megatron and I wanna chip in,” Starscream added. “Come on, let TC and I take care of everything.”

Skywarp smiled; the thought of his brothers taking care of himself and Crystal was very comforting.
Chapter 26: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

This chapter was previously released as a one-shot called "Seekers Shopping," but this is where the story fits into the larger story, "If Only You Knew."

Chapter 26:

By Transformersnewfan

A few days later, at the main mall in Vos, back on Cybertron, a huge department store anchored the property, selling everything you could imagine.

Thundercracker, Starscream, the triplets, and because he insisted on going with them, Laserbeak, arrived on a very busy Saturday. The store bustled with Christmas shoppers, loading their carts with bargains, and presents for their loved ones.

Not risking any more attacks, the Seekers left Skywarp in the Control Room with Soundwave for the day. At which time, the Condor said that he intended to accompany them, “in order to ensure the quality of the sparkling’s possessions.” None of them, least of all Soundwave, knew the Bird believed Crystal to be his half-sibling.

“Enough Seekers here,” Thundercracker grumbled, looking at the crowds.

“Hey, Christmas is coming,” Starscream admitted.

The two Seekers each grabbed carts, and put Dawning and Darkwing in one, and Darkmount in the other.

Together, they picked out a sparkling furniture set that included a white crib, a dresser, and a changing table. The triplets played with the oversized boxes in the carts. They selected various items, including a constellation nightlight, “Seekerlings loved looking at starry nights, even if it’s only an LED.” Starscream marveled, a sparkling bathtub, TC noted, “We’ll need this because we’ve only got a stand-up shower.” Starscream: “You should get a bathtub installed, like Megatron and I did.” TC: “Not gonna do any major remodeling jobs before the baby comes, Star.”, And a huge amount of diapers, sparkling dresses, and cute little toys. They also bought a lot of toys and gifts for the triplets.

“We need some of those cashiers to help us,” Starscream insisted, setting his optics upon an older Associate, “Hey you!”

Stormrunner, who has worked for the store for twenty-five years, knew the group meant only one thing for her day: Aggravation. “Can I help you, Sir?”

“I am Starscream, Bondmate of Lord Megatron,” the red and white Seeker began, “Perhaps you’ve heard of him?”

“I used to bet on Cy-Kill, so yeah,” she answered, referring to Megs’ frequent Gladiatorial opponent.
“What about him?”

“We need your expertise,” Starscream snapped his digits at the femme, as if she was an indentured servant, “Tell me, which of these swings are on sale?”

The Associate explained the difference, “This one’s a little more expensive, but you can use the coupon. The other one, you can’t use the coupon on, but it’s for an older sparkling.”

“This is for a newling,” Thundercracker told her.

Stormrunner, looking at the toddler triplets, just said, “Oh.”

“We’ll take the better one,” the blue Seeker insisted.

The Associate assumed they were finished and returned to her reticketing.

But Starscream continued, the feedback of all the other customers deafening, “Now about this layette set…”

Stormrunner put down the equipment and gathered some blue-colored offerings.

“It’s a femme newling,” TC told her.

“Oh,” the Associate had to recover the items quickly, before picking up some pink sets of packaged sparkling clothes.

Thundercracker was a decidedly easier customer, “Sorry, I should have told you that. It’s for our younger brother’s baby. He’s due in March.”

“He had artificial insemination,” Starscream told her.

“Okay…” Stormrunner didn’t feel she needed to know this, “So this one’s gonna run you a few more credits, but it’s a thirty-nine-piece set, and the other one’s only got twenty-three.”

TC took the thirty-nine-piece set, “Got it.”

Seeing her fellow Associate, Lunarbolt, alone at the register and the long line of shoppers building, Stormrunner tried to break away from the brothers, “Is there anything else I can do for you?” Reticketing would be shot until this group had left the store.

“We’ll let you know,” Starscream told her. He then looked over the gift section and found the snow globes.

Selecting one, “It’s not exactly like the one from Vosnia,” the Trine Leader grumbled, “Definitely more commercial and without the artistic charm of hand-made items.”

“Just get it,” TC rolled his optics. He found a couple of huggy androids, and threw them in the cart, hoping one would be for Skywarp to replace the lost one.

“Hey Stormy,” Starscream called.

Stormrunner: “WHAT?!”

Starscream: “The sign says that everything is twenty-five percent off today.”

Stormrunner yelled back, “That’s when you open a charge card, Sir.”
“If I may be so bold, Starscream,” Laserbeak hissed, “You should open a charge and receive these savings.”

“Agreed,” Star nodded, “I’m getting in line.”

The Trine Leader, with Darkwing babbling loudly, got to the head of the line. Stormrunner went to take his purchases, but then he saw the better snow globes, “Oh, I didn’t see those before.”

The other shoppers were furious when Starscream left his cart—with his sparklings—to look at the higher-end trinkets. “Sir, are you ready or are you gonna keep shopping?!” Stormrunner was getting sick of him.

“I’ll move,” Star told her absent-mindedly, pulling his cart away. Finally, he found a pretty snow globe with a Seekerlette ice skating, “Ah, this one.” He went to get back in line, and by this time, Stormrunner was with another customer. Her fellow Associate, Lunarbolt, waved him over, “Step over here, Sir.”

Starscream immediately recognized her accent, “You’re from Northern Vos?”

“That’s right, Sir,” the older femme proclaimed, “I came to the city forty years ago.”

“My Creator was from Northern Vos,” Starscream smiled. They then both conversed in old Vosian as Lunarbolt scanned their items.

Lunarbolt: “Are you opening a charge card today, Sir?”

“Of course,” Starscream, again absent-mindedly as he picked up Darkwing and bounced him up and down, “You need my Decepticon Badge?”

He handed it to her, and she processed his application, “Congratulations Sir, you’ve been approved for two-hundred and fifty credits with our store.”

Lunarbolt bagged everything up and placed the items in his cart. They chatted together in old Vosian a bit longer, with Starscream telling her about his Sire, who was a professor at the Cybertron War Academy. Lunarbolt thanked Starscream because the femme Associate would receive a bonus for opening the charge card.

Meanwhile, TC was still shopping, now looking over the zero to three months sleepers. He kept thinking of how cold it was in their quarters, so he selected the ones with booties for the mini-thrusters.

He brought the ones he liked to the counter, “Okay Stormrunner, I’m buying these, and I want a couple more of this one,” he held up a pink onesie with tiny petrorabbits on it.

“I’ll haveta check the inventory, Sir,” the Associate switched to the online system, which was slower, “It’s gonna take a minute.” She smiled at him, calming down a bit and appreciating his business.

“You think these’ll be warm enough?” he asked.

“They’re supposed to be warm enough for space bridge travel,” she nodded, then frowned at her computer, “Damn!” she slammed her fists on the keyboard.

TC just listened.
“We don’t have any in our store,” Stormrunner began, “but we can order it for you, Sir.”

The blue Seeker thought about it, long enough for several customers to line up behind him, making the Associate nervous.

Finally, TC decided, “Okay, as long as I haveta order, I’ll take a dozen.”

“Okay,” Stormrunner typed in the quantity, “now we need your coordinates.”

TC gave her the paper with his information, but the femme was having trouble, culminating in smacking the side of her computer screen.

“SUNBLAST!” Stormrunner called for her co-worker, “The systems’ on the fritz!”

This Associate was a bit younger than Stormrunner, with dark, cruel-looking optics. Thundercracker’s immediate thought was that she was a witch.

“We cannot ship packages to Earth,” Sunblast told him, “do you have an address in Vos we could send it to?”

“No,” TC shrugged disappointedly, “and I really wanted these,” he mused as he picked up the garment.

“Well, you can buy these,” Stormrunner told him, closing the internet to switch back to the register setting.

But then Thundercracker thought of something, “Wait, can you mail it to my Creators in Vos?”

Sunblast: “Of course.”

Then Lunarbolt told them, “I’m going to lunch.”

Stormrunner saw that the line now consisted of ten Seekers; she told her co-worker, “Ugh, you can have the order,” and to the customers, “Next in line, step over!” she then got on Lunarbolt’s register.

Sunblast set up his order to be shipped to TC’s parents’ home in suburban Vos, “Do you have a credit card with us, Sir?”

“My brother Starscream does,” the blue Seeker waved him over, “Hey Star!”

“Yes, yes,” the red and white Seeker left their carts to come pay for the items, leaving his sparklings unattended. Darkmount babbled to the other two that this was their chance, and all three flew crookedly out of the carts.

Starscream: “What?”

TC: “They need your credit card.”

Starscream saw the sleepers, “Awwww, I didn’t see these. Where were these?”

“Um,” TC couldn’t remember, “Where are these from, Sunblast?”

“Polo,” she grinned at them, “our finest brand.”

“I must look at that department,” the red and white Seeker noted, hurrying away.
Now Sunblast was mad, “He didn’t give you the credit card.”

And the other customers were even angrier.

TC: “Hey Star! I need your new credit card!”

Starscream was looking over things, “In a minute.”

“We’ll look at these IN A MINUTE,” the blue Seeker could feel the femme’s ire, “First, we gotta finish this order.”

“Okay, okay,” Starscream came back, and let the Associate scan his temporary card.

The register made a negative noise.

“This account could not be authorized,” Sunblast told them.

“HUH?” Starscream got upset, “But I just opened it with your co-worker!”

The Associate narrowed her glare at him and looked at his temporary charge again, “It says you have a credit limit of two-hundred and fifty credits. How much have you spent today?”

“O-Oh,” the Trine Leader realized, “a lot.”

“Great,” TC searched his subspace for his Dad’s credits, “Alright, we’ll pay for it, just not with the discount.”

That’s when the Associate smiled, “Why don’t YOU open your own store card, Sir? Then you can have the discount. Also, aren’t you still going to shop the Polo Department?”

“Oh, I can do that?” TC asked.

Sunblast: “I just said that.”

“Sure!” he gave her his Decepticon Badge.

She processed his application, “Congratulations Sir, you’ve been approved for two-thousand, five-hundred credits today! For the rest of the day, everything is twenty-five percent to you in the whole store.” She would be a lot nicer to him now.

TC: “Alright!”

“What a second!” Starscream barked, “How come you got two-thousand, five-hundred credits and I only got approved for two-hundred and fifty?”

Then Laserbeak came over, “Excuse me, Starscream.”

The red and white Seeker ignored him.

“We have no idea how the register decides these numbers, Sir,” Sunblast told him.

“Excuse me, Starscream,” Laserbeak tried again.

“But I’m the Air Commander of the Decepticons,” Starscream insisted, “Why do I have bad credit?!”

“I don’t know, Sir,” Sunblast shrugged, turning to her co-worker, “Stormrunner, why did Thundercracker get more credit than Starscream?”
“Well,” based on her previous conversation with the Seeker, the older Associate knew exactly what the problem was, “that sometimes happens with you’re Bonded to a Tarnian.”

“Megatron,” Starscream grumbled, “he ruined my credit rating.”

“AHHHAHAHAHA!” Thundercracker couldn’t help but burst into laughter.

“So,” Sunblast began to set up his order again, “are you expecting a little femme this time?” She thought Starscream was the carrier.

Laserbeak persisted, “Starscream…”

“Huh?” the Trine Leader was distracted by the Bird, “No, I’m not carrying.”

“Nah, this is for our brother’s sparkling,” Thundercracker explained, “he’s having the little femme.”

With the line of customers completed, Stormrunner came back over, “Eleven customers later, and you’re still waiting on the blue guy.”

Sunblast: “Sorry, Stormy.” She finished his order and handed him the receipt.

Starscream: “I can’t believe Megatron ruined my credit rating.”

Laserbeak: “Starscream…”

Starscream mused now, “Although, it may have been my divorce from Skyfire…”

“Now I wanna buy this stuff,” Thundercracker told the Associate, picking up the sleepers.

“Of course,” Sunblast told him, ringing them up.

Laserbeak: “No one listens to me.”

Stormrunner tried to help by bagging up the items, “Can I help you, son?”

“I am attempting to obtain Starscream’s attention,” Laserbeak explained.

Stormrunner: “Hey Starscream!”

Finally, he listened, “Yes, Stormy?”

She ignored his newfound familiarity, “Your friend or nephew or whatever he is, is talking to you.”

Starscream looked at Laserbeak now.

“At last, I have your attention,” Laserbeak signed, “Commander, your triplet mechs are destroying the department store.”

All four of them saw it at once: The store was trashed! Darkwing had pulled all the papers out of the paper-folded Polo and dumped the items on the floor; Dawning had collected all the hangers from the Formalwear department, and Darkmount had spilled his sparkling-Energon all over the underplating fixture.

“MY POLO!” Sunblast yelled as she ran to her department.

“THE UNDERPLATTING!” Stormrunner yelled as she too ran to correct the mess.
“Oh man!” Thundercracker tried as he scooped up Dawning, “We’ll help you clean it up!”

“You boys are being naughty,” Starscream scolded his laughing Darkwing, “you’re just like your uncle Skywarp!”

TC came over with the little guy in his arms, “Where’s Darkmount?”

They looked around, and saw the little guy wrecking the holiday display, taking the ornaments off the Christmas trees.

Starscream quickly lifted him up, “Darkmount, NO!”

The Associates hurriedly cleaned up the various messes, folding and repackaging, respectively, as fast as they could. By the time their fellow Associate, Lunarbolt had returned from lunch; they had another line of Christmas-shopping customers waiting for them.

“Lunary, you take the customers,” Stormrunner ordered, “I’ll take the cart!” she then wheeled her tool of the trade and began picking up all the hanger-less merchandise off the floor.

“Ugh, you guys are gonna get us kicked outta the store,” TC put Dawning and Darkwing back in the cart, “C’mon, Star, let’s hurry up. The kids are getting too rambunctious.”

“Fine, fine,” Starscream groaned, getting Darkmount into the other cart, “Just let me look at the Polo items.”

The red and white Seeker began to go through the department fixture by fixture, “Wow, this is nice,” he found toddler mechling outfits for his sons, before finding the newborn femme clothing for his niece-to-be.

Meanwhile, TC tried to entertain his nephews, holding and bouncing Dawning while he rocked Darkwing in the cart. He smiled as the femme Associates amused him, thinking how Skywarp would have enjoyed shopping with them.

“Hey Stormy,” Lunarbolt told her co-worker as she examined the register, “I made my goal twice over!”

“That’s cause you were ringing and I was cleaning!” Stormrunner griped.

Then TC remembered he still had the credits from his Creators, “Hey Stormy? Can I pay my credit card bill?”

“Fine,” the Associate could have screamed, “Everyone else around here gets the sales and the orders, but they just make their PAYMENTS with me!”

The blue Seeker wasn’t sure if that was a yes or a no, so he just stood there.

“Come on!” Stormrunner rolled her optics and waved her hand out to him, “Come on, bring it over.”

“Okay,” TC smiled and sat Dawning on the counter while he retrieved the credits from his subspace, “I’ll pay my brother’s bill too.”

Stormrunner: “He has to bring his new store charge over here.”

Thundercracker called behind him, “HEY STAR!”

Starscream yelled from across the aisle, “WHAT?”
TC: “I WANNA PAY OFF YOUR CREDIT CARD!”

Starscream: “MEGATRON AND I CAN PAY FOR IT!”

TC: “BUT MOM AND DAD WANTED TO PAY FOR EVERYTHING!”

Stormrunner was ready to kill them both.

Starscream: “YOU CAN PAY FOR THIS NEW STUFF IF YOU WANT!”

TC: “OH, OKAY!”

“Well, I think that’s everything.” the red and white Seeker brought his cart over, “We’ve got sparkling bottles, diapers, blankets.”

“You know,” Sunblast came up behind him, holding a pair of pedes sleepers, “you really should get your brother these.”

Starscream wasn’t against it; “It might help,” Thundercracker added, “he’s been getting cold a lot.”

“You know what they say,” the younger Associate told them in all seriousness, “when one is carrying, you must wrap his pedes up at all times…because he’s walking with one pede in the grave.”

The two brothers froze.

“Oh, CAN it!” Stormrunner told her co-worker.

“Stormy, don’t yell.” Lunarbolt corrected.

Stormrunner: “But she keeps talking about that stupid pastor from her church!”

“We’ll take them,” Thundercracker tried to smile, putting the items in their cart, “thanks for the tip, kid.”

“Hey TC,” Starscream remembered sometime, changing the subject, “I need purple yarn to finish that blanket!”

“Well, hurry up!” his brother told him as he put the Polo items on the counter.

As Stormrunner rang up his purchases, Sunblast flirted with him, “So, both your brothers have sparklings.”

TC tried to ignore her, “That’s right.”

“So, um,” she continued, “You got a girlfriend?”

Thundercracker turned and grinned at her, “Not if you were the last Seeker femme in Vos, Sunblast.”

Stormrunner tipped her digits on the counter impatiently while the line again piled up.

Lunarbolt meanwhile, helped Starscream select which yarn best matched the youngest Seeker’s unique purple coloring, “I would say, Amethyst is the closest to what you’re looking for, Sir.”

“Yes, this is definitely it,” the Trine Leader told her in old Vosian, “I’ll take two rolls, I make tons of
“WILL YOU HURRY UP!” Stormrunner bellowed now, “YOU TWO HAVE BEEN DRIVING ME CRAZY ALL DAY!”

“Yes, yes,” Starscream came over with the yarn, “Add these to our sale.”

The line was huge now; Sunblast jumped on the other register, “Step over!”

“OH GREAT!” Stormrunner was furious at them now, “YOU KNOW HOW MANY SALES I’M GONNA LOSE CAUSE YOU IDIOTS KEEP HOLDING UP THE LINE?!”

“Stormy, be quiet!” Sunblast told her.

Starscream didn’t care; he began to bundle up Darkwing followed by Darkmount and Dawning, while Thundercracker paid for their items.

“Ma’am,” Laserbeak attempted to calm the Associate.

“DON’T TELL ME TO BE QUIET!” Stormrunner hollered at her co-worker, “I’VE BEEN WAITING ON THESE TWO, ICE CREAM AND BLUNTERCRACKER, OR WHATEVER THEIR NAMES ARE, ALL DAY!”

Laserbeak: “Ma’am.”

Stormrunner finished the sale while Lunarbolt bagged up their items, “AND THEY OPENED CREDIT CARDS WITH YOU AND SUNBLAST AND NOT ME!”

Laserbeak: “Ma’am.”

Stormrunner: “NOBODY WANTS TO OPEN A CREDIT WITH A LOSER LIKE ME!”

Laserbeak: “Ma’am.”

Finally, Stormrunner heard the Bird, “WHAT?!”

“Ma’am,” Laserbeak said politely, “I would like you to open a store credit card for myself.”

The Associate’s demeanor changed completely, “Aw, thank you, Sir.” She processed his application, “Congratulations, Laserbeak, you’ve been approved for ten-thousand credits today!”

The Condor smirked, telling the stunned Seekers, “Await in the transporter, I shall now begin my Christmas shopping.” He pulled out his cell phone, “But first, I shall check in with Father.”

“Hey,” Thundercracker thought to apologize to the Associates, “we really wanna thank you for all you femmes did for us today, helping with getting all this for our brother’s sparkling.”

“Yes, we really do appreciate it,” Starscream agreed.

“Aw, and I’m sorry for yelling at ya,” Stormrunner agreed, stepping out from behind the counter to hug the blue Seeker.

Back at the Decepticon Underwater Base, Soundwave was at his Computer Consul, imputing the latest of the sorted-out information.
After working hard sorting more files all day, Skywarp had laid down with his pedes up on the sofa for a nap. He was still half-asleep while he felt Soundwave gently shaking him, “Hmmm?”

“Skywarp, your brothers want to show you something,” the Tapedeck had a portable computer tablet in his hand; he sat down and showed it to the pregnant flyer.

Laserbeak was giving them a face-time with his brothers and the Associates.

“Hey Skywarp,” TC began, “everybody here at the store in Vos wants to say hi!” he was holding up Dawning, who was waving, “Hi-Hi!”

“We just wanted to wish you congratulations on your sparkling!” Lunarbolt told him.

“We got everything a newling could ever need!” Starscream said as he held the giggling Darkwing and Darkmount.

“Have a safe and happy delivery!” Sunblast smiled.

“And come visit our store with your little femme!” Stormrunner said excitedly.

The group all waved and smiled at him.

Skywarp was smiling the biggest smile and crying happy coolant tears after seeing and hearing all these well-wishings. Soundwave put his arm around the carrying flyer as he told everyone, “Thank you! I love you all.”
Chapter 27: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

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After returning to Earth, Soundwave assigned Laserbeak an important task: Shadow the Autobot Mirage at all times.

“We strongly believe he’s the one that has breached our security perimeters on numerous occasions,” Soundwave explained, “Someone stole Megatron’s Gladiatorial files, and,” he spoke it matter-of-factly, “possibly, he was behind the attack on Skywarp several weeks ago.”

The Tapedeck had originally wanted the Condor to take the spying mission immediately upon his return from England but allowed him to accompany the Seekers for Christmas shopping.

“I would also like for you to gather any evidence as to what exactly is Mirage’s mission in these break-ins,” Soundwave continued.

“With pleasure,” the Bird responded with gusto, flying out of the tower and towards the Ark.

Infiltrating the Autobot Base always proved easy for the wicked Condor; their ventilation ducts were large enough for him to navigate through, and he quickly established which ones led to which rooms, so he could trace Mirage’s movements.

It was around four in the afternoon when Laserbeak first found Mirage, sitting in between Jazz and Hound in front of the television, watching the local news. Several other Autobots were busy hanging Christmas decorations; others were wrapping presents.

With this mundane scene, Laserbeak allowed his processor to wander: Shopping with the Seekers for his baby sister’s necessities had been a joyous experience, contradictory to his usually dark and cold intelligence missions.

The wicked Condor starred down at the Formula-1 Racer, narrowing his optics; his telepathic powers were not anywhere near those of his Creator’s, but on occasion, if he concentrated enough, he could pick up a thought or emotion here and there.

Laserbeak was rather taken aback that Mirage’s thoughts were not on spying or murder, rather, a Christmas pageant at Public School District 17, which the Condor recognized as Sam Witwicky’s education establishment. How peculiar…

The Decepticons were getting ready for Christmas as well.

“Is that it?” Soundwave stated flatly as he looked at the tree Megatron had found, “It looks sickly.”

Megatron had dragged in a Norway Spruce—completely white—since he figured the sparklings would like a white Christmas Tree.
Megatron: “We can get some ornaments from a gift shop in Tarn and make it look better.”

Soundwave: “I suppose so.”

They set up the tree in the Rec. Room.

Meanwhile, Thundercracker spent the day setting up the nursery: He assembled the crib, the dresser, and the changing table. He hung the strings of lights with the little stars and put the constellation nightlight together. He tested it at the outlet, and it worked nicely.

He even placed the toys in the crib, taking a minute to look at the plushie petrorabbit he had gotten his niece-to-be as a gift. Petrorabbits were wild and probably wouldn’t make a good pet on an Earth Base, but at least she would have a toy one. TC smiled, arranging the toys perfectly, already picturing the little femme sparkling in the receiving blanket, coming home from the Med-Bay, his little brother’s newling, and they would put her in her crib, and just…marvel at the miracle of life. The blue Seeker couldn’t wait!

The two brothers had spent the past two nights on Megatron and Starscream’s sofa bed and were anxious to get back home now that repairs were made to the heating system and the Base’s security seemed to be tightened.

Skywarp was still with Soundwave at the moment, working on their paperless-society project, and TC wanted everything to be perfect for the unveiling. He began laying out the tiny Seekerlette sleepers on Skywarp’s berth to display them.

After floating around Cybertron for three days in a lost state, Gravechaser returned to his attic lair. He watched Thundercracker’s preparations. The ghost realized how much his own son already adored the child that the wretch was growing in his belly; his feelings for the sparkling very clear with all the work he was doing. Gravechaser thought back to when Thundercracker himself was a sparkling, and how, even at an extremely young age, cared deeply for his pets. The demon blocked out the parts about killing the animals and breaking his son’s spark, of course. That had been Skywarp’s fault; Gravechaser had been upset by his wife’s creating a sparkling with another mech! And that’s why he lost his temper that day!

Well, after having been on the fence for a while, Gravechaser decided, he would spare Skywarp’s sparkling. His own son, Thundercracker, clearly wanted the baby, so Gravechaser would make sure Skywarp lived long enough to bore his spawn, and THEN Gravechaser would deactivate him! But Thundercracker would be allowed to keep the sparkling. It was decided.

Later, Starscream and Soundwave led Skywarp into the new nursery. The pregnant Seeker was overwhelmed with joy; crying happy coolant tears for once. He walked around the space, admiring all the gifts for his precious daughter-to-be. He turned back to his family, “I-I LOVE it!” He hugged his brothers and Soundwave, “T-Thank y-you!”

“Hey, I’m still working on that blanket,” Starscream laughed, “At least I’ve got a couple of weeks.”

Their first night home began peacefully enough, Skywarp wolfed down his dinner again, going to
his berth rubbing his full tummy, hoping things would be okay going forward. Things with Starscream were better, for the most part, and he knew how much TC loved him and Crystal; and they had not had any paranormal experiences for that past few nights, so hopefully, things would be okay. He looked at the new snow globe Starscream had given him; he wasn’t ready to try it out, not yet. So, he set it back on the shelf. Finally, he and his brother were ready for bed, and the two slept peacefully in their berths.

But the haunting was far from over. Around one-thirty in the morning, Skywarp opened his optics slowly, not sure what had awoken him. He rubbed his belly, making sure his little one was alright. His brother was snoring loudly; so Skywarp closed his optics again.

“Wop?”

It was so faint, Skywarp thought he had dreamt it. And then, there it was again…

“Unkel Wop?” followed by a frightened whimper.

“Darkwing?” Skywarp immediately recognized the little vocal to be his youngest nephew, the one that had been upset with him as of late, “Did you wanna sleep with me?”

His defenses down, foolishly, he went to the door, thinking the little guy had somehow snuck out of his Creator’s quarters to come to visit them, maybe after a nightmare.

But when the black and purple Seeker went to the door, there was no sparkling, “Um, Darkwing?”

The hallway was again pitch black, despite the faint light of the brake lights that Soundwave had recently installed. They seemed to have no effect on the veil of darkness. That cold chill had moved into the halls now, and Skywarp shivered a little. He turned back to get his robe, but suddenly, their front door slammed shut behind him! He heard the deadbolt lock shut! There was absolutely no possibility that would happen accidentally!

“TEECEE!” he banged his hand against the door, “TEECEE! WAKE UP!” He knew it was futile though; his brother was a heavy sleeper. Skywarp could feel coolant tears floating in his optics.

Then he heard his nephew whimper again, this time further down the hallway. “Darkwing, where are you?” The response was a scared keen, one that hurt the pregnant flyer’s very spark.

Even though he was terrified, he knew he had to save his little guy, “I-I’m coming to get you, baby.” He started down the hallway, groping the wall as he went.

And then…chanting began. Old world, Gregorian chanting, the kind that was practiced in the prisons on Cybertron, in an effort for positive activities for the convicts.

Skywarp stopped. There was absolutely no explanation for this on Earth or Cybertron. It was Gravechaser again! There were no doubts now; the ghost was back!

“TEECEE!” he screamed for his brother, but something told him that no one would hear him tonight. “O-Oh God…” He was now halfway between his quarters and Starscream’s. He thought he had to be brave and get Darkwing to safety.

He again heard who he thought was his nephew, keening in fear now! “D-Darkwing!” he hurried faster down the hallway, looking down, trying to find the little guy in the blackness, fearing the ghost would devour the sparkling before his very optics!

The chanting got louder as he went along; Skywarp was beginning to wonder if he was in the middle
of a nightmare, or that he had gone insane. He was looking down and suddenly…

Skywarp bumped clean into a mech. He stumbled backward, expecting the large being to be a Combaticon, “S-Sorry,” he knew his pregnancy was making him clumsy; he looked up…

Gravechaser stood before him in the hallway. Optics as black as his beard. As the demon grinned—the same evil grin, he had flashed when he was masquerading as his own son recently—and then bared his fangs.

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!” Skywarp cried at the top of his air intakes, “AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!” He screamed and screamed, and yet no one woke up! How could they ALL sleep through his frightened cries for help.

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!
“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!
“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!
“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!

He ran past the entity, now running for either Starscream or Soundwave’s quarters, whoever woke up first! The whole time, his sparkling twisted and squirmed inside him.

His spark nearly stopped as he heard Gravechaser FOLLOWING HIM! STOMP! STOMP! STOMP! The ghost walked with purpose, sounding like he was wearing big, heavy boots.

Skywarp heard the demon coming closer!

The brake lights went out. Even though there was power on in other parts of the Base.

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!” he cried out again.

Mercifully, his latest cry was heard by Starscream.

The red and white Seeker was startled online, waking up goggily, “W-What?”

Skywarp got to their door, ratting the locked knob, “STARScream! STARScream!”

Gravechaser, floating-flying now, rushed him, brushing by Skywarp’s wings at fifty miles-per-hour, clawing him, and disappearing in a puff of smoke.

“OOOOOOWWWWWWWW!!!!” the pregnant Seeker cried out in pain, falling to his knees; his arms around his stomach.

Finally, Starscream opened the door, “Skywarp, what’s going on?!’ he was in a bizarre, half-sleep, and for unknown reasons, had no thoughts of the recent burglaries. He was annoyed that Skywarp was waking them, “Don’t you know what time of night it is?”

The black and purple Seeker, traumatized, couldn’t understand, “D-Didn’t you h-hear me s-screaming in the hallway?”

Starscream was stern, “I only heard you holler and bang against my door once, now WHAT IS IT?!”

Skywarp shook his helm, “I-I heard D-Darkwing crying in the hallway!”

The Trine Leader just looked at him suspiciously, “Darkwing’s fast asleep in his crib, you idiot!”

The younger flyer began to realize, that Gravechaser was not only manipulating the lights in the
Base, but he was also manipulating the SOUNDS in the Base, and possibly the thoughts of his loved ones! Still, he brushed past his brother, running into the nursery, he opened the door, and saw his triplet nephews: All three were in a peaceful recharge and seemed to have been for quite some time. Darkwing was nestled between his two bigger brothers; his pacifier in his mouth. There was absolutely no way the little guy could have been in the hallway, returned to his quarters, his crib, and be fast asleep, and all without waking his Creators and brothers.

Skywarp knew then just how far Gravechaser was taking things; pretending to sound like his beloved nephew; the lights, the chanting of the prisoners, no one able to hear him scream…

The pregnant flyer felt a deep sense of hopelessness now; his family couldn’t…wouldn’t be able to help him. The Ghost was going to get him; he could get him anytime he wanted to. Why hadn’t he already? Oh, because he was toying with him.

“Go to bed, Warp,” Starscream insisted, not inviting his scared brother to stay, seeming to have no memory that his Trinemates had just spent the past two nights on his sofa bed.

“C-Can you walk me back, S-Star?” he pleaded.

“It’s one in the morning!” Starscream hissed, “Get outta here before I throw you out!”

Skywarp knew the words were not his brother’s; he wouldn’t hold this against Starscream. He knew who was putting the words in his mouth. The pregnant Jet stepped back into the hallway, and his beloved Trine Leader slammed the door behind him, locking it for good measure.

His own quarters locked from the inside, there was no point in going back there. Dejected and hurt, Skywarp continued to the Control Room. The French Doors opened easily, and Skywarp went to the sofa. He curled up there under the same blanket he had rested under while his brothers had gone shopping for his sparkling.

And there, Skywarp cried; he cried like he had not cried before. His air intakes were hitching like crazy; keening and sobbing. The backs of his wings burned strangely, hurting him. This was where Gravechaser had scratched him. Skywarp realized that Starscream didn’t seem to see anything, so maybe the pain was just in his CPU; maybe all of this was in his CPU, and he was malfunctioning. Maybe there was a scientific explanation: Maybe Seekers onlined with an extra drive—his teleportation drive, the one he inherited from his Sire, oh the irony—begin to break down when the drive wasn’t used for the nine months of a pregnancy. Teleportation drives were rare, and not everything was readily known about them, especially since Sentinel Prime had stymied the medical education system. Soundwave’s late wife, Celene though, had been an exception, and Skywarp had trusted the Tapedeck to know the most about these things.

Soundwave. He could go to Soundwave. But after this latest trauma, the pregnant flyer couldn’t bear another rejection tonight.

He wanted to offline; just go offline. And not deal with all this. The only one…the only one that he felt truly loved him now, and the only one that he felt would truly miss him, was his little femme.

Crystal moved around inside of him now; she had been awake during the entire time in the hallway, squirming nervously within his gestation chamber. :Momma, Momma, we fly! We fly away?:

:I don’t think I can, sweetspark,: he answered her through their already forming Bond, :I’m sorry…: he knew she meant to fly back East, but Skywarp doubted he could make the journey again. It was too risky for both of them this late in the pregnancy.
He was turned on his left side, with his belly facing the couch top cushions, hoping for some way of protecting his child. He tried to squeeze himself as far into the cushions as possible, and under the blanket, protecting his baby and trying to rest. He would think tomorrow about where they would go to hide.

Skywarp did the only thing he could now: He prayed for their safety, relying on his faith. And friendship: He replayed memory files of happier times with Christopher: The music; the stages the public received him on; the celebrations… Stay far from timid… only make moves when your spark’s in it… and live the phrase the sky’s the limit…:
Chapter 28: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 28:

By Transformersnewfan

The next morning, one by one, the Decepticons onlined to helmaches and night-shivers. Thundercracker groaned, feeling like he’d been drugged up to his optics. He turned over, “Hey Warp?”

When there was no response, TC opened his optics and saw the empty berth. He bolted up, “O-Oh no!” he knew something must have happened again. Skywarp was still scared to leave their berthroom without his brother’s protection. The blue Seeker jumped out of his berth, “Warp?!” he searched their whole quarters frantically, “SKYWARP?!”

Their door. Their front door was bolted from the inside. Thinking Skywarp had to still be inside, possibly hurt and bleeding again, just like that day with the sonogram tape…Thundercracker searched again, this time under the couch, the desks, their berths, the wash racks, EVERYWHERE. At least there were no signs of a struggle or Energon-blood!

It didn’t register at first in his still-sleepy processor, but how did the door get bolted from the inside when Skywarp was out? Had he teleported out against doctor’s orders? If he did, what condition were he and his sparkling in now?! Panicked, TC opened the door and began searching frantically for his baby brother, “Skywarp?! Where are you?!”

Starscream awoke around the same time. Like Thundercracker, he felt like he had been drugged; which made no sense at all, “M-Megatron?”

“Uuuggghhh,” the Decepticon Leader moaned, “I haven’t been this stiff since my Arena days.” His joints creaked and popped as he swung his legs over the side of their berth, “What time is it?”

Answering his own question, he checked his internal clock, and was stunted, “IT’S TEN-THIRTY IN THE MORNING!”

Megatron always rose at six A.M., not having overslept in decades. He had missed the morning’s scheduled target practice!

“W-What?!” Starscream jumped up, running to get their triplets, “How’d we both sleep so LATE!”

Thankfully, Darkmount, Darkwing, and Dawning seemed to be fine, chirping happily to see their Mother.

“Something’s not right,” Megatron realized, “What happened last night that we both slept so late?”

“How should I know!” Starscream screeched back, lifting up Darkwing and Dawning, allowing his mate to heft up the third of their trio. “Did you get me drunk or something?”

“How the pit would I have gotten you drunk?!” Megs barked back. It was their usual bickering; the
kids enjoyed it.
Then Starscream’s optics widen, “O-Oh… I don’t know if I dreamed something or…”

Megatron: “WHAT?”

“Was Skywarp here last night?” the red and white Seeker’s vocals were getting scared.
The former Gladiator shrugged, puzzled, “I don’t remember anything after we went to bed!” He
looked around, “Let’s go find the others.”

When Megs, holding his oldest son, opened the door, he was met with the sight of more than a few
Decepticons holding their helms, stumbling around like they all had a night from hell.

“B-Boss,” Ramjet met him, “I overslept! I’m sorry!”

“Well so did I!” Now Megatron was worried, “I DON’T UNDERSTAND ANY OF THIS!”

Starscream got frightened for his brothers, “THUNDERCRACKER! SKYWARP!” he cried down
the hall, not seeing them amongst their troops.

“I DON’T GET IT, IS THERE A GAS LEAK IN HERE!” Megatron bellowed at the crowd,
demanding answers, “WHERE THE HECK IS SOUNDWAVE?!” He moved towards his Third in
Command’s quarters.

In their quarters, the Tapedeck and five of his brood—Laserbeak having spent the night at the
Autobot Base—all woke up at the same late time as everyone else, but all were spared of the strange
symptoms of a drugged induced recharge. Their shared telepathy seemed to shield them.

“I can’t believe it’s so late,” Soundwave grumbled as he headed for this work, “Megatron must think
I fell in.”

Rumble was nervous, “You never oversleep, Pop.”

Soundwave: “I know.”

He turned his front doorknob, and nothing happened. He rattled it, and it seemed to be jammed,
“Great!” The Tapedeck began rattling the doorknob, growing more and more frustrated, “Come on,
come on!”

On the other side of the door, Megatron reached them, with Starscream close behind, “Soundwave!
Soundwave, what happened!”

Soundwave: “Megatron! Open the door!”

“What?!” the Decepticon Leader, getting impatient, went to open the door from the outside, and
found it locked, “It’s locked!”

“It’s not locked!” Soundwave shouted back, “It’s jammed or something!” He rattled the knob,
getting violent with it, “Come on!”

“Pop! What happened to the door!” Frenzy yelped.

“Pop! What’s going on!” Rumble joined in. Buzzsaw, Ratbat, and the twins were now all frantically
yelling in the Tapedeck’s audials.

Ravage at least was cool, “It’s jammed, Father.”

“Here, help me push!” Soundwave told him. The two both tried pushing the door open as Soundwave had the knob turned.

“Soundwave! This door won’t open!” Megatron barked back.

Now both sides were pulling and pushing at the door, holding against the two most powerful Decepticons in the army!

“Get him outta this!” the Leader roared.

“Here, lemme try!” Onslaught offered, pulling on the knob hard.

In the middle of this insanity, Thundercracker came running down the hallway, grabbing Starscream, “YOU GUYS! I CAN’T FIND SKYWARP!!!!”

“WHAT?!” Starscream was frantic now, “W-WHERE IS HE?! WHERE IS HE?!”

TC: “I DON’T KNOW!”

Now Astrotrain came over, “We gotta blast the knob!” He took out a handgun and aimed, “Get away from the door!”

From the other side, Soundwave and Ravage did so, and the Triple Changer shot the doorknob twice. The Tapedeck tried to push, but the door held firm. It seemed to be GLUED to the frame!

“Oh, SLAG now!” Megatron couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

Finally, Soundwave told his sons, “Alright, on the count of three, we all ram this door at once! ONE, TWO, THREE!” All six of them rushed against the door at once, and it finally broke free, sending the wood splintering and Soundwave crushing to the ground; Rumble landing on top of him.

“Soundwave!” Megatron shouted, handing Darkmount to Ramjet to help his friend up, “What is going on around here!”

“Some afthole superglued my door!” the Tapedeck hollered back as he got to his pedes, “Look at this!” He pointed to the telling signs of the yellow substance all along his quarters’ doorframe, “Somebody’s idea of a joke, apparently.”

The Decepticon Leader, the only one truly thinking clearly over the yelling, knew that the only real prankster in their ranks was Skywarp; but the Seeker was in no frame of processor these days to pull off such a feat.

“I CAN’T FIND SKYWARP!” Thundercracker tried to remind them all.

Soundwave: “WHAT?!” he was still reeling from what happened. His sparklings yelped; “The baby!” Buzzsaw cried.

“Check the Control Room!” Soundwave told them, thinking of the cameras. As the group raced there, he looked up, “WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BRAKE LIGHTS!” They were all burned out, “I JUST INSTALLED THEM LAST WEEK!”

“Something’s going on here, Soundwave,” Megatron hollered back, “We gotta find him!”
Skywarp had stayed awake the entire night. For nine hours, straight. By now, his optics were hurting; everything was hurting. He waited out the night, protecting his sleeping daughter, singing to her through their Bond the lyrics he remembered from Chris’ songs. He didn’t want to budge, for fear of any further attacks. Gravechaser had left him alone, it seemed, after he disappeared in the puff of smoke in the hallway. The morning had come; the young Seeker could see the light gleaming from the windows; the seas’ shadows dancing lazily. He recognized how no one had gotten up yet. Hour past after hour, he thought about it, wondering if they were all dead, Gravechaser having killed them all, leaving his prey for last, but not before forcing him to see the bodies of all his loved ones.

Then, little by little, he heard them all hollering and yelling. At least they had survived the night. But the flyer’s growing depression stopped him from calling out to them; feeling unloved and unwanted, he didn’t even think they would miss him.

“SKYWARP!” Soundwave threw the French Doors open, and they all spotted him on the couch, partially hidden by boxes of files, at the same time. The pregnant Jet had a blanket wrapped around his wings and back, but he was shivering and looked frightened.

“WARP!” Thundercracker pushed the others aside, knocking over the boxes, and scooped his baby brother up in his arms, hugging him tightly. The pregnant flyer was pretty upset, but it felt good being held. Starscream grabbed him and hugged him next, “Skywarp, baby!” They both were asking him if he was alright, their hands checking his pregnant belly, and the black and purple flyer nodded, sniffing.

He gave a surprised yelp when Soundwave pulled him away and hugged him; the Tapedeck’s chassis language more like a loved one that a doctor or the normally cold, Communications Officer. He was even more surprised when Megatron put an arm around him as well.

Several other mechs filed in now, wondering what had happened.

As Thundercracker cuddled the youngest Seeker, trying to calm himself down after searching in fear for him, Soundwave contacted his second son, “Laserbeak, what is your report?” In the wake of everything that happened, the Tapedeck worried if his Condor had been a casualty.

What a relief when the Bird answered immediately, and in a mundane tone, “Well Father, firstly the Subject watched the human film, known as White Christmas, followed by Singing in the Rain. After which, Subject retired to his quarters, where he recharged for approximately eight to nine hours. This morning at seven, he joined his fellow Autobots, a group of whom led by Optimus Prime, transformed and drove off. Their destination being Public School District 17, the educational establishment of Samuel James Witwicky. The Subject is currently present there, assisting in carpentry for a set of sorts for the Christmas Pageant.” Laserbeak sighed, finishing, “I have never been subjected to such banal activities.”

Soundwave and Megatron looked at each other in horror. Mirage wasn’t the prowler?

“Was the Subject out of your sight at any time?” Soundwave demanded.

“Negative, Father,” Laserbeak affirmed.

“Continue your mission,” Soundwave told his son, cutting the connection before the Bird asked any questions. The Tapedeck dove for his Computer Consul, pushing buttons frantically, and being shocked at his discovery, “Megatron, get over here.”
The Decepticon Leader had taken his eldest son back from Ramjet and joined his Communication Officer at the Consul. The normally brave little Darkmount became nervous, sensing his Sire’s distress.

Megatron: “What is it, Soundwave?”

“The security cameras,” the Tapedeck couldn’t believe what he was about to say, “their connectors were cut off at one in the morning. This has never happened before!”

The Coneheaded Seekers and the Combaticons were shouting now, demanding answers from their Leaders.

It all seems to happen at once. Thundercracker was holding Skywarp when Starscream, checking for injuries, pulled the blanket off his back, “SKYWARP!” the Trine Leader shrieked, getting everyone’s attention. He couldn’t finish his sentence; he was in shock. TC turned their brother around roughly to see what Star was seeing:

Skywarp had deep, six-inch long, gashes on each of his wings, marring his Decepticon insignias to the point of unrecognition. They were still fresh; ready to bleed Energon-blood from his fragile appendages.

“Geez, somebody clawed you!” Ramjet vocalized.

This was the breaking point for Thundercracker; he turned Skywarp around, gripping him by his shoulders, shaking him, “THIS IS THE LAST STRAW, WARP! YOU HAD BETTER TELL US WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE! THIS IS GETTING OUT OF HAND!!! DO YOU WANNA GET YOURSELF AND YOUR SPARKLING KILLED AND ALL OF US WITH YOU?!”

His tone broke Skywarp’s psyche, which had already been tittering on the brink. But…How could he ever admit to his brother that he was being haunted by the ghost of his Sire? And with everything staring at him, well, that wasn’t helping.

“I-I thought I heard Darkwing crying in the hallway…So, I looked for him; the lights were out in the hallway. I-I couldn’t find him, but there was…s-somebody else there.”

Soundwave was at his side in an instant; the Seeker went on, “I was screaming and screaming…None of you came…H-He cut me…” But he quickly changed the subject, or rather, continued on, “I went to Starscream, and…” He looked at his brother, “You said to go away…So, I came in here.”

Starscream’s jaw dropped, he had no memory of this, “Skywarp, I didn’t see you last night.”

“I came to you telling you that Darkwing was in the hall!” the darker Seeker insisted, getting upset, “Y-You said to go away, like I-I was crazy.”

“I don’t remember anything,” Star shook his helm, shakily, “W-Was I asleep?! I-I mean, was I sleep walking?!?”

Astrotrain went to Megatron, “Megs, were we all hypnotized or something?!”

“Gotta be a gas leak of some sort,” the Decepticon Leader growled, before barking into his Comm-Link, “Scrapper, get your crew in here!”

Soundwave pulled Skywarp toward himself, “I’m taking him to the Med-Bay,” he practically picked up the pregnant Seeker, giving the others a scowl before leaving.
“Boss, I didn’t hear a thing!” Onslaught insisted to Megatron.

The former Gladiator, desperate to gain control of the situation, gave Darkmount to Starscream and began barking orders, “Listen up all of you! We’re under attack, in case you can’t tell! Scrapper: Get the other Constructicons and investigate for a gas leak or a power surge! Reflector: Start replacing all the starters and bulbs in the brake lights! Astrotrain: Take Blizwing and Octane and search for any possible entry points of an intruder. I want this entire Base searched from top to bottom! Dirge: You three search from the air! Check for any nearby military operations! Ravage: Guard my family twenty-four seven!” And lastly, he turned to the blue Seeker, “Thundercracker: Bring in Mirage!”

TC nodded, narrowing his optics; at the time, he DID believe the answers still laid with the Autobot spy.

“Starscream: Keep the sparklings safe and tend to your younger brother,” Megatron continued, “And Soundwave and I will investigate any further suspects.” He pointed at the door, “ALL OF YOU! GET ON THIS!”

The Decepticons all set about their assigned tasks.

“Megatron, what are we going to do?” Starscream asked; he was frightened by the whole experience, “Was I glitched or something?”

“We’ll figure it out,” the Leader kept his tone even as to not alarm his Bondmate, “It still might be an environmental problem.”

“Those scratches on his wings aren’t an environmental problem!” the red and white flyer screeched, “Somebody was HERE last night!”

“The prowler could have gassed us, or,” Megatron shook his helm, not able to deal with his mate when he was irrational, “we have a problem in the building and Mirage took advantage of the situation.” He shook his helm, “Just calm down, okay?” He knew he would only scare Starscream if he told him his own, personally held belief.

“Just another minute, Skywarp,” Soundwave instructed. The Tapedeck had cleaned the scratches and patched up the Jet’s wounded wings. He also performed another ultrasound, for precaution, and determined the sparkling was unharmed. The black and purple Seeker’s emotional state, however, was a different story: The attack made him feel hopeless; knowing that Gravechaser would continue to up the ante, toying with him until he had finally had his fun, and then he would offline him as he saw fit. He knew his own life was over; now he just wanted to protect his sparkling.

“Um, since everything’s on track,” Soundwave tried to focus on the sparkling, “we can cancel Thursday’s appointment.” He covered the bandaged wings with the blanket from the Control Room’s sofa, “Try to stay warm.”

But Skywarp kept looking at the floor; despair all over his faceplates.

“Hey,” the Tapedeck lifted his friend’s chin gently, “If there’s someone hurting you, is it easier to tell me than it is your brothers?”

Skywarp’s optics filled with coolant tears; he wanted to tell someone. And maybe…Soundwave would be the one.
“Skywarp, did Thundercracker do this to you?” the Tapedeck was picking up something that may or may not have had to do with the blue Seeker.

“No,” Skywarp answered quickly.

“One of the other Decepticons?” Soundwave asked again, “If so, they are in violation of our ethics code. There is to be no violence against one Decepticon to another.”

“I know that,” the young flyer admitted. He had been in violation of Code 23 of the Decepticon Bylaws when he had shot Thundercracker in the faceplates years earlier, “You think I don’t remember?”

“Skywarp, you do not have to take being abused,” Soundwave told him, “you can tell me.” He took the younger’s hands in his own, “I care about you and your daughter, you know that.”

Warp could see the Tapedeck’s emotions even through his hidden faceplates: He cared for them; he loved him. Soundwave DID love him. Soundwave was truly in love with him.

He collapsed against the larger mech’s chest, sobbing uncontrollably, hitching his air intakes and keening openly. Soundwave wrapped his arms around him, holding him tightly, “It’s alright…It’s alright.”

Skywarp realized it was time to come clean, “I-I tried to deal with this myself…I-I can’t even tell T-Thundercracker.” Soundwave listened, stroking the little flyer’s back while he continued, “I-I kept thinking, he was only after ME and would only hurt me…B-But now, h-he…he…”

Soundwave: “Who?”

“H-He calls himself Gravechaser,” there, it was out. He said it, “I-I know that’s not his real name. I don’t know HOW I-I know…I j-just, know, okay?”

Soundwave finally knew, “Have you ever seen him before?”

“N-No…” Warp told him between hitches, “H-He’s not…” Online? Real? “an Autobot…”

“Someone not affiliated with a faction,” Soundwave nodded, understanding now, “Can you tell me about him?”

The young, pregnant flyer was afraid to say more.

“Skywarp, I can’t help you if you don’t tell me what happened,” the Tapedeck tried.

So, Skywarp started to talk about it, “T-The day I was attacked, I-I couldn’t find the sonogram tape…I looked everywhere, and, I heard somebody laughing…” he didn’t want to talk about the smoke, trying to leave out the paranormal aspects of the story, “And I turned around, and the tape flew out at me.”

Soundwave listened carefully as he held his Seeker, allowing the other to get it out.

“A-Another time, he tried to strangle m-me…” Skywarp whispered.

Soundwave: “When?”

Skywarp: “Thanksgiving…”

The Tapedeck flashed on the dinner and remembered how the flyer wore a scarf for the entire day,
“Oh God…” he didn’t even sense it. Despite his telepathy, he knew he had serious blind spots. He could sense when someone is lying, but not what they would leave out.

“It was always ME he was after,” Skywarp went on, “last night was the first time he went after you guys.” Coolant tears flowed down his faceplates, “It’s been going on ever since I got pregnant…” This was even more alarming to the Tapedeck. “Do you feel he’s trying to get your sparkling?”

“H-He said no,” the flyer told him, “I-It’s just me he wants to k-kill.” This made Soundwave even more determined to protect his friend, “Describe this perpetrator.” Skywarp didn’t want to.

Soundwave: “What colors are he?”

“B-Blue, mostly…” the Seeker stammered, “but he has a beard, and long, red claws. And he’s invisible a lot…he’s got a lot of powers…he made the lights go out…”

The Tapedeck realized that said mech could still be on Base, “Let’s go back to the Control Room. There’s safety in numbers.” He also didn’t want his Cassettes left alone. Soundwave picked up the pregnant flyer and carried him out of the Med-Bay. Skywarp didn’t so much as react. He was very tired and emotionally spent. This was the most depression he had ever felt.

Starscream was wringing his hands and pacing around. Six tiny optics following him around the Control Room as he paced. He stopped immediately when his little brother was brought back though, “O-Oh!” he cried out, meeting Soundwave at the sofa. “They are okay,” was the blue mech’s only words. When he placed Skywarp down, Star picked him up and held him close, “Oh Skywarp, I’m so sorry you were hurt…I-I’m so sorry…” The black and purple Seeker barely made a sound; hurt and confusion written all over his faceplates.

“You poor thing,” Star cooed, pulling the blanket back to look at the bandaged wings. He rubbed and stroked them, trying to comfort his youngest Trine brother. He pulled Skywarp closer, trying to get him to lay his helm on his shoulder. Skywarp was more worried about leaning on his right side, but apparently, the way Starscream was holding him wasn’t putting pressure there, so he curled into his brother’s side, sort of lifting his belly into a more comfortable position. He wasn’t as comfortable these days with Starscream than he used to be before his Trine Leader’s Bonding to a Gladiator, but for now, he was going to try.

As the two brothers spoke, Megatron, meanwhile, watched his 3ic come towards him; he explained everything that was being done by their troops. Soundwave told him what the Seeker had told him about the mech called Gravechaser.

“This is the first time I’ve heard that name,” Soundwave told his Leader, “no one in the files Skywarp and I have uploaded into the computer has that designation.”

“So, we don’t know if this mech is freelance or working for someone,” Megatron noted, clasping his hands together, resting his chin there, “and he took my files.”

Several more Deceptions came in the Control Room to speak to Megatron. They wanted to know what had caused the strange episode the night before.

Starscream asked Skywarp now, “Can you tell me what happened?”
“Last night,” the youngest Seeker began, “I woke up, I thought I heard Darkwing crying in the hallway. So, I got up, and it was super dark, and I was looking around, and, this is really weird, I heard chanting and stuff…and the lights went out, and…I saw this mech…”

Starscream held his brother’s hands as he spoke. Megatron came over and listened as well.

The pregnant flyer had to come clean. He pushed past Starscream and stood, ready to address the group, standing behind a stack of chairs, trying to at least partially hide his swollen frame.

“I-It’s not Mirage,” he stammered at first, “I-It never was Mirage…” He took a deep air intake, trying to gather his strength; his sparkling squirmed a little, knowing he was upset, “Someone who calls himself Gravechaser has been stalking me for months…He was the one in the kitchen. He was the one that attacked me in my quarters. And he’s the one we’ve been hearing walking in the hallway…It’s been ever since I got…” He spilled his secret, “Since I got pregnant.” He saw Onslaught’s optics widen; Blitzwing’s as well; Thrust just seemed angry; Ramjet looked concerned, and Dirge just looked away. “And, last night, I heard who I thought was my nephew Darkwing crying in the hallway…” Starscream picked up his youngest at this mention, “I went out to find him, and my door shut behind me, with the second lock and everything…” Megatron remembered how TC had come running, “The lights were all out, and…I ran into Gravechaser…and…he started…chasing me.” This was hard, “That’s when he scratched me…” He turned enough to show the group his bandaged wings, “I don’t know how, but I think he made all of you sleep late today too. I-I think he can hypnotize us and stuff…Star doesn’t remember talking to me last night.” Before they could tear him apart, he admitted, “Until last night, I thought…Until last night, I thought I was the only one he wanted to hurt. He was only attacking ME. T-That’s why I kept everything to myself…I can’t even tell T-Thundercracker.” He couldn’t bring himself to say Gravechaser was a ghost, or more specifically, the ghost of Thundercracker’s Sire, “B-But now, I don’t know what to think…he could have hurt you guys, and…I’m so sorry for whatever I did to deserve this…” He had coolant tears in his optics now, “I’m sorry…I’m sorry…I’m sorry.”

He fully expected everyone to hate him. But instead, he was met with many sympathetic expressions and some angry FOR him.

“What kinda monster attacks a pregnant Seeker?” Astrotrain barked.

“And Prime claims he’s not his uncle’s nephew,” Bonecrusher grunted as he folded his arms.

Megatron, as unnerved as he was by the attacks, could see this had been terribly stressful on the carrying Seeker, “I wish, you had come to us sooner.”

Starscream wanted to protect his little brother from everyone, not just Gravechaser, but from all of the Cons’ prying optics. He wanted to take him and hold him and protect him from their cruel world, but he knew that, after everything, he knew that Skywarp no longer felt he could talk to him, let alone confide in him.

Soundwave wanted this meeting over with, so he could set about finding this mech.

“Is he a flyer?” Ramjet asked.

“Y-Yes,” Skywarp nodded, “A-And…he has a lotta powers. I-I’ve seen him teleport.”

“What’s he look like?” Spyglass asked.

“Um, b-blue…He’s tall, and he has a beard and stuff…He’s got long, red claws.”

The former Gladiator, meanwhile, bit his lower lip components, trying to picture this new opponent.
It all fit his personal theory, but he would sooner dance on the conference room table in a pink tutu to the tune of a Broadway musical number than vocalize his suspicions to most of his troops. Instead, he may speak alone to the Seekers and Soundwave. But not yet…not without some sort of proof.

“Sounds like a real fashionista,” Dirge shrugged.

“He’s a terrorist,” Megatron blurted out, “And he needs to be stopped.”

Thrust looked at Skywarp dead in the optics, “Is he the Father?”

If Skywarp hadn’t been so dejected and traumatized, he would have made a joke about the ghost being TC’s Father. But no, he understood the question, “N-No, he’s not.”

“That’s right; he’s not.” Soundwave stepped forward and stood with Skywarp; the Tapedeck looked at Thrust as he addressed the group, “We know who the Sire is.” In order to protect his friend’s privacy, he strongly implied that he HIMSELF was the Sire.

“You tell ‘em, Pop!” Rumble cheered.

“Yes,” Megatron agreed, “Everyone, you are to continue your assigned tasks. And come to the Control Room and see me the moment you find any evidence of this…Gravechaser mech!”

With only Skywarp, Starscream, their sparklings, and Soundwave and family present, Megatron could drop the military leader persona and question his young, brother-in-law in a softer tone, “Skywarp, I’m sorry you’ve been going through this. Why didn’t you come to any of us for help?”

“He said not to,” the Seeker’s vocals were barely a whisper now; he was spent, “Even TC doesn’t know…”

Megatron didn’t know what to say. He felt so sorry for the dark Seeker; here he was, a loyal soldier to the Deception Army, fighting for the Cause the former Gladiator had championed, and now, when he was carrying, at a time of extreme sensitivity, someone had come into their Base; their very home, and tormented the flyer, making feel unworthy of their help; their love.

“Don’t listen to this being,” the Tapedeck told him, his twins coming over as well, “you didn’t deserve this.”

The carrying Seeker felt weak, hanging onto Soundwave for dear life. Skywarp thought his Leader hated him now, “Just…You have to trust us, okay? We’re your family, Warp…” he didn’t usually use their sparklinghood nicknames that were usually reserved for their Trine, but he was trying to reach out to him, “I don’t know what this mech is after or where he came from, but we are going to put a stop to him. You’re not alone anymore.”

Starscream too wanted to help. He brushed past the others and hugged his pregnant brother tightly.


Soundwave hugged the Seekers as well, with Megatron finally joining in.

Chapter End Notes

Next up: Thundercracker confronts Mirage!
Apologies, as I have drastically altered the personalities of my co-creator's original characters. However, she has made it clear that she is not interested in continuing to write chapters for Transformers stories, and I want to continue this fanfiction. Also, I could not see Thundercracker NOT visiting the fertility clinic as part of his investigation. Hope everyone will understand.

Chapter 29:

By Transformersnewfan

Thundercracker flew in a rage, impaling clouds at his top speed. He was fuming with the being he believed responsible for stalking his little brother and destroying their lives.

He and Skywarp couldn’t eat; couldn’t sleep at night; every morning was met with some bad disturbance one way or another. And if Mirage was responsible, TC was planning to bash the Autobot’s helm in with his bare hands!

The blue Seeker was going faster and faster, booming through the atmosphere, Pit-bent en route to Laserbeak’s coordinates. Instead of transforming and waiting outside as he normally would, he crashed, nosecone first, straight through the skylight of the auditorium of Public School District 17, transforming into his Robot Mode in mid-fall and landing with an earth-shattering BOOM, which was met with screaming humans, running from the building.

The Autobots—Optimus Prime, Ironhide, Mirage, Bumblebee, and Tracks—had been busy building the sets for the Christmas Pageant. Now they all stared, wondering what could have brought this on.

“Quite the entrance,” Laserbeak thought to himself from the nearby lighting fixture.

When the dust settled, Thundercracker stood and stalked towards the group, “ALRIGHT, YA FILTHY COCKROACH LOVERS! YOU WANNA FIGHT?! I’LL GIVE YOU A FIGHT!”

Optimus Prime stepped forward, “What’s the meaning of this, Thundercracker?”

“I THINK YOU KNOW WHAT THE MEANING IS, METAL-BRAIN!” the blue Seeker was too furious to be scared, “YOU DON’T THINK THE DECEPTICONS KNOW WHAT’S GOING ON?!”

“Whatever Megatron thinks is going on,” the Autobot Leader began sternly, “doesn’t give you the right to barge in here and bully these innocent middle school children.”

“OH, BUT IT’S OKAY TO BULLY A PREGNANT SEEKER, IS IT?!” Thundercracker roared. Prime looked at him, “I assure you, I don’t have the faintest idea of what you’re referring to.” He truly didn’t.
“Starscream’s pregnant again?” Bumblebee asked.

“Guess Megatron can’t keep his hands to myself,” Mirage laughed, bumping shoulders with Tracks.

“YOU SHUT UP!” TC shouted, trying to get past Optimus Prime, “I’VE HAD IT WITH YOUR BREAKING INTO OUR PLACE EVERY DAMN NIGHT!”

“Thundercracker,” Prime stood his ground, “if you would just calm yourself for two minutes, I can assure you, no Autobots have been infiltrating the Decepticon Base.” He turned to his troops, “And if they were, it was NOT with my authorization.”

Thundercracker took a deep air intake and tried to speak calmly, “Prime, Mirage has been breaking into my quarters almost every night, and last night, he scratched Skywarp’s wings!”

“Mirage,” Optimus turned and called, “Can you come over here, please?” He knew his soldier wasn’t guilty; he only wished to acknowledge the Seeker’s concerns.

“Sure,” the Formula-1 Racer stepped off the stage, wearing work gloves and a chipper smile on his faceplates, “How can I help?”

Thundercracker came faceplates to faceplates, blue metal to blue metal, and pointed an accusatory digit, “You stay AWAY from my brother, you got that, creep?!”

“Ooookay,” Mirage looked at Optimus Prime, “I haven’t seen either of them in a while, but, I’d be happy to simply to go on about my life,” he laughed a little, trying to make light, “such as adding fixing that skylight to the to-do list.”

What?

Thundercracker looked Mirage up and down, looking for a lie, and finding none. He had known the Racer for years; blithe and cheery, and clearly wasn’t the maliceful individual that had hurt his baby brother.

TC bit his lower lip component, “Lemme see your hands!”

The Racer shrugged, removing his gloves and holding his hands out, palms up. He did not have claws.

Keeping up his tough act, Thundercracker barked at the group, “If I find out any of you are lying, I swear, I’ll tear all of you a new one!” He ignited his thrusters and left via the hole he had made in the ceiling, leaving the Autobots bewildered.

Laserbeak however, remained, to analyze the subjects.

“Now what, was THAT about?” Mirage asked Prime.

“I have no idea,” the Truck shook his helm, “this must have something to do with that call from Megatron on Thanksgiving.” The duo walked back to the set and joined the others, “It was basically the same thing Thundercracker was saying, something about a spy on their Base.”

“Is Starscream pregnant again?” Bumblebee asked.

“He didn’t say, Bumblebee,” Prime answered, “Although, he said something about Skywarp being attacked.”

“He made it sound like Skywarp is the one that’s pregnant,” Tracks noted, “He mentioned someone
was bullying a pregnant Seeker and that Skywarp was attacked.”

Four of the Bots started snickering and laughing, “Either way,” Prime chucked, “Thundercracker’s one nervous uncle.”

Ironhide looked at his Comrades nervously; not laughing with them and seemed to be turning pale.

“Right Ironhide?” Prime laughed.

“Let’s get back to work, guys,” the red Bot hurriedly picked up a board, “we got even more work now that we gotta fix the ceiling.”


Ironhide’s strange behavior did not go unnoticed by Laserbeak.

Starscream sat on the sofa in the Control Room, watching Skywarp whimpering in a restless recharge. The black and purple Seeker was laying on his back on pillows to support his injured wings; little Darkwing curled up on his canopy glass. Star adjusted the blankets around them, covering one of Skywarp’s shoulders, before stroking his forehelm, “It’s okay, Warp…” he whispered, “I’m here…”

Skywarp just keened in his sleep, turning over on his—right—side, and cuddling his youngest nephew. The pain of the cuts on his sensitive wings made him twist in his sleep, and he was on his bad side accidentally. “Oh, my brother…” Star sighed, adjusting the blankets again and rubbing the other’s swollen stomach to calm him.

Megatron, meanwhile, pondered over the clues, while Soundwave worked with a welding tool on one of the cameras as they sat at the Computer Consul.

“A blue mech with a host of powers,” the former Gladiator thought aloud, “and red claws. It doesn’t ring any bells with anyone I faced in the Arena. Soundwave, do the Autobots have any new recruits?”

“Negative,” the Tapedeck answered, “Laserbeak would have detected such a thing.”

“What about any known Autobots?” Megatron asked, “Any with known powers of hypnosis?”

“Well, Skywarp and I uploaded every file on the current Autobot roster, let me see…” Soundwave typed in the search bar, and came up empty, “Damn.”

Megatron: “How about known enemies of the Decepticons?”

“Nothing…” Soundwave typed again, “But we’ve only uploaded around seven-percent of the online populous of Cybertron. We were focusing on the Autobots.”

“What I can’t figure out is how he keeps getting in!” Megs pounded the Consul in frustration, “In and outta here without our ever finding—” then it hit him, “Soundwave, what if this mech is hiding somewhere in the Base right now?”

They both realized they needed to be quiet in case anyone was listening; Starscream watched them, holding two of his triplets closely.

Soundwave stood, reaching his sensors out around the Control Room. He went out into the hallway
to see if he could get a bead on anything.

The Reflectors were busy changing the fuses in the various brake lights while the Tapedeck walked by slowly.

He walked down to the conference rooms, which were empty at the moment; then to the mass hall, where several Cons were having Energon cubes. He looked around the kitchen; trying to see if he could feel anything out of the ordinary. He went to the basement: Unlike Megatron and Thundercracker, he wasn’t unnerved by the lower level of the Base. He felt nothing unusual down there. It was their file stockroom, and he had been back and forth from there, bringing up the boxes of papers all the time. There was dust everywhere, indicating there had been no recent disturbances. The trap door they had sealed off remained unchanged. He concluded this clearly wasn’t the intruder’s point of entry.

So, Soundwave went back up the stairs. He then walked by each of the quarters’ doors; wondering if any of their soldiers were harboring this strange mech. He went to his own quarters, where Scavenger was repairing his front door and examined it. Strangely, only the Constructicons’ digit marks were present, “He must have used gloves,” the Tapedeck thought to himself. He couldn’t fathom how he and his sons had slept through this episode, especially Ravage, who had impeccable hearing.

Using his spare keys, he entered Megatron and Starscream’s quarters; everything seemed fine. He went to the nursery, making sure it was secure. Going to the large window, he looked out into the blue seas, and—

He thought he saw something out there, right outside the corner of his left optic.

Soundwave turned his helm sharply! But there was nothing there except seaweed and flounder.

He shut the blinds and latched them.

Going back into the hallway, he looked up, wondering about the attic crawlspace. The entrance was a ladder in their utility closet, but many of the quarters contained trap doors that led there, in case of an emergency or invasion, they could be used for an exit.

From the attic, Gravechaser could see the Tapedeck walking towards his direction. He knew that the big mech was going to go into the Seekers’ quarters next. So, the demon decided to not only use Skywarp as a distraction but to torment him in the process.

In Skywarp’s dream:

In Skywarp’s recharge, he had been dreaming of flying. His newling wrapped tightly to his cockpit. The air was crisp and clear. And the triplets were flying—poorly—around him. He was laughing with them when suddenly, the skies turned gray and ominous. A storm was brewing…

Gravechaser’s evil laugh was could be heard in the distance.

Fear seized the young flyer; “G-Guys?” and he saw that the triplets were nowhere in sight.

End of Skywarp’s dream:

“NNAAAHHHHHHNNNNOOOOOO!!!” Skywarp let out a terrified keen; thrashing in his sleep.

Starscream had been sitting next to his sleeping sibling and immediately tried to wake him, “Skywarp, you’re having a nightmare!” he shook his shoulders lightly; little Darkwing was
“NAH!” Skywarp woke up startled, snapping his optical shutters open and jerking around. He had slept in an odd, twisted position because of his wings and belly, and when he jerked suddenly, he was hit with another sharp pain in his right side, “AH OWWW!”

“What is it?! What’s wrong?!” Starscream helped him sit up, checking his wings, “what hurts you?” He saw his brother grip his stomach, realizing it might be the sparkling, “MEGATRON!”

The Decepticon Leader saw the distress, and radioed his 3ic, “Soundwave, come to the Control Room immediately!”

The Tapedeck abandoned his search and came. When he arrived, he scanned the pregnant Jet for any complications, focusing on his gestation chamber, “Everything is fine.”

Coming back to reality, Skywarp saw that his precious sparkling was still safe inside his belly, and his little nephews were all okay; the youngest right next to him.

“D-Darkwing…” the black and purple Seeker sobbed, hugging the toddler tightly.

“Wop?” the little Seekerling didn’t fully understand what was going on with his uncle, but he assumed Skywarp was apologizing or trying to be nice to him, so he cuddled back, “Love Unkle Wop…”

Starscream smiled a bit, amid the tension, “You were worried about him last night…” he put his arms around his brother and youngest, “Don’t worry, you’re both together now…”

With his family okay, Megatron turned to Soundwave now, “You find anything out there?”

“Negative,” the 3ic admitted, “Although, I didn’t go into Skywarp’s room yet.”

The dark Seeker, trying to calm his spark, sobbed, “I-I don’t w-wanna go back there tonight.”

“You and Thundercracker are staying with us tonight,” Megatron nodded, “until we find this… this…perpetrator.”

Skywarp: “W-Where’s TC?” he wondered if his brother was in their quarters, being turned by the ghost.

“He’s currently interrogating suspects,” Megatron answered, “He reported that Mirage and Prime didn’t know anything about this, AUGH,” he was frustrated, opening the French Doors, and looked around, “Is it dark in here? What is going on in this Base!”

The hallway did indeed seem ominous, even in the middle of the day. The Decepticon Leader shivered a bit; thinking again about his theory.

“Skywarp, you said something about hearing chanting?” he asked as he came back inside.

“U-Uh huh,” Warp nodded, “L-Like it was piped into the walls or something.”

“Manipulating the sound system, perhaps.” Soundwave noted darkly, still believing they were dealing with a living mech, “most likely the same way the suspect manipulates the electronics.”

“What sort of chanting?” Megatron tried using his detective skills, “Human music or Cybertronian?”

Skywarp tried to remember now, “Like, really old Cybertronian.”
This made the former Gladiator remember something, “Gregorian chanting was once practiced in the prison systems.”

Soundwave looked at him as he continued, “It was another one of Sentinel Prime’s crazy ideas, he wanted the criminals to form, choir groups of some kind, he was a psychopath. He said publicly it was to reform them. I always believed it drove mechs to insanity.”

“So,” Soundwave wondered aloud, “this is indicative that this individual has been inside the prison system before?”

Megatron: “Possibly.”

Now, the pregnant Seeker hoped against hope that his leaders would solve this, “I-I wanted to catalog the prisoners, Soundwave!” Skywarp piped up, “You said you’ve got files on all of ‘em!”

“We do,” the Tapedeck noted, “but they are all in these boxes. We haven’t sorted them out yet.”

And with this, Megatron had a new lead, “Then let’s get on it!”

Mirage wasn’t the attacker. Thundercracker couldn’t believe this development. He was desperate for answers; he radioed the Decepticon Base and told them he was going to do some further investigating. Rather than return to the Base and another sleepless night, the blue Seeker decided to fly to Vosnia.

Once again transforming into his Robot Mode and landing, he approached the Speedwing Donor Bank, considerably calmer than he had been with the Autobots, only after information this time. He walked into a waiting room full of Seekers, all hoping to become Creators one day.

He first spoke to the femme receptionist, “Hey, listen, um…I know this is gonna sound weird, but…my brother was here six months ago, and…Have you had any problems with your files being hacked.”

“No, can’t say that we have,” the receptionist told him coldly. She hated her job.

“Somebody’s after him,” Thundercracker told her, “I think somebody followed him, possibly from here.”

She was already tired of him, “We have a policy against disclosing anything regarding our patients.”

But TC was smart, “What if I’m his emergency contact? Could you tell me anything then?”

Receptionist: “And how would you KNOW you’re the emergency contact?”

“Could you check?” he was getting a little miffed. He knew that at the time, his little brother wasn’t on speaking terms with Starscream, and since the pregnancy was a secret from everyone else, there was no way he wasn’t the emergency contact.

Receptionist: “What’s his name?”

Thundercracker: “Skywarp. And he was here last June seventieth.” He remembered how his little brother had told him how friendly whoever the receptionist had been was towards him that day, “Um, is the other femme here? Maybe I can ask her something…”

“I’m the only receptionist here,” the femme answered coldly, “have been for the past ten years.”
Oh.

“Oh, so you were here that day?” he was sort of surprised, “Do you remember him? He kinda looks like me, only he’s black and purple, and he’s got purple and white stripes on his wings…”

“No, can’t say that I do,” she raised an optic brow, “But we get a lot of desperate Seekers in here. They all look alike to me after a while.”

TC couldn’t help but think she was a bitch.

“Well, he’s very special to me and our other brother,” he just felt like stating that.

Finally, after a long, awkward silence, she printed out some pages and handed them to TC, “Well, whatta know. Looks like he was here.”

“Um, thanks,” the blue Seeker read the file as fast as he could, looking for anything that could solve this puzzle. The file DID contain their address, so that could explain how whoever this was found out where they lived.

Thundercracker: “Who has access to these records?”

Receptionist: “Only me and the doctor.”

“Has anyone else asked for his file?” the blue Seeker asked, “Or like I said, do you know if you were hacked at all?”

“No, absolutely not,” she barked back, “We have strict confidentiality policies.”

“Okay, okay,” he knew she wasn’t going to be any help, “Lemme talk to the doctor.”

“Fine,” she buzzed him in, “But make it short, we’ve got a lot of patients out here.”

“It’s very strange,” Dr. Candy admitted, shaking her helm, “I don’t remember anything about your brother being here, and yet I signed his forms.”

Thundercracker had an uncomfortable feeling deep in his spark; like Dr. Candy, her receptionist didn’t remember Skywarp. Both reactions were similar to Starscream’s not remembering Skywarp coming to his quarters the previous night. This was now beginning to sound…supernatural.

“Have you ever had anything like this before?” he asked the doctor, “With your other patients, I mean?”

“No, never,” the doctor insisted, “what really makes me nervous is that I performed the procedure on him and have no memory files of it. I hope I was in my right processor that day.”

Thundercracker noted this; he would have to mention this to Skywarp and Soundwave.

“Looks like he chose Joey as his donor,” Dr. Candy looked at the file again, “he’s a pretty popular choice. He has at least five hundred sparklings by now.”

Joey.

Another suspect. Thundercracker had never really dropped his suspicions about the mysterious ‘actor’ ever since the attack with the sonogram tape.
“Thank you for your time, doctor,” he told her as he left quickly.

“The answers are in these files, I know it!” Skywarp tried to be smart for them, “I just know it!”

The group hurriedly began opening boxes; Soundwave’s five sparklings assisting. Megatron tried to help, but his slow reading hampered more than anything else. Starscream tried too, “Which prison are we looking for?”

Skywarp: “I don’t know, how many were there?”

“Four, I think,” Mегs interjected, “There was one that was broken into by vandals recently. Shockwave said they were teenagers or something.” He knew he was rambling, but the whole situation was making him tense, “that was the one in Iacon.”

“Here!” Ravage shouted, “In these boxes.” The Cat had indeed found a huge stash of papers containing the records of a smaller prison in Helix, just outside of Vos.

When Megatron started shuffling through the documents, Soundwave stopped him, “Careful, don’t mismatch those papers. Otherwise, we won’t know what goes with what.”

“Well, I’m the best sorter!” Skywarp smirked, plopping down on the floor by the boxes, “Might as well!” He was calm when he did repetitive actions with the old papers; getting everything in order and putting them in a pile.

Soundwave, in turn, speed spanned the files into the computer system.

“Come on,” Megatron took Rumble and Frenzy, “We’ll get more boxes.” He was okay going into the basement in the daytime, “keep working!”

The group worked for the rest of the day: Reading, sorting, scanning, shredding, etc. The twins crushed the emptied boxes; Megatron had the Combaticons bring up more boxes from the basement. There were boxes stacked everywhere! Stacks even lining the hallway!

Starscream: “What exactly are we looking for?”

Megatron: “Anything about mechs that are blue and have strange powers!”

Gravechaser watched, deciding to once again retreat from the Base, at least until the heat was off. Cybertron was his destination of choice.

What a dump! Thundercracker swore he felt Insecticons all over himself when he entered Joey’s apartment building. He banged on the door, “Open up actor-bot!”

Chandler, Joey’s roommate, opened the door, with TC shooting past him and looking around at the dirty apartment, “WHERE IS HE? WHERE’S JOEY?!”

“He ain’t here, dude,” Chandler told him, “He’s been away on Cybertron for the past three weeks, shooting ‘The Bachelor.’”

TC cringed, a Bachelor with five hundred sparklings. He wondered if the femmes knew. Shaking this thought off, he barked, “Has he been to Earth recently?”
Chandler: “Nah man, I don’t think so.”

Thundercracker bolted, leaving the brown and green Seeker puzzled, “Joey sure gets some weird fans here.”

The blue Seeker used the Space Bridge to Cybertron and Shockwave’s Tower.

“Hey Shockwave,” Thundercracker saluted the Cybertronian President as he came inside and drove for his computer.

“Oh, Thundercracker, lovely to see you,” the polite Cannon-Former stated, “and to what do I owe this visit?”

“Gotta check something,” the blue Seeker was in a hurry, “I'll explain later.” He searched the files on recently issued Visas for any Seekers from Vosnia and quickly found Joey’s name. He pulled up the file, “Damn, damn, damn…”

Shockwave: “Anything wrong?”

“No record of any Space Bridge travels to Earth.” Thundercracker felt dejected; this was his last hope of finding a suspect.

“That’s correct,” Shockwave told him proudly, “No one gets in or out of Cybertron without my authorizations.”

This answered TC’s next question, “Then I take it, no blue mechs with red claws?”

“No, I think I would have remembered that,” the President noted in all seriousness.

“Sorry I bothered you…” the blue Seeker got up and left.

He went outside; it was daylight on Cybertron, which meant it was already nightfall back on Earth. He hurried now; he had to get home to Skywarp before anything else happened to him.

He stepped off the President’s Tower, about to transform into his Jet Mode when—

“Stay out of this, Thundercracker.”

He turned around quickly…and there was no one there.

“H-Hello?” he called out. A random Vehicon, too far off south to have spoken to him, looked up but was nowhere near close enough to have spoken to the Seeker.

Who…What had he heard?

TC shivered now; he quickly transformed and flew back to the Space Bridge.
Chapter 30: By Transformersnewfan

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By six in the evening, and with only forty-some minutes of sleep in the last eighteen hours, pregnant Skywarp was exhausted; but he continued to go through the old, dusty documents, trying to find some clues to how to defeat his attacker.

“Warp, this isn’t good for you,” Starscream insisted, “come on, you need to lay down.”

“Just, a little longer, Star?” he begged; his optics were shrieked and dim, “I-I know we’re close.”

The triplets, along with Ratbat, were asleep on the sofa now. And Soundwave was wondering when to suspend the search for the evening and begin security procedures. The rest of Soundwave’s brood was off getting more boxes.

They had completed the files of the Helix prison, as well as the holding center on the outskirts of Polyhex, and were now working on the files on the Department of Detention of Suspected Criminals in Iacon. The one that Starscream had once been held at after the disappearance of his then-new-ex-Bondmate, Skyfire.

Starscream skipped through the files to find his own record, “Mmm, my file,” he noted, forgetting about the search purpose to relive one of the darkest times in his life.

Megatron saw this and came over to sit by his mate, “Hey…”

“I wonder sometimes,” the red and white Seeker sighed, “how to tell our sons that I was once accused of murder.”

“They’re far too young to understand,” the former Gladiator told him, “wait until they’re old enough.”

“I know, I just…” Star stared at the image of his mug shot, “I just wonder what they’ll think of me. Would they think I was a killer?”

“TC’s father was a killer,” Skywarp thought now, “maybe we can ask TC about it and lead us to this ghost’s real name.” he was determined more than ever to end the haunting, “Hey Star, why don’t you ask Thundercracker. His Father killed two policemchs.” It was the best time to broach the subject, “H-Hey, he was blue. Maybe that’s the guy!”

Unfortunately, his statement was met with no reaction. Everyone was too tired and exasperated to think straight. Those tired thoughts were cut off by the Tower buzz.

Thrust was heard telling Dirge, “If I see this guy, I’m turning Skywarp over to ‘em.”

“Megs needs to take him out,” the blue Conehead agreed, “he just won’t because of Screamer.”

Normally, Thundercracker would have confronted his fellow flyers for comments like that, but now,
he was far too unnerved by the day’s events. He raced down the hallway, calling on his Comm.-
Link, “Where’s my brother?”

“With us in the Control Room,” Soundwave answered.

The blue Seeker stumbled in tiredly, looking at all the boxes, “W-What?” Relief hitting him as he
saw the pregnant flyer was indeed safe.

“We’re looking for the suspect,” the Tapedeck explained, “hang on, let me fill you in.”

Skywarp watched his beloved brother now as they spoke. He could finally relax now that TC came
home safely. He knew though that they still had no clues.

“We’ve got a lead: The suspect has shown to have knowledge of hypnosis, as well as manipulating
sounds and electronic devices. Also, there is evidence he was once incarcerated at the time of
Sentinel Prime’s reign.”

“R-Really?” TC was surprised, “That’s a long time ago. Can he be that old?” he realized this mech
was old enough to have been his Sire.

“Apparently,” the Tapedeck folded his arms in frustration, “But so far, none of our files have led to
any tangible leads. What about you?”

The blue Seeker went over his day as he plopped into a chair by the Computer Consul, “It was
awful. Mirage was working at Sam’s school; he didn’t know slag about this. I was SO SURE it was
him, Soundwave!”

“Soundwave, has Laserbeak check in lately?” Megatron asked.

The Tapedeck called his second eldest, asking for a report.

“The Autobots are currently ingesting their evening Energon, Father,” the Bird reported, “Mirage
was not out of my view all day.”

It didn’t surprise TC or Soundwave, but both looked at each other as Laserbeak continued,
“However, it is worth noting that Ironhide has been acting strangely ever since Thundercracker’s
confrontation.”

Soundwave asked his son, “Elaborate.”

Laserbeak: “Sweaty palms, nervous laughter, and three cubes of Energon-Decaf.”

Megatron stood now, “Pull up Ironhide’s file!”

“I’ll call you back,” Soundwave closed the connection abruptly and went to his computer. The
Decepticon Leader came over and began reading over his 3ic’s shoulder.

Ironhide’s file, having been digitalized weeks earlier, contained his current standing with the
Autobots, as well as previous employment stints, including his time with the Elite Guard.

Megatron saw the paragraph first, “He was once assigned as a prison guard!”

Skywarp’s optics widened; he had read that file but had not connected the dots, making him feel
stupid again.

“Find the files of Iacon Correctional Center,” Soundwave barked as he got up and went to the boxes.
As they searched on, Thundercracker continued about his day, “So after that, I went to the sperm bank, but they were no help.”

Skywarp was modified by this, “W-Why?”

“What do you mean WHY?!” TC barked back, “I’m trying to figure out who’s stalking you!”

“He told us now,” Soundwave piped up, “A mech called Gravechaser.”

The blue Seeker was stunned and hurt at the same time, “Warp, you mean you knew who it was this whole time?!”

The pregnant flyer looked away, “Uh huh…”

His older brother was furious, “YOU LET ME GO TO THE AUTOBOTS AND FLY AROUND THIS GALAXY ON A WILD HOG CHASE FOR NOTHING?!”

Skywarp shot back, “I DIDN’T TELL YOU TO GO AND BULLY A BUNCH OF FEMMES AT THE FERTILITY CLINIC!”

“Stop fighting,” Megatron, holding on to his theory, ordered his soldiers, “we don’t want any negative energy.” He didn’t say more.

TC bit his lip component, refusing to look at his sibling. He stalked out angrily, slamming the French Doors.

The pregnant flyer was crushed; his brother hated him now for sure.

“Let’s keep looking,” the Decepticon Leader mumbled, pick up one of the boxes.

They all searched for another forty minutes. By now, it was growing dark; and they had to hurry.

Finally, Skywarp found some papers listing statistics of various mechs, such as names, dates of incarceration, and dates of either their release or deactivation.

“Um, is this the files?” he asked.

Soundwave came over and looked at them; it was indeed the files from the Correctional Center, “Yes, but unfortunately, these were all that was recovered from their offices.”

The black and purple Seeker started shaking as the Tapedeck told the group, “Iacon was once a very secretive society. They wanted to obscure which prisoners were Seekers and which were of Grounder Alt-Modes.”

“S-So, no pictures, or…” Skywarp had coolant tears in his optics, “Tech specs…this is all they…all w-we’ve got?”

“I’m sorry,” his friend told him, hands going to the young flyer’s shoulders.

Soundwave could see this search was getting them nowhere and the young Seeker was growing fatigued, “Megatron, we need to suspend the search in order to secure the Base for the evening.”

“Alright,” the former Gladiator agreed reluctantly; it was nearly eight in the evening.
Megatron and Soundwave went about checking every exit; the Tapedeck and the Reflectors had gotten the cameras and brake lights working again; the Tower was secured, and every mech and femme was accounted for.

The two Leaders agreed to recharge in shifts in order to protect their families and soldiers. Soundwave took the first shift, watching the monitors in the Control Room. Despite the fact that their front door had been fully repaired by the Constructicons, he chose to keep Rumble, Frenzy, Buzzsaw, and Ratbat close to him, on the sofa and in blankets on the floor. He wanted to keep his youngest sparklings safe, especially with his two eldest on assignments. Laserbeak was still at the Autobot Base, and Ravage was to guard the Triplets with his life. His trusted minions, the Reflectors, were assigned to guard the hallways, assisted by Onslaught. The Coneheaded Seekers, unnerved by the situation, slept in the Rec. Room.

Megatron wanted TC and Warp to stay with himself and Starscream, despite the fact that the blue Seeker was upset about being kept in the dark. The Bondmates moved their sons’ crib into their master berthroom, with the Cat underneath, ready for anything. The red and white Seeker opted to sleep with Skywarp on the sofa bed, bundled up in blankets, while Thundercracker curled up, looking sullen, in Megatron’s recliner. The Decepticon Leader hated the idea of recharging tonight, but he knew he had to be ready for guard duty. He kept his berthroom door open so that Starscream could see their babies. For their part, Dawning, Darkwing, and Darkmount were terrified but took a small comfort in having their Creators and uncles nearby.

Meanwhile, Gravechaser decided against further hauntings for now. They were all far too ready. Instead, he watched Skywarp from the attic; feeding off his fears.

“I don’t wanna sleep,” the carrying Jet moaned, “my wings hurt.” The bandaged scratches meant he couldn’t lay on his back, taking away his already limited sleeping positions.

“Hmmm, pillows,” Starscream told himself, propping Skywarp on his left side with pillows against his back and tummy, “this should make you more comfortable.” He laid down opposite his little brother, facing his triplets’ crib so that he could watch everybody. He rubbed Skywarp’s forehelm, trying to lull him into an easier recharge; the previous tension between them beginning to melt away.

The night went on, and everyone was in recharge, but Skywarp couldn’t relax. He slept off and on, but nothing like the deep, restful recharge his chassis craved.

Around two in the morning, Megatron got up to relieve Soundwave. He looked over his sparklings and his sleeping Seeker Trine, taking a moment to cover Skywarp’s pedes with the blanket, before exiting.

Starscream was at least sleeping.

Thundercracker shifted uncomfortably on the recliner; his legs stiff from being curled up all night. The pain refused to let up; he knew he should go lay down on the sofa bed to stretch out, but he was so angry with his carrying sibling, he refused.

“Teecee?” Skywarp’s vocals were a whine, “I’m cold. Come lay down with me.”

Normally he would have, but he was mad, “Why should I?”

Skywarp: “Cause you love me?”

TC: “Yeah, well you don’t love anybody, it seems,” he shifted again, “lying to me…”

“Huh?” the black and purple Seeker was half-asleep, “I didn’t lie to—”
Thundercracker’s vocals were both hushed and harsh, “You KNEW this entire time who this guy is, and you acted like it was Mirage!”

“I said I saw blue,” Skywarp lied again, “if I tell you everything in the morning, will you lay down with me now?”

TC was unconvinced, “Why do I haveta wait until morning for you to tell me?”

“Cause I wanna go back to sleep,” the pregnant Seeker whined again. This time, Starscream stirred, and both brothers stopped so they didn’t wake him. Skywarp waited for his oldest brother to come over, but Thundercracker refused to budge.

But…Skywarp wondered, how could he just blurt everything out? This was going to be a huge shock. He played out scenarios in his processor: If he didn’t tell him anything, Thundercracker would continue to ignore him; eventually, stop speaking to him altogether. He would probably move out of their quarters, leaving his little brother and unborn niece at the ghost’s mercy. Or worse, TC could kick him out, and he’d be homeless with a newling on the way. The longer he waited, the worst it was going to get. But…would his brother believe such an insane story? That the attacker was the ghost of his Sire? Maybe if he eased into telling him; first tell him about the haunting, and not act like he truly knew who was behind it…

Gravechaser, meanwhile, watched his prey and, like Skywarp, played out possible outcomes, coming to conclusions on how to proceed. He thought up paths based on which way his own son would react.

“T-Thundercracker?” the dark flyer sat up, wincing as his backstructure tightened; his belly resting in his lap, “R-Remember when this all started in the kitchen?”

TC kept his optics shuttered, pretending to ignore the other. Starscream snored again, still asleep.

“T-That’s when I first saw him,” it was hard to get this out, “He…said a lotta stuff, and…he just, vanished, y-y’know?” he didn’t know if TC was listening or not, “And…Soundwave…nobody ever sees him, but me…I-I woulda thought I was imagining stuff if I wasn’t getting hurt all the time.”

The blue Seeker turned and looked at him now, listening.

“I-I didn’t see him that day in our room,” Skywarp was referring to the attack with the sonogram tape, and he knew TC knew that; he didn’t have to remind him, “but I heard him, taunting me and… that’s all I remember.” He looked up at his brother, “H-He always disappears like, like…like he’s smoke. And Megatron, he looked everywhere…” A memory bobbed to the surface, “He strangled me on Thanksgiving. That’s why I was wearing a scarf.”

Sympathy for his little brother and fury at this attacker ripped through Thundercracker’s spark now; he sat up straight.

“A-And…the way he gets in and out all the time, TC…” he knew he had to tell him now, “I-I don’t know how Mirage or anybody else could…” he looked up, “I-I think he’s a ghost. I think I’m being haunted.”

It all made sense now. All the incidents; all the strange things happening; the cold chill in their berthroom; the music, and the oversleeping the previous night, the scratches…

“H-He once…He was in our room,” Skywarp went on, “I thought it was you…”

Thundercracker got up and sat on the sofa bed, putting his hands on his brother’s shoulders, “I didn’t
know…I-I’m,” he didn’t know what to say, “I’m so sorry…”

“I-It’s usually at night, or…” coolant tears streamed down the darker flyer’s faceplates, “when you’re not here. T-That’s why I’m scared all the time.”

TC pulled him into a tight hug now, “I’m so sorry…” he was ready to cry now too; his brother, his little brother that he always protected, defended, and now, he was being attacked by an unseen force, and too fearful to come to him…“I get it now,” the blue Seeker told him.

Skywarp buried his faceplates into TC’s shoulder, crying, whimpering; now he knew…now he knew. They held each other for a while; in the dark, crying. Neither wanted to wake up Starscream in the middle of the night and frighten him. Thundercracker looked around the living room, not seeing anything out of the ordinary.

:Warp, is the ghost here now?; he asked through their Trine Bond.

:I don’t think so,: the pregnant Jet answered, still shaking, :H-He probably knows everybody’s waiting for him…:

“Let’s get some sleep,” the blue Seeker knew the other was exhausted; he got him to lay down next to Starscream and held him tightly. Skywarp is so quiet and sad; depression was setting in, despite now having his best ally by his side.

“Do NOT,” Thundercracker sighed as he ordered, “go anywhere without me. Don’t go in the hallway without me. Got that?”

Skywarp nodded, curling next to the other as best his frame would allow, still crying.

Thundercracker wanted to know how all this got started, but decided against asking too many questions right now; he just wanted to hold his little sibling and niece-to-be and protect them…

Neither got much sleep that night.
Chapter 31: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 31:

By Transformersnewfan

The next morning came without incident. Neither Megatron or Soundwave detected anything out of the ordinary during the night; nor did the security cameras. The Tapedeck made a thorough search of the Seekers’ quarters and didn’t see or feel anything amiss. The two brothers returned to their home, with Thundercracker wrapping his arms around the other protectively.

The blue Seeker locked and barricaded their front door again; even though this would not keep out a ghost, but it made him feel safer.

“Don’t worry, TC,” Skywarp admitted shakily, “he’s never around when you’re here.”

Thundercracker looked around nervously; their quarters seemed ominous, even with daylight coming through. Being the eldest, he was always level-helmed, and balanced, but he couldn’t deny the attacks on Skywarp that he couldn’t otherwise explain. And he himself had seen—and heard—things on Cybertron.

“When I was investigating yesterday,” TC began, “I heard somebody tell me to stay outta this. But…” he shook his helm, “there wasn’t anyone there.”

The younger Jet nodded, “That was him,” he looked around as well, “he’s always bullying, and threatening…” now there were once again coolant tears in his optics, “it’s really hard, trying to f-fight somebody you c-can’t see…”

Thundercracker came over and held him, scared as well, “We have to tell the others, this thing could really hurt somebody…”

But Skywarp shook his helm, “Megatron won’t believe us. H-He’ll think I’m crazy…Starscream won’t…” his sobs cut him off.

The blue flyer knew too that their science-minded Trine Leader would only shriek and scream his disbelieving logical findings, “Well, let’s just keep our optics open…and, if we can point to something we can PROVE to them, they have to believe us.” He sighed, “Until then, I’m not leaving you alone with anybody but Soundwave…”

A full week went by with no paranormal activity.

The Constructicons could not determine the reason for the Decepticons’ bizarre sleeping incident. Nor did anything ever show up on their nearly repaired surveillance equipment.

Laserbeak was still guarding the Autobots, and Ravage was guarding the triplets, but both assignments were given a lighter intensity in status, with each of the brothers given days off here and there.

Skywarp would be with his older brother every moment that he wasn’t at work in the Control Room
with Soundwave. And things began to calm down.

As for the Leaders, Megatron kept at alert at all times, albeit resuming scheduled Energon raids, and Soundwave tried to focus on his work on the paperless-society project. Starscream, of course, focused on his sparklings.

The pregnant Jet tried to relax, hoping against hope that the ghost had moved on, he still insisted on going through all the files on the prisoners of the Iacon Correctional Center, even though the names and what little stats that were recorded were meaningless to their search. He became depressed again, despite being under constant protection. It didn’t help that Christmas was coming and being pregnant made him want more than anything to see his Creators.

One evening, working late and waiting for Thundercracker to finish his evening shift, Skywarp and Soundwave were in the Control Room with their paperless-society project again.

Soundwave could see his friend retreating into himself, “Is there anything you want to talk about?” the Tapedeck asked gently, “You sparkling, maybe?”

The black and purple Seeker wasn’t much for conversation these days; he had so much on his processor, and yet, this was probably the best mech to talk to about his worries, “What’s the Decepticons’ policy for custody arrangements for insane Seekers?”

“Come on, you’re not insane,” Soundwave told him as he continued typing up the files, “you are experiencing a lot of different emotions due to your pregnancy, and the current situation with this perpetrator has only served to exacerbate those feelings.”

Skywarp didn’t know what to think anymore, and those pains were getting more frequent.

Soundwave: “By the way, have you noticed anything recently?”

“Huh?” the dark Jet was confused, “with my baby or the guy attacking me?”

Soundwave: “Either.”

“No…” Skywarp didn’t want to risk talking about the sharp sensations yet, even though he hadn’t seen Gravechaser for a week, he was still terrified of him, “…just, thinking is all.”

“Have your scratches healed properly?” the blue mech asked.

The Seeker just shrugged and nodded.

“Well,” the Tapedeck tried to cheer him up, “my sons are wondering what to get you for Christmas.” His visor met round optics, “They’ve come to think of you and your sparkling as members of our family.”

“Um, I don’t know,” the young Seeker admitted, “haven’t really thought about Christmas much.”

Soundwave: “The date is only two weeks away.”

“Guess I’m thinking about March,” the flyer blushed a little, referring to his baby’s due date, “Can’t wait to hold her…”

“I remember when Celene was carrying,” Soundwave began, “we never had a lot of currency, so she used to try to make blankets and clothes for our kids.” He stopped working, deciding he would rather chat with his friend, “She made this little outfit, with slits on the back for the wings. It was pink and
white, and really frilly with the laces. Celene intended it for when they were discharged from the hospital.” He chuckled underneath his facemask, “Well, we had all mechlings.”

Talking about sparklings made Skywarp more at ease, “Did Celene want a little femme?”

“I believe so,” Soundwave admitted, “we had not completed our family when she died.”

The black and purple Seeker listened intently as the Tapedeck continued, “I know that…When I adopted Buzzsaw and then Ratbat, I felt that it was something she would have definitely agreed with.”

“So how come you didn’t remarry?” Skywarp asked.

“Never thought about it,” Soundwave shrugged, “I joined with Megatron shortly after Celene’s death to get revenge on Sentinel…Been here ever since,” he gestured at the computers, “I doubt I even spend enough time with my sons.”

“My mother remarried,” the Seeker knew his friend knew his origins, but didn’t care to go into much detail and possibly provoke the ghost, “my Creators are always happy together.”

“I know,” Soundwave acknowledged.

Skywarp studied him now, trying to picture what he looked like under the visor and facemask, “Why do you always wear a mask?”

“Hmm?” Soundwave pretended he didn’t hear him.

“No…nothing like that,” the Tapedeck leaned back against his swivel chair, “I’ve always had these powers…always hearing chatter; seeing thoughts of things I would rather not. Sometimes, Transformers reacted badly…when they figured it out.” He had never told anyone else, except his Bondmate and sons, “So, when I was very young, I started to hide my faceplates whenever I was around anyone else.”

Skywarp: “Even Celene?”

Soundwave nodded, “She would say, ‘It is such a pity you hide those handsome features behind a mask and visor.’”

“Why’d you hide from her though?” the flyer kept asking.

“I was so used to it by the time we met,” the blue mech explained, “but, on occasion, I would take them off…and let her in.”

Hormones surging, making his chasses heat up, as well as emboldening him, Skywarp challenged Soundwave now, “Can I come in?”

Soundwave never flinched; instead, he only turned around to make sure the French Doors were closed, then turned back towards his friend, and removed his visor and mask. He had triangular, yellow optics.

“Ravage has your optics,” the Jet whispered; he studied the elegant, smooth features on the faceplates before him; the older mech looked far younger than his actual age; Skywarp theorized that wearing the protective gear helped protect Soundwave’s looks from the elements of weather and
war, lacking the wear and tear of an everyday Decepticon existence.

“I know he does,” the blue mech nodded, “so does Laserbeak. It’s a giveaway, you could say.” He realized that he was exposing his true faceplates to Skywarp because, for the first time since his wife’s passing, he was in a serious relationship, “so, what do you think?”

Skywarp grinned in his own mischievous way, “I think if the femmes knew what you really looked like, you’d have to fend them off with Megatron’s Fusion Cannon.” He giggled to himself at the last part, “you’re very good-looking.” His sparkling was calm whenever the larger mech’s vocals could be heard, occasionally stretching out her little thrusters playfully. The Seeker starred into those triangular optics now, feeling the heat rising in his systems…

Then Soundwave turned suddenly, looking towards the French Doors, miffed at the interruption, “The boys.” He quickly reattached his mask and visor and jumped to the entrance.

Skywarp’s thoughts immediately froze, thinking that Gravechaser was back. But when the Tapedeck flung the doors open, it was only Rumble and Frenzy standing there.

“Hey Pop,” Rumble fanned innocence, “we were just horsing around.”

“And invading my privacy,” Soundwave mumbled dryly as he turned away, “you know better than that.”

“Sorry,” Frenzy shrugged, not sorry.

But Skywarp was relieved to see the twins there, “Hey guys…”

Soundwave: “What do you want?”

“Vortex made Energon-chicken quesadillas for dinner,” Rumble told them, “we wanna invite Skywarp!”

“Fine,” Soundwave would let this intrusion go THIS time, figuring the pregnant flyer had to eat, “Skywarp may take a dinner break. I’ll join you after the evening security check.”

“Cool!” the pregnant Jet jumped up with the thoughts of delicious dishes, following the sparklings out of the Control Room, but not before giving Soundwave a loving smile.

The Tapedeck, for his part, allowed Skywarp out of his sight as long as his sons accompanied him, “Make sure he’s safe.”

Going back to his computers, Soundwave couldn’t shake the thought that the intruder would return at some point; simply laying low at the moment. He began flipping through the security cameras, looking for anything out of the ordinary. The repetitive action allowed his hands to work on their own.

But even as he tried to put on a hardened facade, he couldn’t continue to deny his growing feelings for the young, pregnant Seeker. He began to wonder how serious he was willing to let things go with Skywarp; if he himself was even READY to have another relationship. He didn’t want to fool the younger mech, after all.

Soundwave’s thoughts then went to his late Bondmate Celene and their relationship. He wanted to believe that she would have wanted him to be happy, and for their sons to have a Mommy again… He thought about the little femme the flyer was carrying, and how he wanted to protect them both from this still-unidentified attacker. The Tapedeck sighed, trying to determine what was his
protective instinct for Skywarp, and what was love…

Now sitting in the mass hall, Skywarp started wolfing down his Energon-chicken quesadillas with gusto. The gooey, fattening delight was so delicious to the carrying Jet; he began to again forget his anxieties. His thoughts instead focused on his little femme and his replying the image of Soundwave’s handsome faceplates in his processor.

The black and purple Seeker was finding his processor scattered more and more these days: One minute, he was focused on the little movements of his soon-to-be sparkling on his gestation chamber, “These are good, aren’t they, Crystal?”; the next, he was thinking about Soundwave, and wondering when the Tapedeck would be joining them for dinner, partially because he now loved spending every waking moment with the big, blue, chivalrous, older Decepticon; and finally, he was trying to forget about his past fears over Gravechaser, fearing if he thought too much about the evil being, he might accidentally conjure him…

The mass hall was decorated for Christmas, with green fir garlands and red bows donning the ceilings.

The twins, largely kept in the dark about the mysterious incidents, didn’t watch Skywarp as closely as they probably should have. Instead, they began horsing around with their siblings, Buzzsaw, and Ratbat, and swiping food from the chafing dishes to the annoyance of their fellow Decepticons.

Said members of the faction watched as Skywarp feasted on his Energon-quesadillas. Astrotrain wondered exactly how much weight the flyer would end up packing on by the time he was ready to have his newling. Skywarp felt their stares and covered his swollen tummy with the tablecloth.

At this point, Starscream arrived with his triplets, with Ravage acting as security. The red and white Seeker spotted his younger brother sitting alone and came over to him, “Hey there…”

But the darker Jet still didn’t know what to make of his Trine Leader’s always-changing personalities; these days, he never knew if Screamer was going to laugh with him or strike him. He merely waved hi between mouthfuls.

“TC’s on the third shift tonight,” Starscream remarked as he sat his little ones down, “surprised you’re not with Soundwave.” Darkwing, meanwhile, looked at his uncle worriedly, while his brothers babbled to each other as if they could understand their babblings.

“I’ve got his kids,” Skywarp told him curtly.

“Well, I know you like sparkling-sitting,” Star remarked off-handedly, “Megatron and I have one last meeting with Shockwave in Iacon before the Christmas break.” He scooted Dawning back over from where he was crawling to, “He needs us to tour the new sewer systems the Vehicons finished constructing before it can be opened for transit use.”

“Whatever…” the younger Jet had a lot on his CPU.

“What’s the matter, Warp?” Starscream sighed, “You used to be able to confide in me about what’s bothering you. When you were younger, you ALWAYS came to me…”

“I-I just…” Skywarp tried, “You’re always yelling at me and—”

Skywarp saw a dark blue figure whip around a corner. Gravechaser was in the mass hall.
“AUGH!” he jumped up, almost knocking the table over with his belly, only to see nothing there, and no other Cons seemed to notice.

“Careful,” Starscream said, pulling him down, “don’t hurt yourself.” He remembered what it was like to not be used to it being there.

Skywarp: “I-I saw somebody standing there!”

Star looked, “Where?”

“T-THERE!” Warp pointed a shaky digit at the corner where he had seen Gravechaser’s shadow seconds earlier. Only now, there was nothing there. In fact, Brawl was now tossing his fellow Combaticons’ dirty dishes on the counter right near there and didn’t seem to notice anything.

“It’s just us, Warp…” Starscream dismissed his little brother’s fears, “Listen, watch the kids while I get dinner,” he stood and headed for the chafing dishes.

Skywarp didn’t know now what to do; he knew Thundercracker believed him, but he felt that Starscream would just think he was insane, especially since the ghost knew how to hide from others. Being haunted made the carrying flyer feel like it was all his fault, and he wanted to cry again. He picked up Darkwing and Dawning to protect them, while Darkmount sat closely.

“You want your baby?” Frenzy asked.

“HUH?” Skywarp jumped and then sighed when he saw the red and black Cassette.

“You’re holding the babies,” Frenzy pointed out, smiling, “does that mean you wanna hold your own baby now?”

“Oh-huh,” the Seeker nodded a bit, “I wanna have her…” wanting safety in numbers, he patted the seat next to himself.

So Frenzy sat down, “Listen, Rumble and I were talking and,” he brought a few more Energon-quesadillas, these being the cheese-filled ones, “we want you and the baby to spent the Christmas vacation with us, since, y’know, you can’t go to Cybertron and stuff.”

The gesture touched Skywarp deeply; Starscream was planning to travel with Megatron and the triplets to Esmeralda’s in Tarn, and normally, he and Thundercracker would spend that time back home in Vos with their Creators, but he was forbidden from Space Bridge travel for the duration of his pregnancy. TC and their parents had been campaigning to let the couple visit them here on Earth, but Skywarp had fought this. There was no way he was going to expose his beloved Mother to the ghost of her former Bondmate.

“I-I’d like that…” the pregnant flyer smiled; his emotions were up and down more often than a roller coaster, and Soundwave and his family was proving to be a most stabilizing presence. Calming now, he grabbed one of the Energon-cheese quesadillas and started eating it, then another one; by the time Starscream returned, he had wolfed down three of them.

“Bah, I keep telling Megatron we need to change the menu around here,” the red and white Seeker grumbled, “something more high class.” He sat down next to his brother and started feeding his sparklings. After a few minutes, he couldn’t help noticing how Skywarp continued to inhale the Energon-quesadillas.

Starscream: “Easy, will you.”
Skywarp: “Huh?”

“You’re going to make yourself sick with all those,” the red and white glanced at the other’s tummy before petting it.

“Don’t pick on me!” the younger flyer snapped back.

“I’m not PICKING on you,” Starscream rolled his optics, “I just don’t want you to get too fat in case you have to have a cesarean.”

Skywarp didn’t answer him; he honestly wondered if he would even get that far.

Starscream: “Anything wrong?”

Warp didn’t want to answer.

“This is exactly what I’m talking about!” Star snapped now, “You used to talk to me about anything and everything! And now, you’re sullen, and you never say what’s wrong—”

Skywarp cut him off, “And why do you THINK that is, HUH, STAR?! Because you’re always picking on me and yelling at me! It’s ever since you got with Megatron!”

“WHAT THE SLAG IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?!” Starscream shrieked back, “Are you slagging jealous or something?! Is that why you’re doing this?!”

“I’m having a sparkling because I want my OWN sparkling!” Skywarp hollered back, “One that you can’t pull away from me every time you change with your stupid moods!” He got up now, storming out of the mass hall. The triplets were used to this kind of talk, although Darkwing seemed a bit sad about it. Frenzy, on the other hand, jumped off the chair and went to get Rumble, knowing their Sire didn’t want them to leave Skywarp alone.

Soundwave was still watching the monitors, staring at them as if waiting…something inside of him felt he had to keep looking at them as if he knew there was something about to happen.

Skywarp had run into the hallways without thinking; he was so upset with Starscream that he had momentarily forgotten how risky it was to be alone. He blocked the Trine Bond between himself and his Trine Leader. He didn’t even know where he was heading; back to the Control Room, he guessed, and back to work—and Soundwave. He held his lower belly with his arm, trying to walk. It was getting harder to walk these days, especially after a big meal and not really giving it any time to settle.

The thing was, Starscream hadn’t really done anything that bad this time; it was just his usual self-importance. No, Skywarp was upset because of all the fights that happened over the past two years; his Trine Leader had changed…Starscream said it himself, that the younger flyer no longer came to him for anything; that they no longer talked as brothers. Skywarp let a sob escape his vocalizer now; why did he have to wait another five hours for Thundercracker to come home?!

As Skywarp passed the bend in the walkway, a black cloud of smoke emerged from the wall, forming into Gravechaser…

The black and purple Seeker was lost in his thoughts when he heard someone walking behind him. He moved to the right, thinking it was another Decepticon hurrying by, but…the pede steps seemed to fade away. Uh oh…
Skywarp’s mouth opened, it was only around six-thirty now; would the ghost stalk him this EARLY? And with all these Decepticons fully online?! He suddenly remembered what he had seen in the kitchen...He took a few more steps now, trying to hear carefully. The pede steps began again, sounding like a huge mech wearing heavy combat boots.

“S-Soundwave...” he called on his wrist Comm.-Link, “Where are you?”

“Control Room,” the larger mech answered, “what’s the problem?” he could tell by the pregnant mech’s vocals that he was scared.

“C-Come get me,” was all Skywarp had to say.

Gravechaser quickly retreated to the attic before Soundwave stepped into the hallway and met Skywarp at the halfway point. As much as it was in the ghost’s nature to repetitively torment his prey in the same ways every time—much like he had made the same mistakes over and over again in life—he decided to change his game plan. Now, he opted to collect information.

“What’s wrong?” Soundwave asked.

“Just...I thought somebody was following me,” Skywarp was trembling now, folding his arms over his stomach and looking around.

Soundwave moved past him and scanned the area, finding nothing, “I’m not picking up any heat signals,” still, he felt to get the pregnant Seeker to safety, “you think he’s back?”

Skywarp: “M-Maybe?”

The Tapedeck got on his Comm.-Link to his sons, “Return to the Control Room.” He put a protective arm around Skywarp and pulled him along, “Let’s look at the cameras.”

Once there, the larger mech rewound the tapes; he saw the part where Skywarp stopped and reacted to something, but something was still amiss, “There’s no displaced air,” he said to himself,” before hearing his four youngest Cassettes enter through the French Doors.

Rumble and Frenzy knew they had screwed up; they weren’t supposed to let anything happened to Skywarp, and now it seemed that someone was again stalking him.

“Lock the doors,” Soundwave ordered. The older twin was obliging.

The carrying Jet, meanwhile, just wanted to calm down. He sat on the sofa and pulled a blanket over his belly and curled his legs up. He mentally calculated that Thundercracker still had four hours and fifty-eight minutes left in his shift. Ratbat flew over and snuggled close.

“I told you to keep him safe,” Soundwave scolded lowly, “the perpetrator has yet to be positively identified.”

“Oh, sorry about that, Pop,” Rumble admitted, “we was distracted.”

“We were getting more Energon-quesadillas,” Frenzy piped up, “enough for everybody before they ran out.”

Soundwave: “One for your Sire?”

Frenzy winced, “I forgot.”

“Fine,” the blue mech grumbled, “I’ll grab a cube later.” He tried to remain calm for his family,
going back to the computers, switching from camera to camera at a fast clip, and coming up with nothing…

“Laserbeak:” Soundwave radioed his second son, “Where is Mirage?”

“At the shopping establishment on the corners of Harlem Avenue and Irving Park Road,” the Bird sighed in disgust, “searching for Christmas presents with the Witwicky and Spencer youths.” This was so beneath his skill set as an espionage specialist.

Switching channels, the Tapedeck contacting his eldest Creation, “Ravage: Guard the triplets.”

Time passed, and when no further incidents occurred, everyone began to relax again. Skywarp rested enough that he returned to working on the files, sitting on the floor amongst all the boxes, with the brittle papers spread out; their corners cracking off due to ages. He also gobbled down the last six Energon-quesadillas. He tried not to think too much about Gravechaser, knowing that Soundwave could detach his presence if he were to enter the Control Room. It was the nights that were scary. That was when most of the haunting had occurred, usually when Thundercracker was in a deep recharge, snoring loudly. Although, since telling his older brother that the stalker was supernatural, the blue Seeker had been on high alert and much more attentive to the dangers, which, possibly was why Warp hadn’t seen Gravechaser since TC knew about it. And yet, tonight, with TC away, those two incidents—one in the mass hall and the other in the hallway—had occurred. Was it because Thundercracker was on the third shift?

“What are you thinking about?” Soundwave asked, concerned.

Skywarp tried to hide his worries, trying instead to be playful, “Thought you could read processors.”

“I never invade the thoughts of fellow Decepticons,” the Tapedeck told him in all seriousness, “with the exceptions of interrogations on Megatron’s orders, I don’t do things just because I CAN.”

Well, since he didn’t have to tell him about the ghost, he could pick the subject, “Starscream and I were fighting in the mass hall, he was saying stuff about me not wanting to confide in him anymore.” He handed another pile of useless papers to Rumble for shredding, “But he’s always changing, y’know? One minute he’s my friend, and the next he’s banishing me to a cell in the brig.”

“He’s still trying to define his inner spark sensations,” Soundwave explained, “I told you, taking on Megatron’s emotions when they Bonded has not been an easy transition for him.”

“Hmm,” the Seeker shrugged, “and here I thought, it must be nice to be Bonded.” He felt the little movements in his gestation chamber again, signaling his precious sparkling was waking up from her nap, “It’s hard, knowing we’re alone.”

“You’re not really alone,” Soundwave told him, his hands still typing in the information from the sorted files, “You’ve got Thundercracker…” he dropped his vocals a setting before adding, “and me.”

“It was always me and my brothers for a long time,” Skywarp began musing, “in school, and then in Northern Vos, Earth…we were happy.”

While the twins were busy shredding papers and the youngest family members played with their toys, the young, pregnant flyer continued, “Star…he changed. It was before he had the babies, and… I love the little guys, and um, there was a day when I took Darkwing out to play.”

Soundwave listened carefully now; understanding.
“I was teaching him to fly, we were having a great time…” memory files played out those happier times:

Flashback:

“Come on, Darkwing, don’t be scared!” Skywarp reassured the frightened sparkling in his arms, “Don’t ya wanna learn to fly?”

End of Flashback:

Skywarp: “Starscream was so mad…”

Flashback:

“WHERE THE SLAG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH MY SON?!” Starscream shrieked as his younger brother walked in. The way Warp was holding the sparkling only served to make him angrier.

Little Darkwing again became frightened, more so than he was before the flying lesson.

Skywarp was a bit taken aback by the red and white Seeker’s tone, “Um, sorry…We kinda lost track of time.”

End of Flashback:

“I got tired of always giving them back.” Skywarp looked down, “No matter how much I loved them, I knew they belonged to Starscream and Megatron…”

“Well, you ARE their uncles,” Soundwave told him, “Starscream too, needs to learn about co-parenting.” He gestured at his sons, “I’ve had a lot of help, especially with their Mother gone.”

“Well, he doesn’t feel that way,” the flyer could feel his sparkling was now fully online, flip-flopping around playfully; he started rubbing his belly, wishing he could already cuddle his baby, “That’s the day I decided to have my own sparkling.”

Soundwave, fully facing him now, leaned towards the younger mech and took his chin in his hand, “I’m glad you did.”

Skywarp gave a shaky smile, and the indigo mech continued, “And if you need anything from me, don’t hesitate to ask for it.”

Frenzy watched, elbowing Rumble; the older twin nodding, that it was time to ask.

“Hey Pop?” the blue Cassetticon asked, “Frenz and I were wondering, can you invite Skywarp to spend Christmas with us?”

Soundwave had been used to always spending the Christian holiday watching over the Base while his fellow Decepticons traveled and dispersed to various destinations, either for visiting family or vacations. Not taking his optics off the Seeker, he asked, “Do you have plans?”

Skywarp, grinning now, shook his helm.

Soundwave: “I would enjoy your company.”

Skywarp: “So would we.”
They would have taken their relationship to the next level, had there not been sparklings present.

Too bad the ghost was also listening in…
Chapter 32: By Transformersnewfan

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It was nearly midnight when Thundercracker finished his evening patrol. Nowadays, the thought of going home filled him with dread. Ever since Skywarp had admitted to the hauntings, the blue Seeker had been on high alert, looking for anything that would tell him exactly what was going on. His chief concern was protecting his younger brother and the sparkling he was carrying.

Scouting the Dallas-area hydroelectric dam had been a breeze compared to this. While documenting his findings, he was at ease; he watched the human workers leave the building at their designated times, and the guards locking up for the night. His energy-recording devices told him that the plant contained a sizable amount of materials for Energon, more than worthy of a Decepticon raid.

He had been taking these types of missions more frequently since pregnant Skywarp had been switched to the paperless-society project, and Starscream was still opting to delegate many of his assignments to his Trinimates or the Coneheads since his sparklings were still very young. TC was glad he didn’t have to work tomorrow; that was Thrust’s shift. Well, at least the credits were good; he wanted to earn more now, and maybe take fewer shifts once the sparkling was born. The youngest Seeker wasn’t the only one looking forward to little Crystal’s arrival. TC was loving the idea of Skywarp having a baby; their Creators were overjoyed as well. There was no Bondmate they would have to share with. This was their family’s baby.

Only problem now was this ghost.

Thundercracker couldn’t understand what had attached an entity; neither brother had ever dabbled with the occult, even when they were young, nor had Starscream to his knowledge. In fact, he couldn’t think of anything that could have caused this. The Decepticons had not had any missions to any ancient ruins of Egyptian tombs, or Indian burial grounds, or any other types of places that attracted hauntings. The blue Seeker was still trying to rationalize this even as he landed on the Tarmac and transformed into his Robot Mode. He then took the elevator down to the Base, half expecting to see a Terrorcon staring straight at him when the bell dinged, and the doors opened to the main floor.

TC looked around: The hallways were pitch black, even WITH the brake lights on. It was creepy, but the blue Seeker felt that if he gave into fear, it would only feed whatever entity was there. He put on a brave front; taking out his pistol and cocking it, he went into his quarters.

There was nothing out of the ordinary in their shared residence; it was just as it had been when he and Skywarp had left it. Still, the blue Seeker was on high alert, trading slowly, his digit on the trigger…And while he knew bullets were unlikely to protect him against the paranormal, there was still a chance this attacker was a Transformer with some compelling powers.

The eldest of the Trine approached the door to their wash racks, opening it slowly before peeking inside. There was no one there. He pulled the shower curtain all the way back, only to reveal the tiles on the wall. So, TC went through the living room, looking around for anything out of place. Finally, he went to the berthroom, opening the door carefully, tuning on the light, and once again, finding nothing wrong. The closets: Nothing again. Under the berths: Nothing Again.
Gravechaser looked down at his son from the attic, careful to never give away his position. He never haunted in front of Thundercracker.

And TC knew it too. He never saw anything; never FELT anything! Yes, there was the snow globe, and there might have been something on Cybertron that day, but still, both incidents could still be explained away; the internal music box could have malfunctioned; those guards could have been talking…

Depression grew in the blue Seeker’s spark as he looked over the nursery he and Starscream had put together for their young brother’s new baby. He wanted so badly to protect them. But, from, WHAT was the question. He adjusted the sparkling blankets in the crib, and the stuffed pink plushies he and Starscream had bought, along with the tiny sleepers and dresses that had been sent by their Creators. The whole family was looking forward to the new sparkling tremendously. Thundercracker sighed loudly now; he wanted Skywarp and the baby to feel at home here again. This was THEIR quarters; THEIR home. And yet, to the blue Seeker, nothing felt amiss. He never saw anything moving out of the corners of his optics, nor had he ever heard the pedefalls, or the vocals that his baby brother had seen and heard. He did though, find Skywarp knocked offline on the floor with a serious helm injury, and later, those claw marks on Warp’s wings. Someone or some THING was definitely out to hurt his little brother and the sparkling he was carrying, and it made Thundercracker more determined than ever to protect both of them. The only question was, from who?

He tried to shake off his thoughts, deeming their quarters safe now, he went to the Control Room.

“Skywarp, Thundercracker is back,” with the last of the Decepticons checking in for the evening, Soundwave secured the Tower and began turning on all the security perimeters. His young sparklings were (hopefully) asleep in his quarters, and the Tapedeck was wishing this night would be a peaceful one.

But, the pregnant Jet knew better.

Skywarp hadn’t stopped thinking about how Gravechaser might be back, and he was refusing to rest, out of fear of being attacked again. He kept sorting files, even after Soundwave had said he could rest; even after the Cassetticons went to bed; even after Starscream had asked to see him and he refused to unlock the French Doors.

“Skywarp?” Soundwave tried to get his attention.

Skywarp: “Hmmm?” tired, Energon-blood shot optics looked up from where he was sitting on the floor.

“You must be exhausted,” the larger mech noted sympathetically, “can I get you anything else?”

“No…” he had wolfed down the rest of the Energon-chicken quesadillas when Soundwave was putting Ratbat to bed, and then—knowing the Tapedeck didn’t know—two cubes of Energon when Soundwave had his own nightly rations. The term ‘Stress Eater’ didn’t begin to cover Skywarp’s ravenous behavior.

“Well, we did a number of files today,” Soundwave noted, looking around at the dwindling number of boxes, “making a lot of progress.”

The darker Seeker seemed down though, “We still didn’t find the guy attacking me though,” he kicked the empty box away, “all that was in that whole box was fragging bank statements.”
Soundwave rubbed his chin, “I’m thinking of checking the Iacon files again,” he turned back to his computer, “the most recent arrests were uploaded by Shockwave.”

Skywarp didn’t say anything; he knew there was no point in looking for a living mech.

Suddenly, a shadow of a blue Seeker appeared at the French Doors. He tried the knob; when he saw it was locked, he wrapped on the glass. BAM! BAM!

“AUUUGHHH!!!” Skywarp let a shriek escape his vocalizer, scooting backward on his aft, against more boxes.

“Skywarp?” TC’s muffled vocals could be heard, “You okay?”

Soundwave stood, using his sensors, “It’s your brother.” He went to open the doors.

“NO! SOUNDWAVE!” the carrying Seeker was terrified that it was Gravechaser, again mimicking Thundercracker’s appearance, “I-It’s not…”

The ever-calm Tapedeck knew that his friend was traumatized by the brutal attacks. He knew immediately what to do, whispering, “If you have doubts to his authenticity, speak to him through your Trine Bond.”

:T-TC? W-Where are you?: Skywarp tried.

:I’m outside in the hall.: his brother, mercifully, answered, :The Control Room’s doors are locked.: It was Thundercracker.

The black and purple Seeker sighed and nodded to Soundwave. The Tapedeck unlocked the doors and Thundercracker came in, “What’s going on?”

“Increased security measures,” Soundwave explained.

“Cool,” TC nodded, “I checked our quarters out and it’s safe.”

Skywarp was still reluctant to leave the safety of the Control Room, even as his older brother helped him up off the floor, “Come on, buddy, up we go.”

“Missed you…” was all the pregnant flyer mumbled, still looking at Soundwave even as he was led out.

The two Seekers made their way down the hallways without incident, arms around each other. It was very late, and both were very tired.

Thundercracker tried to make small talk as they entered their home, “Wasn’t hard, found all the information they needed,” referring to his research mission, “I’ll file my report before I turn in. How was your day?”

“Can’t find anything on that blue guy,” Skywarp sighed dejectedly as he flopped on the sofa, pulling a blanket over his belly, “…seven boxes.”

“Y’know, he needs to let you take more breaks,” the blue Seeker went about locking and barricading their door; his now nightly ritual, “I don’t want you lifting anything either.”

“He’s not making me do anything like that, TC!” Skywarp immediately got defensive of his friend, “I’m the one that wanted to keep working on stuff!” his tone turned into a whine, “I’m trying to
figure all this out!” Now the coolant tears pooled in his exhausted optics, “Why are you picking on me!” It was a comment for his brother’s Sire, really.

“I’m not picking on you, kiddo,” Thundercracker softened his tone, figuring the other’s hormones were wreaking havoc again, “just worried is all.” He took out all his files and laid them on his desk, trying to change the subject, “How’s your little one?”

“Um, she’s okay,” he could feel Crystal falling asleep inside him, adjusting herself comfortably.

:Love Uncle,: the sparkling yawned, :Safe with Uncle.: 

“Yeah, no kidding,” Skywarp just said out loud.

TC: “Huh?”

“Sorry…” the pregnant flyer turned over, “she loves you.” He was praying every waking moment for his baby. “Just thinking… glad we both have tomorrow off.” He tried to smile now, “We can play video games together…”

Soon after, the blue Seeker emailed Megatron his findings, they took their respective showers, and the two turned in for the night. Skywarp had taken to sleeping with his older brother for protection for the past two weeks, with TC holding his hand, “‘Night kiddo,” was all the blue Seeker murmured as he turned over, facing the wall.

Still wishing nothing bad would happen, the carrying flyer turned on his left side, facing his sibling, squeezing his hand, and pressing his tummy into the other’s wings, hoping it would protect his little sparkling. He was feeling okay, other than the indigestion one would feel after so many Energon-quesadillas, but nothing he couldn’t recharge though. He would be okay…

…If he had been allowed to relax, of course.

Megatron looked out the window of his sons’ nursery, unable to sleep.

“Sir?” Ravage asked, “Is anything wrong?” The Cat was at the triplets’ sides constantly.

By now, Darkwing and Dawning were asleep in each other’s arms in their crib, and Starscream had fallen asleep in the recliner while rocking Darkmount into a peaceful recharge. The sparkling chirping happily every so often.

“Just thinking is all, Ravage,” Megatron said lowly, and began to pace, “that chair over there,” pointing to the recliner, a slight smile, “I remember when I was a sparkling, my Father used to come home from a long day’s work in the mines…” the happy memory files gave the warrior comfort, “Ma would have dinner ready, and every night, my Father would read to me while we sat in that recliner together.” He wondered how much more he should reveal, “Ravage?”

“Yes Sir?” the Cat answered.

“I always enjoyed the stories,” he continued, “I remember all of them.”

Ravage: “What kind of stories?”

Megatron was hoping he would say that; happier than he first thought he would be, “Scary stories, Ravage,” he looked out the window again, “I loved hearing the stories. Most of them, I feel, were
rooted in religion, or faith-based of some sorts. Ghosts, supernatural activity, vampires, hauntings…” he paused to check that the Cat was not rolling his optics. When he saw that Ravage wasn’t, he continued, “My Creators were both brought online and raised in Tarn, and these were all Tarnian datapads. Some of these stories have made it to Earth…the California human film industry…Wow.”

Ravage listened carefully as his Leader continued, “I still believe them all, Ravage.” He chuckled now, “All these years later…I never experienced anything myself. Not in my Arena years, or Iacon, or Earth…and my Father’s been gone for almost fifteen years…I’ve never seen, or heard, anything that would prove the stories were true or false. But, I always believed what the authors of these stories had written.” He sighed, “I doubt I’ll ever stop.”

Ravage: “How did they end?”

“Good always triumphed over evil,” Megatron smiled.

“And that’s why our sparklings will have science datapads,” a smirking Starscream huffed, revealing he had awoken at some point.

“Guess that’s what I get for Bonding with a Vosian Seeker,” the former Gladiator smiled back, no malice in his tone.

“Where do you get this stuff?” the red and white flyer stood carefully, lifting his son and placing him in his crib with his brothers, “Halloween was weeks ago.”

“Not sure, really,” Megatron admitted, “Just can’t shake these…feelings I’ve had.”

“HUMPH!” Starscream just huffed, still smarting from his fight with his younger brother earlier, “Probably the Energon-quesadillas.”
It was around two in the morning when Gravechaser continued his relentless campaign of terror against the pregnant Seeker.

The closet door opened, creaking loudly, CREEEEEK.

Skywarp stirred but didn’t wake up.

In Skywarp’s Dream:
KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Skywarp awoke slowly, looking around and not knowing what time it was.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Someone was knocking at their berthroom door.

The dark Seeker was petrified; someone was in their living room!

“Thundercracker,” he whispered, shaking him.

TC woke up just as the berthroom doorknob began rattling, at first a little, but then getting more aggressive.

“Wait here,” the blue Seeker told his brother in a hushed tone. He slowly reached down and took his gun out from between the mattresses.

As he got up and approached the door, the knob was shaking violently.

Thundercracker grabbed the knob. And everything stopped.

Almost instantly, the banging shifted to their front door, and a vocal, “Vosian Police! Open up!”

The two brothers looked at each other in total puzzlement.

TC slowly opened the berthroom door and peeked out, seeing no one.

“T-Teecee,” Skywarp begged, “D-Don’t go out there…”

The blue Seeker didn’t listen; he opened the door and stepped into the living room.

“Y-You saw the k-knob,” Skywarp was crying now, scared out of his processor and clutching his stomach, “D-Don’t…”

And again, the loud banging at their door: BAM! BAM!

“Open the door!” the policemehc shouted, “We just want the sparkling.”
“Fuck you will,” Thundercracker hissed in response.

Skywarp backed up in the tangled covers, the words freezing his very spark. Why did the police want his unborn daughter?!

The blue Seeker took the safety off his pistol, rushing the door, and flinging it open.

The policemech, a Vehicon named Steve, burst into their quarters. And Thundercracker shot him point blank in the chestplates, killing him instantly!

Another policemech was behind the first, and Thundercracker killed that one just as brutally.

End of Skywarp’s Dream:

“NNOOO!!!” Skywarp bolted awake, hyperventilating, he flipped over onto his back suddenly, hands grasping up at the air, while his elbows remained on the berth.

Then he saw Gravechaser standing in front of his closet, staring him down.

“AAUUUUUGGGGHHHH!!!!” Skywarp howled in fear, waking his older brother up with a start, and Gravechaser vanished like a flick of a light switch.

Poor Thundercracker was still half asleep, looking around their berthroom and seeing nothing, “W-What?”

The Nightmare. The nightmare had been so real to the pregnant flyer that he thought he had smelled the gunpowder; that he had seen the policemech’s chestplates blown apart; that he saw the rage on his brother’s faceplates…

“TEECEE!” Skywarp sobbed, both brokenly and hysterically, “Teecee, you killed Steve!”

Okay, that was a new one, “Wha?”

“W-Why, Thundercracker?!” Skywarp truly believed what he had just ‘seen,’ “Why’d you kill Steve?!”

“Warp…” TC rubbed his optics, shifting under the blankets, his vocals had static from still being asleep, “What are you talking about?”

Skywarp was fully awake though, “HE WAS JUST DOING THIS JOB, TC!” screaming now, “YOU DIDN’T HAVE TO KILL HIM! AND THE OTHER GUY WAS JUST STANDING THERE!”

The blue Seeker turned over, “Skywarp, I’m right here,” he couldn’t understand what Warp was referring to, “I haven’t moved.”

The black and purple Seeker, his internal fans whirling, trying to calm himself, looked around at the two of them. He and his brother were indeed fully under the covers as they had been when they went to bed. There was no shooting.

“It was a nightmare,” TC whispered, trying over and hugging his sibling, hoping they could fall back into recharge.

Skywarp sunk into Thundercracker chestplates, still crying, “I-It was real…I-I know it was REAL!”
the visions traumatized the pregnant Jet; he couldn’t calm himself now; the hyperventilating got worse. Finally, the combination of hysteric and fear made his fuel tanks twist, causing him to howl out in pain, “OOOWWW!”

The poor Jet was in terrible abdominal pain; the Energon-quesadillas was still processing in his systems, and his still-very full fuel tanks were bloated from the gasses fomenting inside his increasingly limited space in his belly. His expanded gestating chamber was slowing everything down internally. He could have been able to sleep through his systems’ slow processing of the foods, but the nightmare visions and being terrified caused his chassis to rebel on him.

Which is exactly what Gravechaser intended.

“Skywarp is so predictable,” the ghost chuckled to himself from the attic now, “Just like his Mother.”

“NUHH,” the black and purple Seeker keened, half-climbing, half-falling out of the berth—covers around his chassis in a tangled mess—crawling on the floor to the waste can; he stuck his digits down his vocal processor, trying to purge up his dinner. But nothing was coming up. He was crying and keening now.

Thundercracker was fully online now, “Warp,” he got down on the floor with him, wrapping his arms around him, trying to comfort his little brother, “What is it?”

Skywarp didn’t answer; still gagging.

“Is it the baby? What is it?” TC tried again, holding the other’s stomach.

The younger flyer, sick, shook his helm, :No, I’m sick,: he couldn’t speak, he could only talk through their Trine Bond, :TC…I was eating Energon-quesadillas tonight…Now I wanna purge my tanks…It hurts.: He was secreting coolant now, and he was trembling all over.

Thundercracker was a bit miffed at him for giving in to his overindulgence, giving him a glare; but his feelings to comfort and protect his little brother were stronger than his anger for him, “Alright, come on,” he carefully lifted Skywarp off the floor, adjusting the blanket around his wings, “let’s go in the living room.”

“N-NAHNOOOO!” Skywarp sobbed, switching back and forth between his vocalizer and their Bond, :Steve’s chassis is still on the floor in there!:

“No, no,” TC whispered, “it’s okay…” his arms wrapping around his little brother protectively, “Come on, I’ll show you.” He led the other out of the berthroom and into the living room. Skywarp was scared to look, burying his faceplates against the blue Seeker’s shoulder, whimpering.

Thundercracker turned the lights on: There was nothing amiss. He set Skywarp down on the sofa and went to look outside. He moved the file cabinet, opened their front door, and looked out into the hallway.

Brake lights on, there was no one around.

So, TC quickly relocked the door and slid the cabinet back, and got on his Comm.-Link, “Control Room?”

Spyglass was on duty, “Yes Lieutenant?”

TC: “Was there anything trying to break in tonight?”
Spyglass: “Negative.”

TC: “Do we have any visiting soldiers on Base?”

Spyglass: “Negative again, Sir.”

“Sorry to bother you,” the blue Seeker sighed before closing the connection, leaning against the cabinet, “He didn’t see nothing, Warp.”

The pregnant flyer just continued sobbing, “I-I saw it, TC…I-I saw t-the Energon-blood…all over the r-r-rug…”

A policemeh’s blood all over the rug. Thundercracker’s Energon ran cold as a long-buried memory file came to the surface. He quickly blocked it out, not wanting to think about it again. Not after twenty years.

But they both forgot about it quickly as Skywarp winced in pain again, holding his pregnant belly. TC rushed over to him, “I’m taking you to the Med-Bay.”

“I-I don’t wanna,” the younger Seeker whined again.

“It could be your sparkling,” TC insisted.

“D-Doesn’t feel like it,” he was, actually, holding the upper part of his abdomen, right below his canopy glass, which pointed more towards indigestion; his gestation chamber was closer to his lower abdomen.

“Okay,” Thundercracker nodded, wrapping another blanket his little brother’s back and wings, and getting him to lay on the sofa, “I’ll be right back.”

The blue Seeker went to their wash racks; he got a washcloth, wet it with cool water, and washed the sweat off the other’s faceplates with it. Then he started looking in the medicine cabinet for something that would help.

Unfortunately, all of the bicarbonate products had warning labels advising against taking while pregnant. “Slag,” he mumbled to himself, “Nothing I can give him.” So, he went to his computer tablet, looking for a more organic method.

Skywarp was curled into himself around his hurting stomach; the gas pains still intense, making his unborn sparkling kick at him, she didn’t like the tighter space. He was keening, “Auuhhhh, Auuhhhh,” in discomfort.

“How many of those things did you eat, anyway?” TC asked, sitting next to him, optics still searching his tablet.

“Um, sixteen,” the pregnant jet admitted sheepishly.

“Skywarp!” TC was furious, “What are you trying to do, kill yourself?!?”

The younger gasped between keens, upset by his brother’s tone. He shook his helm no.

“Okay, okay,” Thundercracker didn’t want to scare him, “just relax…I’ll take care of you.” He kept searching; finally, he found some helpful tips.

The blue Seeker retrieved a hot water bottle and filled it; the heat was pretty hot still, so he wrapped it in a towel. By the time he held it next to Skywarp’s aching belly, the younger flyer had been in so
much gastritis pain; he was almost too weak to move.

“Can you lay on your right side?” TC asked.

Skywarp had his optics closed, “N-No…”

“I read laying that way is supposed to help you digest,” TC tried again softly.

“H-Hurts…too…much…” was all the sick flyer could muster. He let his brother assume it was the same pains he was talking about.

So Thundercracker gathered him in his arms and held him, holding the hot water bottle to his tummy and letting Skywarp’s helm rest against his shoulder, and rubbing his wings and back, trying to comfort him as best he could. TC wished he could do more; he was wishing he could give him back his sparklinghood Huggy Android; he adjusted Skywarp’s legs so that his little sibling was laying in his lap fully; he rocked Skywarp in his arms.

All the while, Gravechaser watched them from the attic, baffled by his son’s devotion to the object of his scorn.

Skywarp’s belly pains died down; at least enough that he could hold the hot water bottle himself, anyways. His baby absolutely loved the external warmth coming from the medical device. He sighed, not yet feeling strong enough to talk, used their Trine Bond instead. :Why do you put up with me, TC?:

:Why?: the blue Seeker smiled, :You’re my baby brother.:

:That doesn’t mean you have to put up with me though,: the pregnant flyer kept his optics shuttered,

:Starscream’s stopped putting up with me.: 

:You’re my best friend, is why,: he answered back, hugging his younger sibling, :You feeling any better?:

:Uh huh…: Skywarp was still moaning though, and still feeling uncomfortable.

Thundercracker thought of something else, :How about I make you some tea?: he gently laid him on the pillows, so that his upper chassis was elevated and covered him up to his chin, before getting up to make the Energon-tea.

“We don’t have to sit in the dark, y’know,” the blue Seeker tried to be upbeat, “We could watch television or a movie or something.” He flipped it on and skimmed through the channels before finding the returns of a human sitcom, “Emm, it’s a distraction,” he shrugged before heading for their small kitchen.

Skywarp looked up at the ceiling now, trying to relax; his fuel processors were still clogged up with goopy, rich, Energon-quesadillas. His belly was very heavy tonight. He felt powerless against his urges to eat so much, “I…think…I’m a food-a-holic or something.”

When his older brother came back with the Energon-tea, Skywarp figured it was time to tell him, “I saw the shadows again today, TC,” he began, “and I heard somebody w-walking.”

“Oh god,” the blue Seeker didn’t know what to say. He had to think, “in front of Soundwave even?”

“I wasn’t with him…” he sputtered between sips of the tea, “I-I was with Star…in the mass hall.”
TC: “Did he see it?”

Skywarp shook his helm no, “N-Nobody did…”

“I’ll talk to him today,” Thundercracker whispered lowly, “maybe he saw something and won’t admit it. You know how he gets.”

“I-I don’t w-wanna sleep in t-there…” the pregnant flyer sobbed, “D-Don’t l-leave…”

TC nodded, he understood completely, “We’ll sleep here.” He was scared too; he went to retrieve his comforter from their berthroom, but then stopped himself in the doorway. No; he didn’t want to risk going into the berthroom and having the door slam shut behind him. Separating the two brothers would be just what this THING would want to do! They would just have to share whatever blankets they had.

When Skywarp felt he could get up, Thundercracker opened the sofa bed and again made sure the pregnant Seeker was again propped up on pillows and wrapped in the two blankets. He could tell that his brother was weakened by the gastritis pains, knocking all the strength out of him.

“Slagging Combaticons and their Mexican-fusion dinners,” he muttered, pulling his little brother into his arms, “Who do they think they are, the Food Network?!”

“…They didn’t force…me…” the carrying Jet rasped out, “I was…nervous.” He held the hot water bottle to his belly again, “…it’s my fault.”

Thundercracker got him to lay on his shoulder, and the two were quiet for a while. They watched an old human Christmas movie on television, A Christmas Carole.

Skywarp was fighting to stay online now; it was nearly three-thirty in the morning, but he was determined not to fall asleep, “I don’t wanna dream…” He kept replaying his bad recharge file in his processor, “it was bad…it was so bad…”

TC: “Do you remember anything?”

“Um, there was somebody in our quarters,” the pregnant Jet began, “…said he wanted my sparkling.”

TC: “Geez…”

“Then you killed Steve,” Skywarp suddenly felt like crying again, “W-Why’d you…Why’d you kill Steve?”

“I didn’t do anything, Warp,” he was paying more attention to the movie at that point, “it was just a nightmare.”

“NO! IT WAS REAL, TC! I’M TELLING YOU, IT WAS REAL!” Skywarp turned and rested on his knees and wrists, “I-I-I’m…I’m telling you, Steve died in our living room!”

Thundercracker figured he would let his brother get whatever emotional meltdown out, and just listened.

“I-I smelled the gunpowder, TC,” Skywarp insisted; coolant tears were pooling in his optics, “It was real, like I feel like, like I’m grieving for him or something.”

“Warp, I didn’t shoot anybody,” Thundercracker sat up, taking the distress very seriously, seeing the
hurt on his brother’s faceplates, “I don’t know anybody named Steve.”

Skywarp felt like he was trying to solve a puzzle through a haze; partially due to having a ‘pregnant processor,’ and the other due to his lack of using his teleportation drive, “W-What’s Shockwave’s bodyguard’s name?”

TC: “George.”

Warp shook his helm; not him. He knew in his spark though that it had something to do with Gravechaser, “W-Well…Who is he?”

Thundercracker, still unaware of the connection, tried to think of a plausible explanation, “Maybe… Joey killed somebody once, and that’s why something’s after you?”

The defensiveness for his ‘mate’ suddenly boiled to the surface, making the hormonal Seeker forget about the haunting, “D-Don’t talk about Joey like that, TC! I LOVE HIM!”

The statement completely broke the building sense of dread in the room, and Thundercracker burst out laughing, “AHAHHHHAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Skywarp folded his arms over his enlarged belly, pouting.

“AHHHAA, oh…I’m sorry,” the blue Seeker tried to stop himself from laughing, “you’re serious.”

“Joey gave me my daughter…” Warp sniffled, “Wonder if he thinks about me.”

Thundercracker, smiling, debated telling him that Joey was the new Bachelor, “I’m sure he’s happy for you.”

Skywarp: “W-What did you think of h-him?”

“Ah…he wasn’t home when I went there,” TC shrugged, “thought you were drooling over Soundwave, ya little tramp.”

Soundwave?

“I forget about this,” he admitted, laying back down, “he wants me to spend Christmas break with him. But…” frowning now, “I miss when the three of us would go home.”

Their Trine would always travel to Vos and spend Christmas with their Creators. After Bonding, Starscream would go with Megatron’s side of the family to Tarn. The two brothers still went back to their parents.

“I miss when we were kids, TC,” Skywarp mused, “I miss sleeping in our old room.”

“You know what we could do?” Thundercracker smiled, “When your sparkling arrives, we could go back there for a while. Bet Mom would love doting on her new granddaughter.”

If only, Skywarp wanted to cry again, if only they could all go back and be safe.

“Skywarp, Mom and Dad wanna come here,” TC tried to reason with him, “they know you can’t travel, so they wanna come to Earth.”

“No,” he sobbed again; he couldn’t seem to stop crying tonight, “you go there.”

“I’m NOT, going to Vos and leave my carrying brother alone,” Thundercracker was firm on this,
The black and purple Seeker shook his helm as his older brother continued, “They really wanna see you. You won’t come to the phone; you won’t let them visit—”

“I’m being HAUNTED, remember?!” Skywarp cut him off, “Y-You think I want Momma to be attacked by this monster with the red claws?!”

Gravechaser had to control the hate he was feeling at the moment for his former mate’s spawn.

“I was…kinda hoping we’d catch this fragger before that,” Thundercracker confided, “we need to tell the others.”

“How TC, HUH?!” Skywarp shrieked, “How do we get rid of a slagging ghost, HUH?!"

“It might still be the Autobots,” Thundercracker put on hands on the other’s shoulders gently, “or an alien or something.” He made his little brother look at him in the optics, “Skywarp, we have to protect Crystal. We need to get Soundwave involved. He can detach things we can’t. You spend all this time with him, Warp, why haven’t you told him yet?”

The pregnant flyer leaned his forehelm against his brother’s forehelm, and spoke through their Bond, :Because…The ghost says things…He says things that make me feel like this is all my fault, TC. It feels like…like I brought a…plague on our family. Like I’m a jinx. I-I…S-Starscream…He’ll be so angry…he’ll never let me near the babies again. And Megatron’ll probably kick me outta here…Soundwave will hate me…I-I don’t want…I don’t want you to hate me.: I could never hate you, Skywarp, never,: Thundercracker pulled his little sibling into a tight hug, letting the other’s belly nestle between them, :Listen to me, there’s nothing you could ever do to make me hate you, brother. And you do NOT deserve being hurt by this fragger. Understood?:

It was unendingly frustrating for Gravechaser to be unable to hear what they were talking about.

His older brother always knew how to comfort him. Skywarp leaned against TC’s shoulder, debating…debating with himself if he should come clean, and tell his brother…his beloved brother that always protected him; that he could go to for anything; that he idolized and adored…how could he tell him? Just blurt it out? That the ghost of his deceased Sire had returned from the dead to destroy him? How?

He glanced at the bookcase and thought of something…
Chapter 34: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

This is my favorite chapter so far. It shows that this story is the true sequel to "Thundercracker's Backstory," and ties the two stories together, as well as filling in some of the intervening years. Also, Skywarp was cute when he was little.

Chapter 34:

By Transformersnewfan

“I wanna look at pictures,” he announced suddenly, pulling TC along with him.

The blue Seeker shrugged, chalking it up to the pregnancy hormones.

Skywarp crawled over to the small bookcase, still holding his hot water bottle against himself—he still wasn’t fully recovered—before getting his legs into a more comfortable sitting position. Thundercracker followed him and, seeing that the floor was cold, retrieved one of the blankets and lovingly wrapped it around Skywarp’s wings.

“T-Thank you, TC,” he whispered as he pulled several photo albums out of the bookcase.

The blue Seeker was tired, but he sat on the floor next to his little sibling to keep him company. Together, they looked at some photos from their sparklinghood that their Creators had given them when they moved to Earth.

“I wanna go home…” Skywarp mused.

“We will, kiddo,” TC wrapped his arms around him, “pretty soon.”

They sat as close as they could here; no monster could intervene in their friendship and brotherly love.

Skywarp was smiling for once; looking at the photographs of himself and his brother as a newling and a sparkling. There was one that invoked happy memory files:

Flashback:

Thundercracker remembered being a normal 6-year-old, running around in the yard with his 2-year-old brother Skywarp.

“Okay, okay!” the blue sparkling panted, leaning on his knees, “Now you gotta catch ME!”

But as he took off running, his little brother simply teleported close enough to tackle/hug him! The two fell to the ground, giggling and laughing.

“Skywarp! How many times have I told you not to cheat!” Thundercracker yelled but had no malice
in his tone.

“I win! I win!” the little Seeker proclaimed as he crawled all over his older sibling.

End of Flashback:

A photo of four-year-old Thundercracker holding one-week-old Skywarp on the sofa.

“I used to call you The Intruder,” TC laughed now.

Skywarp: “You think Crystal will look anything like me?”

TC: “Probably, you’re darker than Joey.”

“I can’t wait to see her,” Skywarp was trying to picture his daughter, who was asleep inside him at the moment, “I wanna hold her and play with her.” He forgot everything that had happened for a while, “Wanna fly her East…show her Brooklyn…and Ti-Ti and Junior.”

“I’m sure they’ve never seen a newling before,” TC smiled.

Skywarp was hoping his dreams could still become a reality; that he would be able to give birth to his child and hold her in his arms; see her little faceplates…

There was a photo, taken by their Dad, of their Mother with both of them on her lap, sitting by the flowers in their garden. It was around Easter Sunday.

“Crystal’ll probably look a lot like Mom,” Thundercracker continued on their earlier subject, “She’s really happy about having a granddaughter.”

Skywarp laid his helm against his brother’s shoulder, figuring this was as good a time as any to broach the subject of the ghost’s identity; he couldn’t just blurt it out though; he wanted to lead into it, “Did Momma ever have the kinds of problems I’ve been having?”

“Um, she got stressed out,” TC admitted, still looking at the photos, “I mean, it wasn’t because of you…it was always over my Father.”

Flashback:

Thundercracker remembered his sparklinghood vividly. More clearly when most Transformers could. He just had that gift, he guessed.

His Creators were good to him, but they were often not good to each other. His Father was a strong, muscular deep-sea blue Seeker, and his Mother was a pinkish red and white Seeker.

They fought a lot, usually after he was in his berth and they thought he was asleep. Little Thundercracker would watch and listen from the top of the stairs, sometimes cuddling his little petrorabbit, as he tried to make out what they were saying. It seems that his Mother had a friend, and his Father didn’t like that.

End of Flashback:

“They were always fighting,” Thundercracker began, “As far back as I can remember, they were fighting. This was before Dad and Mom got together.” He bit his lower lip component, “My Father was beating her.”

Flashback:
His Father started coming home from work later and later, and most of the time, he acted very funny. Thundercracker realized many years later that his Creator was intoxicated by the High-Grade Energon.

And then in more violent arguments: His Father began beating his Mother! The little Seeker didn’t like this at all. He wanted to protect his Mother, but he was so tiny, how could he? What could he do?

End of Flashback:

Skywarp had never really heard the full story of what went on in his Mother’s first marriage. It wasn’t something they talked about. He knew his Creators began dating prior to her divorce, and that she was pregnant with him when she divorced TC’s Father, but other than the bare bones details, he didn’t know much.

“Do you have a picture of your Father in here?” he asked now, flipping through the pages.

“No, I don’t think so,” Thundercracker shrugged, “nothing really survived that day he destroyed the house.”

Despite knowing it was a painful subject for his older brother, Skywarp felt he had to know more, “He killed your helio-hamsters,” he made sure he was staring at him, “and your petrorabbit. What happened again?”

“Well, um, they were arguing that night,” Thundercracker held his helm, “She had told me she was pregnant with you, and…when she told him. I overheard him…beating her up and threatening her and stuff.”

Skywarp looked up at him as he stated, “He beat her up when she was pregnant with you.”

Flashback:

His Father was shouting and shouting at his Mother, and Thundercracker heard his Mother rushing up the stairs.

He vividly remembered the red and white femme racing into his berthroom, scooping him up into her arms, and taking him into his Creators’ berthroom and locking the door! Thundercracker also remembered his Father holding what looked like an iron bar in his hand.

End of Flashback:

“She grabbed me and locked us in the berthroom,” the blue Seeker continued, “and he was hollering and hollering.”

Flashback:

Thundercracker remembered cowering in his Mother’s arms as his Father yelled through the barricaded door and called her all sorts of bad names and made terrible threats, a lot of them directed towards the new sparkling.

End of Flashback:

“That’s when he trashed the house. He flipped over the mattresses…I kept the cages under the bed,” he snorted, “It wasn’t an accident; he smashed their cage with an iron bar. Who the frag does that?!”
Flashback:

Thundercracker’s berthroom wasn’t immune to the destruction, his little dresser was flung forward, his closet torn apart… the little Seeker sniffled as he saw his ruined toys. Now he just wanted to get Harvey and the two helio-hamsters and get back to his Mother… He lifted the covers to—

The little sparkling made a horrible scream. His helio-hamsters were both dead. One lay in its battered cage and the other lay nearby, it seemed that when the cage was overturned one had fallen out. Both had been beaten… no, bludgeoned, to death by a heavy object. And Thundercracker remembered the iron bar he saw his Father wielding. That had to have been the murder weapon…

End of Flashback:

“Our whole house was wrecked; like a tornado hit it,” Thundercracker continued, “Anything that was glass, or wood, he broke into a million pieces, even the furniture. And, um, when Dad came over… Mom told him to look for Harvey for me, and he found Harvey dead in our upstairs bathroom.”

Flashback:

Thundercracker remembered the rest like it was a memory from a movie: His Mother asked her friend where he’d found the dead petrorabbit, and he replied it was in the bathroom. The big flyer tried to soften the details, for the sake of the sparkling, saying things like, the petrorabbit had passed away and went to heaven last night. The sobbing sparkling nodded that he understood, imagining Harvey’s corpse was probably in a similar condition as his helio-hamsters. Since Harvey was in the bathroom, the little Seeker figured that Harvey must have put up quite a fight, either hanging on by his fangs (petrorabbits were known for their sharp dental plates) to his Father’s leg while the Seeker flailed around wildly, ending up in the bathroom. Or perhaps his Creator was simply breaking all the mirrors in there, and Harvey heard the commotion and attacked, dying while defending his family…

Either way, it broke the little Seeker’s spark into pieces.

End of Flashback:

“So…” Skywarp tried to lead into this, “Did he ever say he was sorry?”

“No,” TC shook his helm, “and Mom didn’t want anything to do with him at that point,” he flipped through pages of the album, trying to get off the subject, “after that, Dad moved in, and they kept him away from us.”

“Um, what was his name again?” Skywarp never did know the name.

“Scourge,” Thundercracker responded before continuing, “and the policemechs came, and they saw all the damage.”

“His name’s Scourge, huh?” Skywarp finally knew the true designation of his tormentor; he finally had a name he could look up! And if he still hadn’t been in such gastritis pain, he would have gone to the Control Room immediately to research any files they may have on this mech, “Um, are you sure there’s no pictures?”

TC rolled his optics, “Why would we keep a picture of him?” He didn’t really want to talk about this.

The black and purple Seeker debated telling his brother the truth, “I just… wondering what he looked like.”
Like me, I guess,” Thundercracker shrugged, “Why? I mean, what’s with all the questions?” he couldn’t understand what Skywarp was getting at.

“Like you…” Skywarp fought back coolant tears as he thought back to that night where he had seen Gravechaser in their living room, right where they were now, “and…did he have red claws?”

“No, he was just a regular Seeker,” TC answered, finally figuring out where this was going, “No, I know what you’re thinking, but whoever this is isn’t him. My Father’s been dead going on ten years, and I’ve never felt anything.”

The black and purple Seeker knew his brother wouldn’t accept the truth, even if he presented it as a theory. But still, this was the only way he could find out anything.

“TC?” Skywarp persisted, “W-Would you tell me about him?”

It was hard for Thundercracker to resurrect his long-buried memory files of one of the hardest times of his young life, but at the same time, it was cathartic to talk about it.

“Well, I remember a lot of arguing,” TC began, “and he would call her things…he was physically abusive towards her. And this was…long before Dad was around, I mean. He would say he was gonna leave and take me with him.”

The pregnant flyer could see his older brother had the same sense of fear just THINKING about this mech as he himself always felt whatever Gravechaser was around.

“I just remember being afraid of him all the time…” TC continued, “Afraid he’d hurt Mom, or me…or you. I was even scared for Dad.”

Skywarp: “Did he have your powers?”

“No,” the blue Seeker shook his helm, “he was a tracker.”

Huh?

“What’s a tracker?” Skywarp asked now, trying to figure this all out.

“Well, it’s like,” TC tried to think of how to explain it, “like he could find the coordinates of whoever he wanted to look for. Even if, say…If you were on Earth and he was on Cybertron or vice versa.”

He had no idea how accurate his description truly was. And it sent shivers down the pregnant Jet’s backstruct. The ghost…no, the demon, had possessed as a Seeker the ability to find his prey whenever he went in the universe. There was nowhere he could hide.

Thundercracker noticed this and readjusted the blanket around Skywarp’s wings and pulled him closer as he continued to focus on the photo album, “He was an addict. He used to go out and get overcharged on High-Grade. And he was doing it more and more…especially after they divorced.”

Skywarp could see this was hurting the other to talk about this, but he had to know more, “How would you feel if I look for his prison file?”

“Um, nothing I guess,” TC paused, before giving him more information to search for “he was arrested twice before he…you know,” he knew his little brother knew what he meant.

Skywarp: “That he took you.” He had to say it, “What was he arrested for?”

“Well, the first time was still when he had visitation with me,” Thundercracker began, “but after
Mom and Dad got married, and Dad was teaching me how to shoot…”

Flashback:

Thundercracker was so excited to tell his old Father that he could make it rain now. The next time his Father visited, he flew up and told him right away, and was totally stunned by the rebuking he got! His Father began lecturing him (he was four years old!) about how HE was his one and only Father, and how his Mother was a bad femme, and a bunch of other names, and how the other mech will never be his Daddy.

The little Seeker didn’t like how this made him feel, being told all these bad things, being told he was bad for loving his Mother and new Daddy. Being told not to use his powers. It made him sick inside. Thundercracker didn’t like his Father after this.

He told his Mother and Daddy at the dinner table that his Father had hurt his feelings and that he didn’t want to play with him anymore. They agreed, telling the sparkling that if his Father didn’t accept the way things were and learn to live with it, then he could not visit with Thundercracker anymore.

End of Flashback:

Thundercracker: “He started drinking again, swearing all the time, and Mom and Dad were trying to protect me…”

Flashback:

The little sparkling was in his berthroom playing with his new toys from his Daddy when said Seeker placed the call to his Father telling him the ground rules. There was a big argument, with his Daddy yelling that he loved Thundercracker and Thundercracker’s Mother and that this was HIS house now, and HIS family now!

End of Flashback:

“Dad told him he couldn’t come over drunk, y’know?” TC continued, “and my Father was yelling and screaming at Mom, and she was pregnant…so they called the police. Boy, was I glad.”

Flashback:

Thundercracker could hear his Father flip back and forth from begging for his Mother to take him back, that he loved her and their sparkling, and then he would change like the wind, insulting her, and insulting Daddy, and then his Father went back to begging, and then insulting again. And… repeat.

Finally, his Daddy couldn’t stand it anymore. He told the sparkling he’d be right back, and the large, black Seeker barreled down the stairs and confronted his Father. Poor, four-year-old Thundercracker heard the all-out brawl, complete with punching and what sounded like chassises wrestling around, his Mother all the while screaming how she was calling the police!

Within minutes, Thundercracker remembered, he could hear the sirens and saw red lights in his window. He ran to the top of the stairs and saw his Daddy holding his drunken Father pinned to the floor. The first policemech took his Father away and locked him in the police hovercraft, the second policemech sat on the sofa and seemed to interview his Creators. His Mother told the first half of the story and his Daddy told the part where he came down. They were pressing charges against his Father because his Mother was carrying and shouldn’t have this stress.
“So, in answer to your question,” TC continued, “yeah, Mom was under a lotta stress, all because of him.” He flipped through the album, trying to distract himself, “I mean, I don’t think about him much anymore…I’m lucky Dad is so good to me, not being his and all.”

The darker Seeker was staring at him now, knowing there was something more to the story, “Go on…”

“Uh…” Thundercracker didn’t want to tell Skywarp anymore, “He was arrested another time…same thing…” he remembered vividly what happened that day, but he could never bring himself to put it into words.

Flashback:

In all, Thundercracker’s Father would be arrested no less than three times: The first was the aforementioned incident. The second, was when his Daddy was at work, and his Father came over unannounced. The sparkling was in the backyard firing his Sonic Booms at the approaching clouds, hitting the small ones but waiting for a nice big one to roll by. Yes, he used his Daddy’s advice and was pretty good at it now! Then he heard his Mother yelling and crying. The sparkling raced back inside, calling for her. He flew around the sofa and saw his Mother on her side, laying on the floor, with his Father panting and hollering over her chassis. His Father had struck his Mother, and now she was crying into her hands. The little Seeker knew his Daddy was at work and wouldn’t be home for another two hours, so he raced over to defend his Mother and his unborn sibling!

End of Flashback:

It was heinous what Scourge had done. He had beaten their beloved Mother while she was carrying Skywarp. And thinking about that always hurt Thundercracker to his very laser core. He could have lost his brother…

Flashback:

Thundercracker did the only thing he could think to do: He threw himself on top of his Mother’s abdomen and screamed at his Father, as loud as he COULD scream, to leave them alone! His Father then turned his drunken ire towards his Creation and began shouting obscenities, saying he was going to teach him a lesson! Thundercracker kept screaming to just leave his Mother alone! At some point during the yelling, his Father told Thundercracker that he’d kill his Mother and kill him too! Finally, more policemeh showed up and arrested his Father. Neighbors called them, the sparkling guessed.

His Mother called Daddy and Daddy came home quickly after that. His Mother was crying into her hands. His Mother said his Father had struck her, and that Thundercracker had gotten in between them, and there was more fighting. They were pressing charges against his Father for both hitting his Mother and sparkling abuse, for BOTH sparklings!

End of Flashback:

Thundercracker whispered to himself now, “She was hurt…”

Flashback:

He heard the policemeh telling them that they should go to the hospital to see if the sparkling his Mother was carrying was okay. Thundercracker started crying; he doubted the storkoid would bring the sparkling to their home now, seeing that they weren’t safe from his Father. And, for some reason,
it made Thundercracker miss Harvey so much more…

His Daddy came upstairs and picked him up, saying they have to go to the hospital with Mommy now. He tried to tell the little one not to worry, that he was back from work now and would protect them. Thundercracker remembered hugging his Daddy around his neck and crying.

Apparently nothing was wrong, Thundercracker guessed, since they all left the hospital the same night, and his Creators weren’t crying or anything, and when they got home, his Creators didn’t disassemble his old sparkling crib that his Daddy had spent last weekend painting in the garage or anything. Maybe his Creators and those poliemechs had a meeting and worked everything out with the storkoid?

End of Flashback:

“Are you thinking about when he took you away?” Skywarp asked.

TC let him believe so, “Uh-huh…”

Flashback:

Earlier that day, his Mother had laid down with him for a nap together, but the little Seeker was bored and carefully wiggled away from her recharging form and went outside. Now he was facing the barrel of a blaster in his Father’s hand.

His Father seized the sparkling in a lucky moment: No neighbors around and, Thundercracker would later guess, observed him and his Mother sleeping from the window. His Father told him they were going on a trip, just the two of them. He also told the sparkling that if he refused, or screamed, he’d deactivate his Mother. Thundercracker nodded that he understood completely.

End of Flashback:

“You were very brave that day,” Skywarp whispered, “you weren’t scared of him…”

“No, I was scared,” the blue Seeker admitted, “I was…very scared.”

Flashback:

Finally, his Father landed in front of a motel. It was all different shades of green. The motel row was two floors, and the doors were very close together. A large neon sign flashed the words “Sleepy-Tyme Motel” in bright red.

Thundercracker was in recharge on the rug for maybe a few hours when a loud noise woke him. His Father was in front of the television, watching some old black and white program, and drinking High-Grade. He threw an empty cube against a wall, shattering it. The glass falling in an established pile, which was what had apparently awoken the sparkling in the first place.

His Father started rambling drunkenly about Thundercracker’s Mother, calling her bad names again. And he hated Thundercracker’s Daddy even more so! Calling him all sorts of bad things. Blaming him for all the trouble. Didn’t he realize how much this hurt the sparkling? Thundercracker scooted behind the berth, hiding.

End of Flashback:

“He was drunk again,” Thundercracker recalled, “And when he was asleep, I called the police… and,”
Flashback:

When the little sparkling was sure his Father had gone into recharge in the chair (Well, passed out drunk, actually), Thundercracker quietly flew up to the motel’s roof. All the lights were out for miles around, even the two moons of Cybertron were crescents tonight. But there were clouds. Beautiful, spark-saving clouds. He flew up in the darkness and fired his Sonic Booms into the air, hitting anything that moved, giving them his all! And the skies lit up with lightning streaks, and the rains came down. Rain, hail, lightning. Everything…

When he finished, Thundercracker went back into their humble motel room and prayed, prayed like he’d never prayed this hard before, that his Creators and the policemechs would find him…

End of Flashback:

“…It was morning when they came,” TC stared off into the nothingness, “They started banging on the door…”

Flashback:

Suddenly there was knocking at the door, “Open up! Police!” His Father grabbed his blaster and pointed it out the window, screaming back at the officers. Sky-Byte was outside too, yelling at his Father to open the door as well! Little Thundercracker hid between the berth and a little table; his Father never even checking where the sparkling was. A key could be heard opening the lock from the outside, but his Father opened the door suddenly shot one of the policemechs point blank! The sparkling’s optics frozen wide open in fear!

Two policemechs rushed to their fallen comrade, and five other policemechs rushed into the tiny room. His Father shot a second policemetch right in the chestplates! A third policemetch grabbed his Father’s arm and the blaster shot into the ceiling before a fourth officer took the weapon away. Then all the policemechs that weren’t shot dogpiled on top of his Father yelling at him to cease his resistance! Another policemetch ran to the second policemetch that had been shot, the one that was shot badly, telling him to stay calm.

Sky-Byte stood in the doorway, looking shocked and horrified at the scene in his entrepreneurial establishment.

Thundercracker was still cowering in the corner as the policemechs struggled to subdue his Father, who was now punching and kicking them and flailing like a wild animal! Yet another policemetch entered and grabbed the sparkling, scooping him up and carrying him out over his shoulder!

“I’LL KILL YOU ALL!!!” His Father shouted as Thundercracker looked back over policemetch’s shoulder. His little vents gasping in terror; terror that no four-year-old should EVER have to experience. He was whisked to the manager’s office, where his Daddy was talking to several policemechs.

“THUNDERCRACKER!”

“DADDY!”

The big Seeker hugged the sparkling tightly to his chest, and little Thundercracker sobbed and hugged him around his neck.

End of Flashback:

“Sky-Byte unlocked the door, and…” Thundercracker bit his lip components, realizing it mirrored
Skywarp’s nightmare, “He shot the two policemechs. One after the other.”

Skywarp’s optics were round, turning and looking at their living room floor, where he had dreamed there were bleeding chassises of Steve and his partner. “W-What were their names?”

“I don’t know,” TC shook his helm, “I-I mean, I never DID know.”

“It was Steve,” Skywarp told him, hands beginning to shake, “the first one that died was named Steve.”

“I have no idea,” TC didn’t want to believe what was going on, but, there it all was, right there in front of him.

“N-No, I KNOW his name was Steve, TC!” Skywarp was in near hysterics, “I don’t know how I know this, but I j-just know this!” he realized what he was saying, “H-How do I know these things?! HUH?! I-I wasn’t even born yet!”

“I don’t know what to think…what to say,” the blue Seeker was at a loss, “Just…Mom or Dad must’ve told us at some point…Maybe, pregnancy heightens your senses or something.”

The carrying Jet had coolant tears running down his faceplates now, shaking his helm, whispering over and over, “I know his name was Steve…”

“I believe you,” TC wrapped his arm around him and hugged him, “there’s definitely something happening.”

They held each other in silence for a while, at least until Skywarp could compose himself.

“M-Mom and Dad…” Skywarp rasped out, “t-they never talked to me about this stuff.”

“I think they were scared,” Thundercracker admitted, “Warp, my Father was a really scary mech, especially when he was angry. You know, I had nightmares for years after the kidnapping…and Harvey…He was in prison, and it was like…We were still living in fear. Dad installed a security system, I remember. We were always afraid he was coming back.”

Skywarp leaned closer, putting his helm against TC’s shoulder, still holding the medical device to himself.

“We didn’t talk about it unless we had to, I mean,” the blue Seeker continued. “In fact, when you were very little, he escaped from prison…”

Flashback:

Skywarp was around nine-months-old, crawling very well now, while five-year-old Thundercracker colored on a datapad on the coffee table in their living room. Their Dad was helping their Mother make dinner when the kitchen phone rang…

End of Flashback:

“Dad had, um, stayed friends with one of the policemechs,” Thundercracker recalled, “so he called to warn them, that he was out, y’know?”

Flashback:

Their Creators quickly packed their bags and headed out with their sons.
“We went to a hotel for the night in downtown Vos,” TC continued, “it was probably the Grand Vosian Hotel, I remember when Starscream was staying there, years ago, and we went to see him, remember? I think the lobby was the same…” he knew he was rambling now, “Um, well, Dad said they caught him again right away. And we went back home.”

Skywarp just wanted to take in this information; this was the most he had ever heard about his brother’s biological Creator.

“There was another time,” Thundercracker kept adjusting the blanket to cover the pregnant Jet’s wings, “I was nine, so you were five, and Dad came home from work, and he talked to Mom, and they came in and he said he was surprising us by taking our family on vacation for a week.”

Flashback:

Again, the couple hurried their sons into their awaiting vehicle with their suitcases.

“Teecee! We’re going on an adventure!” little Skywarp chirped.

“In the middle of winter?” the blue sparkling wondered to himself.

End of Flashback:

“I remember that,” Skywarp smiled now, “we went to Crystal City, right?”

“Uh-huh,” the other nodded, “I remember Dad making a bunch of phone calls the first few days. And then they were relieved. They had recaptured my Father, but since they had rented the cabin for the rest of the week, we stayed there…so they took us ski-flying.”

There was a pause.

“Mom only told me after we got back though…” TC remembered.

Flashback:

His Mother figured Thundercracker was old enough to know the truth. She sat him down on the sofa and told him that they went on the trip because his Father had escaped again and that she was always afraid he would come to hurt her babies.

“I wouldn’t let him, Mom,” her eldest told her. “I would protect you.”

They hugged each other tightly.

End of Flashback:

“Well, after he was dead, it was like,” TC shrugged now, “we didn’t have to be scared anymore.”

“Do you remember the day your Sire died?” Skywarp asked, “Cause I do…”

“Of course.” TC sighed.

The two brothers remembered it very well, in fact.

Flashback:
Skywarp was much naughtier than his older brother had been. He liked to use his teleportation to his advantage. Now ten-years-old, he was easily bored whenever Thundercracker was busy with his homework. Eighth-graders seemed to have more homework.

The black and purple sparkling warped into the living room, careful not to be noticed by his Creators. It was Sunday afternoon, so his Dad was home reading the daily datapad on the sofa, and his Mother was in their garden. Perfect time to get into mischief!

Skywarp snatched his Mother’s purse and stole ten dollars’ worth of credits out of her wallet; now all he needed to do was trick TC into taking him to the arcade.

The phone rang, and the little sparkling teleported away before his Dad got up to answer it, telling his Bondmate that he would do so.

Skywarp rematerialized behind the feature wall, knowing he couldn’t be seen from the kitchen. He eavesdropped on his Creator, hoping he would hear the latest juicy, neighborhood gossip!

But today, the large flyer was very serious to whoever he spoke to on the telephone. It quickly became clear as his Dad called for their Mother to come inside.

It was the authorities: Thundercracker’s Father had been offlined in prison. From what Skywarp could make out, it had been a brutal attack; his Mother gasped at the details; his Dad angrily asking whoever was on the phone where the slag was the guard! Despite being his former rival, the large Seeker did not approve of vigilantism destroying the mech.

The phone call ended. And the two adult Seekers could be heard hugging in sadness, saying that at least this mech’s pain was over. His Mother worried aloud how they would break the news to Thundercracker, that he would be so hurt. And her husband assuring her that they would tell him as gently as possible and help him deal with this in any way they could.

Oh, they need not have worried, because their littlest was on the case! He relished the idea of playing the role of ‘reporter,’ just like that human character, Jimmy Olson, in his Superman comics!

He immediately teleported away when he heard his Mother wonder aloud why her purse was behind the sofa.

Thundercracker, now fourteen-years-old and a straight-A student, was hard at work on his essay on electric shocks and its effects on the chassis for his biology exam. His datapads were all over his desk, open to chapters he was using to cite his sources.

“Oh TEECEE!” Skywarp materialized so close to his brother’s left audial, that he nearly blew out its circuits.

“Skywarp! Don’t do that!” Thundercracker barked back, “I told you not to bother me until I finished my homework!”

Skywarp was bouncing up and down, so happy to be the one to announce this, “But I gots this breaking news for ya!”

“It can wait until later,” TC told him, “Give me another hour.”

“AN HOUR?!” the younger screamed, “I can’t wait that long! You want me to explode or something?! I gotta tell you something now!”
“I still have to read my Shakespeare datapad,” the student waved him away, “you want me to fail my test?”

“Isn’t that, like, next week?” Skywarp asked.

TC rolled his optics, “It’s a big datapad.”

Skywarp continued bouncing around, covering his mouth, wanting to tell him. He started jumping up and down holding onto his older brother’s shoulders.

TC: “What are you doing?”

Skywarp: “Waiting to tell you something!”

“Fine,” the blue youngling knew he wasn’t going to get anything done at this rate, “what’s so important that you can’t wait to tell me?”

“YEEEY!” Skywarp shrieked with delight, “TEECEE! You’re mean old Sire’s pavement pizza!”

Thundercracker’s optics went wide, “W-What?!”

“He’s deactivated, TC!” Skywarp bounced up and down more, “I heard Dad on the phone! Somebody made a whole bunch of wrestler moves on the slagger, and now the cops haveta wash his jail cell with a garden hose! Isn’t that a howl?!”

“Wow,” was Thundercracker’s sad first response; optics fell to the floor; a sullen look on his faceplates, “I guess it’s over.”

“WHY AREN’T YOU CELEBRATING?!” Skywarp squealed.

“Well, can’t really celebrate anyone getting murdered, I mean,” the blue youngling studied his hands, “it’s too bad because…a lot of what he did was because he was drunk, and…they say that effects ya.” He sighed, “I hope he finds peace now.”

“HELLO?!” He kidnapped you!” his little brother came faceplates to faceplates with him, as if to get through to him.

“Oh, I know, I know…” Thundercracker admitted, “I guess I just think…he probably loved me, but High-Grade Energon corrupted his processor. He really hurt me, and Mom…he killed Harvey and my two halio-hamsters…” he was looking at the very spot he had found them laying there, “he was nothing like Dad. I’m…we’re very lucky to have him.”

Skywarp’s short attention span had him already bouncing and thinking about the arcade, tuning his brother out a bit.

“Dad’s my real Sire,” Thundercracker concluded, “A Sire is someone that guides you, protects you, is good to you…It’s not something anybody can really teach you, you either have that gift, or you don’t. Dad is everything my Father wasn’t.”

“Well, I’m glad your old Sire’s dead!” Skywarp shrieked, “He deserved it!”

“Why do you say that?” TC asked.

“Well, DUH!” the sparkling rolled his optics, “cause now you’re not gonna wake up screaming that you’re being kidnapped again!”
Even years later, Thundercracker would occasionally cry out in his sleep about his Father abducting him, and the shooting of the two policemechs, usually loud enough to wake his little brother. Sometimes even waking their Creators.

“I still do that?” TC asked shamefully.

Skywarp nodded.

“Sorry,” the blue youngling pulled his little brother to sit on his knee and loosely hugged him, “I-I’m…really grateful that Mom and Dad love me, and protecting me all time. And that I didn’t go down the wrong path after what happened. And you…I’m grateful to have my little brother.”

Most of these profound statements were lost on the sparkling, “Are you gonna take me to the arcade?!”

“Sure, sure, in a little while,” TC nodded, used to this from his baby brother, “Just lemme finish this essay, okay?” He was still shaky, “W-Why don’t you play with your game console while I work on it.”

Thundercracker let him down and tried to go back to his datapad; the words seemed to blur for a moment as he tried to find his place where he had left off.

Their Dad knocked on the door, asking if he could come in. Thundercracker told him yes.

The adult Seeker could tell, just by looking at his eldest’s expression, that TC knew what he was about to say.

“It’s okay, Dad,” TC nodded, “Skywarp told me.”

Their Sire sighed momentarily at that, before asking Thundercracker if he wanted to talk about it.

“I’m okay, Dad,” the blue youngling tried to reassure him, “there’s nothing we can do, really.”

His Stepfather sat down next to him and told him about the phone call, using much more sensitive terminology than Skywarp had used. All the while, the boys’ Mother stood in the doorway.

TC listened, having a rather indifferent reaction, “Dad, he did it to himself.” He gave a slight smile as he said, “As far as I’m concerned, my real father is sitting right here.”

Their moment of closeness was obliterated by their little one, “DAD! I WANNA GO TO THE ARCADE!”

Their Creator told his youngest to have patience; Skywarp rolled his optics in response.

After Thundercracker assured his parents that he was alright and that he was only worried to finish his homework, the couple said they would do something as a family that evening, possibly going out somewhere nice for dinner, just to take everyone’s processors off the hard news.

After they left their kids alone, their Sire noted to his wife that, if there was any silver lining in this mess, he would finally be able to officially adopt Thundercracker.

The youngling tried to read back over his homework, but the shock of his biological Father being offline in prison was too much for him to just pretend it never happened, “Ugh, I gave up, let’s go to the arcade.”

“YAY!” Skywarp shouted, jumping up and down again, “I love you! I love you!” he grabbed his
older brother and glommed onto him, “You’re the best big brother!”

“You’re the best little brother, Warp,” TC couldn’t help himself from hugging back; his little sibling always knew how to cheer him up.

End of Flashback:

The two brothers were sitting just as close now as they were then. Their memory files having played out, they were back in present time.

“Guess I’ve never been…sensitive,” Skywarp admitted now, cringing.

“Oh, okay,” the blue Seeker helped him up, and got him back into the sofa bed, “listen, no matter what’s going on, we’re gonna be okay, alright?”

“I wanna sleep with you…” was all Skywarp said, looking down, “don’t leave me.”

“Sure,” TC finally got the other settled in the pillows and the hot water bottle on his pregnant belly. Their two blankets weren’t the warmest, so he held Skywarp in his arms for their warmth.
Chapter 35: By Transformersnewfan

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Gravechaser was absolutely seething with burning rage. An inferno of wrath embodied in a horrid, clawed form.

“The slagger actually referenced to my death with glee!” the ghost couldn’t believe it! Being able to ‘hear’ their memories, the monster was enraged anew by Skywarp’s blithe attitude towards his memory! The only thing keeping the ghost from tearing Skywarp limb from limb was the rodent’s current proximity to the one he once called his son. And now knowing the truth, the sight of Thundercracker disgusted him now. It was Skywarp that poisoned his son’s thinking! It was his fault! IT WAS ALL SKYWARP’S FAULT!!!

The two Seekers have been recharging for around an hour, with TC snoring loudly as he always did, when Skywarp opened his optics. He thought he had heard a strange noise. His sparkling shifted around, apparently awake as well. His belly still felt tight and full. And then there was a pain that felt as sharp as a stab wound.

That frightened the pregnant Jet; he sat up, worried because this wasn’t the same pain on his right side that he was still experiencing, THIS one had come from his gestational chamber.

Twenty-six weeks was too early for labor pains, wasn’t it? Panicking, he thought about waking his brother, but part of him was just trying to stay calm.

His pregnancy datapads were in their berthroom. He didn’t want to go in there. Maybe TC’s tablet would have the answers. It was on the desk.

Skywarp got up carefully, still aching, it seemed like ten miles to get to the desk when it was actually less than ten steps. Panting now, he grabbed the tablet and began searching. Finally, he found it.

“Braxton Hicks contractions,” he whispered to himself, reading. At twenty-six weeks carrying, it was actually more common than he realized. The website described it as the muscle cables practicing flexing for labor. As long as the pains were not frequent or severe—his were not—it was nothing to worry about.

Skywarp sighed in relief, turning the tablet off. He yawned now, turning to go back to bed…

The tablet’s light turned back on, as if someone touched it, illuminating the whole living room like a lighthouse.

The carrying flyer figured he didn’t turn it off property, “Pregnant processor again,” and walked back and again turned it off.

And it lit up for the third time immediately, making the Seeker yelp! Then the tablet shot off the desk and clear across the room, whizzing by him and crashing into a corner, knocking it offline. At least this time it didn’t hit him in the helm!
Thundercracker stirred but didn’t wake up.

Skywarp’s spark was pounding very fast; he didn’t want to be attacked again. He bolted to the wash racks, locking the door behind him, panting and holding his tummy protectively. After a few minutes, there were no further sounds. The pregnant Jet went to the sink and splashed some cool water on his faceplates. He was both feverish and chilled at the same time; he wasn’t sure if these were more pregnancy symptoms or more indigestion or if he was just getting sick. He stood fully to look at himself in the mirror. And saw not only his own reflection but the image of a torn, battered Seeker standing right behind him!

“AAAAAUUUUGGGGHHHHHHH!!!” he screamed at the top of his air intakes, the apparition was horrific: Wings broken in several places; Energon-blood was seeping from multiple wounds; a few metal dentra missing, the being looked like it had gone fifteen rounds with Megatron in the Gladiatorial pits in Kaon and lost.

The shouting retched TC from his sleep immediately, “SKYWARP!” he shouted back, rushing to the wash racks.

“W-What are you?!” Skywarp rasped out, twisting around suddenly.

What it said was both sarcastic and ironic.

“Pavement pizza.” Gravechaser grinned. He sucker-punched the carrying Seeker in the smell receptors, before pushing Warp against a wall.

Thundercracker couldn’t open the door. It was locked! He began banging his fists against it, trying to break it down! “SKYWARP! OPEN THE DOOR!”

“L-LEAVE ME ALONE!” Skywarp fought back, using all his strength to push himself away from the wall.

Gravechaser reverted to his evil form and slashed across Skywarp’s chestplates and canopy glass with his claws, leaving long, Energon-bloodied scratches, just like the ones that had healed over on the backs of his wings.

“Listen to me, you little fool,” the ghost snarled, using the same words that Starscream had used months earlier, “everything up until now has just been a warning.” The monster leaned in within an itch of Skywarp’s faceplates, black optics flaring, “After what I heard tonight, I swear, when I offline your worthless steel hide, I’ll make YOU look like what you so-called ‘Pavement Pizza’!” he spat hot Energon through his fangs at the last two words.

“GET AWAY FROM ME!!!!” Skywarp was keening hysterically now, “YOU’RE DEAD!!! GET AWAY FROM ME!!!!” He was being driven insane, and he knew it. But he still had to protect his unborn daughter. He pushed back against Gravechaser’s force, freeing himself and opening the door! He ran out of the wash racks and into his big brother’s arms, sobbing, and keening, “AUUUGGGGHHHHH, AUUUGGGGHHHHH!”

Thundercracker grabbed him and held him, “I gotcha, I gotcha!” looking into the wash racks, and, typically, seeing nothing there.

“AAAAUUUUUGGGGHHHHH!!!” Skywarp continued to cry out, pointing at the empty space. “H-HE’S IN THERE!” His chestplates burned where the scratches were.

“I believe you,” Thundercracker told him firmly, seeing the injuries and becoming absolutely fed up with these attacks. He kept a firm hold on his carrying brother, grabbing the nearest object—a lamp
—and tossing it at the spot where the attack had taken place, shattering the lamp.

“THIS IS THE LAST STRAW, AFTHOLE!” the blue Seeker bellowed at the thin air, “YOU EVER TOUCH MY BROTHER AGAIN, AND I’LL TAKE YOU APART WITH MY BARE HANDS!!!”

Skywarp was in full hysterics now, hurting and screaming, everything he should not be doing while carrying.

“SICK, SON-OF-A-RETRORAT!” Thundercracker roared at the room, “STAY OUTTA HERE!”

It was almost dawn, and the loud screaming and hollering awoke the Coneheaded Seekers in their quarters across the hallway.

Dirge and Ramjet came to the front door, with Thrust covering from behind.

“TC!” Dirge called as he knocked hard, “What’s all the racket?!”

But first, he grabbed a towel and held it to the other’s wound and led him towards the door.

:T-TEECEE:, Skywarp realized something awful, :T-They’re gonna think y-you did this…:

“I don’t care,” Thundercracker told him as he moved the file cabinet with one hand; not letting go of Warp with the other. He didn’t want the attacker pulling him away from him. He opened the door and told their Comrades angrily, “Something attacked him again.”

Dirge’s optics widened, “Which way did he go?”

“Think he’s still inside,” he pointed at the wash racks, “check around while I take care of him.”

Dirge and Thrust, guns drawn, checked the entire quarters, while Ramjet helped Thundercracker clean and bandage the newest cuts. Poor Skywarp started chewing on the towel to keep from screaming again.

Finally, the Coneheads pronounced the quarters safe, “We couldn’t find anything,” Thrust told their Lieutenant, “there’s nobody here.”

“No, SOMEBODY was here, Thrust!” TC insisted, standing up, “Somebody is after him!”

The maroon Conehead slung his gun across the back of his neck cables and gave his superior a sideways glance, “Thundercracker, you had the door locked. There’s no other way for anybody to get in and outta here.”

“What the slag’s THAT supposed to mean,” the blue Seeker crossed his arms, taking a defensive tone.

“All I see’s a broken lamp and stuff thrown around here,” Thrust continued, “maybe…you two had a fight or something?”

“Absolutely not,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “and if you’re gonna accuse me, I can just as easily turn around and suggest one of YOU’VE been breaking and outta here!”

“Come on, Thrust,” Ramjet told his friend, “TC wouldn’t do nothing.”

Thrust shrugged and turned to leave.
Dirge seemed to sit on the fence.

“FINE!” Thundercracker threw his hands up, “I was gonna ask you guys to let him stay with you but forget it!”

The three Coneheads left, with Ramjet giving TC a look to say, he believed him.

Thundercracker groaned and re-barricaded the door.

From the time the Coneheaded Seekers entered to the time they left, Skywarp had not uttered a sound. He just sat on the side of the sofa bed, one of the thin blankets wrapped around him, rubbing his belly, trying in vain to calm his squirming sparkling.

:Momma! Momma!: she was upset, :Crystal scared!: Skywarp tried rocking himself back and forth as if to rock his child, but his own silent sobbing was belying his movements.

Seeing them like that, the blue Seeker felt like he failed as a brother and an uncle. “Warp?” he whispered, “Can I help?” He came over and hugged him again, one hand rubbing the other’s belly tenderly, “I know you’re scared. I’m scared too. But, I’m gonna protect you two, okay?” He got him to lay back down, “You gotta rest…you need your rest,” he covered Skywarp with both their blankets, continuing to rub his belly, “Listen…I-I figured this out. This stuff happens when I’m asleep, right? S-So, I’ll stay awake and watch over you.”

Skywarp’s optics were exhausted, :TC…I’m so sorry.: “Why are you sorry, kiddo?” Thundercracker smiled at him, using his other hand to stroke his little brother’s forehelm, “You didn’t do anything wrong.”

:They’re blaming you…: Skywarp let a small sob escape his vocalizer, :I told you, they’re gonna think you did this to me.: “Doesn’t matter what those guys think,” TC whispered, “I’ll explain everything to Megatron, and he’ll handle them. All I care about is you and Crystal.”

The rays of morning sunlight began to shine through the windows; it had been one hell of a night. But Skywarp was finally settling down, closing his optics as Thundercracker continued to stroke his forehelm, “Shhhh, I’ll watch over you…” The black and purple Seeker was finally soothed enough to go back into his recharge mode. As promised, his older brother stayed awake, letting the other sleep on his shoulder. Then, if he had blinked he would have missed it, he saw the tiny shift in the other’s belly.

“Hey there,” TC whispered, almost in a sing-songy way, “are you, Crystal?” He knew Skywarp didn’t like anyone feeling his belly, but tonight he seemed to let Thundercracker rub it a couple of times, so he hoped the other wouldn’t mind, “don’t worry, okay? Momma’s gonna be alright…”

The sparkling could distinct her uncle’s vocals, settling down and curling up, falling asleep.

Thundercracker hummed a little lullaby since he couldn’t remember the words exactly. He would have to learn new ones soon, he smiled.

The plan was set in motion; it seemed, Gravechaser scowled from his attic lair. It was the ghost’s
plan now to not only torment Skywarp but to pin his actions on Thundercracker, thus having one destroy the other and vice versa. He decided he would lay low for a while, just to keep the Cons guessing. And above all, he didn’t want Thundercracker to put the pieces together.
Starscream headed down the hallways to his brothers’ shared quarters. Emotions were swirling, hands clasped tightly behind his back, not sure what to think.

First, Skywarp had shut him out all night, which wasn’t surprising considering their ongoing feud. The second thing on his processor was much more bizarre though: Thrust had asked for a meeting with him and told him some rather disturbing allegations. During their conversation, he got a message from TC over their Trine Bond, telling him they needed to talk, but of course, he wasn’t about to share that with the maroon Conehead. Thrust was a notorious social-climber; the red and white Seeker hadn’t forgotten how, when he in his last week of pregnancy with his triplets, the low-ranking flyer submitting the latest revision to his resume for the position of the Air Commander. It paid to be Bonded to the Leader.

Starscream never involved Megatron or Soundwave in any dispute amongst the Decepticon Air Force, feeling that Vosian Seekers should always keep their private fights just that: Private.

While Thrust was talking, a vocal popped into his helm, telling him a sad, but a very possible explanation.

Some five hours after the latest vicious assault, Skywarp was still sleeping peacefully, albeit giving off a shiver every once in a while, on the sofa bed. His brother had refilled the hot water bottle and held it to him and stroked his helm, trying to keep him in his recharge circle.

Thundercracker was yawning now, having quietly cleaned up all the pieces of the broken lamp, straightened up their quarters, and in general pacing around, keeping on the lookout for the supranational assailant. In his spark, he really had hoped it was the Autobots, if only because he could easily fight any one of them. But the night’s numerous, unexplainable events left him believing they indeed had a ghost haunting their quarters, and it seemed to be singularly focused on his carrying little brother!

As soon as it was a decent hour of the morning, he contacted Starscream. He felt he had to tell him about what was going on. But, he had to gauge his high-strung brother gently: If he was in no mood to listen, maybe he could, at the very least, ask Star to guard Skywarp and let him take a nap.

When their Trine brother arrived, Skywarp began to wake up. Seeing Starscream come in, he quickly pretended he was still fast asleep.

“What’s going on, Thundercracker?” Starscream asked his older brother in a rather cold tone, not tipping his hand.

“Ugh, you wouldn’t believe it,” the blue Seeker rubbed as his optics, “you really wouldn’t.” He held the door open before realizing that the other had come alone, “Where are the kids?”

Starscream: “With Ravage.”
“Oh,” TC was confused, “thought we were sparkling-sitting today.”

“You never answered my question,” Starscream persisted, “I asked you what’s going on?”

“Umph,” the blue Seeker didn’t know where to begin, gesturing the other to follow him to where their youngest was resting, “We didn’t sleep all night. He was having nightmares; then he was sick… and we decided to sleep out here on the sofa.”

Skywarp was still acting as if he was in recharge, not wanting to talk to Starscream.

“Well,” the middle Seeker was being uppity, “I wouldn’t know, considering he blocked the Trine Bond!”

“He did?” TC didn’t know.

“YES, Thundercracker, he did!” Starscream shrieked.

“Shhh, shut up,” TC waved at him, “you wanna wake him up? I told you, he didn’t sleep all night.”

“Well, you KNOW I hate it when either of you does that!” Star insisted, “Why did he do that then, hmm?”

“I don’t know, Star,” Thundercracker was getting tired, “I just told ya, he doesn’t feel good, he was crying all night.”

His expression softening, but still suspicious, Starscream asked now, “Why was he crying all night?”

He ate too much or something,” the blue Seeker was yawning again, “and before that was that nightmare…”

“Hhmmm,” Starscream went to tuck him in, and noticed the shivering, “where’s his blanket?”

“…Um, in there…” TC looked towards their berthroom.

Starscream: “Well, go get it!”

TC: “Come on…”

Starscream looked at him, “What?”

“Just…come on,” Thundercracker told him.

The blue Seeker opened the door and looked inside, “Stand here,” he told Star, making him hold the door open with his chassis. Then he dashed in and grabbed the comforter as fast as he could and rushed out.

“What are you doing?!” Starscream honestly wondered if his older brother had gone stark raving mad.

“Just…didn’t wanna go in there alone is all,” was what TC was willing to say at the moment. Instead, he focused on finally wrapping Skywarp up properly before again stroking his forehelm, “I mean…” he started to choke back coolant tears, both from tiredness and emotion, “I-I…Every time I leave him alone, something bad happens to ‘em.”

Starscream, ever the pokerfaceplates, sat on the sofa bed, already forming his dark theory, “What
“Well, first he woke up screaming,” Thundercracker began as he paced the room, trying to keep his vocals down for Skywarp, “he had a nightmare that I had killed someone in our living room. Then, he got sick in his fuel tanks, and he was afraid to sleep in our berthroom. So, we came out here…We were okay for a while, and we slept out on the sofa bed. And…I guess I was sleeping, and, something attacked him in the wash racks.”

Starscream: “Is that so…”

“T-The door got locked, and I ended up practically breaking the door,” TC gestured towards it, “and he had scratches again…AGAIN, Star! So I was screaming at whoever was in there, and I smashed the lamp at ’em, and then the guys came, and…and, I don’t know what to think anymore…and I’ve been up all night, and my tablet’s missing, and his stuff’s missing, and…” he was breaking down, “there’s never anybody around when this stuff’s happening!”

“Thundercracker,” Starscream bit his lip component, not knowing how to ask this, “were you drinking High-Grade Energon last night?”

What?

“No,” the blue Seeker shook his helm.

Starscream: “What did you do before all this started?”

“I was scouting,” Thundercracker couldn’t think of anything out of the ordinary that occurred, “I wrote up my report to Megatron before I went to bed.”

Starscream was very serious, “Do you use Dark Energon?”

“No,” TC’s optic brows raised and he shook his helm, “I know it all sounds crazy…but I—”

“Then I’m afraid you have something called, ‘Dissociative identity disorder,’” Starscream told him lowly.

TC: “Wha?”

“Dissociative identity disorder,” the red and white Seeker repeated, “it usually manifests itself in mechs in their mid-twenties. It’s associated with sparklinghood developmental trauma.”

Thundercracker could NOT believe what he was hearing; Skywarp was absolutely mortified.

“You think that I—?” he couldn’t even say it.

“You’re the only one around when these things are occurring,” Starscream’s tone was accusatory, “In fact, you’re the one that usually finds him after an attack.”

“BECAUSE I LIVE HERE!” Thundercracker barked back.

“You said it yourself just now,” Starscream continued, “the door’s locked, you never see anyone else coming in OR out; there’s never anything picked up by the security cameras, and it’s only YOUR vocals anybody ever reports yelling! In fact, YOU were the one that reported the attack with the sonogram tape!”

“Starscream, I AM NOT the one doing this!” TC insisted. “I’m not crazy! Someone or someTHING is after him!”
“What I’m saying is, you don’t KNOW when you’re doing this,” the red and white Seeker insisted, “D.I.D. is characterized by time disturbances and the inability to account for one’s actions during periods beyond normal forgetfulness, and loss referring to time, sense of self and consciousness.”

“FUCK YOU!” Thundercracker roared back, not caring who heard him, “You don’t even know what you’re talking about!”

“You’re mentally unstable, and you don’t even recognize this,” Starscream vehemently argued, “I think you need to submit yourself for testing.”

“He’s not hurting me, Star,” Skywarp sat up, revealing he was listening the entire time, “You think you know everything cause you’re a scientist and scrap. You’ll never understand.”

“What won’t I ever understand?” Starscream was in defensive mode because he could see this was going to be two against one.

Skywarp pulled his legs to his stomach and rested his arms there, looking away, knowing the other was too closed-minded to accept what was happening.

Starscream: “WELL?!”

“Starscream, we think something weird’s been going on,” Thundercracker calmed himself down enough to try to explain, “and it’s not ME, cause I’m not around for a lotta this scrap…”

“And I’m saying that’s a typical symptom of D.I.D.,” the other kept insisting, “Individuals often report being asleep when in fact they are committing heinous acts and having no memory files thereafter and then, often feeling more exhausted than before they went to bed.” He shook his helm, “Y-You could be dangerous to my sparklings if I’m not careful.”

“WELL IF THAT’S HOW YOU FEEL, THEN DON’T EVER BRING THEM HERE AGAIN!” Thundercracker bellowed now, “FRAG YOU AND YOUR DAMN KIDS!!!”

“Fine,” Starscream started for the door, “You wanna have a murder-suicide, be my guest. Just don’t do it on Decepticon grounds.”

“FRAG YOU, STAR!” Skywarp yelled after him, gathering up his blankets, “You’re the mental one around here! Y-You’ve been mental ever since you Bonded with Megatron!”

The red and white Seeker glared back at him.

“I-IN FACT,” Skywarp yelled now, “Y-YOU CAN’T EVER SEE MY DAUGHTER!!! YOU’LL NEVER S-SEE MY BABY!”

Starscream pretended the comment didn’t faze him, opening the front door and walking out.

“You NEVER WANTED ME TO HAVE A SPARKLING IN THE FIRST PLACE!” Skywarp continued, “YOU THINK I FORGOT WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO TO ME?! HUH??!! YOU THINK I COULD E-EVER FORGIVE YOU FOR THAT?! HUH?! T-TAKE THAT STUFF YOU GAVE ME BACK!!! C-CAUSE YOU DIDN’T MEAN ANY OF IT!!! N-NOW, GET O-OUT!”

Refusing to acknowledge the younger’s ultimatums, their Trine Leader simply stated to his Lieutenant and eldest brother, “Thundercracker, until you submit yourself to the Med-Bay for treatment, I’m taking you off all assigned duties.” He went into the hallways.
“No, I quit,” Thundercracker refused to let himself collapse under the pressure of the accusations, “I’m outta here. And the minute he can travel, I’m taking them with me!”

“YOU CAN’T QUIT!” Starscream hadn’t expected this, losing his composure now, “I’M YOUR TRINE LEADER AND I REFUSE TO ALLOW IT!”

“YOU BROKE UP OUR TRINE WITH YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS US!” Thundercracker roared, “YOU REFUSE TO EVEN CONSIDER WHAT I’VE HAD TO SAY!!! INSTEAD, YOU JUST FLING YOUR PHYCHO-PSUDO BABBLE AT ME! YOU THINK EITHER OF US WILL EVER TRUST YOU AGAIN??!”

“Keep yelling,” Starscream sneered back, walking down the hallway, “so the whole Base can know you’re crazy.”

TC followed him out, standing his ground, “YOU WERE A FRAGGING ORPHAN! MY FAMILY TOOK YOU IN WHEN YOU HAD NOWHERE TO GO!!! YOU WOULD’VE ENDED UP IN THE GUTTERS OF VOS!!! I SAVED YOUR WORTHLESS LIFE WHEN YOU WERE IN JAIL FOR CHASING AFTER THAT SHUTTLE YOU WERE SO SURE YOU WERE IN LOVE WITH YOU!!!” He was on the verge of crying himself now, “AND THIS IS THE THANKS I GET!!! NOW THAT YOU’VE BEEN SLEEPING WITH MEGATRON AND YOU GOT HIS SONS, YOU THINK YOU’RE UNTOUCHABLE AND YOU DON’T NEED US ANYMORE!!! WELL FINE!!! WE DON’T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU NEITHER!!!”

He went back inside and slammed the door. Then he fell against the door, hiding his optics into his arm, crying silently.

Skywarp was more vocally crying, sputtering and making static with his vocalizer; coolant tears were running down his faceplates, “I-I’m so sorry, T-TC,” he rasped out, “I-I…”

The blue Seeker just came over and hugged him; they cried together for a while.

The broken Seeker Trine didn’t communicate again for the rest of the day.

Starscream busied himself with his sparklings, not confiding in Megatron, nor was he ready to follow through on his threats. Instead, he sat in his Father-in-law’s recliner, knowing full well he had just severed ties to his family. Now Thundercracker had cut off his end of their Trine Bond as well. The red and white Seeker couldn’t remember the last time both brothers had cut him off at the same time. His spark felt so…cold without being able to feel them.

For his part, Megatron worked with Soundwave, preparing for their meeting with Shockwave, both unaware of the feud.

“What are we gonna do, TC?” Skywarp asked now.

The two were sitting on the floor of their quarters, playing video games; the repetitive nature of the game was a positive detraction.

“About the ghost or the idiot?” TC responded coldly. He was still angry with Starscream.

Skywarp: “About the idiot.”
“Nothing,” the blue Seeker kept playing his game, “I’ll just put in for a transfer with Soundwave.” Meaning, he would work in another division of the Decepticon Army; most likely on Cybertron.

“What about me?” the pregnant flyer turned towards him, “I-I can’t go with you.”

“Just stay in your job with Soundwave,” the other was being matter-of-factly, “and then, when you have your sparkling, you two can come join me.”

Skywarp didn’t think it would be so simple, “But…where will you go?”

“Most likely home,” TC referred to their sparklinghood house, where their Creators still lived, “at least for the holidays. Then we’ll either get our own place, and Mom and Dad can sparkling-sit during the day, or…we can live with them for a while when Crystal’s really little.”

Skywarp realized something, “TC, you sound like you’ve been thinking about this for a long time.”

“Um,” Thundercracker put down his game controller, “Yeah…since you first got hurt.” He didn’t say whether he meant, because of the sonogram tape attack itself, or that he no longer trusted Starscream. The look on his faceplates gave Skywarp his answer.

“Wow…” the pregnant flyer realized, “then why were you shopping with him and stuff?”

“Guess I thought, I don’t know,” the blue Seeker stammered, “that he cared…he didn’t.”

“No, he didn’t,” Skywarp agreed, “he’s just selfish. I hate him!”

“Me too.” TC picked up his game controller.

They were quiet for another few minutes, then Skywarp asked, “What about the ghost?”

“It can stay here,” TC looked towards the ceiling as if to order the being so, “if this place’s haunted, it’s not good to bring a newling in here anyway.”

Skywarp sighed; hurt and blaming himself for the fights.

During the course of their video games, Thundercracker was pretty quiet. Finally, he asked, “Hey Warp?”

Skywarp: “Yeah?”

“What am I like when I’m asleep?” he was almost worried what his little brother would answer.

The black and purple Seeker smiled and laughed, “You snore like a chainsaw.”

Thundercracker was serious though, “Would you…You would tell me if it was me, wouldn’t you?”

“No, TC, it’s not you,” his little brother told him, “In fact, you’re the ONLY one I can truly trust with my life…and my sparkling’s life.” The once-cheerful, carefree Seeker looked his older brother in the optics, “And if anything happens to me, I want you to take care of her for me.”

The brothers went back to their game silently, wanting to leave it at that. In fact, they played for a good few hours.

“How ya feeling?” TC asked every so often.

“Better,” was the pregnant Jet’s response.
Skywarp wasn’t ready to chance it with ingesting anything heavy, instead only having low-grade Energon for meals. Then they watched a Vosian movie; then the Earth remake before it was becoming dust outside. They had pretty much lazed the day away.

“I hate going to sleep,” Skywarp moaned as he took a shower, his brother standing guard, “that was where I saw him in the mirror,” referring to the incident less than twenty-four hours earlier.

Thundercracker was holding his gun, just in case, Gravechaser made any appearance. Still, Starscream’s words about Dissociative Identity Disorder weighed heavily on his processor. He looked around the wash racks, wishing he could see an exit a living mech could have taken, still wishing Mirage was behind this. The other two opinions—a haunting or his own, unknowing doing—it was far worse than any Autobot Spy. He needed some proof…something, to prove to HIMSELF, one way or another, what was going on.

Thundercracker made his decision, “We can’t go to bed without telling Soundwave what happened.”

“Do we haveta, TC?” Skywar asked, getting out of the shower, “Can’t we pretend this one didn’t happen?” He wrapped himself in a towel, “I-I mean, I don’t want him to think I’m crazy or something. I haven’t told him about this stuff.”

“I can’t risk anything happening to you and the sparkling,” the blue flyer was determined to protect his family, more so now that he was doubting his own sanity, “What time does he finish for the day?”

“He usually works until around ten,” Skywarp told him.
It was almost eight.

TC called on his Comm-Link, “Soundwave?”

“Yes?” the Tapedeck was at his Computer Consul, as usual, checking the security perimeters and waiting for the other Decepticons to return from their night shifts. Laserbeak was coming home tonight; he always felt more at peace when his sons were with him and not out facing the dangers of the galaxy.

“It’s just not safe in our home anymore,” Thundercracker whispered.

Soundwave: “What happened?”

Skywarp was so ashamed of all this; he couldn’t bring himself to speak to the Tapedeck. He couldn’t even look at his brother directly.

“Warp got attacked again this morning,” Thundercracker spoke for both, “scratches across his chestplates…”

“Again?” the Tapedeck stood at his Consul, “Why didn’t you two report anything all day?”

“We told the other Seekers and Starscream,” TC continued, “and we had big fights with both of ‘em, so…”

“What do you mean fights?” Soundwave was furious at the situation, “Why didn’t you report this?!”

“Because Starscream didn’t believe us and we were both fretting about it all day, alright?!” the blue Seeker was getting tired of reliving the experience, “Look, I don’t wanna fight, we need your help…We need somebody to guard Skywarp.”
“I’ll be right over,” the big mech assured, closing the connection to call Megatron, “We’ve got a problem.”

Again, the two Leaders searched the entire Decepticon Underwater Base, going room to room, quarters to quarters, floor to floor.

“I can’t take this anymore, Soundwave,” Megatron barked, “we have to catch this mech and lock him up!”

Soundwave: “Affirmative.” After the Tapedeck visited the brothers and TC had given him the details of the latest arrack, he and Megatron went into full-blown alert-mode, locking down their Base, determined to protect their families and their soldiers.

Megs got on his Comm.-Link: “Scrapper: I’m ordering you and the other Constructicons to change all the locks and codes. Do it now, before nightfall!”

The Front-Loader groaned.

Thundercracker and Skywarp sat on their sofa; their front door wide open, watching and listening to the active investigation. The younger Seeker all wrapped up in his robe and his blanket covering him up to his chin, covering both his round belly and the freshly changed bandages on his chestplates. He wished they could just go stay with Starscream and his family, but that fight…and then, he realized something. Gravechaser was influencing their brother.

In the middle of this, Astrotrain popped his chassis in the doorway, “Hey, you guys doing alright?”

TC yawned as he tried to answer, “Okay, I guess…” he had only two hours of sleep, and that was nearly twenty-four hours earlier, rubbing at his optics, “Just need a good night’s recharge.”

“Well, don’t worry,” the Triple Changer nodded, “when we find this guy, Blitz and I are gonna take turns beatin’ him up for ya.” He left after that.

When Thundercracker yawned again, Skywarp told him, “TC, you gotta sleep. You can’t…”

“If only I could figure this out,” Thundercracker was frustrated, “maybe you should go stay with Soundwave or something.”

“I don’t want this thing separating you and me, Thundercracker.” Skywarp leaned against his brother’s shoulder, “I-I think that’s why it’s making us fight with Star all the time and stuff…”

The blue Seeker considered this for a moment, “You mean, you think this ghost or whatever it is… talks to him or something?”

“Maybe…” Skywarp had only just thought of this theory, “When he was yelling at you…He scared me today.”

The blue Seeker thought back to the earlier fights, from the one in the waiting room after the sonogram tape attack, to the fight at Thanksgiving, to this latest bitter feud, “Me too…” It was an interesting theory, but first thing was first: He had to rule HIMSELF out as a suspect.

“Soundwave?” TC called again on his Comm.-Link.
The Tapedeck came to the door.

TC: “Is there any way to set up a camera in our berthroom?”

“It would take a few hours to install one and then link it to the mainframe,” Soundwave explained, “between the searches and locking down the Base, I won’t be able to get to it until tomorrow morning, at the earliest.”

The blue Seeker had another idea, “Would you mind if we slept in the Control Room?” He stood up, “We need to…see what’s happening.”

“I don’t see a problem,” Soundwave nodded, “I’ll get the others to move the boxes. Give us a few minutes.” He took his keys out, “We also must change the locks. And I still have to wait for Laserbeak to return.”

TC: “Let us know when you’re ready.”

The pregnant Jet sighed, embarrassed by the continued incidents and now, the attention of everyone.

The Decepticons’ nightly recharge cycles were collectively delayed by the searches and locksmashship. Cons were walking up and down the hallway, waiting to turn in for the evening.

In the Control Room, Megatron, Astrotrain, and Blitzwing hefted the boxes around and piled enough of them against the west wall to open the sofa bed; none of them concerned with which boxes were where, as long as they were out of the way.

In the middle of the chaos, Laserbeak returned from days at the Autobot Base. His Creator couldn’t help but wrap his arms around him tenderly.

“Ooaa Father, the sheer mediocrity of the daily routine of the average Autobot existence,” the Bird bemoaned, “it was nearly too much to bear.”

“I know,” Soundwave told him, “but we needed to confirm Mirage’s whereabouts.”

“In my humble opinion, Father,” Laserbeak reported, “the mech is far too blithe to derive such a crafty infiltration.”

Long Haul was busy drilling out the locks of the Control Room, his tools making a loud buzzing.

“I have observed Ironhide behaving rather surreptitiously,” the Condor attempted to speak over the noise, giving the Constructicon a cold stare, “he has taken up smoking again after a long period of abstinence.”

“Did you learn of anything substantial?” Soundwave asked, “Right now, we only have circumstantial connections.” He was referring to the Van’s time as a member of the Elite Guard and the chanting incident, none of which had been explained to Laserbeak in detail as of yet.

“Unfortunately, none whatsoever, Father,” the Bird sneered, “Ironhide did not confide in any of his Comrades in my presence.”

“We need a full conference,” the Tapedeck concluded, “I’ll inform Megatron.”
Finally, by eleven in the evening, all the Constructicons’ work was finished, and the investigation again proved fruitless. The Decepticons were allowed back to their respective quarters.

In the meantime, the blue Seeker took his shower, while Skywarp sat on the trash can, waiting for him. They were afraid to be apart. TC just threw on a tee shirt and lounge pants, and Skywarp snuggled into his bulky rube. From there, they went to the Control Room, carrying their pillows and blankets.

“Why don’t you guys wanna come stay with us?” Megatron asked curiously, “You did before.”

“We had a big brawl with Screamer this morning,” Thundercracker explained, “didn’t he tell you?”

The Decepticon Leader shook his helm no.

“Oh, well,” the blue Seeker shrugged, grinning sarcastically, “he fired me, and we need a place to go.”

“Oh Lord,” Megatron rolled his optics, “I’ll handle this. And you KNOW you’re not fired, TC.”

“I-It’s my fault,” Skywarp was whispering to himself, “everything’s my fault.” He laid down heavily, wincing again; the act of moving suddenly causing the fleeting pain in his right side again.

“I mean,” Megs couldn’t help but feel sorry for his two younger brothers-in-law, “is this room going to be comfortable enough?”

“I need the cameras,” TC insisted.

Soundwave meanwhile, adjusted the security camera to be trained on the sofa bed, “You’re both welcome to stay with me.”

“Thanks.” TC made no movement to do so though.

“Are you alright, Skywarp?” the Tapedeck wasn’t about to let this go.

“I’m…better,” was all the pregnant Jet could muster. He was shivering again, still chilled from the wash.

“Take my berth,” Soundwave insisted, “I’ll sleep on the sofa.”

“I told you guys, I WANT the cameras!” the blue Seeker was being unusually stubborn, “I just…I need to see what happens.” He realized he didn’t want them to think he was using pregnant Skywarp for bait, “I’ll protect him.”

“Alright,” Megatron realized it was getting very late, “we can continue this in the morning.”

They left, and Soundwave locked the French Doors behind him.

Megatron entered his master quarters, not surprised to find his mate, wide awake and rocking back and forth in his Father’s chair; their three sparkling not only awake, they were not in their crib, and their little optics were fixed on their Mother. The only one in recharge was Ravage.

“Momma no speak,” Darkmount babbled to his Sire.

Megatron knelt in front of the chair and took Starscream’s hands in his own, “What’s wrong, my
“I’m hurting them,” Starscream began, looking away, “I’m hurting my brothers, and I don’t know why I’m hurting them. I don’t want to…I don’t know why we’re fighting like we are. Skywarp… We’re fighting all the time now. And…My behavior has been very…inconsistent. Megatron…” he sobbed now, “They’re never going to speak to me again.”

Megatron stood and pulled him into a hug, “It’s alright, we’ll figure this all out.”

“T-There’s something wrong with us,” the red and white Seeker sobbed, “W-We’re not…”

“Whoever this intruder is, this is causing this,” Megatron told him, “Star, I want you to listen to me, you cannot, as the Trine Leader, allow whoever this is to come between you and your brothers. Do whatever you have to do to make up with them. We CANNOT go to Tarn with you not speaking to them, do you understand?”

Part of Starscream felt like his mate was treating him like one of the sparklings, but before he could speak, Megatron told him, “I believe your brother Skywarp’s life is in danger.”

“Yes,” Star admitted, though thinking of someone else, “I’m worried that Thundercracker’s—”

Megatron cut him off, “It’s NOT Thundercracker, and you KNOW that, Star. You know Thundercracker couldn’t have caused the entire Decepticon army to oversleep by six hours.”

Okay, the former Gladiator had him there, but the Seeker could see that Megatron wasn’t telling him everything, “What are you—?”

“Look, don’t ask me, Star,” Megatron insisted, albeit gently, “let’s just get through tonight, come on.” He picked up Darkmount, “The children need their recharge and so do we.”

Starscream knew his mate wasn’t telling him what his true theory on the assailant was and seemed to be desperate to get off the subject, but, he was very tired, “Alright…” he picked up his little Darkwing, with Dawning at his side, wanting to walk, “We’ll talk in the morning?” He had his own agenda though.

Megatron pretended not to hear him, instead busying himself with their son. After all, how could he POSSIBLY explain to his scientist Bondmate that there was an evil entity stalking Skywarp and his unborn sparkling?
Chapter 37: By Transformersnewfan

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By Transformersnewfan

It was six in the morning, and the night had passed without incident. Skywarp awoke from one of the better night’s recharge he had had in a while. The Christmas decorations were pretty and glinting in the early light.

“Good morning, my Crystal,” he whispered to his child, “did you sleep okay?”

He could feel his baby’s tiny pedes kick up and down playfully, getting stronger with her movements.

“I’ll take that as either a yes, or…you wanna play soccer,” he smiled, still half-sleep. He looked over at his older brother, who had insisted on sleeping as far to the other side of the sofa bed as he could, without falling over the edge. He was laying on his front with his arms up, snoring loudly, and he had both his hands firmly wedged into the mattress coils, using them as restraints. He didn’t tell anyone except Skywarp about that.

“Oh TC,” the pregnant flyer pried the other’s digits out of the coils, first the left, then the right, as gently as possible, “I don’t want you to worry so much…” he moved the other’s arms to a more restful position, careful not to wake him. Then he tucked the blanket around him, “You stay sleeping, okay?”

Skywarp quietly stood, one hand holding his heavy lower belly, and moved around the boxes towards Soundwave’s Computer Consul.

The dark flyer was determined to solve this haunting; he FINALLY had the true designation of his tormentor. He immediately searched the computer files on the Iacon Correctional Center: the names of the inmates flashed on the screen from top to bottom, lighting up the room.

He looked back, making sure his older brother hadn’t stirred in his rest. TC hadn’t. So Skywarp began scrolling the list.

There: He saw the name Scourge. He clicked on it: It was the dead mech’s inmate number and nothing more.

Skywarp felt immensely disappointed, “N-No,” holding his helm. But then something caught his optic; Soundwave had listed the file as ‘incomplete.’ It was the Tapedeck’s own way of designating which of the paperless-society project’s electronic folders had their information fully implemented, which this one had not. Skywarp backspaced and saw that the entire folder was listed as ‘incomplete,’ meaning there was still files in those boxes yet to be properly processed.

The pregnant flyer sighed; he had to find out more. He took the box nearest to himself and began riffling through the dirty old papers. This box seemed to contain files on Polyhex and their housing developments. He moved this box to the floor and opened another one. This box had information on Shockwave’s investigation into Sentinel Prime’s takeover of the Energon Mine in Tarn. Skywarp was about to push it away when a photo caught his attention. He pulled it out to look at it: It was a black and white photograph of all the miners.

It made him smile and momentarily forgot the intensity of his quest; but then again, his pregnancy was also limiting his already short attention span. He
found Shockwave in the picture. He had his good arm around another mech: a well-built Gunformer with Megatron’s smile. The flyer smiled back at the black and white image from another time: He knew this must be Darkmount, the late Sire of Megatron, and the grandcreator of his beloved triplet nephews—the first-born being his namesake. He took the picture out and placed it on the Consul, momentary forgetting about his feud with Starscream and wanting to show it to the toddler sparklings.

But he knew there was more information still yet to be discovered. He scooted this box down to the floor and went to the next one: This was one that seemed to contain criminal records. “Okay,” he said to himself, “maybe this has something.” He started sorting through the box, reading and arranging the files as fast as he could; throwing away the unimportant envelopes in a pile on the floor; making stacks for Soundwave to input into the computer, trying to find anything that could help him. He groaned every so often and had to adjust himself in the chair; his belly pressed up against the Consul; it was too early in the morning to already feel so achy and tired.

Thundercracker was sound asleep, exhausted from being online nearly twenty-four hours; he hadn’t been able to get into his recharge mode until two in the morning. Skywarp was being as quiet as possible as he pulled another box closer to himself. He wasn’t allowed to lift the boxes, just slide them over. This one contained mugshots of petty criminals in Iacon. While Scourge’s crimes all occurred in Vos, Skywarp hoped that it might have something on the Iacon Correctional Center! He sorted as fast as he could: alphabetizing the photos by names; he also found criminal records and began searching for everything that might lead him to an answer as to what could help him fight this. He needed to protect his family.

Gravechaser had to stay out of the range of the Control Room’s cameras, but Skywarp’s resilience was testing his patience. Time to give the worthless slugoid a punch to the gut.

A stack of boxes far towards the northern wall rose off the ground with no one touching them. Skywarp, engrossed in the files, didn’t notice at first. Then he saw the shadow of the animate cardboard boxes growing over the papers he was reading from. He turned and looked; the one stack seemed high, but he assumed it had simply been piled that way by Megatron the previous evening, not realizing it was levitating. He kept reading.

Gravechaser waved his hand and, with no sound, pulled out the box that was stacked second from the bottom, making it float across the room, hugging the wall as not to be observed by the camera; its cardboard side bushing against the paint, making a scraping sound.

The pregnant Jet definitely knew he was hearing something move. He couldn’t see over the stacks of boxes. He hands began shaking, making it hard to read. And then, the noise stopped suddenly. The Control Room suddenly felt very cold. He knew it wasn’t all in his CPU, because he could hear Thundercracker moan his sleep and curl up.

Gravechaser realized who was coming; he vanished immediately, mid-box-sliding, retreating to the attic, abandoning his prey.

Soundwave unlocked the French Doors and entered, “Hey, you’re up early.”

“Soundwave,” Skywarp was so glad to see him, “I missed you,” he was feeling more and more open about expressing his liking for the Tapedeck.

“Did you sleep well?” the large mech asked, sitting down. He took note of the still sleeping blue Seeker and made sure to keep his vocals down.

“Uh-huh,” the pregnant flyer nodded, forgetting entirely about his fears instantly, “all three of us.”
Soundwave: “Anything out of the ordinary occur?”

“Nope,” the Jet shook his helm, “I’ve been sorting through this mug shots.” He scooted the pile towards the other.

“Find anyone of interest to you?” Soundwave asked, glancing at the pictures, looking particularly at the arrestee’s hands.

“No, he’s not in there,” Skywarp frowned, “I wanna see pictures of the inmates at Iacon Correctional. Remember that chanting? I think he must’ve been in there.” He knew he should tell his friend who the ghost really was, but he was hoping for some type of proof first.

“As I said, unfortunately, they didn’t keep those sorts of records.” Soundwave was matter-of-fact on this, “Trust me, I would have looked there first.”

The pregnant flyer pouted at this, “Well then how are we gonna find him?”

“This mech cannot continue to escape our detection,” the Tapedeck told him with determination, “if he was on our Base again, we’re going to get it on tape at one point or another.” He began typing, “Every morning, I review the previous night’s footage.”

As the larger mech did so, Skywarp watched the tapes rewind and playback, one by one, every angle of the Decepticon Underwater Base. He could tell Soundwave had a much faster CPU when it came to processing the nightly rushes.

The first tape Soundwave examined was obviously the one in the Control Room. He fast-forwarded through the images of the two Seekers’ long night, the blue one sitting up for a long period of time, knees to his chestplates, afraid to go into recharge mode. When he finally did lay down, he could be seen pulling the mattress back and shoving his hands down into the coils, before finish laying his chassis down in an uncomfortable-looking position.

Soundwave looked at Skywarp for an explanation.

“Starscream told ‘em he’s like, Jekyll and Hyde,” the pregnant flyer shifted again, “and TC’s really sore about it.” He looked at the Tapedeck dead in the optics, “He’s not the one that’s hurting me, Soundwave.”

“I know,” the larger mech nodded, hearing no lie in his friend’s vocals, “we’re going to get to the bottom of this.” He turned back to his computer and continued to review the surveillance footage. After finishing, he folded his hands under his chin in frustration, “Damn.”

Skywarp was disappointed, “Nothing, huh?”

“Whoever this is,” Soundwave grumbled, “he’s not going to allow himself to be captured on camera.” He took the papers, getting to work, “We’ll just have to keep our guard up.”

They worked together on their project again, allowing the pregnant Seeker to focus on his sparkling and the paperwork, and of course, his friend. “I like watching you move,” he smiled to Soundwave, who just glanced back briefly.

In Thundercracker’s Dream:

Thundercracker was still cowering in the corner as the policemechs struggled to subdue his Father, who was now punching and kicking them and flailing like a wild animal! Yet another policemetch entered and grabbed the sparkling, scooping him up and carrying him out over his shoulder!
“I’LL KILL YOU ALL!!!” His Father shouted as Thundercracker looked back over policemech’s shoulder. His little vents gasping in terror; terror that no four-year-old should EVER have to experience.

End of Thundercracker’s Dream:

It was a little before nine in the morning when Thundercracker woke up groggily, turning over onto his back, not used to sleeping in a strange bed. He unshuttered his optics, looking at the ceiling; it took him a minute to realize where he was. Then he remembered and looked at his hands, “S-Skywarp??!” he sounded uncharacteristically scared.

“O-Oh,” the aforementioned flyer stood up and almost fell against the boxes rather clumsily; he stumbled over the papers on the floor and finally made it to his sibling, “It’s okay, TC, you’re fine… nothing’s wrong.”

Poor Thundercracker, mouth open, kept flexing his hands and looking them over and looking his little brother over for any fresh injuries.

“D’awww,” Skywarp sat down and hugged him, “You’ve got bad dreams like me?”

The blue Seeker reached his arms up and hugged back; he hadn’t dreamed of his kidnapping in years, not since he was a sparkling. He didn’t want to upset Skywarp with the details.

Soundwave could see this intruder’s effect on the two Seekers, but opted to give them their privacy, “I’ll get breakfast.”

He ended up serving both Seekers and his own sparklings, trying desperately to achieve a level of normalcy.

For his part, Megatron worked in his office, focusing on his work.

It was still early in the morning. Thundercracker returned to his quarters to take another shower, trying to wake up. Then there was knocking at the front door.

“Augggh,” the blue flyer staggered out of the wash racks and opened the door.

Trust saluted and handed him an envelope without comment.

“WHY do we haveta do this?!” Skywarp whined, “You’re gonna suffocate him in there!”

“Let’s just get through this,” Thundercracker kept his exterior resolve, staring straight at the Med-Bay ceiling.

“You’ll have to leave,” Viewfinder was rather pushy, grabbing Skywarp by his elbow and pulling him along, “no pregnant mechs allowed during testing.” He shoved the flyer through the doors.

“This is ridiculous, Megatron,” Soundwave scoffed as they sat in the Control Room, “I refuse to even perform these tests myself.”

“What do you want me to do, Soundwave?” the Decepticon Leader pinched the bridge between his smell receptors, “It’s his family, not mine.”
“I just felt a sickness in my fuel tanks, do you understand?” Starscream was standing while the other two were sitting, “Where is he coming up with this sort of slag. Could TC be making this up, WOULD he be making this up? And…If these incidents…these attacks…these dark things are coming from my brother; then I need to get him some help.”

Thundercracker braced himself, trying not to let his chassis tense up as he was slid into the Magnetic Resonance Imaging machine. He had to undergo a full exam of his CPU, his spark, and all his functions. He was scrapped down to the metal surface, stripped of all his armor, having his wings pinned back in an unnatural position, for a period of forty-five minutes to an hour. He kept his optics shuttered from the bright lights of the machinery.

Starscream had followed through with this threat: He ordered Thundercracker to undergo a full physical examination to determine if he had developed a physical or mental disorder. He was removed from the schedule until Time to be Determined. The blue Seeker did not resist; he reported to the Med-Bay for his physical.

For his part, Soundwave, as CMO, refused to entertain such a notion that the tests were necessary. He displayed his protest by declining to perform the exam himself, delegating the duties to his subordinates.

Megatron knew full well that TC was not behind the attacks, but he knew his Bondmate and knew everything had to be proven to him with science, “Once we get the results, and everything’s negative, then you need to rule him out as a suspect.”

“Very Well,” Starscream admitted, before adding, “I don’t WANT the tests to show anything, y’know.”

Skywarp paced in the Med-Bay waiting room, back and forth, back and forth, worry filling his spark. And the more he fretted, the more his sparkling quivered nervously. “O-Oh, calm down baby, p-please,” he tried rubbing his stomach, “H-He gonna be okay…I-It’s just, hot in there.” He knew how claustrophobic Thundercracker was; Starscream should understand that! His claustrophobia was even more so!

“I thought it over, I really did,” the red and white Seeker insisted, “But…I had this, dream, last night,” he knew how he was going to come off to his mate and the Tapedeck, but he felt he had to explain his actions, “I was walking around the Base…”

In Starscream’s Dream:

Starscream was getting breakfast in the mass hall, “Thundercracker?” he called out, but there was no response. So, he walked into the hallway. He didn’t see anyone, which was very unusual for a morning at the Base.

He went to the elevator; he pushed the bottom; a ‘bing’ was heard, and the doors opened. ‘Thundercracker,’ or who Starscream believed to be Thundercracker, was standing there in the elevator. The Seeker was…different, to say the least. His wings were pointy, and his grin was unnaturally wide. And…was this a darker shade of blue in his paint job? His optics were black, and
he raised his right hand with a creek…he had red claws.

End of Starscream’s Dream:

“I felt the dream was a warning,” Starscream sighed. “That…I need to look into this possibility. Especially after what Thrust told me.”

“Thrust is an opportunist.” Soundwave insisted.

Starscream just bit his lip components, not wishing to argue this time. Normally, he would, but this was a painful subject.

Finally, Thundercracker, fully re-armored, exited the Med-Bay.

“O-Oh, Teeceee…” Skywarp tackle-hugged his brother, “I was so scared…”

“Let’s just go,” the other told him; he was exhausted from the battery of physicals. The two brothers returned to their quarters.

An hour or so later, Thundercracker announced, “I’m going out.”

Skywarp: “Where?”

“Not sure,” he didn’t know either; he just wanted to leave.

So, the pregnant flyer returned to the Control Room.

With Megatron and Starscream not present, Skywarp busied himself with sorting papers. It was almost lunchtime, but he felt too sick to eat anything. It was a combination of being so pregnant and worry and hurt over his brothers fighting. He wanted to purge his tanks.

Soundwave did not wish to upset him, so he stayed quiet, working on typing up the files.

Finally, it was around two in the afternoon that the Tapedeck was sent the medical reports from the Reflectors.

“Your brother’s test results all came back excellent,” Soundwave whispered to Skywarp, “I’m calling him now.”

Clouds. Big, puffy snow clouds. Ripe for shooting.

Firing at the clouds had always been a passion for the blue Seeker, ever since he was a sparkling. Only this time, he wanted to attack the clouds out of anger. He wanted to take out his aggression on them. Punish them. Punish them for how their relationship with Starscream had fallen apart. Take it out on the clouds. Better the clouds than…Skywarp. What if he really was sick? What if he was the one attacking his beloved younger sibling? No…that can NOT be what was happening here. It was whoever…WHATEVER had taken up residence in their Base. Wait…What if he was being manipulated by this being? What if…Wouldn’t Skywarp have told him though? What if Gravechaser
was a name he was calling himself whenever he was in his ‘other’ persona? No…No…It couldn’t be. It just couldn’t be.

Flying in his Jet Mode, Thundercracker pieces the snow clouds with his nose cone at a high speed, making them explode. Then he fired on them at close range, disintegrating them. He shot other clouds, some closer, some very far away. But he got them all. His Stepfather had taught him how to shoot: Don’t aim at where they are; aim at where they are going!

Finally, he received a call from Soundwave on his Comm.-Link, he refused to answer; so, Soundwave recorded the message: His test results showed he was fine.

So now what?! He was just supposed to come back? Resume his schedule? Pretend the events of the past forty-eight hours never happened?! Anger rose in his spark; he turned off his Comm.-Link and, having already closed his Bond to Starscream, now cut everyone off, including Skywarp.

He became more violent with his shooting now; very upset, firing at every cloud he could find…

:TC?: Skywarp pleaded through their closed Trine Bond, :TC? Can you just tell me if you’re okay or not?:

There was no answer, and the black and purple Seeker felt even sicker than before. He couldn’t reach him; he tried searching their Bond for him, but only feeling a general sensation of his older brother. The pregnant Seeker tried in vain to control his growing worries, rubbing his belly to keep his sparkling calm.

“Rumble closes our Bond whenever he’s angry with me,” Soundwave told him, trying to make him feel better, “usually for a day or two. Then he gets over it.” He noticed the Seeker’s discomfort, “Can I get you anything?”

Before Skywarp could answer, Starscream came in. The Trine Leader ignored his youngest brother and addressed the Tapedeck, “Has Thundercracker’s test results come back?”

“Yes,” was Soundwave’s cold, one-worded response.

“And?” Starscream demanded.

“I have already informed him,” the big mech continued his typing.

“I AM ASKING YOU WHAT THEY ARE!” Starscream demanded now, almost shrieking.

“All medical files are confidential,” Soundwave went into his utmost professional mode, “you will have to speak to Thundercracker if you want to know the answers.”

Starscream was undeterred, “As the Air Commander, I need to know the status of my Lieutenant’s health.”

“You officially suspended Thundercracker from all duties,” Soundwave reminded him coldly. “It is up to him to submit copies of his test results to be reinstated.” He turned to face Starscream, “If and when, he chooses to do so.”

“But…” Starscream tried to remind tough, but his exterior resolve was crumbling, “He’s my brother.”
For his part, Skywarp refused to look at him.

“Do you feel you treated him like a brother?” Soundwave asked.

The red and white Seeker didn’t answer; instead, he turned and walked out of the Control Room.

As soon as he was gone, Skywarp began tearing up again.

“Hey,” the Tapedeck immediately changed his demeanor, rubbing the carrying Seeker’s shoulder, “everything will work out. Your brother will come back.” He made Skywarp look at him, “He just needs to cool down.”

“Can you blame ‘em?” the carrying flyer keened, “Star treated him like he was s-some kinda crazy flying maniac!” he wished he could think of better words, but they weren’t coming to him.

Soundwave pulled him into his arms, letting the smaller mech bury his faceplates into his big shoulder. Skywarp wrapped his arm around Soundwave’s neck, hugging him; sobbing his optics out. The Tapedeck’s frame was like a furnace; warm and comforting.

The big mech did his best to calm the young Jet, which wasn’t one of his strong suits. He just held him for as long as he wanted to be held. Finally, Skywarp sat up, resting his forehelm against the Tapedeck’s visor. He looked like he was worn out, both emotionally and physically.

“Would you like to take a break?” Soundwave asked.

“N-No,” Skywarp insisted, “I-I wanna keep going…” going back to his chair, “H-Helps me take my p-processor off stuff.”

“Very well,” Soundwave conceded.

The two worked for several more hours when the Tapedeck finally insisted that Skywarp take a dinner break. The twins came in to join them.

“Psst,” Rumble elbowed the pregnant flyer as they sat on the sofa, “Snuck this for ya.” He gave him a Rust Stick. Skywarp smiled, happily gobbling it down, while Soundwave gave them a sideways glare from his place at the Computer Consul.
Chapter 38: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

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As the sun began to sink into the West, a coldness normally reserved for late January befell this mid-December day. This was all because of Thundercracker’s little ‘tantrum’ in the skies. The blue Jet was normally reserved and the calmest of the three brothers, but when he got mad or frustrated, he was prone to a complete meltdown!

The clouds he had spent the better part of the day obliterating were heavy, wet snow clouds. And now, lightning strikes began to light up the atmosphere; one strike narrowly missing his right wing!

Thundercracker quickly transformed into his Robot Mode, trying to assess the situation. He had accidently created a winter thunderstorm, also known as thundersnow. Some of his targets were cumulonimbus clouds, simultaneously creating a massive snowstorm with rain and hail!

The blue Seeker cringed inwardly now; anger having gotten the better of him. He had burned through his fuel as well, not even thinking. There was no fighting this storm he had generated; not when he was this low on Energon. He could fly back in normal weather, but not this! But, he was stubborn; he refused to call for help. Instead, he transformed back into his Jet Mode and began to look for shelter to ride out the storms.

After searching for a bit with his radar, he found a rock shelter on the inside of one of the mountains. It was cold and uncomfortably close to the Autobot Base, but it would have to do. Thundercracker transformed back into his Robot Mode and crawled into the cramped cave-like hole. He found the back wall; and watched the storms rage just barely out of range of his frame. Almost scared now, the dreaded claustrophobia began to set in. TC pulled his legs up to his canopy and hugged his legs; burying his faceplates into his arms. He could feel the ceiling and walls closing in on him. But he had no other choice: He didn’t want to call for them, either through his Trine Bond or Comm.-Link, mostly because he didn’t want to scare Skywarp, but also because he felt his relationship with Starscream, and probably the Decepticons, was broken beyond repair. He wasn’t their Lieutenant anymore; he was just an outcast. He felt alone; abandoned; wondering if he would survive the night; if he would ever see his brothers again; or their Creators; he had not felt this way since he was four years old when…

Gravechaser paced around the attic, calculating just how close he could get to the Control Room without that big boombox whirling around and looking in his direction. The snowstorm Thundercracker had no doubt caused (he recognized his son’s handiwork) would buy him some ample haunting time this evening; he just had to get Skywarp alone.

“WHERE IS HE, SOUNDWAVE?!” Skywarp cried now, “He’s been gone for hours!”

“Calm yourself, Skywarp,” the ever-together Tapedeck told him, “Thundercracker is likely riding out this negative weather in a sheltered area. He will return in good time.” He stood and retrieved a blanket from the sofa and wrapped it around the pregnant flyer’s wings. Skywarp quickly wrapped himself up in it. Stress was not good for him or his sparkling.
“My brother always keeps me c-calm,” the Seeker keened now, “now he’s gone…”

“No, no, shhh,” Soundwave tried, sitting across from him now, trying to think of the best ways to comfort him, “What does your brother do when you’re scared?”

“U-Um,” the Seeker considered, “Like, he makes me Energon-tea and stuff…”

“I will make you the tea,” Soundwave nodded, standing.

“N-NO!” Skywarp screamed suddenly, “I don’t…wanna be alone!”

The Tapedeck called for his twins to return to the Control Room, before telling the pregnant flyer, “I will return shortly.”

Rumble and Frenzy came in, each with their hand-held video games, optics fixated on the challenges, and plopping down on the sofa.

Skywarp was able to stand up, struggling momentarily, and began pacing around, rubbing his belly and cuddling in the blanket.

Heavy pedefalls were heard from the attic.

Skywarp stopped, thinking the extra pounds were making him sound like that. He took a few more steps and stopped again. The heavy pedefalls were not in tandem with his movements. Being in the Control Room, whoever was walking in the attic sounded much different than it usually did in his quarters. This time, he could make out pointy wing tips scraping against the floor…

Crystal sensed her Momma’s fears; she started trembling.

“Rumble, Frenzy,” Skywarp whispered, “You hear that?”

The twins had both been absorbed in their games.

Rumble: “Huh?”

“You hear somebody walking around really heavily?” Skywarp asked, desperate for verification.

“I thought that was you.” Frenzy shrugged, earning a smack to the arm from his brother, “HEY!”

Rumble put down his game and tried to listen carefully now.

Naturally, Gravechaser refused to budge.

Skywarp took a few steps, not sounding anything like what the ghost had sounded like, “W-Well?”

“I heard somethin’ earlier,” Rumble nodded, “maybe an otter?”

Frenzy: “Maybe an otter wearing boots?”

They all listened carefully now; staring up at the ceiling. Gravechaser looked down on them as if the floor was a two-way mirror.

The ghost was so fixated on the trio that he barely had time to vanish when the French Doors opened, and Soundwave walked in with the Energon-tea.

The big mech immediately saw the scene, “What’s wrong?”
Skywarp sighed now, “Thought I heard somebody walking up there.”

Soundwave scanned the ceiling but felt nothing; he turned to his sons.

“We think there’s an animal up there, Pop,” Rumble suggested, “A fish got in or somethin’.”

The Tapedeck wasn’t sure what to think yet, if this was indeed their intruder or an unrelated incident, “Let’s just all try to relax,” he finally settled on.

A thunder strike was heard.

The snowstorm hit the Western states hard. Wet snow began to pour down on the rush hour traffic, slowing the commute to a crawl. The wind howled, and the thunder rolled. Cars drove very slowly and carefully, just wanting to get to their respective destinations.

“Whoa!” Jazz shouted as he, Bluestreak, and Gears headed back to the Autobot Base, “This is some crazy weather going on!”

“I’ll say,” Gears agreed, “if we don’t put some speed into our wheels, we’re gonna be snowmobiles!”

They drove on for a while. Bluestreak, not wearing his snow tires, lost control, spinning out and going front first into a newly-formed snowbank.

“Bluestreak!” Jazz stopped and transformed into his Robot Mode, “Hold on, Buddy!” The two bots began digging frantically for their friend. They were able to free him with some effort, and the Datsun was able to transform into his Robot Mode, only to immediately grip his injured right leg, “I think I snapped something.”

Jazz radioed for help, and Ratchet arrived within minutes; his red light revolving like a beacon in the violent snowfall.

The Medic put Bluestreak’s leg in a splint, and he and Jazz walked their injured comrade back to the Ark as fast as they could. Their normally ten-minute drive now took them a good two hours!

Upon their return, Optimus Prime called all Autobots back to the Ark, citing the inclement weather.

“Thundercracker?” Starscream knocked on the Seekers’ door, “Thundercracker? Are you in there?” Hearing no response, the Trine Leader let himself in with his key.

“TC?” he looked around; all the lights were out, and there was clearly no one home. Starscream’s spark sank now; he had been hoping his older brother had come back and was just ignoring him, but he couldn’t find him. Just to be sure, he went to their berthroom.

Star took in the small room; TC wasn’t there. He looked at the empty berths briefly, wondering what he had done, “Oh, TC, I…” he turned to leave and—

Skywarp’s closet door was wide open.

The red and white Seeker could have sworn it wasn’t open when he walked in. He had not opened it; nor did he hear it creak open. He knew he must have simply missed that detail. Yes, that was it. He quickly closed the closet door and left the quarters, heading for the Control Room.
Much like his Autobot counterpart, Megatron met with Soundwave, and they mutually decided to cancel all patrols and missions for the evening.

Skywarp sat on the sofa with the twins, wrapped up and doing his best to drink his Energon-tea.

The storm raged on outside, making the waters around their Base move rapidly, practically shaking the entire structure. It creaked and moaned, making the scariest noises.

“Decepticons: This is a curfew!” Megatron announced over the Comm.-Link, “No flying until at least seven tomorrow morning. All missions scheduled for this evening are canceled.”

Earlier, Dirge had been slated for patrol, but immediately turned back when he saw that the runway was iced-over!

Regardless, Laserbeak headed down the hallway.

Soundwave: “Where do you think you’re going?”

“Reporting for my scheduled mission at the Ark,” the Bird huffed.

“Forget it; you heard Megatron!” Soundwave barked back, “All missions are canceled.”

“But I am to collect intel on Ironhide,” Laserbeak persisted.

“You’ll be blown halfway to Japan before you even GET to the Ark!” the Tapedeck hollered, pointed to their quarters, “You’re not getting out of my sight.”

The Condor scowled, “Blast.”

The three commanding officers immediately went into their emergency protocols, although Starscream wasn’t much help, wringing his hands and pacing; holding Darkwing in a blanket. The sparkling’s two brothers were watching their Sire from the sofa.

“Space Bridge is secured, Father,” Ravage reported, looking over the monitors, “also, our human affiliates have all checked in.”

“Decepticons: Move away from the emergency exits,” Soundwave radioed on his Comm.-Link, “we’re going to seal them for reinforcements against the ocean.” He pressed some buttons and did just that; the metal doors coming down against the windows in the conference rooms and mass hall.

Another big wave hit, and their Tower swayed dangerously; making a sickening sound of bending steel.

“Megatron, we need to secure the Tower,” Soundwave insisted.

“I know we do,” the Decepticon Leader admitted darkly, “but he’s still out there.” He tried his Comm.-Link again, “Thundercracker! Report your status!” He waited for a response, and nothing came. “Thundercracker!” he repeated, “We need to know your location immediately!” he kept his language to his military toughness on the open line, not wishing to show he cared for his younger brother-in-law, “Slag it…”

“Megatron,” Starscream was panicking now, “T-This is all my fault…”
Skywarp silently shook his helm; knowing exactly who’s fault, this was.

A quarters’ door was heard slamming, and Soundwave’s computer made a ping sound, “All Decepticons have been accounted for, with the exception of Thundercracker.”

Megatron turned to the Tapedeck now, “Can you locate his energy signal even if his Comm.-Link is turned off?”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave nodded, typing in his codes before pointing to one of the screens, “his Comm.-Link is within five meters of this location,” he looked up, “it’s also within Autobot perimeters though.”

“Forget them; they’re all huddled under their berths,” Megatron huffed, “I know Prime, I’m sure he called them back before it even got dark.”

They heard the Tower creek again.

Megatron: “What time is it?”

Soundwave: “Almost ten.”

Via their video screen, the skies were nearly a whiteout. There was no way a Seeker could fly in that.

“We need to go get him,” Megatron stated lowly.

“I’LL GO!” Starscream keened.

“NO!” Megatron looked at him, “I’m sending Astrotrain. He’s the only flyer strong enough to withstand that blizzard out there!”

The elevator doors opened at the top of the runway, and the Space Train emerged, surveying the scene, “Gonna take me at least an hour in this slagstorm, Megs,” he radioed back, “don’t wait up.”

“Just be careful, Astro,” the Gunformer told him, “call immediately if you have any trouble.”

“Don’t fret it,” Astrotrain chuckled, checking the coordinates and easily knew the best route. He transformed into his Shuttle Mode and took off.

“Daddy?” Ratbat whined, coming into the Control Room, “the windows are making noise!”

Soundwave immediately scooped up his youngest and held him, “Come on, you can sleep here.” He opened the sofa bed from the second sofa, pushing the boxes out of the way.

Megatron looked at his Bondmate and Skywarp, “Um, do you guys want to go in our quarters? Or sleep here?”

The two brothers looked at each other; their fights now a distant memory.

“I know you’re scared, but,” Megatron bit his lip components, “I’ll wait up for them. The sparklings will only stay up and watch us like this.” He looked at Skywarp, “You should…probably lay down.”
The pregnant Seeker was shaking; practically sick to his tanks, “It’s my fault…It’s my fault.”

Starscream was frantic inside, but he didn’t want to lose it and frighten his sparklings…or his younger brother, for that matter.

“Come on,” Megatron told them, picking up Dawning.

Even in their spacious quarters, the cold waters outside made their living room chilled.

“Take our berth,” Megatron insisted, holding Dawning and grabbing some extra blankets, “it’s much warmer in our room.”

“I-I don’t wanna…” Skywarp backed away.

“Come on! You’re pregnant!” Megatron barked, “You have to keep your sparkling warm!”

Darkmount needed no invitation; the little guy flew into his Creators berthroom on his own power.

Finally, Megatron got the two Seekers, and his triplets settled, “I’ll sleep on the sofa bed.” He knew they were scared, “When Astrotrain brings him back, I’ll bring him right to you.” He closed the door and returned to the Control Room.

The two brothers sat on the king-size berth, looking at each other sadly; worried for their third.

Starscream bit his upper lip component, “Will you open your side of the Bond for me, Warp?”

Skywarp: “I-It’s open.”

“O-Oh,” Starscream hasn’t wanted to open his side until he was sure he could feel at least ONE of his brothers there. He did now and could feel his precious little brother’s warmth and closeness again. Now only TC had his side closed off.

“Um…” the red and white Seeker began, “I get that…but why’d he cut you off?”

“He doesn’t want me to be worried about ‘em,” Skywarp shrugged, “although it always does the opposite to me.”

The sparklings were whimpering nervously as well; they knew how to count smell receptors, and they knew their uncle was missing.

Seeing this, Starscream tried to calm everyone, “Come on, let’s lay down. They’ll lay down if we lay down with them.”

The black and purple Seeker groaned as he lifted his legs onto the large berth, not fully comfortable sleeping there, “Um, Star? Whose side am I laying on?”

“Mine,” Starscream smiled.

“Okay,” Skywarp sighed, he could live with that. He groaned again as his belly shifted.

“You are feeling uncomfortable?” the red and white Seeker asked, “I used to get that. Here, lay on this,” he gave him an extra pillow to rest his stomach on.
Skywarp curled onto his left side, facing Star and the little ones, around the pillow; it did help support his extra weight a bit, “Thanks.”

“Trust me, I learned just about every trick to get comfortable,” he smiled now, glad they were finally talking as friends again, “I missed you…I miss TC as well.”

Skywarp’s thoughts reminded on their missing brother, reaching for Starscream’s hand, who took it and gave it a squeeze.

“Hey, can you still fly okay?” Starscream asked. “No problems?”

“I guess,” Skywarp didn’t really care, “it’s hard though.”

“How about the three of us take advantage of this storm tomorrow and go flying, hmm?” Starscream cooed, trying to make it sound like he was sure their brother was alright, “The roads will be blocked for days with this.” He smiled, “We’ll bring the sparklings.”

“…be nice,” the carrying Seeker acknowledged; he couldn’t remember the last time they had flown as a Trine. It was at least a few weeks ago.

Dawning was pretty calm. But Darkmount refused to lay down, and Darkwing was sucking his thumb and whimpering.

Starscream picked up his youngest triplet and began rocking him in his arms, humming a little lullaby. Darkwing was fixed on his Momma’s faceplates, but not sleeping yet.

“They fall asleep when you read to them,” the carrying flyer yawned; then his optics snapped open! What if Starscream didn’t WANT him and Thundercracker to read the triplets bedtime stories? Made-up fairytales from their sparklinghood?! Skywarp flashed back to seven months ago when Darkwing was snatched from his arms by his older brother, screaming at him that he had no business teaching them anything. He froze now; waiting for the next explosion, already imagining being kicked out and forced to go back to his empty quarters, where Gravechaser was waiting for them and —

“You like stories?” Starscream asked his son in baby talk, “Hmmm? Want Momma to read to you? Probably not as good as your uncles, huh?” He picked up his tablet, “Which ones do they like?”

There was a long pause.

Starscream: “Warp?”

“HUH?!” he was petrified.

“Which stories do you guys read to them?” Starscream asked, “I never really read to them, maybe I can fake it.”

“Maleficent,” Skywarp whispered, shutting his optics in preparation for the screech.

“Oh, Sleeping Beauty?” he began to search for it.

“No.” Dawning grinned, shaking his helm, “Mal-fifty-cent.”

Starscream: “Hmmm?”

“He’s saying Maleficent,” Skywarp admitted, accepting his fate, “it’s called, ‘The Curse of Maleficent,‘”
“The one with the Hollywood actress?” Starscream blinked, “They want that one?”

“Yeah, yeah!” Darkmount insisted, “Story, story!”

“Okay then,” Starscream shrugged, leaning back with his youngest and surfing on his tablet, “guess they don’t prefer the classic interpretations.”

The red and white Seeker began reading the bedtime story, with his sparklings and brother finally calming down. Crystal was up though, :Momma, Uncle come home?:

:Hope so, baby…: Skywarp told her; like his daughter, unable to relax with Thundercracker still out there…
Chapter 39: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

Chapter 39:

By Transformersnewfan

Flashback:

He remembered vividly the day he and his Daddy practiced shooting the clouds in the sky. He remembered how he sobbed—when this was the biggest problem the sparkling had in this world or any other world—about not being fast enough at the draw to shoot the faster-moving clouds. And how his Daddy had taught him to aim where the clouds were headed and hit them as they approached and…and…THAT’S IT!!!

Thundercracker’s little optics shot open round. He would make it rain. Make it rain HARD! He had no doubt in his little processor that his Creators and the policemechs were searching for him, but probably had no idea where he’d been taken to. His Mother and Daddy knew he could make it rain. And when the policemechs would ask them for a description of him, they would undoubtedly mention his Thunder-making powers. And they would be checking for any…Storms that have come out of nowhere! He would make it rain. Make it rain HARD!

When the little sparkling was sure his Father had gone into recharge in the chair (Well, passed out drunk, actually), Thundercracker quietly flew up to the motel’s roof. All the lights were out for miles around, even the two moons of Cybertron were crescents tonight. But there were clouds. Beautiful, spark-saving clouds. He flew up in the darkness and fired his Sonic Booms into the air, hitting anything that moved, giving them his all! And the skies lit up with lightning streaks, and the rains came down. Rain, hail, lightning. Everything…

When he finished, Thundercracker went back into their humble motel room and prayed, prayed like he’d never prayed this hard before, that his Creators and the policemechs would find him…

…A few hours later, dawn broke over the mountains, and daylight swore through the sole window. The little Seeker hadn’t slept most of the night. Instead, he lay on the rock-hard berth, listening to his Father’s rantings. He hadn’t had any Energon since breakfast yesterday, not that his Father seemed to care. The adult Seeker wasn’t going anywhere in this rainstorm…

Suddenly there was knocking at the door, “Open up! Police!” His Father grabbed his blaster and pointed it out the window, screaming back at the officers. Sky-Byte was outside too, yelling at his Father to open the door as well! Little Thundercracker hid between the berth and a little table; his Father never even checking where the sparkling was. A key could be heard opening the lock from the outside, but his Father opened the door suddenly shot one of the policemechs point blank! The sparkling’s optics frozen wide open in fear!

Two policemechs rushed to their fallen comrade, and five other policemechs rushed into the tiny room. His Father shot a second policemch right in the chestplates! A third policemch grabbed his Father’s arm and the blaster shot into the ceiling before a fourth officer took the weapon away. Then
all the polemarchs that weren’t shot dogpiled on top of his Father yelling at him to cease his resistance! Another polemarch ran to the second polemarch that had been shot, the one that was shot badly, telling him to stay calm.

Sky-Byte stood in the doorway, looking shocked and horrified at the scene in his entrepreneurial establishment.

Thundercracker was still cowering in the corner as the polemarchs struggled to subdue his Father, who was now punching and kicking them and flailing like a wild animal! Yet another polemarch entered and grabbed the sparkling, scooping him up and carrying him out over his shoulder!

“I’LL KILL YOU ALL!!” His Father shouted as Thundercracker looked back over polemarch’s shoulder. His little vents gasping in terror; terror that no four-year-old should EVER have to experience. He was whisked to the manager’s office, where his Daddy was talking to several polemarchs.

“THUNDERCRACKER!”

“DADDY!”

The big Seeker hugged the sparkling tightly to his chest, and little Thundercracker sobbed and hugged him around his neck.

End of Flashback:

“Come on, buddy,” Astrotain was shaking him, “Come on, I gotta get you home.”

When the Space Train radioed the Decepticon Underwater Base that he had located the cave Thundercracker was sheltered in, Megatron told him to make it clear to the blue Seeker that he was not under any arrest, and that he was not to frighten him. When Astrotain transformed and crawled into the cave, he found Thundercracker curled up in a ball and only semi-online.

“TC, buddy, come on,” Astro kept shaking his shoulders, “Megatron sent me ta rescue ya.”

Finally, Thundercracker’s optics opened; they were very dimly lit, and his coloring was off. He was in a daze, and his temperature was far too low for a Seeker. He wasn’t speaking, and after a moment, his helm lolled to his side.

“Alright, let’s go,” Astrotain got his arm under himself and dragged him to the entrance. It took some maneuvering, but he was able to transform into his Shuttle Mode and get the semi-conscious flyer into his cargo hold.

The storm around them only seemed to be getting worse, but Astrotain could handle it. He, like Megatron, was a former star of the Arena and was one of the toughest Decepticons.

When they arrived back at the Base, Soundwave met them with a stretcher and rushed the Seeker to the Med-Bay.

At the same time, once the three were safely inside, Megatron secured the runway and Tower for the night. Just in the nick of time, as the waves were taking on sheets of ice.

“AAAUUGGH,” Thundercracker cried out as the warm shower waters hit his freezing cold armor. He was still groggy and disoriented, not even realizing where he was, as Soundwave was forcing
him to stand under the Med-Bay shower.

“Stop complaining,” Soundwave growled, “it’s the fastest way to cure hypothermia.” The Tapedeck gradually raised the water temperatures until he felt the Seeker had had enough. Then he put him in a private room, hooked him up to an Energon line and monitors, and threw an electric blanket over him.

With Astrotrain long turned in for the night, Megatron had hoped to reunite the Seekers, but it was clear that Soundwave felt otherwise, at least for now.

For once, Skywarp was fast asleep, along with the triplets. For the pregnant Jet, it was due to sheer exhaustion.

Starscream was in a light sleep, waiting and worrying.

Finally, Megatron came back, “We got him.”

Starscream sat up as his mate continued, “Soundwave’s keeping him overnight for observation.”

“I’m going,” Starscream insisted; he jumped up, “I’ll sleep there.”

Spent from the long day, Megatron groaned, opting not to argue with his Seeker. Instead, he left Skywarp and his sons, opened the sofa bed, turned the television on, and settled in for the night.

“The Underwater Base was still making creaking, scraping, and bending noises as the pre-Christmas thunder-snowstorm raged on.

Megatron watched the twenty-four-hour weather station while he waited for a broadcast of Japanese wrestling, a guilty pleasure he allowed himself.

That’s when he heard a strange noise: It sounded like something scurrying outside as if a sea creature…a CLAWED sea creature, was crawling along the wall, trying to get in. The Decepticon Leader ignored it at first until it became louder. A strange feeling crossed his spark like something was watching them.

Megs got up and walked to the master berthroom, checking on the still-asleep, carrying flyer and his own, three precious sons. Darkmount was definitely awake, looking around; a scared look on his little faceplates. This was rather unsettling, as he was the bravest of the triplets.

Megatron picked him up and walked around until the little fella was resting on his shoulder. Then he laid the sparkling back down and covered him.

The former Gladiator went back to his television, only to hear the scurrying again. He couldn’t fathom what could be making that noise. It sounded like a squid, only much bigger.
He went to the nursery’s window; it was secured with the metal door due to the storm, so Megatron pressed his audial to it, trying to listen. Whatever was out there was large, but it did not trip the alarm. Figuring it was some strange Earth sea creature, he let it go. It was time for his Japanese wrestling match.

Thundercracker was still only partially coherent, enough to open his optics and hearing the monitors beeping in rhythm with his sparkbeat, but not enough that his still-numb limbs noticed Starscream next to him.

He thought he saw a figure walk by the Med-Bay room window and walk down the hallway. Thinking it was Soundwave, he closed his optics and fell back into recharge.

Skywarp stirred in his sleep, turning onto his back, trying to get comfortable. Ever since the haunting began, he never did sleep easy, always having the feeling he was being watched. He felt a cold rush, almost as if he had walked into a walk-in freezer. The Seeker felt as if someone else was in the room, but he was too scared to open his optics. His hands gripped his belly protectively. He couldn’t believe this THING had followed him to Megatron’s, of all mechs, berthroom!

“Starscream?” he whispered when he finally got the courage to open his optics, he turned to face where his brother had been sleeping, only to see he wasn’t there…Thundercracker. What had happened with Thundercracker, he wondered.

And at that moment, his arm was seized by an icy hand! The frozen, undead chassis of Thundercracker had come to get his revenge!

“STARScream!” the poor flyer cried out, afraid to look at the figure next to the berth.

Megatron burst through the door, “What’s wrong?!”

His crying out had mercifully not awoken the sparklings; Dawning stirred, but nothing more. And from the concerned but not alarmed look on the Gunformer’s faceplates, it was clear he didn’t see anyone else in the room.

“W-What?” Skywarp looked around; no Iceman; no ghost; no nobody, “W-Where’s Teecee?!”

Megatron figured the pregnant Seeker had been sleeping before when he told Starscream, “It’s okay. He’s in the Med-Bay for observation. Starscream’s with him now.” But the Gladiator in him knew, there was something more, “What happened?”

“I-is he gonna be okay?” Skywarp whimpered.

“I’m sure he will be,” Megatron told him.

Could he bring himself to tell his Leader what was really going on? “I’m scared…” was all he could muster, and even that was a lot to admit when one was a soldier.

Megatron debated waking up Ravage to stay with the triplets while he took the pregnant flyer to the Med-Bay, but he knew the Cat would probably hit the ceiling and wake up half the Base with his aloof outrage. He bit his lip components, “Tell you what? It’s late now; I’ll take you there in the morning.” He looked around the room suspiciously, but had to believe his optics, “How about I keep the door open?”
Skywarp nodded nervously and laid back down. But no more sleeping.

Megatron went back to his sofa bed and Japanese wrestling show but kept a close watch on the Seeker and the little ones. He stayed up all night long, keeping the monster at bay.

The morning came, and sunrise revealed a blanket of more than two feet of snow.

“Like the frigging Shining out there,” Soundwave limped to the Control Room, the limp in his left leg more prominent on mornings like this one. The twins had slept in the same berth; Buzzsaw slept with Laserbeak, and Ratbat slept with him. Only Ravage wasn’t bothered by the racket the Base was putting up.

Well, the Tapedeck figured, maybe he would make breakfast for everybody. As he went to the kitchen next to the mass hall, he found his thoughts going back to the pregnant Seeker that was his assistant more and more lately. They had hugged yesterday; yes, it was to comfort Skywarp when he was worrying about Thundercracker, but…it felt good, holding him like that. The Tapedeck had never been a mech that touched others inappropriately and despised those who did. He believed in consent. In his spark, he was an old romantic: When he courted Celene, he would bring her flowers, at least when the local drugstores had them on sale; he could never afford to buy her the jewelry he would have loved to drape her in.

Now he wondered if Skywarp liked gifts or not. He could afford better things now; he wanted to get him something for Christmas. A moment of guilt hit the Tapedeck, thinking of how he was now going to give his new friend the luxury he could never give his beloved, but…he hoped she would somehow understand. He had always pictured that if he was ever deactivated in battle, that he would be reunited with his wife. There were days he wished it would happen; his sparklings’ youth the only thing that had stopped him from stepping in front of Blaster’s gun that…that day. But now, he wondered if it was possible, that the spark could love two. Could he actually…was he thinking of Re-Bonding? Until Megatron had Bonded to Starscream, he never would have believed the mech known as the Great Gladiator of Tarn would ever settle down and be raising Seekerlings with his Second in Command. Apparently, anything was possible.

Skywarp couldn’t contain his elation at being reunited with his beloved brother, tackle-hugging the blue Seeker the moment he saw him sitting up in the berth. He forgot about his weight gain when he sat on TC’s legs to wrap his arms around him.

“O-Oh, Teeceee! You don’t know how worried I was!” he sobbed now; Starscream joining in on the hug as he woke up and saw their brother had regained consciousness.

For his part, Thundercracker was still very weak; his systems not fully online; not talking yet. He wondered how he was brought back to the Base since he had no memory of it. The last thing he remembered was being in the cave, freezing cold, and slipping into recharge. In fact, recharging sounded like a good idea now.

“Thundercracker,” Starscream smiled, taking him by the shoulders, making him look at him in the optics, “I’m so happy you’re alright. A-And…” he wasn’t used to apologizing, “I’m very sorry about yesterday…and everything.” He knew more was needed, but, he smiled again, simultaneously biting his lip components, trying to look cute, “Can we forget all about it?” Hey, it always worked for Skywarp.
TC gave him a tired glare, still sore at him.

Of course, Starscream attributed this as the hypothermia.

He was a bit more tolerant with Skywarp, who was curled up in his lap, his helm resting against the blue flyer’s canopy, the younger flyer could feel his little femme kicking happily and repeat, :Uncle come home! Momma, Uncle come back!:

Thundercracker was still out of it when Soundwave released him, and his two brothers walked him back to his quarters. He broke away from them and stumbled into the wash racks, still trying to get his core temperature back to normal. As he took his hot shower, his optics were cloudy, and he felt a virus coming on. What a way to spend his upcoming Christmas vacation.

“We’ll get him into berth; he won’t be—” Starscream stopped cold as he entered the berthroom.


The black and purple Seeker’s closet door was wide open.

“I KNOW I shut that door last night,” Star insisted, “I came in here, looking for him, and I shut that door.” An eerie feeling crossed over their Trine Bond, making them both shiver.

Skywarp gulped, knowing the ghost had been back in their room; doing what was anyone’s guess.

Starscream got on his Comm.-Link, “Soundwave, did Laserbeak report anything different about Mirage’s whereabouts last night?”

“Negative,” Soundwave answered, “all missions were canceled due to inclement weather.”

“So, we don’t know if anyone tried to break in again?” the red and white Seeker asked.

“Negative, we were fully locked down,” the Tapedeck responded, “the Autobots were as well.”

“Which we do not know for sure,” Laserbeak interjected, “Since, of course, I was prevented from performing my assigned duties.”

Soundwave hated it when his son contracted him, “There was no way anything could have gotten IN or OUT!” and he closed the connection, presumably to fight with his Bird off the open air.

Starscream closed the door, choosing not to look inside, just in case there was someone there he’d rather not see, “Um…”

Their thoughts were interrupted by Thundercracker unsteadily walking between them and going straight to his berth, flopping down on his front.

“My poor brother,” Starscream kept trying to make things up to him, quickly bundling him up in a blanket and comforter before sitting on the berth and stroking one of his wings, “don’t worry, you’re going to feel like yourself again soon…”

Skywarp was watching them sadly when he went to lay down on his own berth. Then he realized something, “Where’s my blanket?” He knew he had left it there.

“Oh,” Starscream got up to look for it in the living room, but nothing was there.
“I can’t sleep without it, Star,” the pregnant flyer whined, “how am I gonna go to work in three hours?!”

“I’m not sure,” it crossed Starscream’s CPU that the open closet door and the missing blanket were connected, bizarrely. “Here, I’ll get you another one.” He went to the cabinet and pulled out two more, “chilly in here.”

Skywarp knew though; he knew that Gravechaser was again busy taking his stuff. He was always taking his stuff. He didn’t say anything though; instead, he just let Starscream cover him and tried to sleep a little longer.

Chapter End Notes

Note to readers: I’m thinking of writing a companion piece to this, where I would explain some of my headcanons, such as the names of the triplets, etc.
Chapter 40: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

This is where we find out what happened to Skywarp's friend, and how it ties in with his frequent fights with Starscream.

Chapter 40:

By Transformersnewfan

Twenty-seven weeks today! While his oldest brother was still sleeping, Skywarp was looking at himself in the wash racks’ mirror, pregnancy datapads with him, admiring his sparkling bump.

It was mid-morning now, so it was pretty safe to move about their quarters alone. The carrying flyer was looking at his already huge belly in the mirror, “Think I might be unconsciously eating more,” he shrugged. Oh well. The worsening swelling in his digits and pedes concerned him though, especially since his datapad said it would be more pronounced as his pregnancy progressed. Sometimes he didn’t notice it; other times, he could feel them throb. Also, it said to keep track of any unusual pains or contractions and report this to his physician. He would have to watch for that pain in his right side and think of how to describe it.

Good news: The datapad said that his little femme’s processor activity would increase ten-fold now, and that if she were born today, she could survive, albeit with medical help to develop her tiny air intakes.

“Hey there, Crystal,” he whispered, “hey baby…” he pulled up his armor and rubbed his belly, turning sideways, smiling, to see how much his tummy was sticking out now; he wanted to try to enjoy himself again; this was a happy time in their lives. Christmas was coming, and by the end of winter, he would be holding his baby girl in his arms.

He should have her Baptized. Baptism was very important in the Seeker culture. When Starscream had the triplets, Soundwave became the Godfather of Darkmount, Thundercracker was Dawning’s Godfather, and he was the Godfather of Darkwing. Skywarp thought about it now: Even though he had very mixed emotions about his relationship with Starscream these days, it would only be fair to appoint his Trine Leader to be Crystal’s Godfather. However, he definitely wanted Thundercracker to have legal and physical Guardianship in case anything was to happen to himself, which was a real possibility these days. He would speak to Soundwave to have Shockwave draw up the paperwork.

The datapad said to think about a birth plan. Okay, he wanted his brothers with him in the delivery room. Soundwave was to delivery his sparkling, and maybe if he needed the Reflectors there to help him. These were all big decisions for the young Seeker, especially since he was used to depending on his brothers to lead him in his life. He went to the Cybertron War Academy because Thundercracker did; he moved to Northern Vos because Thundercracker and Starscream decided to; he joined the Decepticons because Starscream was swayed by Megatron’s public speeches against the Autobot tyranny.
Come to think of it, getting pregnant through alternative insemination was the first REAL decision he had ever made for himself. And it was the best decision he had ever made.

Coming out of the wash racks, their quarters was eerily quiet. The snowstorm covering the surrounding towns with a blanket of snow; there were no honking car horns, no bustling humans. Only an occasional train whistle. He threw on his bulky bathrobe, keeping his stomach warm, and looked around again for his blanket. Sadly, he couldn’t find it anywhere. He sighed, Gravechaser had taken away yet another object of comfort for the Jet: His sonogram tape, his huggy android, the musical snow globe, and now, the blanket that kept him the warmest. He worried about his little baby now; how would he keep her safe? He decided he wouldn’t let her out of his sight; and if he had to, he would only leave her with TC or their Creators.

He went to the berthroom, “I’ll be in the Control Room, TC,” he told his recharging, sick brother. There was no response. “I turned twenty-seven weeks today.” Again, no answer. The pregnant Seeker moaned; he was lonesome.

“I love this photo,” Megatron mused with sentimentality as he looked at the photo of the Energon miners that Skywarp had found, “it was taken at the twentieth anniversary of the shift supervisor’s employment.” He bent down and showed it to the triplets, who were playing with their toys on the rug, “There’s your grandfather there, and there’s your uncle, Shockwave…” A bit of sadness tinged his vocals now, “it was only a few years later, that the accident happened. Tarn lost eight miners that tragic day.” He looked over the picture again, “And all of them are in this picture. This is historic.”

Soundwave drummed his digits on the Computer Consul impatiently, “Megatron, I need that City of Kaon incorporation certificate.”

“Er?” Megatron looked up, “Oh…Saw that here somewhere.” He began rearranging the papers.

Soundwave was getting annoyed, “Mega, try not to mix those up.”

Alright, alright,” he found the document and headed it to the Tapedeck switching stories, “Actually, I remember that day pretty well: It was when Shockwave first became President, and one of the first documents he signed was to incorporate Kaon in her own right…” He smiled at the memory, “It was a real pride for us Gladiators, Soundwave, as many of us became real mechs in the Arena there. Astrotrain, Clutch, Cy-Kill, we were all there that day. The air was…crisp and smelled like fall. We had all blown some extra credits on professional polishing jobs that morning, all of us went up to Maccadam’s…We looked good enough to get Bonded in, I tell ya,” he chuckled now, “It was worth it though…There we were, in the front row, and Shockwave was on this portable stage, at the podium, and then…he signed this document, declaring the land between Tarn and Iacon, to be foregoing known as the City of Kaon. It was glorious, Soundwave.”

“Yeah, and the document was in a cardboard box, partially submerged in water in the basement for the past eighteen years.” Soundwave took the yellowish paper and carefully scanned it, “real glorious.”

Megatron smiled and shrugged, still smitten with the memories.

“Now I need the accompanying documentation of the town’s history,” Soundwave insisted.

“Oh…” Megatron moved some papers on the Computer Consul, “saw those here…” He was messing up the papers again.
“Careful with those!” the Tapedeck grabbed the papers away, “Skywarp had those all sorted out,” he hurriedly straightened them out.

Megatron made an expression of mock horror, and went to one of the boxes, pulling out an old photo album, “Oh…My God, do you know what this is?”

“More memories?” Soundwave grumbled.

“Photos of the construction of Shockwave’s Tower!” the Decepticon Leader proclaimed, opening the album and sitting on the floor to show his sons.

“Oh, happy day,” Soundwave oozed sarcasm, and hurriedly scanned through documents, “I have to finish these. Skywarp’s going to be here any minute.” He began re-sorting the papers Megatron had messed up, “And the last thing I want him to see is his work undone by YOUR reminiscing.”

Megatron couldn’t help but notice the change in his Third in Command and friend, “He’s really starting to mean a lot to you, isn’t he?”

“He’s my assistant,” Soundwave made a futile attempt to hold on to his cold exterior, “I don’t want to upset him unnecessarily with your messing up his work. His emotions are running high, and this could set him off.”

Megatron paused, “I just…worry, y’know?”

The Tapedeck looked at him, “Oh?”

“I mean,” the Gunformer sat up slightly, “I know how you are about Celene…” He looked down and made a face, “Don’t fool him.”

“I’m not,” Soundwave stated quietly, sitting back down and facing his friend; a look of sincerity in his faceplates, “I know what you’re saying. I do have unresolved regrets in regards to my wife’s passing…but, I feel I’m able to separate who Celene was and who Skywarp is. And he is beginning to mean something to me.”

Megatron nodded a little, accepting this answer, “Just making sure…He is, part of my family after all.”

Soundwave nodded back, “Understandable.”

The former Gladiator smiled and shrugged, “Good thing he loves sparklings.”

“Speaking of which, I’ve got something for him” the big mech got up and left, “I’ll return shortly.”

Family. The youngest Seeker was part of his family. Megatron sat on the floor, helm leaned against his fist in deep thought, as his triplets happily turned the photo album pages back and forth. Megs got up and went to the Computer Consul; he searched and found the previous evening’s security footage.

He quickly found the one that monitored the window outside his sons’ nursery, where he had heard the strange scurrying, right before Skywarp woke up screaming. He fast-forwarded, but nothing was caught by the camera.

Soundwave came back in, “What are you looking for?”

“Just…looking,” Megatron wasn’t going to say more; not until he was sure, at least.

Before the Tapedeck could ask anything further, Skywarp opened the French Doors, “Hey guys…”
he tried to hide his bulging belly with the door.

“Hey, come in,” Soundwave’s demeanor completely changed, becoming warm and anticipating, “glad to see you.”

Megatron was still looking at the footage when the big blue mech shoved him up out of the chair, “GET OUT!”

“Yeah, yeah,” Megatron rolled his optics, leaving his kids to play, “Whatever.”

Soundwave helped the carrying Seeker sit in his chair, getting a pillow and placing it behind the younger’s back, wanting to make him comfortable, “How is everything?”

“Okay, I think,” Skywarp nodded, “I turn 27 weeks today.”

Soundwave nodded, showing him the new datapad he had picked up from the Med-Bay, “Here, this is one that will prepare you for the sparkling birth processes,” he turned it on, “it will tell you what to expect. When one knows what is coming, the process is much less unnerving.”

“Thank you,” he was still shy about talking about this, even with his friend, “I read your other datapads.” He was nervous that he seemed to be gaining more weight than what was recommended in the reading material, but it was hard to admit to; maybe he could ask Starscream about it. “Is…this normal?” he showed him his swollen digits.

“It’s not what I would consider severe,” Soundwave took his hands in his own, “it’s still normal, but we can monitor it closely.” He slowly caressed the digits.

“Oh…” Skywarp took a deep air intake, “do that again…feels good.”

“Of course,” the Tapedeck continued his gentle touches, continuing to the flyer’s wrists.

Skywarp: “Can you do my back?”

Soundwave stood and reached under the Seeker’s wings, running his hands up and down in a calming manner.

“Mmmm…” the other moaned, loving this, “…Your hands…”

“As long as you keep your stress levels low, you’ll have a much easier time carrying,” the large mech told him.

“You ever do this for Celene?” Skywarp asked.

“Yes.” He was reluctant to talk about her now; unlike Megatron, the Tapedeck didn’t want to reminisce on the past, instead focusing on the present, “Do you like it?”

“Are you kidding?” Skywarp rolled his optics; then grinning mischievously, “I wanna know what other tricks you know!”

Soundwave decided to become playful himself, “Maybe, if you’re a good little Seeker, I will show you…”

“Oh really?” the other asked, intrigued, “Can I come over tonight and you’ll show me your tricks?”

“If that is your wish…” the Tapedeck wanted every step to be Skywarp’s choice; proceeding only when and if the Seeker was comfortable.
“I’d like it if we sit up and talk for hours,” Skywarp whispered, “and you can hold me and tell us everything’s gonna be alright.” He looked up at him, “TC…Do you think he’ll be okay if I leave him alone for a while?”

“Oh, I’m sure he’s fine,” Soundwave assured, “But…I must admit, when you say you want me to talk to you…” he had to own up to this, “I’ve never been much of a conversationalist. I’m more of a listener.”

“Well,” Skywarp smiled, “if I ask you stuff, will you answer?”

“Of course,” Soundwave nodded, “that I can do.”

The triplets were giggling and smiling; this was just as much fun as watching their Creators.

“Thank you, Soundwave,” Skywarp was happy, for once, “I’m feeling better now.”

The two began their daily routine of sorting and scanning the archives and emptying out the boxes. The Tapedeck always made his twin sons move the boxes for the pregnant Seeker.

There was that one box, the one that Gravechaser had placed next to Skywarp’s chair, that kept getting covered by the next box Frenzy would pile there, while Rumble would do the shredding of the unnecessary materials. Anything such as the Certificate for the City of Kaon would be saved for framing, most likely to hang in Shockwave’s office in Iacon.

The group had gone through three boxes before breaking for lunch; Starscream came in to feed his sparklings; his attitude towards Skywarp was slowly improving, “I appreciate you guys watching them while I did target practice,” he began, “you’re going to make an excellent Mother.”

Seeing that Darkwing needed a change, he picked the sparkling out, “I’ll be right back.”

“You hear that, Soundwave?” Skywarp whispered, “That’s the nicest thing he’s said to me!”

“I told you,” the blue mech nodded as he got up to retrieve more boxes, “he just needs time. He will be better to you.”

“Hope so…” the young flyer smiled, “Things are looking up…” he pulled the box nearest to himself and opened it: It was more recent records, from the late nineteen-nineties.

“Cool,” he shrugged, not thinking; he pulled out the “People” magazine clippings, reporting on the humans that were interviewed with their inspirational stories of pulling each other out of the way of debris during Decepticon attacks, and some receipts for subscriptions under the name of ‘Ron Tagem’, Megatron’s preferred alias. He tossed those receipts in the to-be-shredded pile.

He found an ordinary looking file folder and opened it. He stopped. He stopped smiling; he stopped noticing the movements of his sparkling in his gestation chamber; he stopped listening to the playful fighting of the twins and the babblings of his nephews. The stillness of the snow-coated world outside only added to the sensation that the Earth had stopped turning.

Skywarp stared at the first photo, then the second one; there were twenty-six in all. And he was seeing them for the first time. No one had told him these photos even existed.

When Soundwave came back inside, carrying five boxes, he didn’t notice anything was wrong.
He put the boxes down, and saw that his friend was staring at some black and white photographs, “Skywarp?”

The Seeker stood up suddenly and whirled around; every emotion cranked up to eleven, “WHY DIDN’T YOU EVER TELL ME??!!!”

The sparklings whimpered; Rumble and Frenzy stopped their inane chatter; all the fun was sucked out of the room.

Soundwave: “What?”

Skywarp shrieked at the top of his air intakes, “WHY DIDN’T ANY OF YOU EVER TELL ME THEY CARVED UP HIS BODY LIKE A FRAGGING JACK-A-LANTERN?! HUH?!”

The Tapedeck approached slowly, trying not to set the flyer off even further, but he had to assess the situation. He got close enough to catch a glimpse of the photo in Skywarp’s shaking hand, “Oh…”

The photos were copies of the official ones, a property of the Los Angeles County Coroner, of the autopsy of Christopher Williams, who died after four of six gunshots had hit him while riding in a car with his friends in L.A, after attending a music industry party.

Soundwave opted not to treat his friend as if he were a sparkling, instead telling him matter-of-factly, “Skywarp, the examination of the remains, and retrieval of any evidence in relation to the crime itself, which commonly involves the extrication of bullet fragments, are important to the investigation. When you tie the bullets to the gun, and the gun to the shooter, it must be collected to bring conclusion to the case itself.” He saw that the other was still listening, so he continued, “It was what Shockwave did for a number of years in Iacon. It is done with the utmost respect for the deceased’s remains, and they are repaired before being released to the deceased’s loved ones. I know about these things. My wife was autopsied.” He knew his sons knew that; but he kept his visored optics on the flyer, reaching for the photos…

But Skywarp pulled them back, “N-No…” he sat back down, feeling sick, shaking all over.

Gravechaser had bided his time, waiting since the previous morning, for his prey to open that box, and see the remains of the one human he had truly loved.

Soundwave motioned to his sons to pick up Darkmount and Dawning and take them to their nursery, trying to give the pregnant Jet some space.

Neither moved or spoke for several minutes. Finally, Skywarp’s initial shock gave way to coolant tears streaming down his faceplates; his expression that of a grief-stricken loved one. All the joy from the beginning of the afternoon gone, replaced with hurt and an unending ache in his spark that he had long learned to live with since Chris’ death. The wound was always there; it had healed over but was now torn open and salted.

Soundwave knew the feeling well; he took the flyer’s hand in both his own, holding it in an act of comfort. He noticed Skywarp was shaking, “I’ll get you a blanket.” He got up, going to the sofa and picking it up when the flyer began to speak, “He knew he was going to die.”

The Tapedeck just listened as he wrapped the blanket around Skywarp’s wings, “Is that so?”

“Yeah,” the Jet’s vocals were barely a whisper, but that wasn’t a problem for the Tapedeck, “He told me, ‘I swear Warp, I feel like death is fucking calling me.’”

Soundwave only listened as Skywarp gazed at the floor, completely hurt, telling Soundwave things
he had, up until then, only told his brothers, “We were in Brooklyn…in his house…”

Flashback:


“He’s so adorable, Christopher,” Skywarp couldn’t take his optics off the sleeping baby boy, clad all in white, in the Tiffany bassinet, a gift from the Decepticons, “What’s his name?”

“Junior,” Chris told him, looking out the window; his expression painted with worry.

“Hi Christopher Junior,” Skywarp told the baby, “that’s a human name, right?”

“Um,” the musician rubbed his eyes, “It’s his initials, we named him after me, Christopher Junior, but we’re gonna call him CJ.”

“You got that from me, right, Christopher?” the flyer grinned, “Cause I call my brother by his initials.”

“Alright.” Chris let him think so.

Skywarp couldn’t help but notice his friend’s distracted behavior, “What’s wrong?”

Christopher didn’t mince words, “Got another one of those phone calls.”

“Slag,” Skywarp knew about this; the musician’s growing fame made him the target of crazies, and some would even call his cell phone and threaten him, “Did you tell your authorities?”

“Uh-huh,” Chris shrugged, “It doesn’t matter really…They can’t do anything about it.” He began pacing, “Just gotta keep going.”

Ti-Ti came bouncing in, “Daddy, Daddy!”

“Hey baby!” the large human picked her up and held her into the air, “Airplane!”

The little girl held her arms and legs out, “Airplane! Airplane!”

Skywarp loved this, “I love watching you with your sparklings, Christopher!”

As Ti-Ti played with her dolly on the floor and CJ slept in his bassinet, Christopher smiled over them and turned to Skywarp, “Listen, I gotta ask you a favor.”

Skywarp: “Sure.”

“I was thinking about…stuff, and….” the human rubbed the back of his neck now, not wanting to look at Skywarp in the optics, “We’ve known each other for a long time…”

Skywarp was always impatient, with his short attention span, “You want me to laugh on one of your tracks again?”

“Nah, that’s not what I’m thinking,” Chris had to get this out; now or never, “I want you to promise me something.”

“Yeah?” Skywarp cocked his helm, almost like a pet dog.

Christopher: “If anything happens to me, I want you to watch over my kids for me.”
The Seeker was startled by the request, “Well, why do you think something’s gonna happen to
you?”

“Oh, you know,” Christopher shrugged nervously, “I could die in a plane crash—”

Skywarp cut him off, “So you’ll fly with me.”

“I mean,” the human bit his lip, “I could have a heart attack—”

Again, Warp cut him off, “That’s why you’re on a diet.”

Christopher: “Or I could get s—”

Skywarp: “NO!”

“I DIDN’T ASK YOU TO PROTECT ME!” the musician bellowed in frustration, “I’M ASKING
YOU TO TAKE CARE OF MY KIDS!”

“Okay, Christopher,” Skywarp looked at him, optics to eyes, “I will always watch over your family.”

A sigh of relief, and the human relaxed, “Thank you, Skywarp. That’s all I needed to hear.” He felt
guilty for yelling now, “Hey man, listen, how’s about I…Cause you’re gonna do this for me, I’ll do
you a favor.”

The flyer just watched now, a serious expression on his faceplates.

Christopher: “You think of a favor, and I’ll do it. Are we cool?”

Skywarp couldn’t think of anything quickly; he would have to ask his brothers, “Okay.”

End of Flashback:

Starscream had heard from Rumble about Skywarp’s discovery. He approached the Control Room’s
French Doors now, with Darkwing in his arms, creaking them open, and listened.

“We saw each other again…” Skywarp went on, “His shows…meetings…We had a Christmas
together…” Ironic, that it was almost Christmas, “And…He was at Star’s wedding with his wife…
And then…”

Flashback:

The evening of March 8, 1997:

The Seeker Trine was in their quarters, Thundercracker was sitting on the sofa, reading one of his
datapad novels; Starscream was pacing around; and Skywarp was in the wash racks, taking a
shower.

The red and white Seeker had only been Bonded to Megatron for a few months, but whenever his
new husband was away on business, he would go back to his brothers.

“Quit pacing around, Star,” TC told him, not looking up from his datapad, “they won’t be back for
another hour.”

“I know, I know,” Starscream nodded.

Megatron had been visiting Shockwave on Cybertron for the past two days, and Starscream was
thinking of trying something.

“Hey Teeceee?” the Trine Leader asked, “Can I talk to you about something?”

The blue Seeker groaned, “I’d rather finish my story, but what is it?”

Starscream sat down next to him, “Okay, so Megatron and I always interface by—”

“WHOA!” Thundercracker stopped him, “Don’t tell me about your sex life!”

“But I need your advice!” Starscream shrieked.

“Well, what do you think I KNOW about being Bonded?!” TC barked back.

“Come on,” Star pleaded, “you’re my big brother. You’re supposed to give me advice and stuff.”

“Well, you’re the Trine Leader,” Thundercracker reminded him, “make your own decisions.”

“But, but, that’s just for the flying maneuvers,” Star wrung his hands, “you’re the oldest brother for everything else.”

“I’ll try,” TC rolled his optics. “what do ya wanna know?”

Skywarp was drying himself off when he snuck into the living room, eavesdropping.

“Ever since the beginning,” Starscream explained, “Megatron has…taken ME. But, well, I want to ask him, if I could, y’know, take HIM. What do you think?”

He was referring to being the dominant one in the Bonding of their sparks. Megatron had always been the dominant one, taking in the Seeker’s memories, feelings, and emotions.

“So,” Thundercracker tried to push aside his embarrassment to answer this, “You want to RECEIVE…his energy levels.”

Starscream nodded, fidgeting.

TC: “You sure you wanna handle all that?”

Skywarp was having trouble suppressing his giggling now.

“I mean, careful what you’re asking for, Bro,” the blue Seeker told him, “His Fusion Cannon plugs into a black hole.”

“Oh, he doesn’t wear his Fusion Cannon during interfacing,” Starscream told him, “it’s just that…” he was smiling, and his optics were wide, “I just wanna…keep taking in more and more of him while we’re interfacing, TC. I just wanna drop more firewalls and feel more and more of his spark in my own and…”

This was clearly grossing Thundercracker out, “Star, please!”

Skywarp couldn’t hold it back anymore. He burst out laughing, “Star, I can just see you and Megs fragging and you getting all hot and stuff!”

“This isn’t funny!” Starscream insisted, “I’m trying to make a decision on my Bonding here.”

“Star, do whatever you want!” TC threw his hands up, heading for the wash racks, “I don’t wanna
Skywarp plopped down where Thundercracker had been, “Well, I’m interested, even if he isn’t!”

“I’ll tell you all the details,” Starscream smirked, “but you know the rule.” Meaning that he always closed the Trine Bond to his brothers during interfacing with Megatron.

Skywarp made a face.

End of Flashback:

Soundwave rubbed his chin; he wondered now.

Skywarp was getting weak from crying, “That’s when Christopher called…”

Flashback:

11:45 P.M. of March 8, 1997:

The telephone rang.

With Starscream reunited with Megatron, Thundercracker got the phone, before passing it to Skywarp, “It’s for you.”

It was his friend, Christopher Williams. The musician had appeared at the Soul Train Awards, before attending the post-awards show party. He was there with his producer, as well as his two best friends, Damian and James.

This conversation was like millions the two had shared before…

They talked about the show; about his children; about when they would see each other again, with the singer promising that after he returned from a planned trip to London—which he was leaving for in the morning—that he would have some time off, “And I’ll bring Ti-Ti and the baby and the family. We’re gonna spend a couple of weeks together. How’s that sound?”

“I love it,” Skywarp told him, “you know I wanna spent all my life with you.”

The two shared a deep friendship, and love for one another that transcended their species differences; their home worlds; their heights; none of that mattered to them. They only saw their mutual love for each other.

And this conversation was like millions of their other conversations.

…Until the end

Christopher paused, and quietly said, “Goodbye, my Seeker.” And hung up before the other could respond.

Skywarp briefly wondered why his friend chose to say ‘goodbye’ instead of ‘goodnight,’ but he quickly shook it off and went back to his Walkman, listening to his friend’s latest single.

End of Flashback:

“He died…” Skywarp whispered; new coolant tears flowing down, “Some cockroach shot him in the car.” He gasped, “And I knew it.”
Flashback:

12:47 A.M. of March 9, 1997:

Skywarp bolted up in his berth, awakened from a sound sleep. He was sweating coolant all over his chassis, despite the winter weather. He had felt something in his spark snap; a connection had been broken; the only thing that could give him that type of sensation was a Bond break. The deactivation of someone he had in his spark!

His brothers. Did something happen to one of his brothers?!

“TEECEE!” he keened, jumping up and going to his oldest brother, shaking him in his berth.

“Uummm,” Thundercracker turned over, still half-asleep, “What’s up?”

He was fine. Skywarp realized his beloved brother was fine.

“STARScream!” he cried out, thinking it had to be their Trine Brother.

End of Flashback:

Starscream continued to listen in, eavesdropping like Skywarp usually did, adjusting his baby in his arms. He knew the rest…

Flashback:

Starscream made his proposal to Megatron for letting him take the lead in their interfacing. Megatron admitted that he had never had a lover actually take HIM before, but he was surprisingly willing to experiment.

The pair began in their usual way, kissing and cuddling, before moving on to the berthroom, flopping down on the berth, getting their systems hotter and hotter, and finally, opening their chestplates to merge their sparks.

Starscream was hit with all of his mate’s memories of the Gladiator Games. Sure, he had heard all these stories and even seen pictures, but nothing prepared him for the sensation of actually being inside Megatron’s spark during those battles. There was a fight, followed by a victory; another, then another, then…He was fighting Cy-Kill, and—

The berthroom was bathed in a purple light, and Skywarp materialized right in front of them, “STARScream, are you alright?!”

The red and white Seeker immediately retracted his spark and snapped his chestplates closed. For his part, Megatron was surprised by the interruption, but his reaction wasn’t even a tenth of what his mate’s was.

“How dare you?!” Starscream roared at his little brother, “You have the gall to interrupt me when I’m in the middle of this?! You are the stupidest; most insolent fool I’ve ever had the displeasure of ever knowing in my entire onlineing!”

The words were clearly more of Megatron’s vernacular.

“Get out” the red and white Seeker demanded, “You’re out! You’re out of the Decepticons!!! I never wanna see you again!!!”
Skywarp burst into coolant tears, shaking, he teleported out.

It took the Trine Leader a good two hours to calm down and get back in bed; all the time, ranting and raving about tearing the black and purple Seeker’s wings off and mounting them on the wall.

“Cool your engines, killer,” Megatron had long been able to separate his battlefield persona from his personal one, “He probably thought I was destroying you.”

Starscream: “I’ll destroy HIM!”

End of Flashback:

Soundwave listened, “I think…I understand now.”

Skywarp: “Y-Yeah…”

Flashback:

The morning of March 9, 1997:

Skywarp didn’t sleep all night, having cried in Thundercracker’s arms, in pain; in terrible pain. He had pain in his spark from whatever this wound was, compounded by Starscream’s cutting words; he felt like he could die that night, he was so upset.

When they got up, they had been scheduled to go on an Energon Raid, led by Megatron, only to find that Starscream had put the youngest Seeker on cleaning duties as punishment.

“Just do it,” TC left for the Raid, “I’ll talk to him afterward.”

So Skywarp was moping the floor in the hallway, while Soundwave was in the Control Room, manning the upcoming battle from his cameras, “No Autobots within fifty miles, Megatron.”

He had the local news broadcast on one of the monitors, and then, the announcement came:

“The rapper known for reviving East Coast music was shot several times as he sat in a Chevy Suburban early this morning, outside of the Peterson Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. He had been attending a party honoring the winners of the Soul Train music awards, of which he made an appearance on Friday night.”

His friend’s voice suddenly boomed, “What’s up, Cali?”

“After the shooting,” the anchorman continued, “the rapper was taken to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where he was pronounced dead.”

The rest was a horrible blur. Skywarp fell on his knees; it all made sense now. He had known last night when he woke up. His friend…his best friend, Christopher Williams, was gone forever.

He didn’t remember Soundwave coming for him when he passed out; nor did he know it when the Tapedeck radioed Megatron the terrible news.

Over the Comm.-Links, the former Gladiator announced, “Decepticons: Today’s mission has been canceled. Agent Williams died.”

Starscream and Thundercracker were the first to return to the Base.

Skywarp was sitting in the hallway, curled in a ball in a corner, near the Control Room, with
Soundwave trying to talk to him.

The two older brothers crouched down on the floor, trying to get him to look at them. They were right next to him, but their vocals seemed so far away; an echo in his audials. They were telling him to wake up.

Finally, he lifted his helm to look at them. Thundercracker grabbed him and hugged him to his chest; with Starscream hugging him from behind.

He didn’t remember anymore.

End of Flashback:

“I’m so sorry,” Soundwave told him now.

“My God…” Starscream whispered, earning a stare from Darkwing. “I never put it together.” He walked with his baby back to his quarters, realizing he had to sort this out before he spoke to Skywarp again; before he did any more damage to their relationship.

The black and purple flyer started keening fully now; the floodgates broken; his optics fixated on the photos of his dead friend.

“Don’t look at that,” Soundwave pulled the pictures away, without any resistance from the flyer, “The man you knew had already passed away when these pictures were taken. This was not Christopher Williams. Just his shell, nothing else.” He quickly went to his computer and found the last music video the musician had starred in, for his single that was released posthumously. As the tape played, the human’s deep voice booming through the system, Soundwave told him, “THIS is Christopher Williams. And this is how he is now, in his new life. This is who you will always have in your spark, Skywarp, not what’s in those photos.”

But Skywarp was having none of it. Instead, he just sat there, reliving the events of that day, replaying it in his CPU, over and over, over and over…

Their plans for the day shot to oblivion; the pregnant Seeker was escorted back to his quarters to rest.

Skywarp didn’t even say goodbye to Soundwave as he entered his quarters; nor did he look for Thundercracker. Instead, he found a little section on the floor, between the sofa and the small bookcase, and sat there, cold, hurt, crying, and sick. He couldn’t curl his legs up to his chestplates anymore, but he hugged his belly and curled his legs under it. Depression washed over him more than ever.

Perfect timing.

Gravechaser showed up to gloat, “Did you figure out who left you that box?”

Skywarp didn’t care anymore. He just sat there, wallowing in self-pity, as the ghost stomped around, telling him, “I told you, you worthless little wretch, you’re a nothing. You’re worthless! A waste!” the ghost repeated this, again and again, for the next five hours.

Thundercracker rolled over and yawned, finally feeling better, albeit still slogging from his virus. He opened his optics and looked at the ceiling, realizing he was in his berthroom. It was almost six in the evening; he had slept the day away. He checked his Comm.-Link for any messages: There was one from Soundwave, explaining what happened.
“Oh man,” he got up, threw his robe on, and started for the living room.

“Warp?” he had to walk slowly, still unsteady on his pedes; he forced his optics to focus enough to find his little brother sitting on the floor in the dark.

The ghost was gone for now, but Skywarp hadn’t noticed. In fact, he tuned Gravechaser out a while ago. He did put two and two together though: After all, he wasn’t THAT stupid. Gravechaser had made his brothers fight, which led to Thundercracker leaving, which led to his hypothermia, which led to his virus and day-long recharge, which led to Skywarp being alone all day to be yelled by Gravechaser, who had planted the L.A. Coroner’s file for him to find, which Gravechaser would have had to do when Soundwave wasn’t in the Control Room, which meant he did that when Skywarp and Thundercracker were sleeping in the Control Room, after the fight that they had had with Starscream, which Gravechaser had originally caused.

“Hey TC?” he asked blankly, “I’ll bet your Sire was good at chess.”

The comment made absolutely no sense to the blue flyer. Instead, he just pulled his little brother up to sit him on the sofa. The two didn’t do much after that; just huddled together under the blankets on the sofa with their Energon cubes—although neither was hungry—and watched the local news on television.

Footage of the city trucks plowing snow played on. They were also to clear the highways, but it would be at least another day before they could get to the residential areas, much less the side streets.

“Wow, I really made a mess,” TC commented offhandedly.

Skywarp didn’t answer; he just curled closer to his brother for warmth.

“Let’s go to bed,” Thundercracker told him. Again, no resistance. The two curled around each other protectively in the blue Seeker’s berth.

:I’m sorry I’ve been out of it all day, buddy,: TC told his little sibling through their Bond, :Just sleep…I won’t let anything happen to you two:.

Skywarp didn’t worry about it though; he knew Gravechaser wouldn’t be bothering them again this evening. The ghost had WAY too much fun today.
Chapter 41: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter 41:

By Transformersnewfan

The next day came without incident; Skywarp and Thundercracker were still recovering together, while the Decepticon Officers headed for their meeting with Shockwave. The Christmas break was scheduled to begin in two days, and they had a lot to talk about, especially since their January meeting was subject to cancellation due to inclement weather.

Cybertron being eight hours ahead of Earth, it was nearly ten at night when the trio left the Underwater Base.

As he sat in the back seat of the transporter, Starscream was still thinking about the day before but refused to show that in front of his Bondmate, who was in the front passenger seat, or Soundwave, who was driving. He had removed Thundercracker’s suspension but hadn’t had a chance to tell his brother yet. It didn’t matter since the blue Seeker needed a least a week for his systems to clear that virus. Instead, he told Ravage to watch over the triplets, (“I am NOT a babysitter,” the cold Cat had insisted, refusing to change diapers, etc., so he went to Soundwave, who instructed Rumble and Frenzy to do the dirty deeds.).

“Everything alright, Star?” Megatron asked, craning his neck cables towards the back seat.

Starscream just nodded silently.

So, the Decepticon Leader instead chatted with Soundwave as they drove to the Space Bridge, “So what’s new with the investigation?” Neither of the large mechs had been told about the latest attack.

“Unfortunately, we are at a dead-end,” Soundwave admitted, “Our only course of action is to finish the paperless-society project, and hope it yields us further information regarding the prisoners of the Iacon Correctional Center and any powers they had possessed.”

“Hmm,” Megatron wondered, “remind me to ask Shockwave about this.” They drove through the Space Bridge now, “maybe he remembers something from when he was a coroner.”

“A mech with invisibility powers,” Megatron explained to Shockwave as the group entered the President’s Tower, “and claws, possibly red ones.”

“No, I cannot say it rings any bells,” the purple Cannon-Former shook his helm, “but then again, it’s been quite a long time since I’ve looked at those records.” He began gathering his datapad reports, “But I must say, I have so enjoyed receiving the digitalized copies of our Decepticon files. The other evening, I re-read all about the year we built the atrium in Crystal City while listening to the human Ludwig van Beethoven’s Symphony Number Five.”

“This mech’s as bad as Megatron,” Soundwave mumbled under his air intakes.

Throughout the meeting, the Tapedeck was rigid and angry, having been deprived of what he had hoped would have been a long evening with Skywarp, that was ruined by finding those archive
photographs.

“You seem tense, Soundwave,” Shockwave looked up from his datapad, “is there something wrong with my treasury report?”

“Who says I’m tense?” the blue mech barked, getting up to walk around, “I’m fine.”

“I will make some Energon-coffee,” Shockwave fumbled with his notes and went to the kitchen.

:Skywarp’s got his circuits sizzling,: Megatron smirked as he told Starscream through their Bond, unaware of the events of the previous day, :he hates to be away from him.:

Starscream nodded, :Have you told Shockwave about his pregnancy?:

:Not yet,: Megatron admitted, :I know him. He wouldn’t sleep for nine months. He was a basket case when you were carrying. We’ll tell him when the sparkling gets here.:

:Sounds good,: Starscream just shrugged; his processor elsewhere, :I need to talk to them today…:

“This meeting couldn’t get any worse,” Soundwave grumped to himself.

Then Shockwave’s Chief of Security, George, came in, smoking a cigarette as always, “Hey! Big Blue!” before slapping the Tapedeck on the back, “Ya look like slag. Ain’t ya getting any?”

Soundwave just looked at him.

When the purple Cannon-Former returned with the Energon-coffee, Soundwave downed it in one gulp.

“So I see,” the Tapedeck cringed inwardly.

The group watched as the blue mech nearly took the handle off the patio sliding door as he shoved it open, before commenting off-handedly, “Fresh air…”

“Anyway…” Megatron steered the conversation back to business.

The meeting went on, among the topics, Megatron proposed having a Triple Changer division created, with Astrotrain appointed to lead the team. The Motion was passed.

During the Good of the Order, Soundwave, because of Skywarp, proposed a Cybertron-based Memorial Wall for their fallen comrades, including members of the Decepticon Human Alliance Division.

“I think that’s a glorious idea,” Shockwave told the group, “I’ll have the plans drawn up immediately.” Again, the Motion passed.

Starscream didn’t add much to the meeting. Instead, his thoughts kept going back to his sparklings and his brothers. He felt uneasy, as if they were in danger, somehow.

:Thundercracker?: he called over their Trine Bond, :Can you pick up my sparklings and take them to your quarters?:

:Okay.: was the indifferent response.
The meeting went on, but the red and white Seeker’s worries persisted.

Thundercracker was still weak, so he only carried Dawning, while Rumble and Frenzy, respectively, carried Darkwing and Darkmount, when the triplets were brought to their uncles’ quarters. They didn’t let Skywarp pick up the heavy toddlers.

Ravage turned to leave, satisfied.

“Hey!” Rumble reminded him, “Aren’t you supposed to guard them or something?”

The Cat didn’t believe so, “Starscream has requested the sparklings be taken in by his brothers.”

“Yeah…” Rumble gave his most sarcastic tone, “But he didn’t say anything about you not guarding ‘em!”

Regardless, the Panther huffed and stalked out. He went back to his quarters, where Laserbeak was (probably) not watching Buzzsaw and Ratbat.

“It’s okay guys,” Skywarp told them, “we can watch them.” He thought about Gravechaser again, and hoped the two semi-telepathic twins could detect him, “Hey, you guys wanna hang out with us? Watch a movie or something?”

“Sure,” Rumble told him; and Frenzy always followed his older twin’s lead.

So, TC left to take his hot shower and went to his berth. While Skywarp had the sofa bed, with the triplets, and Rumble and Frenzy, gearing up to watch a couple of DVDs.

“So…” the pregnant Seeker tried to broach the subject, “What do you guys think we heard in the Control Room the other day?”

“Eh?” Frenzy didn’t remember.

“Never mind,” Skywarp sighed, putting the DVD in the player. Then he leaned his tummy on a pillow, on his left side, trying not to have that pain again.

Rumble was rather rough, plopping the sparklings into the sofa bed one by one; Darkmount flying up a bit, only for the blue Cassette to pull him back under the covers.

“So Skywarp,” he began, “what’re the movies on tap?”

“I wanna watch ‘Sleeping Beauty,’” the black and purple Seeker smiled, “we used to watch it when we were little, y’know? And I want the kids to see it. TC’s always reading them that stupid, new version.” He missed his brother, calling out, “WANNA WATCH THE MOVIE, TEECEE?!”

A disinterested grumble was the only response.

“Don’t worry about ‘em,” Rumble piped up, thinking the pregnant Seeker would soon be moving in with his family.

The film played; the famous, well-known scenes, but never becoming old. The famous Christening scene, where Maleficent made her entrance via teleportation.
“I miss teleporting,” Skywarp sighed, “it was easier getting around.”

The scene went on, with the pregnant Seeker adding, “I’m gonna ask Starscream to be Crystal’s Godfather.”

The twins nodded; fair enough since their Sire had no siblings.

“Makes sense,” the blue Cassette agreed, “having a Seeker,” Since, of course, they figured their ‘sister’ would need the company of other Seekers.

The famous Curse scene, with the evil fairy disappearing in a flash of green light, leaving the royal family devastated.

Skywarp couldn’t help but feeling the parallel with Princess Aurora, especially since knowing about the newer version of the story, in which it was explained that Maleficent had a beef with King Stefan, much like Gravechaser’s own embroilment with his Creators, and yet, like Aurora, HE was the one to suffer the consequences.

Then, during the time-skip scene to sixteen years later, the pregnant Seeker shifted and had one of those shooting pains in his right side again, making him keen in agony.

Frenzy looked at him, remembering the time he had leaned against the flyer’s belly, and he cried out as if he was stabbed. After a moment, the red Cassette asked, “How come you didn’t tell Pop about that?”

“How come you didn’t tell Pop about that?” Skywarp played dumb.

“You seem pretty comfortable with him,” Frenzy insisted, “So why don’t ya tell him about that?”

Rumble listened now, unaware that there was a problem.

Skywarp had no answer, so he simply lied, “I-I’ll tell him.” He knew he should too; he was getting them almost every day now.

The film went on; the triplets fell fast asleep, Skywarp nodding off, curling around his belly, to the music of Aurora and Philip singing, ‘Once Upon a Dream.’

Frenzy got up to cover the flyer’s wings with the blanket. Then he and Rumble began chatting quietly, “Gonna be nice having a Mom again…”

“This is Pop’s real opportunity,” Rumble nodded, referring to the Christmas break, “the rest of ‘em are going to Cybertron, and TC’s probably gonna sleep through the first week. So, we gotta plan for some romantic stuff for ‘em.”

Frenzy: “Like what?”

“Movies, flowers, candy, the whole bit.” Rumble plotted out, “Maybe a little dancing. Pop usually goes for the classics, like those humans from the nineteen-fifties,” he glanced at Skywarp to make sure he was fast asleep, “Skywarp seems to like the fairytales from when he was a kid, maybe Pop could capitalize on that, like have a theme night.”

The thought of a fairytale-themed party was just too much for Gravechaser. These two had to go.

At first, both Cassettes thought the noises were coming from the television, but then realized it was coming from overhelm. They stopped talking and listened; it sounded like nails dragging on the
ceiling. This wasn’t a normal sound on the Base. They looked at each other, before both looked up at the ceiling, listening carefully. They didn’t know it, but it was the sound of the floating monster dragging his wing-tips across the attic floor.

“Rumble, what’s that?” Frenzy asked.

“I dunno,” Rumble admitted.

Little Darkmount awoke and peeked his little helm up. For a moment, he saw Gravechaser through the ceiling. The little fella was unable to comprehend what he was looking at, so he pulled the blanket over himself and refused to acknowledge it.

The dragging stopped, right above where Skywarp was sleeping. It was an eerie feeling.

They did what they always did when they were scared; the same thing Skywarp always did: Call their big brother.

:Rav,: Rumble whimpered over their sibling Bond, :Rav, you awake?’

:What do you want?: was the Cat’s annoyed response.

Rumble: :Can you come to Skywarp’s quarters?:

There was an audible groan, but he seemed to be coming.

Gravechaser knew that this beastformer might be able to detect his presence, so he stopped moving. Oh, but he was not afraid of the Tapedeck’s family. They would know him; their time would come…but not tonight.

“Warp,” Frenzy shook him, “I think Mirage is back.”

“Hummm,” the carrying flyer woke up confused, looking at the red and black Cassette, then realized the ghost might be back, “What happened?!”

Frenzy whispered, “Somebody’s in the attic.”

He realized what was going on, he sat up, grabbed Frenzy and held him, looking up at the ceiling,

Dawning poked his little helm up, making a whimper.

Rumble was listening, waiting.

“You guys heard it?” Skywarp asked.

Frenzy: “Yeah.”

“Uh-huh,” Rumble nodded.

“Rumble, please…” the pregnant Seeker begged, “Go see if TC’s still asleep.”

“Should I get him?” the Cassette whispered.

“No!” Skywarp told him, “Just tell me if he’s sleeping.”

The blue Cassette wasn’t entirely sure what was happening, but he got up and went to the berthroom, all the while, the movie played on, now at the argument-in-the-cottage scene.
Rumble opened the door, and indeed, Thundercracker was sound asleep. So, Rumble ran back, “Okay, he’s recharging, so now what?”

“I just…Don’t want anybody to ever say again that it’s him attacking me, okay?” Skywarp explained in a whimpering tone, “you’re my witnesses, okay?”

The twins nodded, understanding.

Skywarp looked around the living room, looking for any large shadows; seeing nothing. He jumped when someone knocked at the door.

“That’s Ravage,” Rumble told him, getting up.

There was more knocking; Rumble opened the front door…There was nobody there. The blue Cassette’s optics were round in shock.

Then Ravage reached their quarters, looking at his younger brother.

“Rav?” Rumble was afraid to ask, “Do you just knock twice and walk away?”

“No,” the Cat told him, “I just got here.”

“That’s what I was afraid of…” he mumbled.

Seeing that Skywarp and Frenzy were frightened, Ravage entered and checked out the quarters, going from room to room. Like his brother, he saw Thundercracker sleeping, still sick from his virus.

“No one is here,” the Panther told Skywarp. Still, he jumped onto the sofa bed, intending to protect the family, “Recharge, I shall stay vigilant.”

“Kit-ty,” Dawning reached for him, and Ravage allowed the sparkling to hold onto his paw.

Nobody slept though; Skywarp and the twins just continued to watch the ceiling. The entire mood had changed; the movie was now creepy. Skywarp turned it off before the final battle scene.

Back on Cybertron, it was daytime. When the meeting over, Soundwave asked that he step out and join them back at the transporter in an hour or so. Starscream meanwhile, went shopping.

The Tapedeck went up to Polyhex, his hometown, and went to a local flower shop. He picked up a single rose, and ordered some more flowers to be delivered to the Base…

“Celene, I regard not having visited more often,” he began as he knelt at his wife’s grave; he told her all about how their sons were doing, one by one, and about the Decepticons’ accomplishments. Finally, he paused and told her, “I’ve fallen for someone, darling…I just…hope you would approve.”

Finally, the trio returned from Cybertron, getting in a little after two in the morning. Starscream and Megatron retrieved their triplet sons, still asleep.

“No one was on the Base,” Ravage concluded upon hearing and sensing nothing.

Skywarp wasn’t convinced though; he didn’t talk to Star or anyone else, going to his berthroom.
They all left; he didn’t barricade the door the way Thundercracker did, knowing it didn’t matter. Instead, the pregnant flyer plopped down in bed, not wanting to bother his brother, and trying to rest.

:Momma okay?: Crystal asked.

“Uh-huh…” he was too depressed even to give her any attention. He started to wonder if this was all going to ever end. Would he be able to last much longer like this? Would this thing attack his sparkling once she was born? Could they escape? Would Gravechaser follow them to go to Cybertron?

He had mixed emotions about Rumble and Frenzy hearing the sounds in the attic. On the one hand, he had gained two witnesses, proving his beloved brother wasn’t the cause of the attacks, but on the other, he hated the idea of the two boys being frightened by the entity that he had somehow brought upon himself.

He rubbed his belly gently, trying to focus on his daughter’s impending arrival. He pictured holding her, cuddling her. He wanted to feed her and change her, take care of her. Not think about ghosts and getting scared or attacked.

Skywarp closed his optics and drifted off to recharge, knowing fully that it would be violently interrupted before the night was over.
Chapter 42: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 42:

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After Soundwave locked down the Decepticon Underwater Base for the night, he joined his sparklings in their quarters.

Rumble and Frenzy debated if they needed to tell their Sire.

“Hey Pop?” Rumble asked, “Do we have any problems with sea creatures getting into the Base?”

Soundwave looked at him, “What do you mean?”

“Frenz and I heard, like, something like a crab dragging around in the attic,” the blue Cassette explained, “so, um…”

“Probably came through the ventilation systems,” Soundwave nodded, “it will either find its way out or die there. Nothing more.” But he wondered if it was something more, “What happened?”

Rumble didn’t say any more; Frenzy was silent. So, Soundwave began cleaning up a bit before bed. Finally, Rumble piped up, “Pop, I don’t want Skywarp and the baby in that room anymore. I think they need to move somewhere safer.”

Wow. Rumble had never cared for anything before; not even Frenzy.

“Tell Thundercracker he should move out too,” Rumble continued, “their room’s right by those vents and the elevator. It ain’t safe.”

The Tapedeck took his son seriously, “In the morning, I will speak to them.”

He then made sure all his sons were in their berths and turned in for the night. It was two-thirty in the morning.

In Skywarp’s Dream:

The Seeker had no idea he was dreaming…

He was working on the files in the Control Room, just like any other day. He was working alone, meaning Soundwave had not reported for his shift yet. He had a local television station on one of the monitors. An anchorwoman was reporting on a cooking demonstration.

He opened the next box and pulled out a file folder. He opened it, and there it was: Gravechaser’s mugshot and the criminal record! He finally had it! He could finally show the others who the ghost was!

It should have occurred to him that the mug shot would not have been Gravechaser in his current form, rather, it would have been Scourge’s original Seeker chassis. But just then, the television turned to snow, making static. And then, a song:
“If only you knew…”

Skywarp’s neck cables snapped up; he spun on his heels and looked at the screen.

“If…only…you…knew…”

The pregnant Seeker approached the screen, scared; his air intakes hitching, ready to keen. He got close enough to hear it clearly:

“Iiiifff…oooonly…youuuu…knewwwww…”

It stopped abruptly. Followed by dead silence. Skywarp didn’t even feel his own chassis.

The stillness was cut by the frightened wail of a newling.

He looked down and saw his flat abdomen.

“AAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!” he grabbed at his form, horrified that his unborn femme had vanished.

He was in a total panic when the second time the newling keened, he ran into the hallway, “SOMEBODY HELP ME!”

Gravechaser had his little Crystal in his crawls. He was floating away with her at an unearthly speed.

“STOP!” Skywarp cried out, “GIVE ME MY BABY!!!!” he tried to chase them, but the ghost was moving too fast.

“NOOOOOO!!!” Skywarp cried out.

End of Skywarp’s dream:

Thundercracker awoke to his little brother’s keens and whimpers. He saw Skywarp thrashing in his berth, in the throes of a nightmare.

“Warp,” he whispered now, trying not to scare him, “you’re dreaming.”

“HELP ME! AAAAAUUUUUUGGGGGHHHHH!!!!” Skywarp shrieked out; his optics shuttered tightly.

TC jumped out of his berth and shook his brother, “Skywarp, wake up!”

The black and purple Seeker’s optics snapped open finally, internal fans whirling, and he couldn’t catch his air intakes, “TEEECEE!!!” he grabbed his brother’s arms, “HELP ME!!!”

Thundercracker’s optics were still refocusing, and his systems were still lagging; he looked the younger Seeker over for any injuries, “W-What?”

Skywarp was sobbing in his sleep, “My baby’s gone!”

Oh, God.

TC pulled all the blankets off, throwing them on the floor. But there was no Energon-blood or fluids to indict anything had gone wrong with the pregnancy.

Skywarp finally realized it was all a bad dream. He was still carrying his little femme. But it had all seemed so real. He sat up now, hugging his abdomen with both arms, rocking back and forth;
coolant tears bursting from his optics.

“Skywarp, tell me what happened?” Thundercracker pleaded. He had been out of it for hours, not even realizing Starscream had picked up the triplets. He wrapped his arms around his young brother as the other continued to cry.

“When was the last time you felt your sparkling move?” the blue Seeker asked, worried.

Skywarp looked at the clock; it was four in the morning, “Couple hours…” he felt his baby moving her legs now; she always did that when he was sobbing, and she didn’t like that, “She’s moving now…”

TC sighed in relief, resting his chin on Skywarp’s shoulder. He put one of his hands on the other’s pregnant belly now, making sure his niece-to-be was alright.

“Um…” Thundercracker stammered, “Sometimes, sparklings don’t always move… I mean, they fall asleep… She was probably asleep.” He was that thinking Skywarp didn’t feel her moving and panicked.

Skywarp just let him think so. He didn’t want to tell him about the nightmare.

The two held onto each other and Skywarp’s belly for a little longer before they were getting cold again. “Come on,” TC helped him up, and they went to the blue Seeker’s larger berth, picking up the blankets and wrapping themselves up, holding each other tightly, arms and legs intertwined with Skywarp’s tummy nestled safely between them.

:Mommy okay?: the sparkling wanted to know why they were up again, :Uncle okay?:

:Yes, sweeptspark…: he answered his baby, before switching Bonds, :TC, how you feeling?:

:Okay I guess…: he yawned at the same time, :Maybe tomorrow I’ll be able to stay awake for more than an hour.: 

:I don’t wanna sleep again…: Skywarp sniffed, :I-I dream… He makes me dream…:

:Warp…: Thundercracker reached up and stroked his baby brother’s helm, :We gotta tell somebody…:

They didn’t talk anymore; instead, all three of them laid awake, while Gravechaser paced above them.

The next day came without incident, with most of the Decepticons leaving for their holiday destinations. Astrotrain left to visit his younger sister; while Onslaught went to Uranus with Blast Off. Some of them vacationed on Earth, with the Coneheads opting to travel to Paris, France. And Megatron packed up his small family to visit his beloved Mother in his birth city of Tarn.

“I hate to leave them,” Starscream whispered as he walked around with Darkwing in his arms, “Are we SURE the Space Bridge isn’t safe for unborn sparklings?”

Megatron stopped his packing and shrugged, “You’ll have to ask Soundwave.”

“He’ll just say no,” the Seeker pouted, “Megatron, what are we gonna do?”

Megatron tried to think of the best way to keep his mates’ siblings safe while they were away, “Our
quarters is closest to the Control Room,” he concluded, “If anybody’s trying to break in, they would have to get pretty deep into the Base before they reach here.” Soundwave’s quarters was only a room away as well.

“Okay,” Star nodded, “but TC’s still sore at me,” thinking his oldest sibling wouldn’t be willing to listen.

“He’ll obey an order from me,” Megs nodded, “let’s go.”

With nightfall coming once again, Megatron spoke to the blue Seeker and Soundwave, who also had concerns for their safety after what his sons told him. Adding to the stress was that the Underwater Base would be virtually deserted except for the Tapedeck and his family. Skywarp sat on the sofa, still wrapped up in the blankets.

“Somebody was walking around again last night,” Thundercracker admitted, still not telling his brother’s secret that their intruder was a supernatural, “we could hear it.”

“Yes, Rumble told me,” Soundwave nodded, earning a look from Megatron.

“No, after they left,” TC insisted, “this was around four this morning.”

“I’ll check the cameras again,” the Tapedeck’s vocals told them he already knew nothing would show up on their surveillance system.

That was it. “Come on, now,” Megatron insisted. He and Soundwave helped take some of the Seekers’ things and moved them into the Decepticon Leader’s quarters. Thundercracker was trying to walk, holding onto the wall. Megs took the flyer’s arm and slung it over his shoulder and hurried him along, while Soundwave helped Skywarp.

While the couples’ berthroom and the triplets’ nursery were spacious, their guest berthroom only had a twin bed for when Esmeralda visited. Neither Seekers was comfortable in the master berthroom, so they opted for the sofa bed. “A nice way to spend our vacation,” Thundercracker grumbled, but deep down, he hoped moving would help.

Before they left for the Space Bridge, Starscream tried again to speak to his brothers, “Well, the little ones are in their car seats…”

“W-We kissed them bye-bye,” Skywarp interjected.

Starscream hugged him once more and petting his stomach, “Bye-bye little one,” still refusing to call her by her planned name.

“It’s Crystal,” Skywarp told him again, smiling.

Thundercracker refused to look at the red and white Seeker.

Starscream: “Thundercracker…”

“I’ll be outta here as soon as I can get my transfer,” TC cut him off.

“I removed your suspension,” Starscream told him, “days ago…”

The blue Seeker hadn’t known that, but he stayed tough, “Alright, then I quit!”
“Thundercracker,” Starscream begged now, “wait…”

“JUST GO!” was the other’s response before storming into the hallway.

Starscream knew he had to leave; his sparklings were already in the transporter with their Sire. He would have to think about how to reconcile with his Trine Brothers for the rest of his vacation.

With Megatron, Starscream, and their sparklings in Tarn, and the last of the vacationing Cons finally on their way, the Base was practically empty. Only Soundwave, his sparklings, Thundercracker and pregnant Skywarp remained. With all the break-ins, they all stayed together in the Control Room, with most of the other rooms locked and dark. The nearby towns were still buried in mounts of snow, and, like the Decepticons, their human counterparts had also flown the coop for the Christmas holiday.

The Tapedeck tried to get some work done before they turned in, having lost a few days of productivity. Skywarp, in turn, got up to help by sorting the papers.

“You guys are gonna work through the vacation?” TC asked.

“Not really,” Soundwave answered, “just trying to keep busy.” He was turning knobs and pressing buttons now, “The real work is securing the Base while there are less inhabitants.”

Skywarp was nervous now; he was standing up, sorting papers, just like he had been doing in his dream the night before. This time, he kept his left arm firmly around his belly, protecting his sparkling from any attackers.

: Hug!: Crystal thought he was hugging her.

Later, Soundwave escorted them to their temporary quarters, making sure they were safe and turned in with his family.

They weren’t used to the large quarters, “I miss the triplets,” Skywarp said offhandedly.

“Well, we’re gonna have our own kid,” Thundercracker told him, “that was the plan, remember?”

The two brothers continued to stay close, not leaving each other’s sides, guarding one another during nightly showers. Megatron’s wash racks had a bathtub; Skywarp didn’t want to try to get up from that; not tonight anyway.

The sofa bed wasn’t as comfy as the one in their own quarters; Skywarp had to prop his big belly on a pillow, and another in the middle of his back. He had the habit of rolling over onto his back, and he was still thinking about that nightmare where Gravechaser had somehow ‘removed’ Crystal from his gestation chamber.

Thundercracker was feeling better at least; he was awake for more hours today than the previous day. Still, it was late, and he was ready to fall back into recharge. He held his little brother close, making sure nothing happened during the night.

The night and the next day went by without incident. Soundwave and Skywarp worked on their paperless-society project, with TC and the twins helping, and things were actually going well for once. Afterward, the night was again, uneventful.
Skywarp began to relax and recover from the attacks. It crossed his processor that Gravechaser may have attached himself to someone that had left the Base and would be left behind at some far-off destination.

Twenty-eight weeks carrying now, seven months pregnant, he was starting to get hopeful again about giving birth to his daughter and raising his little femme. One of the things he was looking forward to doing was leaning back and holding the baby against his canopy glass under the blankets and cuddling together.

In the morning, just like a week earlier, he enjoyed looking in the mirror in the wash racks (Megatron had a full-length mirror) and admiring his sparkling bump. His datapads were making him nervous though: They all said in the third trimester, he was going to get bigger rapidly and his belly more round-looking. He was nervous because he was already over the expected weight gain for twenty-eight weeks, “I already look like a swallowed a beach ball,” it was very sensitive too; he rubbed it gently before patted it. Then he wrapped himself up in his blanket again. He was shy and not used to others looking at him or touching his belly. At least it was only TC and Soundwave around for a while.

At the afternoon med-bay appointment, Soundwave did another ultrasound on the Seeker. Poor Skywarp kept flitching and complaining that the medical equipment strapped to his stomach was too painful; the Tapedeck kept having to readjust it. Some medics were hard on their patients, but luckily, Soundwave wasn’t one of those medics. For one, he didn’t believe in strapping his patients down. Instead, he had Thundercracker hold his little brother steady during the examination, “Geez, why are you squirming so much?”

“Cause I’m sick,” Skywarp whined.

“Pregnancy is not an illness,” the Tapedeck noted, “and it’s not to be treated as such.” He gave Skywarp his blanket for added comfort, “This is normal, the chassis becomes extremely sensitive.” Finally, he was able to complete the sonogram, and thankfully, everything was progressing normally. The black and purple Seeker calm a little; at least his little femme was healthy. Now, he laid back in his brother’s arms.

Soundwave: “So how have you been feeling?”

Skywarp knew he should tell him, “I get pains all the time,” he began, “like…I’m being stabbed.”

“Braxton-Hicks,” Soundwave noted, “they tend to occur more often in the last few weeks. It’s from changes in the gestation chamber. Some patients notice them more than others.”

It wasn’t what Skywarp was referring to. He had read the datapads; he had read the websites; he KNEW what Braxton-Hicks contractions were. THIS was the sharp pain on his lower right side. And it didn’t even feel like it was coming from within his gestation chamber. He had trouble thinking of the words to describe it, sometimes it felt like a muscle or a tube was being pushed or squeezed.

Soundwave: “Skywarp?”

“Okay,” was his only response. He had zoned out there. So, he just let Soundwave remove the medical equipment, and he sat up, still hiding all his worries about the future from both his brother and his doctor/friend.

For the rest of the visit, Soundwave explained what would happen next: The third and final trimester
meant that the ultrasounds now had to be every two weeks instead of every month, and at thirty-six weeks, they would switch to weekly visits. As for the pains—or what he was led to believe were—Braxton-Hicks contractions, “The main remedy for that is the minimalization of stress. Remain calm, do things to relax, and don’t let yourself panic.” He and TC looked at each other, “Which isn’t easy, I understand, with all that’s happened with the intruder.”

“Starscream caused a lotta stress too,” Thundercracker spat bitterly. It was evident that the blue Seeker’s own rift with their Trine Leader was showing now, “at least he’s gone for a while.”

Talk like that only hurt the black and purple flyer; deep down, he knew that it was Gravechaser that was behind a lot of their fights, and he was still hoping his family would all reconcile before his daughter was ready to be born. He didn’t want to tell Thundercracker about his wish to make Starscream the Godfather; not yet anyway.

“Well, I have to admit, those files also caused strife,” Soundwave sighed, referring to the LA Coroner photos, “I can assure you, Skywarp, none of the remaining files contain anything like that.”

With the exam complete, Skywarp was walked back to Megatron’s quarters to rest for a while. Working in the Control Room could wait until later. He needed some more sleep.
Starscream was holding Darkwing against his canopy, while the little one was drinking from his sparkling Energon bottle. The Seeker walked around his Bondmate’s ancestral cottage looking at the framed photos on the bookcases, while Dawning and Darkmount wrestled each other on the rug.

One photo was of Megatron, the Great Gladiator of Tarn, in a fierce battle with his frequent opponent, Cy-Kill. And in the photo next to it, Megatron and Cy-Kill, along with two other Gladiators, in a buddy-buddy/friends pose. The images couldn’t be more contrasting.

The Decepticon Leader saw his mate looking at the photo and came over.

“How do you…I mean?” the flyer stammered.

“Leave it in the Arena?” Megs smirked, “You learn to separate your emotions. Compartmentalize, if you will.”

“But how?” Starscream asked.

His Bondmate shrugged, “Just takes time, I guess.”

“Thundercracker didn’t even want to say goodbye to me,” the red and white Seeker put their son down to play with his brothers, “Skywarp and I are hot and cold. I feel like…like I don’t have a Trine anymore.”

Megatron: “Anything I can do?”

“Not sure,” Starscream admitted, “I guess…I have to have something come along to knock us back in sync.”

The former Gladiator watched his mate for a moment as he played with the sparklings, thinking he would have to come up with a solution. Maybe talk to Soundwave about this; thoughts of the mysterious intruder still weighing heavily on his CPU.

Increased pheromone levels. Skywarp found this in one of the pregnancy datapads when he was researching what to expect at the twenty-eight weeks’ cycle. Soundwave hadn’t told him about this one; probably out of embarrassment.

Basically, a pregnant Seeker reaches his or her sexual peak in the third trimester, just in time for the Christmas vacation. Skywarp exhaled heavily, picturing the masculine Tapedeck now, secreting coolant from his chassis after going back and forth from the basement, bringing up those boxes that he refused to let his carrying assistant move around. The image was making Skywarp breathe heavier, envisioning himself and the larger mech kissing, touching him all over, and having Soundwave massage his wings, leading up to interfacing…

But, where would they interface? He could invite the Tapedeck back to his quarters for a romantic
evening, but the environment in his room was beyond ominous these days. Sure, Soundwave would protect him, but feeling even the remnants of the haunting would be a turn-off for the telepathic Tapedeck. Worse yet, what if Gravechaser decided to return?

No. His quarters was out. Soundwave’s quarters, maybe? He would have to either be very quiet with the six Cassettes nearby, and the older ones would certainly know what they were doing in the berthroom… “Hmmm…” Skywarp hummed a bit, running his hand up and down his belly, “Control Room’s the best place,” he finally concluded.

Only problem now would be getting rid of Thundercracker. Of course, he greatly appreciated his big brother’s love and devotion, caring and protecting not just himself, but his precious unborn daughter.

But now, he would like to have a little fun with his new friend. He felt he could even feel his pheromone levels rising. He moaned to himself a little now; how could he get rid of TC without tipping him off about what he was thinking of doing with Soundwave?

No patrols or scouting missions scheduled for the next two weeks; and his brother was still a bit weak for simply joy-flying. He debated sending him out on a propane run, lying to him that he had a pregnancy craving for it. But then, Soundwave would probably go instead, and that would defeat the purpose of everything.

Their Creators. Skywarp raised an optic brow. They had always spent Christmas with their parents. Perhaps Thundercracker could visit them for a day or two, maybe Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, and then the black and purple Seeker could put on a movie for the Cassettes and keep them occupied while he forced himself on their Sire on the same sofa where he first told him about his plan to keep his pregnancy a secret seven months ago. Maybe they would open the sofa bed; his belly was taking up more and more room these days.

Back to Thundercracker: This would take some convincing, but he could play up the fact that this would be the first Christmas their parents would be without them. After all, just because he was forbidden to travel intergalactically didn’t mean TC had to stay back as well. He would have to get Soundwave to agree too, but not tip his hand that he intended to turn their holiday break into a romantic rendezvous. Gravechaser wasn’t the only conniving mech around here, Skywarp smirked, after all, he invented it back when he was a sparkling!

He heard his older brother stir in his recharge nap, groaning and twisting in Megatron’s recliner. “Hey Teecee, you up?” he asked, feigning innocence.

“Uh-huh,” the blue Seeker yawned, “slagging virus is hanging in there."

“You poor thing,” the pregnant flyer smirked, sitting down on the sofa bed, “Wanna go eat? I’m starving.” He would never launch right into his intended plans; he was too cunning for that. Besides, it was dinner time, and he was getting hungry again.

“Okay,” Thundercracker got himself up, and they went to the mass hall. The two brothers were drinking their Energon cubes when Soundwave came in with his brood.

“Hey,” the Tapedeck acknowledged causally; no need for formality on vacation, “I just checked the cameras again. We’re all clear for fifteen miles in all directions."

“I shall return to the Ark in the morning hours,” Laserbeak announced to the group, “They can never go unmonitored for prolonged periods.”

The Tapedeck put a piece of paper in front of Thundercracker, “Starscream called earlier, he wanted
to make sure you guys had Esmerelda’s phone number.”

The blue Seeker promptly crumbled up the message and tossed it in the trash without blinking.

“Howa,” Rumble stated before Soundwave gave him a look, telling him to stay out of this.

“As far as I’m concerned, we’re done,” Thundercracker spat harshly, “I’m transferring to Cybertron come January.”

“Understood,” Soundwave sat down and put Ratbat on his lap; the little guy drinking from his Energon cube, “I’ll notify Shockwave.” He didn’t really believe the blue Seeker would leave his Trine, but he never wanted to argue needlessly, knowing the two Seekers would reconcile eventually.

Skywarp used it as an opportunity to bring about his plan, “Then we’re gonna go back to Vos, TC?”

“Hope so,” the older Jet fiddled with a wrapper, “close to Mom and Dad preferably. That way, Mom can babysit during the day.”

Skywarp grinned now; his brother bringing their parents up himself was even better than he could have expected. Now, he just slid into the next step, “Teecee, I miss them.”

Thundercracker: “Me too.”

“This is our first Christmas away from them,” the carrying flyer faked his whining, “Soundwave, can’t we go? Just for ONE little day or two?”

The big blue mech seemed to ponder this, “The electromagnetic effects on an unborn sparkling have not been fully studied…”

“No,” Thundercracker told his brother flatly, “I don’t want you doing anything risky, especially after your concussion.”

Skywarp made a pouty expression, “I just feel sorry for our Creators, y’know? Being all alone at Christmastime…Couldn’t ONE of us go? Can you go?”

TC seemed to consider this, biting his lower lip components.

“Come on,” Skywarp insisted now, “I’ll be fine. Soundwave’s here.” He turned to the Tapedeck, “You wouldn’t let anything happen to me and the baby, right? We’d be safe, right?”

“In course,” the Tapedeck drink from his cube, “I wouldn’t let you out of my sight.”

Oh, this was wonderful, “Come on, Teecee, please?!” Skywarp pleaded, “Spend Christmas with Momma and Dad, PLEASE?!?” now he faked an emotional surge he knew his big brother would attribute to pregnancy, “I-It must be so hard on Momma to have us so far away…I-I’d hate to be so far away from Crystal…”

Thundercracker wondered briefly why his little sibling wanted to get rid of him all of a sudden, but he chalked it up to his shifting emotions, “Guess I could.”

“YAY!” Skywarp jumped up and hugged him, “Can I tell them?! PLEASE TEECEE?! HUH?! HUH?!"

Okay, his brother was definitely crazy, “Okay, okay,” TC let the other glomp him and practically sit on him, “You can tell them. But I’m just going for a few days.” He got up, “Guess I’ll go pack.” He
left the mass hall.

“I see what you did there,” Frenzy grinned knowingly at the carrying Seeker.

Huh? Uh-oh.

“Y-You do?” Skywarp asked. How did the young Cassette figure out he was in love with the boy’s Sire?

“You wanna get him and Starscream back together,” Frenzy grinned, “and you’re gonna call Starscream and tell him to go visit TC in Vos. Isn’t that right?”

Hee-hee. The red and black Cassette was clever, but Skywarp was downright conniving.

“Yep, that’s it,” Skywarp told him.

Just to cover his own skidplate, the pregnant Jet DID call Starscream once he got back to the red and white Seeker’s quarters and told him that Thundercracker would be coming to Vos. Thus, shooting two Aerialbots with one Null-Ray blast.

“He’s still pretty mad, Star,” Skywarp told their Trine Leader, “maybe if you ask my Dad to talk to him.”

“I’ll try,” Starscream held the phone to his shoulder while changing Darkmount, “I wanna settle this just as much as you must want to, Warp,” he felt so far away from his siblings, “I hate being away from you two…a lot…”

“Star, he told Soundwave to transfer him to Vos,” the black and purple Seeker told him.

“Ugh,” Starscream sighed, “this is my fault, um, I’ll think of something. In the meantime, take care of yourself.” And hung up.

“I knew it,” Thundercracker said suddenly, startling the pregnant Jet.

Skywarp: “Hmmm?”

“You want me to go to Vos just so Starscream can visit,” the blue Seeker thought there was something suspicious about Skywarp’s suddenly wanting him to leave, “you’re a sneaky little frigger, but you could never fool me.”

“Okay, you caught me,” Skywarp faked it again, “but don’t you wanna spend Christmas with our parents?” he made a sad expression.

“Yeah, I do,” TC admitted now, “been weird around here anyway…” he also wondered if he should ask his Mother something, but didn’t want to tell the other, “You sure you’re okay alone?”

“I’m not alone, silly,” Skywarp smiled, “Soundwave and his kids are here. And besides, I haven’t seen or heard from whatever’s been in the attic for days now. I think it’s gone.” He truly hoped the last part was true anyways.

“Okay,” Thundercracker told him, “just promise me you’ll stay by Soundwave the whole time I’m gone.”

“Oh, I will,” Skywarp smirked deviously, “I sure will.” His plan had come together even better than
he expected it to. And soon, he would have Soundwave’s attention to enjoy…

Rip.
Rip.
Rip.

Gravechaser used every fiber of his evil being to control himself from exploding into a flaming ball of energy that would result in a mushroom cloud-sized blast that would tear the entire Decepticon Underwater Base to smithereens and be felt in three neighboring states.

Rip.

He found that slowly ripping paper with his claws—Megatron’s Gladiatorial file—and throwing the pieces on the attic floor was a good way to dispense his roaring fury in small doses.

Rip.

“That infernal, filthy little hellion,” he seethed with an even greater hatred than before, “Lusting, wretched creature,” he tore off another piece, “All he thinks about is frigging around.” Just like her, “Just like his mother.”

Rip.

Oh, how his then-Bondmate plotted whenever he went to work, or rather, looked for work, whichever it was, depending on the era, to have her coccoid boyfriend over for an afternoon romp in the berthroom. Their berthroom. An afternoon romp in their berthroom, while his son innocently played with his pets, completely unbeknownst to what his retch of a mother was doing. When she made breakfast in the morning, she must have been breathlessly anticipating the departure of her rightful husband, and the arrival of her backdoor mech. Their sparkling as oblivious as his Sire.

Rip.

The ghost had indeed taken several days off from haunting the pregnant Jet in an effort to give the frigger a false sense of security, with plans to come back in a blaze of glory when the time proved right. Tonight, he saw firsthand how the little slut was manipulating everyone in his life. This, Gravechaser vowed to himself, would NOT go unpunished. Not at all. Not at all.

Rip.

Plotting would be answered with better plotting. The monster would bide his time now; wait for Thundercracker to indeed leave; the big mech was only intimidating from the outside, the evil ghost knew his weakness though…

Rip.

This paper would have to do until he could rip into Skywarp’s innards.

Rip.
Rip.
Rip.
Thundercracker left for Cybertron on the evening of the twenty-third, the day before Christmas Eve so that he could arrive in Vos on Christmas Eve morning. He planned to spend three days with his parents in his sparklinghood home, recovering from his virus and simply taking things easy. He didn’t plan on leaving Skywarp again once he gave birth though; he would be way too attached to Crystal once she arrived.

Before he left though, Soundwave pulled him aside, “I was wondering,” the Tapedeck whispered, “how good are you with setting up network connections.”

“Pretty good, I’d say,” TC shrugged, “I set up my tablet.” He didn’t add that someone or something broke it since then.

“I’ll give you something,” Soundwave pulled him into the Control Room.

Skywarp saw them as he watched from the crack in the berthroom door, wondering what they were up to, “This is called eavesdropping, Crystal,” he taught her, “I’m a master of it.”

Thundercracker emerged smiling and holding a small box, the size of a router. He left for the Space Bridge now. Skywarp brushed off the box as something to drop off for one of Shockwave’s informants.

“So phase one,” he whispered to himself and his child, “Soundwave’s all mine…” He hurried to the wash racks and took his nightly shower, making sure he was gleamingly clean from helm to pedes. Seekers loved the feeling of being clean; he wanted to look his best for Soundwave tonight. He was feeling much better lately as well. He hadn’t overeaten in days, successfully sticking to his diet plan. Ever since (he thought) Gravechaser had left, he wasn’t stress-eating. There were nights that his fuel tank felt so overextended; it would hurt for hours.

When he was finished showering, he dried off and looked himself over in the mirror. He sighed a bit, wishing his faceplates and digits weren’t so puffy. But he was pregnant, so it wasn’t like he was just FAT, he shrugged. He wrapped up his belly in his robe and blanket and went to the Control Room, “My little Crystal, Mommy’s gonna have fun with your new Daddy tonight.”

Soundwave was working at his Computer Consul, as usual, working on a report for Megatron on another possible energy resource. This one in Chicago.

All six of his sons were in his quarters, watching that new Shia LaBeouf movie Skywarp was kind enough to download for them. No one gave his sparklings any gifts, usually. Except himself and Megatron, of course.

“Hey,” Skywarp began, peeking through the French Doors, “you busy?”

“Um, no,” Soundwave stood, “not at all. Did you need anything?”
“It’s soooo boring in there without TC,” Skywarp giggled, “mind if I chill with you?”

“Not at all,” the Tapedeck smiled under his facemask, “make yourself comfortable.” He guided the pregnant Jet to the sofa, getting him to lay down and put his legs up. He covered Skywarp with another blanket. Then he sat down by the other’s hip, “Is that better?”

“Oh-huh,” Skywarp nodded, stretching out and adjusting his carrying frame, “want me to work on the files?”

“No, it’s late,” Soundwave told him, leaning his elbows on his knees and lacing his digits together, almost sheepishly, “we don’t have to work on those tonight. We’re well ahead of schedule.”

“Maybe…we could just chat then?” Skywarp grinned in a flirtatious manner.

“I would like that,” Soundwave nodded, “I have something to give you, actually.”

Skywarp: “Oh?”

“I wouldn’t…categorize it as a gift,” Soundwave stammered, “I define a gift as something new, and personal, so…it’s not really a gift. It’s just, well, something I’d like you to have.”

He stood and went to his Computer Consul, pulling something out from under the desk. It was a rectangular box that looked like it was from a department store, back when they gave out boxes.

“Skywarp,” Soundwave began slowly, “do you remember that story I told you about Celene making an outfit for a femme?”

Of course, he did, “The one with the slits on the back for the wings?”

“I believe,” pulling the pink, frilly, and oh-so-tiny outfit out of the box, “she would have wanted you to have it.” He handed it to the pregnant flyer, “I um…I washed it last night.”

“Dawww,” Skywarp just loved the little dress, taking it and holding it to his stomach, “she’s gonna be adorable in this. Are you SURE you wanna give this to me?”

“Very much,” Soundwave nodded, “In fact, I’ve come to think of you as part of my family. And, my sons feel the same.”

The Seeker was so touched by this; happy tears, for once, pooled in his optics, “Oh, Soundwave…” He sat up a little and hugged the larger mech tightly, “You’ve been so good to me…I-I don’t deserve it.”

“You deserve others to be good to you,” Soundwave ran his hand over the other’s back before letting him up to look into his optics, “Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“Well,” Skywarp smiled coyly, “how about we cuddle here on the sofa, and you tell me more about Celene…” it was in the back of Skywarp’s CPU that he could get Soundwave to pretend that he was Celene and that their family was back together.

“Very well,” Soundwave was willing to entertain the pregnant Seeker a bit. So, he leaned back on the sofa and let Skywarp lean on his arm and cuddle under the blanket.

The Tapedeck was never the kind to touch or force himself on anyone inappropriately; preferring instead to have his partner initiate further interaction.

Skywarp, on the other hand, was feeling the effects of his hormones racing and wanted to take the
larger mech for his own this evening.

“What were your favorite Christmas memories with Celene?” the flyer whispered.

“Oh, I have a lot of those,” Soundwave sighed, “There was one tradition we observed every year. In Polyhex, on the twelfth night of Christmas, everyone in the Township used to strip their Christmas tree…No one had a fake tree back then…of all the tinsel and the ointments, and the garbagemechs used to take all the old Christmas trees to the Plaza. They would pile all the old trees in one mound,” he chuckled now, “and it was high. It was higher than the ceiling of the Control Room…” For a moment, he realized he was sounding like Megatron and Shockwave, but he didn’t care, “and as soon as it would get dark outside, everyone in Polyhex would gather in the Plaza, and they would burn all the trees in one big bonfire.”

The young flyer was picturing what this huge fire must have looked like, while Soundwave continued, “Celene and I, we took the kids every year. There was one year, before we had the twins, that we took Ravage and Laserbeak. It was freezing outside, and we were huddled together. The boys started fighting as they usually do, and Beak threw a snowball at Ravage, and then Ravage started chasing him. And they were racing each other all around the bonfire.”

Soundwave stopped talking now. Looking straight ahead; watching the memory files in his CPU fade from the good times to the horrific end his beloved had met.

Skywarp craned his helm up to look at him, “What’s the matter?”

“We never went to another one again after Celene passed,” the large mech stated tonelessly.

Skywarp: “I’m sorry…”

“Well, sometimes I realize, she would have wanted us to continue our traditions, even without her,” he adjusted his arm around the smaller flyer, “just the same, Polyhex only continued the tradition for two years after her death.”

“They stopped because of how she died?” Skywarp asked.

“Negative,” Soundwave shook his helm, “it was Sentinel Prime that stopped it. He halted all public gatherings due to the Clampdown.”

The pregnant Jet was leaning against Soundwave’s chestdeck now, “But you wouldn’t have wanted to go to those anymore anyway, right?”

“Well, it’s not like I can’t look at fire or anything,” Soundwave admitted, “we were just…at the time, it was too soon. Now that they stopped doing it, it seems a shame.”

“You ever talk to Shockwave about bringing them back?” the Seeker wondered now.

“Maybe someday,” the Tapedeck shrugged, “I would like Buzzsaw and Ratbat to enjoy what my older sons enjoyed…What I enjoyed with my own Creators.”

“Just imagine, if you tell Shockwave,” Skywarp whispered the image, “next Christmas, you and me, and the kids, watching the bonfire in your hometown. I have Crystal in her little pink snowsuit, and you have Buzzsaw and Ratbat, and the boys and they’re all having a snowball fight. And you and me…together?”

Soundwave reached up his free hand and stroked the young flyer’s cheekplate, staring his visored optics into the hopeful, bright red ones.
“It won’t be easy, Skywarp,” Soundwave’s vocals were laced with trepidation, “my sons aren’t devoted to one another the way Seekers are. Once the novelty of any potential union wears off, they become distant and inconsistent. They’ve even been that way about the Decepticon Cause.”

Being in the moment with his lover, Skywarp temporarily forgot his fears of Gravechaser and spoke candidly, “My Creators are both on their second marriage. And they’re happier than they were in either of their first marriages. And my Mom already had Thundercracker, and he and my Dad have a really great friendship. I could be like the mom to your kids like my Dad is to him.”

The Tapedeck paused before continuing, “The best advice I can give you is to remain as you are. Don’t change to try to fit into my disjointed family. Attempting to emulate Celene won’t solve anything. Be yourself. And if my sons rebut you, I will speak to them, and they will accept you in due time. Until then, they are you assist you with raising your daughter.”

Skywarp raised an optic brow, “You sound like you’ve thought a lot about this.”

“I have,” Soundwave admitted, “A lot…actually.”

Skywarp: “And?”

“And,” the large blue mech continued, “I think you’re beautiful and delicate.”

His words sent a shiver down the black and purple Seeker’s chassis, making his pheromone levels rise even higher. He kept pushing his insecurities deep down, only to have them continue to bubble to the surface, “I’m puffy all over…”

Soundwave: “I was talking about your spark.”

“Wow…” Skywarp’s faceplates flushed now, “nobody’s ever said anything like that to me before… Not even Joey.”

The Tapedeck was momentarily puzzled by the mention of the anonymous sperm donor, “Did you meet him?”

“He’s Crystal’s Father,” Skywarp told him.

“But that was an anonymous donation,” the larger mech corrected.

“That doesn’t mean I don’t love him,” Skywarp shook his helm, “I’ve only seen a picture of him, but…ever since I’ve been carrying our daughter, I think about him, I know I love him, Soundwave…I’ll always love him, but…he’s not here with us. But you are…you’ve been by my side from the moment I told you I was pregnant.”

Soundwave didn’t have the spark to tell the young Jet that the actor he had interrogated months ago could not have cared less about either Skywarp or Crystal, but he had a very quick processor, and came up with a much better response, “Knowing you has taught me something…”

Skywarp: “Yes?”

“The spark can love two beings at the same time,” Soundwave continued, “You feel the way about him the way I will always feel about Celene.” He brushed Skywarp’s helm vents, “and now, the way I feel for you.”

Skywarp starred deeply into the red visor, and wasn’t satisfied with the well-hidden cover, “Can I see your optics again?”
Soundwave removed not only his visor but his facemask as well, “Just anticipating your next request.”

The sight of the handsome older mech’s true features warmed Skywarp’s spark; with his unborn baby fast asleep in his gestation chamber and his friend’s brood in their quarters, the Seeker leaned in for a kiss.

Their lip components met, and they kissed passionately. Soundwave taking the younger mech’s faceplates in his large hands, and Skywarp wrapping his arms around Soundwave’s neck cables. They caressed and cuddled one another for several minutes before mutually separating and gazing into each other’s optics in a moment of total bliss.

Skywarp was feeling more tired than he wanted to be at the moment, but between being pregnant, and the warm shower and the heat he and Soundwave were generating between their two chassis, his optical shutters blinked several times, and he leaned against the large mech. Soundwave, in turn, gathered the carrying Jet into his arms and held him in his lap. He stroked the little flyer’s back, up and down, careful not to infringe on his sensitive wings. Within moments, Skywarp was asleep in his arms.

The Tapedeck didn’t want to move; he didn’t want to disturb his lover. He thought about what the next steps would be: He would keep the French Doors locked, telling his sons they were working late. He didn’t want them walking in on his recharging Seeker. After a while, he would take him back to Megatron’s quarters. If he were afraid to sleep there alone, Soundwave would invite him to take his own berth, while he would take the sofa. He didn’t want to rush their new level in their relationship; nor did he want to take the pregnant flyer while his Trine was away.

He reattached his facemask and visor and allowed his processor to wander as he too dozed off off.

In the Tapedeck’s quarters, while Rumble, Frenzy, Buzzsaw, and Ratbat watched their movie, Laserbeak was working at Soundwave’s desk, uploading his tapes.

“I do not normally feel I require your assistance,” the Bird began, “but I feel enough concern in regards to this investigation to bring this to your attention.”

“So, basically,” Ravage rolled his optics; finding his younger brother’s perpetual pompousness tiresome, “Father bushed off your findings, and you want me to convince him to reconsider.”

“Precisely.” Laserbeak nodded, “Here, this recording was taken on the day I began my shadowing mission on Mirage.” He played the tape, fast-forwarding over an hour ahead, “As you can see, I was focusing on Mirage, but I would like you to focus on Ironhide at this moment.”

On the tape, Mirage was on the sofa, watching a movie. In the upper hand right corner of the screen, Ironhide and Ratchet could be seen. Ratchet had a pitcher in his hand and poured Ironhide a glass, “I used a bit more propane than before, what do you think?”

Ironhide drink it, and gave a positive reaction, “OOoWEE! That’s good High-Grade!”

“They’re getting drunk, so what?” Ravage shrugged.

“Exactly,” the Condor exclaimed, “Ironhide is behaving completely within his normal character. Now, look at this one,” he switched to another tape; this one recorded on the day Thundercracker confronted the Autobots in the auditorium of Public School District 17.
Thundercracker: “YOU SHUT UP! I’VE HAD IT WITH YOUR BREAKING INTO OUR PLACE EVERY DAMN NIGHT!”

Optimus Prime: “Thundercracker, if you would just calm yourself for two minutes, I can assure you, no Autobots have been infiltrating the Decepticon Base. And if they were, it was NOT with my authorization.”

Thundercracker: “Prime, Mirage has been breaking into my quarters almost every night, and last night, he scratched Skywarp’s wings!”

“Keep your optics on Ironhide,” Laserbeak told the Cat.

Ironhide backed up; his jaw opened. He looked like he was having a severe attack of déjà vu.

Taking this seriously now, Ravage leaned closer to the screen.

Optimus Prime: “Mirage, can you come over here, please?”

Mirage: “Sure, how can I help?”

Thundercracker: “You stay AWAY from my brother, you got that, creep?!”

Mirage: “Ooookay, I haven’t seen either of them in a while, but, I’d be happy to simply to go on about my life, such as adding fixing that skylight to the to-do list.”

Ironhide began to walk away; the walk turning into a sprint, finally leaving the auditorium.

Thundercracker: “Lemme see your hands!”

Mirage showed him his hands.

Thundercracker: “If I find out any of you are lying, I swear, I’ll tear all of you a new one!” He flew away now.

As the Autobots talked about what happened, laughing and joking now, Ironhide crept back into the auditorium. He seemed to be in a cold sweat, and his optics looked like he had seen a ghost.

“Right Ironhide?” Prime laughed.

“Let’s get back to work, guys,” the red Bot hurriedly picked up a board, “we got even more work now that we gotta fix the ceiling.”


“He did behave rather strangely.” Ravage admitted now.

“That is not the end of it,” Laserbeak continued, “Here he is two days later,” he switched to a tape of Ironhide at the Autobot Base, seemingly on guard duty at the computer, smoking a cigarette, “He began smoking again after an eleven-year abstinence.” He played another tape, this one showing Ironhide having a cube of High-Grade; his hand seemed to be shaking.

“This is ever since Thundercracker’s confrontation,” the Condor concluded, “I have attempted to have Father switch the focus of my investigation to Ironhide, but alas, he does not believe the instances to be related to our burglaries.”

“I would concede that you have significant evidence,” Ravage scratched his chin, “I will speak to
Father in the morning.”

Both groups did not go unnoticed by Gravechaser. This was the last straw. Skywarp was going to suffer for this. And it was time to involve other Decepticons. And Autobots.
Chapter 45: By Transformersnewfan

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By Christmas Eve morning, Thundercracker had reached his familiar home in Vos, and the loving, welcoming arms of his Mother and Adoptive Father. They ate dinner together and chatted all night. They even invited several relatives over for Christmas Day dinner.

It was peace to be back in his old berthroom. The blue Seeker had his first real nine-hour recharge in months. His Mother made breakfast, and they all went to see the Christmas tree in downtown Vos. The only thing keeping the festivities from being complete was the lack of Skywarp being there, but the impending birth of their granddaughter/niece was enough to keep everyone in the holiday spirit. In the family home, the heaviness that had permeated the Decepticon Underwater Base was definitely absent in the serenity of the family home. And this wasn’t lost on Thundercracker.

Cybertron altogether was feeling serenity, as evident in Esmeralda’s Tarnian cottage. The Hooded Ma adored the three babies, having waited through her only son’s broken engagement and then prolonged courtship to Starscream, followed by their infertility problems before the miracle birth of the three mechlings.

And with their paternal grandmother doting on their sons, Starscream was feeling content; the fear of burglaries vanishing; the heaviness no longer present. Only light and love.

“You only get more glorious with age,” he purred at the former Gladiator, gliding across the guest berth, “What’ll ya say?”

“I say,” Megatron grinned coyly, “you’re in my Mother’s house, young mech.”

“Oh, I won’t be loud,” Starscream slid over, “not very, anyway.”

They two intertwined their limbs and began interfacing passionately.

On Christmas Eve morning, the two were basking in the afterglow, kissing and cuddling.

“Megatron?” the Seeker asked tentatively.

“MMmm,” was the sleepy response.

Starscream: “What am I gonna do about my Trine?”

“Well…” the Decepticon Leader probably knew as well as Seekers that nothing could truly ever break up a Trine, so he tried to make Starscream realize what he knew he wanted, “what do you wanna do?”

“I wanna reconcile with TC,” Starscream put his helm on Megatron’s chestplates, “he’s in Vos now, visiting Mom and Dad. Do you think if I went there today, do you think he would see me?”
“Only one way to find out,” Megatron shrugged, still trying to stay out of their fights.

“I’ll take the sparklings,” Starscream jumped up, “he won’t yell at me in front of them.”

As he watched his Bondmate leave, Megs couldn’t help but have a feeling of dread that the youngest, carrying Seeker was alone at the Earth Base.

“Soundwave?” he called over his Comm.-Link, trying to keep his vocals even, “Status report.”

“All is well,” the blue mech reported, at the time, it was nearly midnight of the twenty-third, twenty-fourth on Earth, and he had covered Skywarp with a blanket on the Control Room sofa, while he himself was online, waiting for the Seeker to wake up, “No activity on the Base for the past few nights.”

Megatron sighed in relief, “You got this, I know,” he sat up, “call me the minute anything out of the ordinary happens.”

Soundwave: “Affirmative.”

While his mate out of a while, Megatron took the opportunity to look through his late Sire’s belongs, not sure what he was looking for.

“How about checking his desk?” Esmeralda suggested.

Megatron went to the desk now, rummaging through the drawers. He found his Father’s copy of the Book of Primus, and a bag of ticket stubs from his Gladiatorial matches.

“Megatron, if you suspect something’s happening,” Esmeralda scolded, “you need to tell Starscream.”

“Ugh, he’ll never believe it, Ma,” Megs groaned, “You think a Biology Major’s gonna buy into this stuff?”

“Maybe you should go back to Earth…” the Hooded Ma suggested, “The youngling’s alone…” she came over now, “When we planned this trip, we didn’t know Thundercracker was going to go to Vos.”

“Nothing’s gonna happened,” Megatron told his Mother as much as he told himself, “It’s…it’s nothing. Just that Autobot Mirage is all.”

“I hope so, Megatron,” Esmeralda signed, “I hope so.”

The Decepticon Leader kept looking around in the drawers.

“I’ll make lunch,” his Mother finally said.

“Yeah, okay…” he found a small, wooden box. He opened it and found the extra Mass Cards from his Sire’s funeral, as well as the cross that was laid on the old mech’s casket. Megatron looked at it for a moment. While the family home had many crosses on the walls, this one was the one that made him feel his Father’s presence close by. Protecting them.

Thundercracker groaned when he saw Starscream come through the front door. While his Mother
yelped with delight at seeing her grandmechlings on Christmas Eve Day, he was decidedly less enthusiastic. He had been watching a human football game with his Dad, who also got up to greet the red and white Seeker. Still, since coming home, the blue Seeker found himself feeling less hate; less fury, at his middle brother. The argument was dissipating to mere annoyance.

As the couple picked up the babies and took them to the kitchen for Energon cookies and sneakers, Starscream came over to the sofa, “Hey TC,” he started tentatively, “I-I missed you.”

TC glared at him, folding his arms over his canopy and focusing on the football game. He didn’t feel like letting Star off so easily, even if he would eventually forgive him.

“I owe you an apology,” Starscream bit his lip components, “I should never have accused you.” He sighed, “I could easily blame Thrust for influencing me, but…I’m not going to. I’m the Air Commander, but more importantly, we’re brothers. And I should have trusted you. I’m truly sorry.”

“That’s all I wanted to hear,” TC stood and hugged his younger sibling, “glad that’s over.”

Starscream hugged back tightly, resting his helm on the other’s shoulder, “Believe me, you’re the last mech I want to fight with.” They sat down together on the sofa.

“I’ve been trying to reconcile my emotions,” Starscream said now, “I don’t want to fight with you, or Warp, anymore. He’s right, I have changed since Bonding with Megatron, b-but, how can I be with him and mother my boys, but I wanna be in our Trine, and be close with the two of you…a-and, Skywarp’s sparkling.”

“We can, we can,” Thundercracker reassured him, “Listen, Star, don’t feel like you have to choose between us and Megatron. He seems to be willing to merge our families, just…” he groaned, “you gotta learn to control your temper.”

Starscream nodded now, “R-Right…” he leaned against his brother now, “If you know how, will you help me?”

“I’ll think of something,” TC shrugged; relief that they were back together washing over him.

They hugged each other for a while, “Package from the department store is up in my room,” the blue Seeker stated nonchalantly to break the tension, “remind me to take it back with us.”

“Does this mean you’ll come back to the Decepticons?” Starscream asked.

“Eh, I probably wasn’t leaving anyway,” the blue Seeker smiled, “Besides, I couldn’t leave Warp and the baby.”

“At least he and I are talking again,” Starscream mused, “wish he was here with us. I don’t like the idea of Warp being so far away at Christmas.”

“I know,” Thundercracker didn’t like it either. In fact, the two brothers didn’t speak of it, but being in their Creators’ home, at Christmastime, without their youngest Trine brother, didn’t feel right at all. It almost felt like he was gone from their lives somehow; as if he had been deactivated in a battle with the Autobots, or an alien alley. And not simply because he couldn’t travel through the Space Bridge due to his delicate state. They both felt this, and neither knew why.

“Thundercracker?” the red and white Seeker asked.

TC: “Hmmm?”
Starscream: “Do you think he’s up?”

It would be morning by now on their Earth Base. “He might be.”

“We used to fuss when the landlord dissed us…” Skywarp sang along with his Walkman while sorting through the files. He was standing in front of a stack of boxes as tall as he was while facing where his mate was sitting at the Computer Consul, “No heat, wonder why Christmas missed us…”

Soundwave meanwhile, was working at his Computer Consul while Laserbeak, accompanied by Ravage, made his case. The Bird again played his tapes, this time with the Cat backing him up.

“He only began exhibiting suspicious behavior after Thundercracker confronted his Comrades,” the Condor explained, “I request that Ironhide be named the primary focus of my investigation.”

“He does seem to know more than he’s telling, Father,” Ravage agreed, “perhaps he will confide in Prime, and Laserbeak can get it on tape.”

“Very well,” Soundwave concurred, “We can refocus our investigation after Christmas.”

“Actually, Father,” Laserbeak pressed his metal feathered digits together, “I was anticipating infiltrating the Annual Autobot Christmas Party this early evening.”

“You wanna spent Christmas Eve spying on Ironhide?” Soundwave raised an optic brow.

“Well, Ironhide could have a few High-Grade eggnogs,” Ravage nodded, “it does present an opportunity for Intel.”

Soundwave hadn’t wanted any of his sons to be away on Christmas Eve. Normally, there were no missions over the Christian holiday. And on this particular evening, he wanted to have his family with Skywarp. Maybe not go as far as proposing to Bond, but at least have a family evening of togetherness.

Soundwave: “What time is their party?”

Laserbeak: “Five in the evening until nine in the evening.”

“Very well,” Soundwave conceded, “You can go at Five. But return as soon as possible.”

The Condor had hoped to record the party preparations but accepted what he could get.

After lunchtime, Skywarp was taking a nap on the sofa. He was feeling much better over the past few days, having not been haunted.

“Skywarp,” Soundwave’s deep vocals said softly, “I want to show you something.”

The black and white Seeker woke up slowly, smiling at his ‘lover.’ He let the big mech lead him to the Computer Consul, still wrapped up in his blanket. The whole Base was so cold.

Soundwave flipped a switch, and one of the monitors came on, showing a live stream from his Creators’ home.
“Oh wow!” the pregnant Seeker was overjoyed at seeing his loved ones celebrating Christmas. Apparently, Soundwave had given Thundercracker the equipment to hook up a face-time with the family on Christmas morning.

“MERRY CHRISTMAS SKYWARP!” they all shouted in unison.

“Hey little brother,” Thundercracker smiled, his arm slung around Starscream, signifying their reconciliation, “we just wanted you to know we love you and miss you.”

“Merry Christmas Warpy,” Starscream was on the verge of coolant tears, overjoyed to contact his baby brother. They didn’t even know WHY they were so emotional about being separating from their youngest; they had taken trips before and gone periods without each other. Maybe it was because he was carrying?

“I-I love you guys…” Skywarp sobbed happily.

His Mom and Dad came into frame now, both telling him how much they loved him and that they couldn’t wait to see him soon.

Skywarp tried to hide his belly under the blanket, slightly embarrassed by how big he was getting already. He put his hand up against the screen, wanting to touch them. His Mother did the same.

Five in the evening eventually came, and Laserbeak headed for the Ark. Soundwave normally kept watch in the Control Room for any messages from his son, but it was Christmas Eve, so instead, he put the computers on sleep mode and took his little family to the Rec. Room.

He sat now, with Skywarp curled up next to him on the sofa; Ravage watching a Christmas movie on the carpet, and the rest of the Cassettes all in the recliners and the carpet around them. He felt the Seeker take his hand, and he, in turn, squeezed it lovingly.

Bumblebee had just dropped off Sam at his home and was heading back to the Autobot Base. He had ‘I’ll be home for Christmas’ on his radio as he made a left turn onto the main road. He wanted to hurry; the Christmas Party had already started an hour ago.

There were very few cars on the road this evening. Normally, this was rush hour, and it would have been bumper to bumper. But on this Christmas Eve, there was only one other vehicle on the road, and that car had long passed.

It was an eerie feeling; the winds howled; the road was dusted with blowing snow, and a general quietness fell over the city. And then, after Bee had left the city limits, the darkness was pierced only by his two headlights. He opted to drive more slowly and carefully.

By seven in the evening, the Autobot Christmas Party was in full swing; Ratchet was the chairman for the third consecutive year; Swerve was acting as the bartender, and everyone was taking turns singing on the Karaoke. At the moment, Jazz was performing a rousing rendition of Nat King Cole’s ‘Merry Christmas to You.’

Everyone was having Energon High-Grade and socializing. Optimus Prime planted a kiss on the cheekplate of his girlfriend, Elita-One.
It was all enough to make Laserbeak want to choke. He had to keep reminding himself that this party was only to go on for another two hours.

Eventually, Ironhide emerged from his quarters, making the Condor’s neck snap up in attention. The Red Minivan got himself a cube of High-Grade, trying to fortify himself with booze.

“Finally,” Laserbeak whispered to himself as he followed Ironhide over to where Prime was standing.

At that moment, Bulkhead took the stage, and began performing his own version of Perry Como’s ‘Santa Claus Is Comin’ to Town.’

Speaking of the image of a bearded figure, Bumblebee saw something up ahead on the road. As he got closer, he saw that the figure was a Transformer. And yet, he swore he could see through him. Who was this? He was very tall; possible taller than Prime. Was this a Decepticon? He seemed to have a beard, and…the optics were unlit.

He seemed to be coming—floating—closer to the little yellow Car. Faster. Faster.

The wicked Bird had to raise his speakers up to hear over that racket.

Bulkhead’s singing: ♪ “He sees you when you’re sleeping.” ♫ “He knows when you’re awake.” ♪ “He knows when you’ve been bad or good.” ♫ “So be good for goodness sake!” ♪

“Prime,” Ironhide began, “Something’s been eating at me.”

“Yes, Ironhide?” Optimus listened.

Ironhide: “You remember that day when Thundercracker broke into Sam’s school?”

Bumblebee veered to the right as the dark figure zoomed past him on the road. When the small Bot looked in his rearview mirror, he didn’t see the mech at all. Bee wondered if what he had seen was an optical illusion! He hurried home now, spooked by the incident.

::PRIME!:: the distress call came into the Autobot Base, almost startling Red Alert, ::PRIME!::

The Chief of Security radioed the Truck to come to the Security Area immediately.

“Excuse me, Ironhide,” Prime rushed off before the Minivan could get his thoughts out.

“Blast,” Laserbeak mumbled to himself, keeping his focus on Ironhide for now.

The Autobot Leader went to his Chief of Security now, “What is it, Red Alert?”

“We’re getting a distress call with the reading nine-one-one,” Red answered; it was the Autobots’ highest level of emergency code, usually reserved for possible fatality.

::PRIME!:: the vocals on the other end was filled with static.
“Bumblebee?!” Prime tried in vain to keep calm, but the sound of his littlest Autobot in such pain tore through his spark, “What’s wrong?!”

::A-Accident…:: the vocals continued, ::W-We swerved…Cliff…Went down embankment…Sam…Bleeding out…Pain…::

“NO!” Optimus cried out, “Bumblebee, Sam, we’re coming for you!”

::Prime…HURRY:: and then, only white noise.

“Red Alert, trace his coordinates,” Optimus was almost yelling now, in total panic, “I’ll get Ratchet and Prowl!” he hurried back into the Main Hall, where the party was going on.

The Truck saw the festivities and couldn’t think straight; he rushed over to Ratchet, whispering what happened, prompting the medic to abandon his station. He then tapped Prowl, who was talking to Jazz, telling him something that the Bird couldn’t quite pick up over the music.

Laserbeak stretched his sensors out, trying to hear.

“Jazz, you’re in charge while we’re gone,” Prime told his Second-in-Command, “Don’t tell the others yet. Just let the party continue.” The trio then hurried off, leaving the Porsche looking a bit shaken.

“Father,” the Condor contacted Soundwave, “Prime, Prowl, and Ratchet have exited the Christmas event. I request your instructions.”

At that moment, Soundwave was focused on the beautiful Seeker curled up next to him; knowing nothing about the emergency call, “Continue your surveillance of Ironhide, then return to Base.”

“Very well,” Laserbeak affirmed. Still, he couldn’t help wondering what had just happened, “Father, have there been any distress calls from any area Autobots in the past approximately seventy-two seconds?”

Soundwave groaned, indifferent to their problems. He checked his portable remote access to the Computer Consul, “Negative. It’s all quiet out there.”

“Odd,” Laserbeak noted, “very odd indeed. I shall await their return to learn the reason for their departure.”

“Yeah, whatever,” Soundwave ended their conversation now, telling Skywarp, “He’ll be late. Prime apparently had to go out for more alcohol.”

Skywarp just nodded, not wanting to interfere, “Do you ever worry about him when he’s there?”

“I always worry,” Soundwave admitted, “I doubt the other Decepticons have any idea how preoccupied I am with the whereabouts of my Cassettes when they’re off Base.”

The other five sons were now fixated on the next movie of choice, ‘Die Hard,’ and not listening. Only Ravage’s audials were slightly perked, listening in on his Sire.

The scene where John McClane removed large shards of glass from his feet played now. “Eww,” Frenzy curled his smell receptors. Rumble on the other hand, just shrugged, “Stuff like that doesn’t get me. I can look at human blood and stuff. I’ll probably be a medic when I grow up. Like, Mom.”

His Mom. Skywarp wondered now about his predecessor, “You’re all they have now.”
Soundwave: “Well, they also will have you…”

The Seeker wasn’t ready for that. He could only think of his own little femme now. Skywarp was trying to imagine what it was going to be like to be a Creator, “It’s scary to think…what it would be like if she disappeared.” His thoughts went back to his most recent nightmare.

“If I could, I’d kept them with me at all times,” Soundwave admitted, “but I suppose it’s for the best. If they’re independent, they wouldn’t be attached to me if anything were to happen.”

“I think we’re always attached to our Creators,” the Seeker mused, looking straight ahead, “I won’t be here to see her grow up.” He didn’t even know why he said that; he just knew.

“Of course you will,” Soundwave told him, “we won’t let anything happen.”

The carrying flyer knew his lover couldn’t protect him from the ghost forever; eventually, Gravechaser would reappear. But tonight, Skywarp tried to push those thoughts from his CPU. Instead, he leaned in and kissed the larger mech softly.

Soundwave responded by removing his facemask and locking lip components with his small Seeker. As they kissed passionately, he wrapped his arms around Skywarp, pressing him as close as their frames would allow. The Tapedeck closed off his Bond to all of his Cassettes except for Laserbeak; he didn’t want to cut off the Bird because he was on enemy grounds. If Beak figured out what he was doing with Skywarp, so be it.

The black and purple Seeker pulled himself into Soundwave’s lap, trying to take their relationship to the next level, but Soundwave wasn’t going to get there with his children in the room. “Just relax,” he whispered to his lover, kissing him again before he could respond. Skywarp would have to settle for necking, he supposed, at least until those brats went to bed.

Back at the Ark, the partygoers decided to keep the festivities going a bit longer until their Leader returned, completely unbeknownst as to why he and his officers had driven off. They went past the nine o’clock hour, singing Christmas Carole after Carole.

“Oh, Lord…” Laserbeak rolled his optics, “Have they not run out of songs?”

It was some forty minutes later that Bumblebee entered the Autobot Base, “Sorry I’m so late, guys,” he transformed and ran to greet his Comrades, who happily welcomed him, “the roads are horrible!”

“How perfect,” Laserbeak spat; he decided it was time to take a nap. The Condor set up his video camera on a portable stand, wide-lens set to get a fuller view of the room and pulled out his game controller from his subspace. He soon dozed off.

Meanwhile, the joyful Autobots continued to party. Jazz tried to get his processor off what had happened, putting on a happy faceplate and applauding each singer after their impromptu performances.

Finally, Mirage noticed his Commander’s stress, “You okay, Jazz?”

“Yeah,” the Porsche shrugged, “just worried is all.”

Mirage: “About?”

“Well,” Jazz bit his lip components and hushed his vocals, “Prime didn’t want me to tell you guys
and spoil the party, but…” he sighed, “Bumblebee was in a pretty bad accident tonight. And…Sam was with him.”

The Formula-1 Racer looked at him, not with concern, but puzzlement, “Bumblebee? Bumblebee’s over there.” He pointed at the small yellow Bot cutting himself a slice of Energon fruitcake.

Jazz couldn’t hide his shock; he jumped up suddenly, racing over to their littlest teammate, “Bumblebee?! What’s going on?!”

Bee looked around, “Did you want this?” referring to the slice of Energon fruitcake.

“Bee, didn’t you radio Prime that you were in an accident tonight?! Jazz no longer cared how loud he was speaking, “Well?!”

“No,” Bumblebee shook his helm, not fathoming what his Commander was referring to, “I was late for the party because of the snow.”

Jazz got down on his kneeplates to look the small Bot in the optics, “Bumblebee, listen to me. Prime and the others went out searching for you! Red Alert said you called, that you slid down an embankment, WITH SAM! Where’s Sam?!”

“Sam?” Bumblebee kept shaking his helm, “Sam’s at his home! I dropped him off hours ago!”

Jazz ran to the Security Room, leaving the littlest Autobot stunned, “Jazz?”

The Porsche hurriedly explained everything to Red Alert, who was monitoring the situation on his radio.

Red Alert: “Prime! Come in!” he called quickly, “Bee’s on Base!”

Optimus Prime, Prowl, and Ratchet had repelled down the cavern close to where the emergency call had pinged Bumblebee’s last known location. They were searching, using their headlights, in blinding snow and freezing temperatures. The trio couldn’t find any evidence of a crash.

Suddenly, the Truck stopped, “Autobots! We have a message from Red Alert! Bumblebee and Sam have been located! Return to Base.”

“What’s going on, Prime?” Prowl asked.

“We’ll find out when we get there,” Optimus shook his helm, “this had better not have been a prank.”

It was now one in the morning, Christmas Day. Skywarp and Soundwave had fallen fast asleep in each other’s arms, and the five Cassettes were also curled together on the rug; the only noises were the rushing waters that surrounded their Underwater Base and the howling winds.

The Comm.-Links, the Decepticons’ wrist-worn-based network of communication, backed by several failsafe-systems, went dark.

::Father!: a distress call came in through Soundwave’s portable remote access to the Computer Consul, ::Father! HELP ME!!!!:}
“W-WHAT?!” Soundwave bolted awake, quickly moving away from his Seeker and grasping at his hand-held device, “BEAK! BEAK! ANSWER ME!”

::HELP ME, FATHER! I’VE BEEN CAPTURED!:: keened the vocals, ::THEY’RE GOING TO HAVE THE MEDIC SCAN MY PROCESSORS!! YOU’VE GOT TO GET ME OUTTA HERE!!:: the line died; the buttons fading to black.

“LASERBEAK!” the Tapedeck momentarily wondered if he was in the middle of his worst nightmare, “HOLD ON, WE’RE COMING!” he told the dead connection. He tried now to feel his second son through their Bond, but there was no answer, only a general presence, coordinates in the Autobot Ark.

Skywarp woke up groggily, “Hhuh?”

Soundwave ignored him, waking up his sons, “YOUR BROTHER’S BEEN CAPTURED!”

Ravage sprang up on his pedes, “That idiot.”

Frenzy: “Laserbeak’s captured?!”

Rumble: “POP! What’re we gonna do?!”

“No!” cried Buzzsaw, while Ratbat only whimpered in fear.

Soundwave had to think fast; Megatron was on Cybertron, and everyone else in their army was scattered away. He had to get his son back.

“We must confront the Autobots: Get any weapons you can, I’m raising the Tower!” he used his remote access, but he wasn’t working, “SLAG IT!” and bolted for the Control Room.

As the Cassettes took off, Skywarp tried to realize what was happening. His processor was sluggish; he didn’t fully understand what Soundwave was telling his family. He followed him to the Control Room now, leaning against the walls on the way.

“W-What, what’s going on?” he asked the Tapedeck.

Soundwave was in a turmoil of fear and fury as he rebooted the systems; a growing hostility to his surroundings coming forth, “Laserbeak has been captured,” he loaded his Barretta and shoved it into his holster, before grabbing a hunting knife, “those slaggers are going to torture him if I don’t get there.” He grumbled now, “I wasn’t at the Consul.”

Skywarp covered his mouth in fear, “Oh God, Soundwave, what should we do?”

“WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHAT SHOULD WE DO?!” Soundwave bellowed, “I’M GOING TO RESCUE HIM!”

The Seeker was startled by his tone, but asked, “What should I do?” When Soundwave didn’t acknowledge him, Skywarp asked again, “Soundwave, what do you want me to do?”

“Just stay here,” the Tapedeck finally responded as he packed his gear.

“Do you want me to watch the cameras or something?” Skywarp asked.

Soundwave: “NO!” his tone was almost accusatory.

“Do you want me to come with you?” he knew he wasn’t much help.
“Oh please,” Soundwave snarled, “what help are you going to be in your condition.”

“I’m sorry, I-I” Skywarp didn’t know how to respond now.

“I NEVER should have left the Control Room during a retcon mission!” Soundwave was lashing out now, “You distracted me and now, LOOK WHAT’S HAPPENED!!!”

“Wait a second; you’re not blaming ME for this?!” Skywarp shouted back.

“DON’T YOU EVER INTERFERE WITH MY FAMILY AGAIN!” the blue mech stormed out, “If anybody messes with my Bird, I turn into an animal!”

With his Cassettes waiting for him at the elevator, Soundwave left with them for the Ark. They took off from the Tarmac; the carrying flyer listening to them moving further and further away.

Skywarp knew. He didn’t know how he knew, he just knew. Gravechaser was behind this somehow. And now, the pregnant Jet was on the Decepticon Underwater Base alone, at his mercy.

“We’re alone, Crystal,” he told his unborn daughter with coolant tears in his optics, “We’re on our own.”
“Optimus, I swear, I didn’t make that call,” Bumblebee pleaded as he sat in the Autobot Leader’s office. Besides the Truck, there was also Jazz, Prowl, and Red Alert.

“Tell me again what happened,” Prime demanded, his vocals were upset.

“I dropped off Sam at his home,” the yellow bot began, “then it started snowing harder, so I drove slowly. That’s it.”

“So, you’re not going to admit you were playing a joke?” Prowl demanded.

“No! I swear!” Bee insisted, “You believe me, don’t you, Optimus?”

The Truck didn’t know what to believe anymore; he would have sworn it was the littlest’s vocals on that call. Finally, he stood, “You’re not to leave your quarters for one week. But since it’s Christmas, you can return to the party. But your punishment begins tomorrow.”

Before Bumblebee could protect, Optimus told the group, “Let’s just return to the party.”

Unbeknownst to them, Laserbeak’s camera picked up their conversation. The Bird himself was snoring like a chainsaw.

Skywarp tried to work on the files, hoping to get his processor off the stillness and unsettling quiet in the deserted Base. He realized it was early morning on Cybertron, but a bit too early for his family to be awake yet.

His emotions were swirling; Worry for his daughter’s safety; his own safety; Laserbeak’s safety; and... the way that Soundwave BLAMED him for this. They had gone from kissing and cuddling to the Tapedeck barking in his faceplates that this was all his fault. How could Soundwave turn on him like that?! He understood that blue mech’s Cassettes would always come first, but... Would he be blamed for anything that ever went wrong with one of them? IF they got Laserbeak back, that was...

Skywarp pulled a bunch of files from a box and plopped them on the Computer Consul. He had locked the French Doors and turned on all the lights. Soundwave had taught him how to work the monitors, so he began switching between cameras to look around the Base. There was no one in the hallway, or the Tarmac, or near the surrounding area.

Skywarp sighed, thinking he wanted to be with his brothers. He reached out for them through their Trine Bond, but he could tell both were still asleep.

“Wanna listen to music, Crystal?” he asked her, rubbing his belly, “Maybe I can find a radio.” He got the menu screen up, and searched the options, looking over the words. Nothing stuck out, ‘East view,’ ‘West view,’ ‘North view,’ ‘South view,’ amongst them. Scrolling more, he saw an option labeled, ‘Live feed.’
“Live feed,” he whispered, “what’s that?” He pressed the button, and a widescreen shot of the Autobot Christmas Party popped up. Skywarp’s optics bugged out as he realized he was watching a view from Laserbeak’s camcorder, and the Condor’s snoring was audible.

Everything. Was. Fine.

“It’s a hoax.” Skywarp whispered, then shouted, “IT’S A HOAX!” He got on his Comm.-Link, “SOUNDWAVE!”

His wrist Comm.-Link was dark.

It had never been dark. He hadn’t noticed it all evening. He felt so stupid for not noticing this earlier! He jumped on the controls of the Consul, “SOUNDWAVE!”

And then, all the lights went out on the Base. The buttons on the Computer Consul went black as well. The screens zapped off. Even the brake lights shut off. There was no power in the Decepticon Underwater Base.

“O-Oh my God…” Skywarp hitched his air intakes; a wave of panic crossing his spark, causing his chassis to hurt all over.

Knock. Knock.

Someone was knocking at the French Doors.

Skywarp felt his abdomen tighten from the stress. He grabbed it; keening in pain.

Knock. Knock.

There was no way he was opening that door. Instead, he hid under the Computer Consul, crouching in the tight space, and pulled the swivel chairs as close as possible, hoping to make a barrier.

Knock! Knock!

“And our final number for the evening will be performed by…” Ratchet read from his agenda, “Drum roll, please…Mirage and Arcee!”

All the Autobots applauded as the duo took the stage.

“Okay, this is a little number we rehearsed,” Mirage began, “it’s from the movie, ‘Elf,’ starring Will Ferrill.

“And we hope you like it,” Arcee added.

The background music began to play…

Outside, in the snowstorm, Soundwave and his brood crept to the Ark, crunching the snow in their pedes steps.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “I really can’t stay.”♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Baby it’s cold outside.” ♫

Knock. Knock.

Skywarp was both dripping coolant and freezing at the same time. The Control Room itself became ice cold.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “I’ve got to go away.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Baby it’s cold outside.” ♫

Skywarp was shaking now; his air intakes were hitching. The Control Room’s windows were frozen over.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “This evening has been…” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Been hoping that you’d drop in.” ♫

KNOCK! KNOCK!

Skywarp’s spark was racing now; he could feel his little sparkling trembling in his gestation chamber. She didn’t do anything to deserve this. He tried stroking his stomach, “It’s okay, darling; I’m not gonna let him hurt you…”

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “So very nice…” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “I’ll hold your hands, they’re just like ice.” ♫

BANG! BANG!

He thought his life was going to end now. Not on Christmas…He thought of how his Mother would be sparkbroken…

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “My mother will start to worry.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Beautiful, what’s your hurry.” ♫

BANG! BANG!

Murdered by the ghost of his beloved brother’s Sire.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “My father will be pacing the floor.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Listen to the fireplace roar.” ♫

BANG! BANG!

No, he couldn’t go out like this. He couldn’t let his baby’s life end before it even began. He had to confront this. The pregnant flyer crawled out from under the Consul now…

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “So really I’d better scurry.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Beautiful, please don’t hurry.” ♫

BANG! BANG!

“You old boozehound…” Skywarp spat quietly, “We’re not afraid of you…”

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “Well maybe just a half a drink more.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Put some records on while I pour.” ♫

BANG! BANG!
The French Doors were rattling now.

The pregnant flyer walked to the French Doors; he reached out for the knob.

And the banging stopped.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “The neighbors might think.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Baby, it’s bad out there.” ♫

The Seeker opened the door.

No one was there. Not that Skywarp expected anyone physically there, that is.

“Coward,” he hissed, shutting and locked the doors again.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “Say, what’s in this drink.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “No cabs to be had out there.” ♫

When he turned to go back to the Consul, the French Doors both blew open, and a blast of chilling cold air came in!

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “I wish I knew how.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Your eyes are like starlight now.” ♫

The poor Jet yelped in fear, he quickly shut the doors and locked them again. This time, he stayed there, holding them shut.

BAM! BAM! The pounding began again.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “To break this spell.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “I’ll take your hat, your hair looks swell.” ♫

Skywarp looked around for something to barricade the doors now. His spark was racing, and the pains in his middle were getting worse. That side pain came and went again as well.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “I ought to say no, no, no, sir.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Mind if I move closer?” ♫

He pulled a nearby chair over and placed it under the knobs. Then he rushed back to the Consul; he opened the drawers, looking for a weapon, but Soundwave had taken the good ones. He did, however, find a spare flashlight and some rope.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “At least I’m gonna say that I tried.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “What’s the sense in hurting my pride?” ♫

Skywarp tied the rope around the doorknobs to keep the French Doors from opening. The doors were rattling violently now. He backed away and hid between the right side of the sofa and the boxes.

Arcee’s singing and Mirage’s singing together: ♪ “Ahh, but it’s cold outside.” ♫

The banging and rattling stopped now. Skywarp held his air intakes…

Mirage’s singing: ♪ “C’mon baby.” ♫

Skywarp waited now, listening carefully. There were sounds of doors opening, and someone moving
around the Base.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “I simply must go.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Baby it’s cold outside.” ♫

The flyer heard pede steps approaching again. He gulped and cycled air in short bursts now.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “The answer is no.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Ooh darling, it’s cold outside.” ♫

Skywarp turned on the flashlight, shining it at the French Doors. Again, there was no one there.

He turned the flashlight off and sighed; coolant tears were falling from his optics now. The trauma was catching up with him.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “This welcome has been.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “I’m lucky that you dropped in.” ♫

Crackle.

“Eh?” Skywarp didn’t know what sound that was.

Crackle. Crackle.

“What’s he doing now?” Skywarp peaked up from behind the sofa…

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “So nice and warm.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Look out the window at that storm.” ♫

Under the French Doors, there was a flickering light; it was unmistakably…fire.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “My sister will be suspicious.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Gosh, your lips look delicious.” ♫

“FIRE!” Skywarp ran to the doors; his digits were shaking so bad, he could barely hold the flashlight and untie the rope from the doorknobs. Now he could smell smoke! The pregnant Seeker flung both doors open: He stepped into the hallway and saw…

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “My brother will be there at the door.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Waves upon a tropical shore.” ♫

First, he saw the massive damage that the monster had done to the outside of the French Doors. The ones that Megatron had imported. They looked like a battering ram bashed into them.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “My maiden aunt’s mind is vicious.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Ohh, your lips look delicious.” ♫

There were Decepticon weapons laying on the hallway floor. Among them, a hammer, a mace, a mallet, and various other instruments. Gravechaser had utilized their Weapon Storage Room.

Arcee’s singing: ♪ “Well maybe just a half a drink more.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♪ “Never such a blizzard before.” ♫

Skywarp could still smell smoke. He turned his flashlight on again:

The hallway walls were splashed, from end to end, with Energon. Flammable Energon.
And on the floor: a pan with an Energon-soaked rag in it, on fire—Ready to flick onto the walls.

The Seeker yelped and made a break for it!

Arcee’s singing:  ♫“I’ve got to get home.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♫“Oh, baby, you’ll freeze out there.” ♫

Every door in the Base was open. When Soundwave had left, they were all locked up. Every door. It didn’t matter; he had to get them both to safety.

Arcee’s singing: ♫“Say, lend me your coat.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♫“It’s up to your knees out there.” ♫

Skywarp reached the elevator, but with no power on the Base, there was no way to operate it! He tried to pull the doors open with his hands, trying, trying to pull…

Arcee’s singing: ♫“You’ve really been grand.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♫“I thrill when you touch my hand.” ♫

The smoke was thick now; he started coughing and choking…

The pain. The pain in his right side flared, making him crumple to the ground.

Arcee’s singing: ♫“But don’t you see.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♫“How can you do this thing to me?” ♫

Skywarp looked up and saw a haze of smoke. He turned his flashlight on again, and saw something he didn’t quite understand at first…

Arcee’s singing: ♫“There’s bound to be talk tomorrow.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♫“Think of my life long sorrow.” ♫

Paper towels. Paper towels that were rolled out, and…damp. Damp with…Energon.

“What...???” Skywarp wondered if he was truly insane now, he moved the flashlight around slowly, seeing where the paper towels were leading to…

Arcee’s singing: ♫“At least there will be plenty implied.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♫“If you caught pneumonia and died.” ♫

Skywarp stood and followed it now.

There was toilet paper, and paper towels strewed everywhere; in every room in the Base. In the Rec. Room: It was wrapped around the furniture; in the Coneheads’ quarters: It was wrapped around the berths, and the lamps, and even in the wash racks; there was even paper leading down into the basement. The mass hall. The conference rooms. Everywhere.

Arcee’s singing: ♫“I really can’t stay.” ♫
Mirage’s singing: ♫“Get over that hold out.” ♫

It was clearly designed to carry the flames into every corner of every area of the Decepticon Underwater Base. In a matter of minutes, the structure they called their Earth home would become an inferno. Eventually, it would be completely engulfed in flames from the inside, and when it was completely burned out, it would collapse in on itself, crumbling to dust under hundreds of gallons of water.
Arcee’s singing and Mirage’s singing together: ♪ “Ahh…”

It was all too much. They were going to die.

Arcee’s singing and Mirage’s singing together: ♪ “but…”

No. Skywarp: “No…no…”

Arcee’s singing and Mirage’s singing together: ♪ “it’s…”

Skywarp: “I can’t…I won’t…”

Arcee’s singing and Mirage’s singing together: ♪ “cold…”

Skywarp: “I’ll save you, Crystal…”

Arcee’s singing and Mirage’s singing together: ♪ “outside…”
Chapter 47: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 47:
By Transformersnewfan

The Autobots roared with applause as the duo finished.

“Well, maybe I’ll spend the night,” Arcee joked.

BOOM!!

The crowd gasped, yelped, and was startled by the sudden interruption.

Soundwave kicked in the door, facing his 44 Magnum, “FREEZE!”

With him, Ravage growled loudly; his hind-mounted missiles at the ready; Rumble was holding a baseball bat; Frenzy a knife; Buzzsaw with a pellet gun; and Ratbat was in his Tape Mode, in Soundwave’s chest, to record their ‘interrogation’ of the Autobots.

“EVERYONE DOWN!” Soundwave ordered, “NOBODY MOVE!”

Jazz and Prowl each drew their guns; Mirage got in front of Arcee to protect her; Ironhide stepped forward, fully expecting the Tapedeck to be there for him; and Optimus Prime rushed in front of the crowd.

His Sire’s bellowing vocals and the ensuing pandemonium woke Laserbeak up with a start. He grabbed his camera and looked out into the scene.


Soundwave roared now, “RELEASE LASERBEAK IMMEDIATELY!”

“Soundwave, stand down!” Optimus Prime put his arm out and his hand up, ready to take a bullet if it meant protecting his crew, “I repeat, stand down now!”

“RELEASE MY SON OR I’LL KILL EVERYONE IN THIS BASE!” Soundwave was shaking, losing control.

Laserbeak’s beak dropped open, stunned, :Father! What are you doing?!

At the same time, Optimus Prime told him, “We don’t have your son, Soundwave. I repeat, stand down!”

Laserbeak shouted through their Bond, :FATHER!:

The Tapedeck kept his weapon trained on the Truck’s optics; his visor never giving away that he was hearing his son, :Where are they holding you?:

:What are you talking about?!! the Condor was dumbstruck, :I am at my post where I am supposed to be!: 
Now, Soundwave didn’t know what to think. He had to distract Optimus long enough to figure it out, “I can tell if you’re lying.”

“I’m not lying,” Prime slowly approached now, trying to reason with the blue mech, “Please… Soundwave…”

Rumble looked at his Sire for what to do. Ravage was still suspicious; he tried Laserbeak, :Where are you?:

:Oh, Lord,: the Bird smacked his forehelm, :At my post.: In the rafters:

Soundwave scanned Prime for a lie, finding none. His thoughts were interrupted by his Cat, :Father, he’s up in the rafters.: Soundwave was both shaken and furious, “WHAT IS THIS, A JOKE?!”

“Of course not,” Optimus put his hands to his own chest, “you know we would never kidnap your sparkling.” The Autobot Leader—and the Autobots—were unaware of the continued spying missions.

The partygoers began to lower their hands and relax; Optimus signaled Jazz and Prowl to lower their weapons, “I don’t believe he’s going to hurt us.” He tried to take Soundwave’s gun, but the Tapedeck put it back in its holster on his own. His sons were still at the ready though.

“Is your son missing?” Prime asked now, “Do you need our help?”

“No.” Soundwave didn’t want to give away Laserbeak’s location, so he played it cool, giving away only the information he wanted to, “I received a false distress call.”

“A phony distress call?!” Ratchet came over now, “We…We had one tonight too! For Bumblebee!”

“Something is going on here,” Prime looked at everyone, putting a hand on the Tapedeck’s shoulder in a calming manner, earning narrowed optics from the equally tall mech.

“Looks like we’ve all got a Christmas practical joker around here,” Prowl grumbled, turning his attention to their mischievous pair, “Sideswipe? Sunstreaker?”

“Hey, we didn’t do anything.” Sides shook his helm.

“Although, I gotta admit, this would have been a pretty good one,” Sunny shrugged, “had we thought of it first.”

Bluestreak, on the other hand, folded his arms, “I think you guys are forgetting a much bigger practical joker than these two clowns.”

Soundwave: “Skywarp…” Could he really have been behind this? Could he really be up to his old tricks? Even though he was carrying his first sparkling? Was tonight a lie? He HAD taught Skywarp how to operate the Computer Consul…Could he have—

“I will handle all Decepticon matters with Megatron,” Soundwave told Prime coldly.

“Very well,” Optimus nodded, “But, you may stay with us for the party. It is Christmas morning, after all.”

“My only request is to be allowed to leave with my sons,” the Tapedeck didn’t flinch.
“That’s fine,” Prime told him. His tropes never argued with his decisions.

Soundwave waved his family to the doors, existing lastly, just in case it was an elaborate trap. He told Laserbeak through their Bond, :We’re going to walk approximately fifty yards north to a clearing in the woods. Exit the Ark when you can and meet us there. I’ll send you the coordinates.: Laserbeak refused to acknowledge his Sire; he was completely modified.

“I…Um,” Ironhide stammered nervously, “I think I’ll have another drink.”

“Gotta find this fire,” Skywarp was determined to save their two lives; he grabbed a wall-mounted fire extinguisher, “I’ll just bet I know where it is.”

Sure enough, his own quarters was the source of the black smoke that was billowing into the hallways. The pregnant flyer dragged the heavy fire extinguisher inside and shown his flashlight around.

“AAHHH!” he found it.

There was an empty Energon cube, placed on top of his berth, half-filled with Energon-soaked towels made to act as a wick. The fire was burning five feet out of the cube; both his mattress and the curtain on his window had caught on fire by them.

“AUUGGHH!” he used the fire extinguisher on the flames, finally putting them out when he remembered Starscream telling him to point it not AT the fire, but DOWN where the flames were.

He was choking on the black smoke; it made his chestplates tighten, and the pains were nearly constant now. Then he raced back to the hallway and the Control Room and put out the fire in the pan. The walls had not caught on fire.

When the fires were finally out, he collapsed on the hallway floor, crying and sobbing.

His distress didn’t go unnoticed though; he suddenly felt his two older brothers trying to reach him through their Trine Bond, :Skywarp, what’s the matter?: Thundercracker called to him, :Why are you having trouble breathing?:

:I-I’m f-fine…: the younger Seeker lied now; he didn’t want his Teecee to worry and rush back, :J-Just…I-I’m okay now…:

:Skywarp, I felt that too.: Starscream chimed in now, :Do you think something’s wrong?:

He couldn’t tell them. Not now. Not while they were on Cybertron. He would tell them when they got back. But for now, he lied, “I wanna go flying.” Well, not too much of a lie, anyway.

:It’s too cold tonight, Warp,: Thundercracker told him, :you can’t fly in this weather.: The black and purple Seeker just whimpered in response.

:Absolutely not,: Starscream backed their older brother up, :no flying while we’re away. Now, try to go back to sleep, you need your rest.: :Okay…: was his weak response.

:You want us to talk to you until you fall asleep?: Teecee offered.
N-No…: he didn’t answer either of them after that. He couldn’t sleep; not until he cleaned up. He didn’t want Soundwave to find this mess.

“I say, he was talking in his recharge,” Ravage scoffed, pacing in the fresh snow, “He does that sometimes, y’know.”

“We’ll figure this out back at the Base,” Soundwave was sitting on the ground, back leaning against a tree. He had Ratbat nestled in his arms, with Buzzsaw cuddling Frenzy for warmth.

“But Pop, what made you think Beak was captured in the first place?” Rumble asked.

“I believed at the time, I knew what I was hearing,” Soundwave was curt, not wanting to discuss it at the moment, “right now, I just want to get him back and get home.”

“Well, I say we leave him there,” Ravage smirked.

“We’re NOT, leaving without him,” the Tapedeck cut that off, “now, let’s remain quiet.”

Finally, some branches shook, their snow falling off, and Laserbeak emerged; a look of indignation and disgusted as he looked over his family, “WELL?”

Soundwave lost it; he put the kids down and stood, wrapping his arms around the Condor and falling on his kneeplates, sobbing in relief. The four younger Cassettes all joining in on the hug, and lastly, Ravage, “I will admit, I was ready to tear a few windpipes open for you.”

“I can not yet fully accept your collective apologies for that utter humiliation,” Laserbeak spat, “not to mention the compromise of my mission.”

The Bird tried to pull away, but Soundwave held him, “I-I’m sorry…” he leaned his helm against his son’s, “Just…give me a minute.”

“Very well,” Laserbeak rolled his optics, “Might as well…at least, out here in the woods, only the Earth chipmunks are able to guffaw at my expense.”

Finally, Soundwave let him go, “Sorry…I really thought…that we had lost you.”

“Father,” the Condor blinked, “whatever gave you that incorrect assumption?”

Soundwave took his visor off to clean it, “We got a distress call…it was a somebody’s idea of a prank…” he put his visor back on, “I thought…I thought it was you, saying that you were captured and that they were having Ratchet torture you.”

Laserbeak shook his helm, “Father, you should have known better than anyone else, that I do not use boilerplate language.”

“Well, you’re at fault too, you know,” Ravage told him.

Laserbeak: “Such as?”

“You didn’t answer Father through the Bond,” the Cat sought to defend their sole-surviving Creator, “nor did you use the Comm.-Links.”

“If you must know,” the Bird hissed, “I was in my recharging mode. I HAVE been online for twenty-six consecutive hours.”
“Comm.-links are dead,” Soundwave remembered, checking his wrist-radio, “no way he did that…” it dawned on him now; he had left Skywarp alone with a dead communication system on a deserted Base.

“Let’s go,” he told his family, trying not to let them see his reemerging panic, “we have to reboot the systems.”

As they trudged in the snow, Rumble asked, “Pop?”

Soundwave: “Yes?”

Rumble: “We left Skywarp alone.”

“I know that,” Soundwave ignored the statement.

With the fires out, the still-scared, now hyperventilating, carrying Seeker began to gather all the Energon-soaked paper towels, toilet paper, and towels. The latter were heavy for him, and Soundwave didn’t want him to do the heavy lifting.

Room by room, he frantically gathered up the trash. With still no lights on in the Base, he had to hold his flashlight everywhere. He dragged black garbage bags around with him, not leaving any evidence in any of the quarters. He first cleaned the Coneheaded Seekers’ room, relocking the door behind him, then the Combaticons’ quarters, then the Constructicons’ workshop, then their adjoining quarters; the stuff was everywhere.

He had to make sure it was all gone, just in case the Ghost set any more fires. He even went down to the basement. He kept choking and coughing; at one point, doubling over in a hacking fit. The tightness and pains in his stomach still persisted as well.

“S-Sorry sweetie,” he told his daughter, “everything’s okay now…” He could feel her kicking and fussing inside him; she was very upset by what had happened.

There were not as much of the flammables in the basement, at least, although going back up the stairs, he got even more winded and had to stop. He ended up crawling up the rest of the way.

When Skywarp came out of the basement, Gravechaser was leaning against the elevator doors, arms folded, legs crossed, “Don’t forget about the mass hall.”

“Whatever…” the Jet staggered past the ghost, “you wanna help, Gramps?” he started laughing hysterically at his own joke, he sounded insane, “AHAAAAHAAAAAAAAAHAHAHAHA!!” he turned to look at his tormentor, but he had vanished again.

“Slag you!” he kept laughing, that is, until he hurt too much, then he started keening and whimpered, “H-Hurts…” He proceeded to clean up the mass hall. It was a huge area, and his legs were getting tired. The extra weight didn’t help either.

When he went to the kitchen, he found something interesting: Something was in the microwave. And the timer was on. He gathered up all the paper towels, including the ones leading to the microwave, and opened the door. It was a small cup of Energon, set to two-thousand degrees, and would have gone off in thirty minutes. He shut the timer and removed the hot cube with a towel and poured it down the sink.

The Jet started trembling now; he knew that this was not only enough to blow up and burn up the
entire Base, but enough to cause the waters around them to become a big enough tsunami to cover the US; also, the shockwave could make a deadly earthquake, enough to level every major city.

Skywarp couldn’t take anymore; he was crying, hurting, “W-Why?” he asked aloud, “Why me? Why my daughter? W-Why are you doing this to us?” He sobbed, falling again on his kneeplates, “I-I can’t...”

Gravechaser: “You were the one that wanted to see a bonfire.”

Time passed, he didn’t know how much time. But he got up to finish his tasks. He finished the kitchen, then the Conference Rooms, carefully locking doors. “I-I gotta m-make sure…nothing catches f-fire…”

Skywarp then cleaned the hallway walls with a bucket of soapy water; more hard work for the seven-months-pregnant flyer. He kept having to stop because of the pains.

Finally, he finished all the cleaning and threw the full trash bags away. He didn’t know how to start the power again; nor did he know how to fix the bash marks in the Control Room’s French Doors, so he figured it could wait for the Constructicons.

With nowhere else he felt welcome, he returned to his own, damaged quarters. The smoke was still pretty thick in their living room, and his mattress was a total loss, so he took an extra pillow and blanket out of the cabinet, locked the door and went back into the hallway.

“HHHmmmm,” he keened, “I can’t sleep in my room…” it was the only area that was fire-damaged, “I can’t sleep in the Control Room…” because Soundwave hated him now, “I can’t sleep in the Rec. Room,” because that’s where Soundwave blew up at him, “I don’t wanna sleep in Megs’ berth, and the sofa bed’s gonna paralyze me.”

:Warp…: Starscream heard his pleas for help, :My guest room has a full berth. My mother-in-law uses it. Sleep in there.: Esmerelda’s room was, in reality, rather pleasant. Skywarp climbed into the newish mattress and cuddled up in the blankets. It was almost Three in the morning.

:I think I should come home a day earlier, kiddo…: Thundercracker told him through their Trine Bond, :You’re too nervous without me there.: :

:Hmm…No…: Skywarp moaned back, :Just…had a fight with Soundwave…:

Thundercracker: :Wanna talk about it?:

:No…wanna…sleep…: his optics were so tired, he almost COULDN’T sleep.

:Okay…: Teecee told him, :I’ll stay up with you until you fall asleep…: And he did.

Frenzy’s singing: ♪ “Have a holly, jolly Christmas.” ♫ “It’s the best time of the year.” ♫ “Shut up, Frenz,” his twin told him.

The Tapedeck and his brood reached the Tarmac around Three-Thirty in the morning, Christmas Day.

The Tapedeck opened an emergency hatch and climbed down a side ladder next to the elevator shaft, using his visor for light.

“Skywarp?!” he called out when he stepped into the hallway. Almost immediately, he smelled the lingering smoke. “SKYWARP?!” he went the Seekers’ quarters door, opened it, and ran inside, “No, no, no!” Had the flyer committed suicide?!

The Tapedeck raced to the berthroom; something ominous had definitely taken place, but there was no chassis there. He had to find him though.

“SKYWARP?!” Soundwave raced down the hallway to the Control Room; he saw the damaged French Doors, but that didn’t register immediately. Instead, he went to a panel in the wall and began rebooting the systems one by one, throwing switches and pressing buttons.

The brake lights were the first to come back on; then the main lights.

“Beep-bop-beep-beep,” the Computer Consul rebooted; it would take at least an hour to get fully back online. Only then could he reboot the Comm.-Links from their main power source.

As his sons stepped out of the elevator, finding Skywarp was the main priority now. Soundwave reached out his sensors, looking for any signs of life forces on the Base. He detected two in Megatron’s quarters. Racing inside, he called out again, “Skywarp, where are—?” he opened the guest room door and found the pregnant Seeker fast asleep in a deep, exhausted recharge.

“Oh, Thank God,” Soundwave sat on the berth, putting his arm around his Seeker. He scanned him for any injury and found none, save only for seemingly past anxiety attacks. His sparkling was doing fine, as well.

“Father?” Ravage came in; the others following, “Is everything—?”

“It’s okay,” Soundwave whispered, “he’s not hurt.”

Little Ratbat rubbed his optics, “Daddy…I’m sleepy.” he crawled into the berth, snuggling next to Skywarp’s belly.

“Good idea,” Rumble noted; he, Frenzy, and Buzzsaw did the same.

“I guard the door,” Ravage laid next to the door frame.

“Well, seeing as that I am the only one rested in this sorry sot,” Laserbeak huffed, “does anyone object to my reviewing my tapes?”

“Be my guest,” his Sire nodded, still looking to try to tell himself that it was all a false alarm. He stayed where he was, sitting on the edge of the berth, studying his hands to pass the time, watching over Skywarp and his unborn sparkling.
Chapter 48: By Transformersnewfan

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Flashback:

In all, Thundercracker’s Father would be arrested no less than three times: The first was the aforementioned incident. The second, was when his Daddy was at work, and his Father came over unannounced. The sparkling was in the backyard firing his Sonic Booms at the approaching clouds, hitting the small ones but waiting for a nice big one to roll by. Yes, he used his Daddy’s advice and was pretty good at it now! Then he heard his Mother yelling and crying. The sparkling raced back inside, calling for her. He flew around the sofa and saw his Mother on her side, laying on the floor, with his Father panting and hollering over her chassis. His Father had struck his Mother, and now she was crying into her hands. The little Seeker knew his Daddy was at work and wouldn’t be home for another two hours, so he raced over to defend his Mother and his unborn sibling!

Thundercracker did the only thing he could think to do: He threw himself on top of his Mother’s abdomen and screamed at his Father, as loud as he COULD scream, to leave them alone! His Father then turned his drunken ire towards his Creation and began shouting obscenities, saying he was going to teach him a lesson! Thundercracker kept screaming to just leave his Mother alone! At some point during the yelling, his Father told Thundercracker that he’d kill his Mother and kill him too! Finally, more policemech showed up and arrested his Father. Neighbors called them, the sparkling guessed.

His Mother called Daddy and Daddy came home quickly after that. His Mother was crying into her hands. His Mother said his Father had struck her, and that Thundercracker had gotten in between them, and there was more fighting. They were pressing charges against his Father for both hitting his Mother and sparkling abuse, for BOTH sparklings!

He heard the policemech telling them that they should go to the hospital to see if the sparkling his Mother was carrying was okay. Thundercracker started crying; he doubted the storkoid would bring the sparkling to their home now, seeing that they weren’t safe from his Father. And, for some reason, it made Thundercracker miss Harvey so much more…

His Daddy came upstairs and picked him up, saying they have to go to the hospital with Mommy now. He tried to tell the little one not to worry, that he was back from work now and would protect them. Thundercracker remembered hugging his Daddy around his neck and crying.

Apparently nothing was wrong, Thundercracker guessed, since they all left the hospital the same night, and his Creators weren’t crying or anything, and when they got home, his Creators didn’t disassemble his old sparkling crib that his Daddy had spent last weekend painting in the garage or anything. Maybe his Creators and those policemechs had a meeting and worked everything out with the storkoid?

End of Flashback:

It had been more than twenty years since that day.

Thundercracker opened the front door and got the morning news datapad. The Christmas edition was
packed with sale advertisements.

“He stood right here…” the blue flyer leaned against the door frame, replaying that day vividly in his CPU.

After a moment, his Mother came behind him and placed her hand on his shoulder, knowing what he was thinking about. His Dad meanwhile, had already sat down for breakfast in the kitchen.

TC had never asked his Creator if she had suffered any pregnancy complications while carrying his baby brother; he was only four years old at the time and didn’t remember knowing anything about that. Their Mother brought the little Intruder home a month later as scheduled. His own kidnapping in between the timeline.

His Mother told him breakfast was ready, and he nodded and came inside.

Laserbeak sat next to his Sire, reviewing his tapes. Soundwave reached over every so often and stroked his helm; his son was having none of it.

By mid-morning, Soundwave had rebooted all the systems and cleared them for any viruses. No explanation turned up; it was simply as if someone had flipped the switches off.

And the reasons for the Comm.-Links fail? The system, and all four backup systems—had been flipped to the ‘off’ setting.

When the Tapedeck turned them back on, he was immediately met by the vocals and image on the main screen of Megatron, bellowing, “WHAT THE SLAG HAPPENED, SOUNDWAVE?! I’VE BEEN TRYING TO CONTACT YOU FOR HOURS!!!”

The Gunformer stopped when he saw that his friend was totally exhausted, not having barely a recharge.

“Well,” Soundwave began to tell the tale, “we had all systems down; cameras went down; Comm.-Links and all four of the backup servers were down as well.”

Megatron sighed deeply through his smell receptors, “Any evidence of what happened.”

“Very little,” the Tapedeck admitted, “the last thing the cameras caught were all of us recharging at the time.” He paused, debating if he should leave it at that for now. Perhaps it WAS Skywarp playing a prank?

“Any signs of a break-up?” Megatron asked, thinking he already knew the answer.

“I’ve yet to check the entire Base,” Soundwave shrugged, “I’ve been rebooting the systems.” He decided to end this call, “It’s fine. Continue your vacation.”

“Keep me posted,” Megatron stated curtly, hating being kept in the dark, figuratively and literally.

“Thank you for sparing myself of further indignation, Father,” Laserbeak grinned, “it is much appreciated.”

“I have to figure out what the slag happened here before I deal with him,” Soundwave spat, “but first, I have to speak to Skywarp.”

The Tapedeck continued to search for any evidence via the security cameras’ footage before the cut-
off for another hour. Finally, Frenzy came in, “Pop, Skywarp’s up.”

Soundwave: “I have to go.”

Skywarp had rolled onto his back and groaned, thinking about everything that had happened the night before. He realized the only two mechs he could trust was Thundercracker and Starscream. Soundwave had shown his true colors; the moment a crisis erupted, he blamed Skywarp. The Cassettes would always come first; probably rightfully so, as he was their Father.

The Jet sighed again; his spark had calmed down, but that same pain in his right side had now become a dull ache, rather than the sharp knife it usually was. Except this was more frequent. It didn’t come and go anymore; now it was as if he was feeling an object embedded under his derma plating. He knew his chassis; he knew where his gestation chamber was; he knew what angle Crystal was sleeping in, and he knew this pain was outside his gestation chamber. This was what was alarming to him because it never seemed to be pregnancy related.

The other Cassettes were up, and he was somewhat aware of Frenzy leaving the room, and then coming back with his Sire.

Soundwave sat on the berth, “Hey…How are you doing?”

With the knowledge that they weren’t romantic partners anymore, and simply a doctor and patient, Skywarp was matter-of-fact, “I’m worried about my sparkling.”

Soundwave felt the other’s belly, scanning him: The sparkling’s vital signs were strong and seemed to be okay, but he asked anyway, “Do you want another ultrasound?”

Skywarp: “Yes.”

Soundwave retrieved a wheelchair and took the still-weak Seeker to the Med-Bay. The ultrasound showed the previous evening’s trauma did no harm to his daughter. She was still moving, and her growth was on track. But while normal medical equipment wouldn’t pick this up, the blue mech’s telepathy did, :You hurt Momma!: 

Soundwave removed the medical equipment and helped the flyer to sit up, “I just wanted you to know, I’m sorry about last evening. I panicked, and…I said some things I shouldn’t have.” He looked down, “Laserbeak was fine, by the way.”

“I know,” Skywarp just looked away, “I saw him before the power went out.”

“We had another break-in,” Soundwave admitted, “in…your quarters.”

“I put out the fires,” Skywarp kept looking away, refusing to say what exactly happened.

“Oh God,” the blue mech couldn’t stand much more. He wrapped his arms around his little Seeker. Skywarp didn’t want to be held; it just made him miss who he thought Soundwave was going to be to him and now it hurt to be in his hold.

Soundwave: “Tell me what happened.”

“You’re the telepath around here,” Skywarp told him, “just read my processor.”

“Skywarp, I’m not going to invade your thoughts like that,” Soundwave pulled away to look at him.
in the optics, “I’m so sorry…I won’t let anyone harm you again.” When he saw the hurt on the carrying Jet’s faceplates, he added, “not even me.”

The Seeker wasn’t feeling it, “I wanna go back to bed.”

“I’ll take you back,” Soundwave didn’t push him; instead he just helped him off the medical table and back into the wheelchair. He then helped him back into the guest berth and left him alone for a while, not wanting to bother him.

Another hour passed, it was still Christmas morning when Buzzsaw and Ratbat woke him up.

“Merry Christmas, Skywarp!” little Ratbat jumped on the berth, “Wake up! It’s Christmas morning!”

“Don’t you wanna open your presents?” Buzzsaw smiled, “We gots presents for Baby Crystal too!”

Skywarp felt his little daughter responding positively to the sounds of their vocals, and he himself was feeling a bit better, so he sat up, “T-That sounds nice.”

After climbing out of the berth with some difficulty, the Seeker was pulled by the two little ones to the Rec. Room. Rumble and Frenzy were there, putting the presents under the Christmas tree.

“Hey,” Rumble get up and came over, “You okay? Pop said somebody was in your room again.”

“Y-Yeah, I was in the Control Room,” the pregnant Jet began, taking a seat on the sofa, “I heard somebody, but…all the lights went out, and, he started a fire this time.” He bit his lip components, “So, y’know, I-I had to put the fire out…and then I cleaned up and went to bed.”

Frenzy was shocked; he didn’t say anything.

“You tell Pop what happened?” Rumble asked.

“Uh huh,” Skywarp nodded, “I think he was t-trying to burn the Base down.” He realized he might scare the younger sparklings, so he stopped there, “I think I scared him off before he could take anything.” He smiled nervously at them, “Can we open the gifts now?”

“Whoever it is, we’re going to catch him in the act,” Soundwave said suddenly.

Skywarp looked up, and the Tapedeck was standing in the doorway with Ravage and Laserbeak.

“I was reviewing Laserbeak’s tapes,” Soundwave began, coming inside, “There was a lot of feedback, but we saw Optimus Prime leave at one point.”

“We believe he met with the perpetrator,” Ravage followed, “too bad Laserbeak didn’t think to follow HIM instead.”

“I had told him to stay at the Ark,” Soundwave shrugged.

“I shall defend my action on the accord that I still believe that Ironhide is involved,” the Bird scoffed at his brother, “we are continuing to make the error of focusing on erroneous leads.” He saw Skywarp reaching for him, “And if you attempt to embrace me, I shall smack you.”

The carrying flyer couldn’t help it; this was the first time he was seeing that Laserbeak was indeed safe.
“We have a plan,” Soundwave began, “After breakfast, I propose we leave the Base for several hours. When he attempts to break in again, OR if he’s still here, we’re setting a trap to capture him once and for all.”

Skywarp wasn’t so sure, “Think it’ll work?”

“At the very least, we might get something on camera,” the Tapedeck sat down next to him, “trust me on this. In the meantime, yes, let’s open the presents.”

“O-Okay,” Skywarp was starting to trust his friend, at least a little, once again.

The family all happily opened their gifts; wrapping paper and ribbons all over the floor, with Soundwave chuckling to himself at the sight. Skywarp seemed to be enjoying himself again, sitting on the floor with Ratbat on his lap, laughing along with them.

“Wait here while I check on some things,” the Tapedeck told him after a while, leaving the group.

Soundwave went to the Control Room and began gathering some supplies. Ravage, and Laserbeak followed him and stood by the French Doors; looks of anger and disappointment on their faceplates.

“It honestly pains me to see such distrust, Father,” Ravage sneered, “especially since this is the first real relationship you’ve had since Mother’s passing.”

“Our family comes first,” Soundwave told his eldest, “I’m not about to be made a fool of.”

“Do you honestly suspect Skywarp of duplicity?” Laserbeak questioned, gesturing at the damage to the French Doors, “Could he even weld a weapon with such force in his current condition?”

“Thundercracker could have helped him,” Soundwave nodded, “come and gone back before we knew anything. After all, the cameras were all shut down.”

“But for what purpose, Father?” Ravage questioned, “While I do acknowledge Skywarp is a prankster, surely he wouldn’t lead you on in the romantic sense purely for the purpose of a joke.”

“I don’t know what his plan is,” Soundwave hushed his vocals, “I just know he’s hiding something. There’s deception in his vocals.”

“But Father,” Laserbeak protested, “you are continuing to disregard my findings of Ironhide’s obvious involvement. You cannot believe that Skywarp—”

“Enough!” Soundwave cut him off, “Just let me prove or disprove my worries.”

Both eldest Creations were disappointed in their Sire’s suspicious. They had believed this to be the beginning of a new chapter in their family, with a new partner for their widowed Father and a sister on the way, still believing that Soundwave had fathered the baby.

“And what of the sparkling?” Ravage asked now.

“I’ll take care of the sparkling,” Soundwave told them, “just go back in the Rec. Room.”

“MMmm,” was all the Cat said before leaving with his brother.

As soon as they were gone, Soundwave stopped and leaned against the Computer Consul. He didn’t want to do this, but he had to know for sure. He had to protect his sons, his Decepticon Cause, and his fellow Decepticons.
Chapter 49: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 49:

By Transformersnewfan

The sun on Christmas Day shined brightly in the skies above as Soundwave drove the transporter across the snow-covered terrain. There were no Autobots or humans around for many miles.

Skywarp stared longingly at those skies now, wishing he could soar through those snow clouds in his Jet Mode. But his brothers had forbidden him from any flying while they were away. From the front passenger seat, he craned his helm up to watch them; sticking his digits out of the slightly open window; at least he was getting fresh air.

He realized that Soundwave and his family were a very quiet bunch. The Tapedeck drove, focusing on the path, and the Cassettes all sat silently in the back seats. The Seeker wasn’t used to such quiet; he and Starscream constantly chattered in the transporter, while Thundercracker was the more reflective type, but was still talkative. Megatron would usually narrate the purpose of the travels: It was always either going over the battle plans once more or if it was a casual trip, talk about his days as a Gladiator in the Arena in Kaon.

Skywarp looked at the Cassettes in the passenger mirror: They seemed to be engaging one another in conversations through their sibling Bonds. He shifted uncomfortably now; he was all wrapped up in a comforter/coat-like blanket, and the seatbelt was fastened a bit too tightly around his rounded belly, making him feel strapped down more than safe. He looked at Soundwave now, wondering what he was thinking.

“Where are we going?” the flyer tried to smile.

Soundwave didn’t look at him, “Far away from everyone.” His tone made Skywarp a little nervous.

He never let on, but before they had left the Base, the Tapedeck had methodically gone around setting his traps for the young, pregnant flyer to get caught in the act. First, he set up a secret camera over Skywarp’s berth; the burned-out mattress that wouldn’t be replaced until after the holiday, and invisible, inferred motion-sensing beams all over the two Seekers’ quarters. He also set up hidden recorders. And in both the Control Room and the Basement, especially the Weapon Storage, he put in inferred cameras, something he had been meaning to do anyway since the break-ins, only now it was to catch Skywarp pulling his pranks.

The twins were watching them; Rumble and Frenzy knew nothing of the traps and were more concerned about their Father’s coldness.

:Pop’s blowing this, for sure,: Rumble told his twin through their Bond, :He let that whole thing with ‘Beak get to ‘em. We gotta get their relationship back on track,::

:But how?: Frenzy asked, :When he gets that way, ya can’t reason with ‘em.:

:Get them back into the romantic mood,: Rumble smirked, “Hey Pop? How about putting on the
Soundwave didn’t want to acknowledge his son, but he did flip on the radio to PBS.

Finally, he pulled off the trail on a snow-covered mountaintop, “We’re here.”

The Cassettes got out first, with the Tapedeck lifting Skywarp out of the transporter.

The Seeker was a bit nervous, “Where are we?”

“We come here annually,” Ravage told him, “it’s ideal due to its isolation.”

“Oh cool, so it's like a tradition?” Skywarp turned to Soundwave, who seemed colder than usual, even for him.

“Laserbeak and Buzzsaw were flying together a few years back,” he seemed to be frowning under that facemask, “they found it from the skies.”

Frenzy made a snowball, “Hey Rumble…THINK FAST!”

Rumble did so, by quickly turning around and pelting his twin with an even larger snowball, “Ya mean, like this?! AHAHHAAHAHAHA!”

The twins began throwing snowballs at each other, laughing and having fun. Buzzsaw soon joined in.

One of them hit Ravage with a snowball, but he refused to react, preferring instead to take in the serenity of the atmosphere.

For his part, Laserbeak perched on a snow-covered branch, and looked far off into the distance, smiling for once, “I do so enjoy the sounds of the local Earth wildlife.”

Ratbat got away from Soundwave and frolicked with his brothers; his little wings were flapping around. With the loose snow flying everywhere, Skywarp started laughing and joined in on their snowball fight, “I’m gonna get you, Frenzy!” he laughed out loud.

The group played in the snow, whooping it up, laughing and throwing snowballs. Skywarp was giving as good as he got.

“Skywarp, slow down,” Soundwave momentarily forgot his suspicions; his sons tended to play rough, and he didn’t want the pregnant Jet to over-exhausted himself. Skywarp responded by hitting him with a snowball, laughing happily. He continued his snowball fight with the kids.

Soundwave sighed, thinking the carrying Seeker acted like a youngling. He checked his hand-held remote access to the Computer Consul; it showed no activity at the Decepticon Base.

The day went on, and the family set up camp, building a fire and roasting Energon-marshmallows, most of which, Skywarp was wolfing down.

It was getting dark, and with the darkness came a drop in the temperatures. Skywarp cuddled in his coat-like blanket, sitting on the ground next to Soundwave.

Their family was not alone though.

While the Cassettes chatted around and ate their Energon-marshmallows, the large blue mech’s thoughts drifted back to the situation at the Base. He checked his hand-held remote access, and, as it
had all day, showed no activity.

“Thank you for bringing us here,” Skywarp shifted closer to his friend and leaned against his big shoulder, “Crystal and I had a lot of fun today…”

“Yes,” Soundwave sighed, deducing the clues, and feeling the evidence pointed more than ever to these mysterious ‘burglaries’ being figments of the Seeker’s fantastic imagination. He was and will probably always be immature and irresponsible; pulling pranks on anyone foolish enough to get close to him.

Ravage noticed the winds kicking up, “It’s getting late, Father.”

“We’ll go in a little while,” Soundwave told him, “if we wait, the younger ones will fall asleep in the transporter.” Turning to Skywarp now, he stood, “Why don’t you and I take a little walk.”

“Cool,” Skywarp pulled himself up, and followed the Tapedeck, leaving their pede prints in the snow.

“Come on,” Ravage nudged Ratbat to get in the transporter, assuming his responsibility for his younger siblings.

Skywarp, meanwhile, was once again in a playful mood, teasing his friend, “So, what did you wanna tell me away from them?”

Soundwave: “Eh?”

“Why are we going for a walk?” Skywarp asked, grinning, “Did you wanna tell me you loved me?”

Soundwave didn’t answer.

Skywarp walked closer to him, “Or maybe…we can pretend we’re one of those human couples in the movies? Walking and talking together in the snow?”

“Anything you care to talk ABOUT?” Soundwave questioned; he turned his sensors up now.

“Just…” Skywarp frowned, realizing the other seemed angry with him, “wondering where we’re going…”

“I want to show you something,” Soundwave seemed to be putting his arm around him, but it was quickly apparent he was pushing Skywarp to walk in front of him. The better to read his CPU, my dear.

Skywarp wondered what the Tapedeck was doing, but he was trying to trust Soundwave again; surely, he wouldn’t hurt them, right?

“Tell me, Skywarp,” Soundwave turned his sensors up higher, reading the Seeker’s vocals, “what exactly happened last night?”

“Um…,” the pregnant Seeker was still reluctant to talk about it, “just that…that guy was back and stuff.” His responses were too vague to deduce much.

Soundwave: “Any idea who he really is?”

“Just what I’ve already told you,” Skywarp looked up and realized they were walking towards a cliff’s edge, “he calls himself Gravechaser, but it’s not his real name.” He bit his lip components, “He’s going to kill me.”
Because Skywarp truly believed the latter statement, everything he said came up as the truth, making Soundwave feel a twinge sorry for him. Still, he ignored it and tried to learn more, “Any idea of his true designation?”

Skywarp: “No.”

The larger mech narrowed his triangular optics; the Seeker’s vocals showed deception.

Gravechaser lurked in the distance on a treetop, unseen by all. He sensed an opportunity…

Soundwave: “What do you think of that false distress call?”

“He wouldn’t have hurt Laserbeak,” Skywarp turned back and looked at him.

“What makes you so sure?” Soundwave wanted to know now, “If someone’s trying to harm my son…” A prank, maybe?

“I just know that, okay?” Skywarp was becoming defensive, “Just…leave it alone, okay?”

“Okay,” Soundwave lied now, “what time is Thundercracker scheduled to return?”

“Couple more hours.” Skywarp reached the end of the cliff, trying not to get too close to the edge, “Why’d you bring us here?” He was scared now; his sparking felt that too.

“Well, I just think this is a beautiful view of the human city,” Soundwave took him right to the edge, holding the Seeker’s right wing hinge in a hurtful grip, “Why are you worried? You’re a flyer.”

“N-Not sure if I can fly right now,” Skywarp began shaking, both from the freezing cold and the growing fear of the large mech he once thought he would Bond with, “D-Don’t hurt us…”

“Were you playing a prank last night with that phone call, yes or no?” Soundwave forced the smaller mech forward, still squeezing his wing hinge and holding him as close to the edge as possible without him falling over the edge. His sparking quaked in fear.

“T-THERE’S NO PRANK!” Skywarp screamed out, “I-IT WAS HIM! IT WAS ALL HIM!!!”

His sensors told him the Seeker was speaking truthfully. But he needed to know more.

“When I told you Laserbeak was safe, YOU said you knew!” Soundwave dug his digits into the sensitive appendage, “EXPLAIN THAT!”

“I-I WAS IN THE CONTROL ROOM AFTER YOU LEFT!” Skywarp began keening now, “I-I WAS LOOKING FOR A RADIO, AND I GOT THE LIVE-FEED!!”

Again, his statement was truthful. But Soundwave wasn’t about to tell him that.

From the treetop, Gravechaser was relishing how the large Tapedeck was tormenting the pregnant Jet after having his family dragged into the ghost’s own vendetta. Unlike the incident between Starscream and Thundercracker in the Med-Bay waiting area, he was not personally controlling Soundwave. This was all the protective Creator’s own. Still, he wanted Soundwave to take things further, finish Skywarp on his behalf, once and for all. He had never attempted to control Soundwave before, careful not to get too close to the telepath. But tonight, he felt he had been on Earth long enough, and gained enough strength, that he could influence the Decepticons’ Third-in-Command.

He thought wrong.
“Who is Gravechaser and what have you done to bring him upon the Decepticons?!” Soundwave demanded, “I will not have this mech threaten my family! Not even for you!”

“I-I’M S-SO S-SORRY, S-SOUNDWAVE,” Skywarp was crying so much; he could barely get the words out; his spark was throbbing in his chestplates; he was so sure he and his daughter were about to die…

Soundwave: “WELL?!”

“Throw him off the cliff,” Gravechaser whispered, “do it.”

Soundwave stopped cold; he was taken aback to hear a third, unknown vocal, “Who’s there?!” he pulled Skywarp away from the edge suddenly, making the Seeker stumble backward and land on his aft. The snows at least cushioning his fall.

“Someone’s there!” the Tapedeck’s optics were wide under his visor; he reached his sensors around in every direction like a wild mech, “This isn’t possible! No one knows we’re here!”

For Skywarp, all he wanted to do was escape. He stroked his belly, trying to calm his sparkling.

“WHO IS OUT THERE!” Soundwave drew his Barretta, “SHOW YOURSELF!” he sensed a strange presence in a nearby tree; an unnatural one…

Gravechaser realized his mistake; he had to make his way out. But he felt himself gripped by the Tapedeck’s sensors!

“Ravage! Laserbeak! Potential threat!” he sent the coordinates to his sons, who both quickly left the transporter, weapons drawn, to aid their Sire.

“Stay put!” the Cat ordered his younger siblings.

Gravechaser was starting to get away, and Soundwave ran after the menacing force. His Cassettes soon caught up with him. They left Skywarp behind.

Meanwhile, the Seeker was visibly shaking in the snow; he had to get away. He had made a terrible, misguided decision in coming to this place with that Tapedeck. He couldn’t trust him; he would never trust him again. He looked around now; they were miles from anything familiar. He didn’t even know which direction was the way back to the Decepticon Base. He couldn’t trust Soundwave to take him back there.

Teleportation. If he teleported away, they would be safe, but it would risk irreparable damage to his unborn sparkling; a daughter he had come to know. And yet, staying there would mean certain death for both of them. Would risking injury and death later be better for her than giving her the best chances for a normal life? No. He couldn’t hurt her or even risk hurting her, and he would have to live with the knowledge that he had harmed his child; to live only to regret.

Flying. Flying didn’t harm sparklings. Crystal LIKED flying with him before, when they went to New York, in fact. Flying was a better option, but…he didn’t know which direction to go. The blowing snow was throwing off his internal radar, making it ping in every direction off the snowflakes. And, who would open the Tower? There was no one there, and there was no one he could call. No one to come and get them either.

All these thoughts and doubts raced through the Seeker’s processor in a matter of minutes. He had to
start moving, or they would both freeze to death.

“SKYWARP, COME ON!” Rumble ran out to get him.

“WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE!” Frenzy followed his twin. They were coming as fast as they could in the snow.

Maybe…maybe the best option was to return to the transporter; Soundwave wouldn’t harm him in front of his Cassettes, right? And…maybe he would spare Crystal. Even though he almost killed them both by throwing them over the edge…maybe…maybe he wouldn’t have… It seemed like the best option, and it would be the least chance of harm coming to his baby.

Soundwave’s huge frame crashed through the forest in pursuit of the supernatural force, cracking tree limbs like sticks, thundering like a hurricane. Ravage galloped alongside him, while Laserbeak took an aerial view. All three picked up the strange signal that seemed to float at an unnational rate of speed.

“DON’T LET IT GET AWAY!” Soundwave roared. He couldn’t get a clean shot at this being, and it was unclear if they were pursuing a force that was the size of a Transformer, or something as big as a planet, or as small as a human. His sensors were unable to determine anything concrete.

Ravage shot off one of his missiles where the trees brushed, but it hit nothingness.

Laserbeak felt the signal moving further and further away, “It is escaping, Father!”

Finally, after a five-mile chase, the monster disappeared into the snowstorm.

“Damn it!” Soundwave was fuming, “What the slag was that, that, THING?!”

“It wasn’t something I had never witness before, Father,” Ravage told him, looking puzzled at the trees, “an alien force, perhaps.”

“I have never been witnessed to such movements in my existence,” Laserbeak commented as he landed nearby, “however, I recorded footage for later analysis.”

“Good,” Soundwave told him as he panted in the wind, “we must return to the Base, and also inform Megatron about this.” He started to turn back as he realized, “I left Skywarp…” he broke out into a run; his sons following.

Rumble was trying not to panic, at least for the sake of his younger brothers; Frenzy was not doing as good of a job.

“You think it’s the Autobots, Rumble?” the red and black twin asked as they ran back to the transporter.

“It can’t be,” Rumble yelled back, “they don’t work on Christmas day.”

Skywarp climbed into the second back seat of the transporter, cowering and picking up little Ratbat, pretending to be protecting him. In reality, he was hoping Soundwave won’t attack him while holding the Tapedeck’s youngest.

The twins closed the back sliding door.
“Skywarp, what’d you see?” the blue Cassette yelled in a hushed tone, “Where’s Pop?”

The Seeker was out of breath from running, “H-He h-heard…somebody out t-t-there…” He had to stop before he could continue, “I-I didn’t…see it.”

“Um, can you relax?” Frenzy climbed up over the first back seat, “you don’t wanna go into labor and stuff.”

Skywarp nodded and tried to calm down; he knew Frenzy was right, those pains were back.

Finally, Soundwave returned. He opened the back passenger door, letting Ravage and Laserbeak in, and saw that the pregnant flyer winced in fear at the sight of him.

“We’re going back to Base,” he tried to be matter-of-fact, “it’s not safe here.”

The Tapedeck drove his family home, all the while thinking about his first paranormal experience.

Chapter End Notes

Well, now Soundwave has seen it!
Chapter 50: By Transformersnewfan

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As soon as they got inside the Decepticon Base, Skywarp locked himself in Megatron’s quarters. He was now terrified of the mech he was once madly in love with.

“I-I’m so s-sorry, Crystal,” he whispered to his unborn daughter, “I-I’ll be more careful…”

Soundwave, meanwhile, went straight to the Control Room, gathered his Cassettes, and turned on all the security systems. Not surprisingly, they turned up nothing. The Tapedeck began a forensic analysis of previous recordings, including Electronic Voice Phenomenon, or EVP, motion sensors, disturbances of the environment, sonic field analysis, and other searches; anything that would tell him what he was dealing with here.

“Pop, what’d you see out there?” Rumble asked.

Soundwave wasn’t ready to answer, “Something that didn’t belong in this world, Rumble.” He took his visor off and rubbed his optics, “We need to call Megatron…”

He did so, and while they waited for the Decepticon Leader, Thundercracker returned home.

“TEECEE!” Skywarp was elated to see his older brother again, “You’re back!”

The blue Seeker smiled and scooped him off the berth and wrapped his arms around him, “Primus, I missed you, Warp. You don’t know how worried I was.” He pulled him back to look him over, “C’mon, what the slag happened while I was gone. I kept feeling your spark racing.”

“Uhhh, it’s a long story…” Skywarp began; he told his brother everything, from Laserbeak’s call, to the blackout, to the fire, to his trip with Soundwave. He did, however, choose to leave out the incident of Soundwave possibly trying to kill him. He wasn’t ready to accept that yet.

“Oh God, Warp,” Thundercracker kept holding him and hugging him throughout hearing of the odyssey of the past few days, “Are you SURE you’re okay?! What about your baby?”

“S-She’s okay…” he nodded, “I-I made him do another ultrasound…I-I’m so tired of going to the Med-Bay…”

TC felt so sorry for him. “Come on, kiddo,” he helped him up, “let’s go back to our quarters…” he helped his little brother walk, “…Maybe that ‘thing’ got left back in the snowstorm.”

Thundercracker’s relaxing vacation with his Creators in Vos only a few hours earlier seemed like eons ago as he surveyed the destruction to their quarters. First, he got Skywarp to take a warm shower before getting him settled into their sofa bed in the living room. Then he went about methodically cleaning: He threw out Skywarp’s burned-out mattress and gathered and mopped up all the dried-up fire extinguisher foam. Thankfully, Crystal’s future nursery didn’t sustain any damage;
The blue Seeker was tried from the trip, but he made sure everything was semi-back to normal. Afterward, he went to his computer and ordered a new, full-size mattress and box spring, paying the extra charge for next-day shipping from Cybertron.

But TC knew he was just putting off what he knew he had to do: He had to confront this head-on; he held his helm as he turned to look over at his recharging baby brother and contemplated what he had to do next, “We gotta tell Starscream what’s going on.”

“I want to thank you again for having me over for dinner, Megatron,” Shockwave gushed as he sat at the family dinner table with the Decepticon Leader and his family, “the Tower tends to get rather lonely at Christmastime, what with George vacating with his femme friend in Cancun.”

“Well Shock, as I get older, I realize how important family is,” Megs smiled; he was in a reflective moment as his Mother washed the dinner dishes in the kitchen and Starscream walked Darkwing around, giving the sparkling his bottle. Dawning and Darkwing wrestled each other on the rug.

“All the years in the Arena…” Megatron continued, not noticing Starscream seemed to be concerned about something, “…Fighting the Autobots…”

The red and white Seeker felt Thundercracker through their Trine Bond, :Starscream, there was a fire…:

Starscream: “MEGATRON!”

“The analysis of the seismic activity was negative, Father,” Ravage stated, looking over the report.

Soundwave: “What about the weather analysis?”

“Nothing out of the ordinary, Father,” Laserbeak responded.

“Nothing here either,” the Tapedeck read the EVP report, “although, this is only checking the range of the Control Room. I need to set up a portable one to carry around the Base, especially in Skywarp’s room.”

His thoughts were interrupted when Megatron’s furious image popped onto the big screen.

“SOUNDWAVE!” the Gunformer demanded, “WHAT THE SLAG IS GOING ON THERE?!! STARScream SAYS YOU HAD A FIRE??!!”

The Tapedeck sighed, “…forgot about their Trine Bond.”

Megatron: “WELL?!”

“Look Megatron, I was going to tell you after your vacation,” Soundwave began, “it’s been an eventful last few days, to say the least. I was just compiling my report.”

“We’re coming back tonight,” was Megatron’s quick answer, closing the connection before the Tapedeck could argue. He looked up at his Mother’s crosses, “God help us.”
“I also received a false distress call that I attributed to Laserbeak,” Soundwave explained, “this was most likely done as a diversion.”

It was nearly midnight now. Megatron and Starscream had rushed back to Earth, leaving their triplets with Esmeralda and Shockwave for their safety. Starscream briefly checked on Thundercracker and their still sleeping sibling before joining the other Leaders for a meeting in the Control Room.

“And where were the Autobots?” Megatron asked.

“All Autobots were accounted for, Megatron,” Laserbeak answered, “I myself recorded video evidence of the fact.”

“Oh, that’s right,” Megs hung his helm, “Optimus and his slagging Annual Christmas Ball.” He turned and looked behind himself, making sure Starscream wasn’t getting upset, “Any idea what happened?”

“Possibilities included a December twenty-fifth triggered virus,” Soundwave laced his digits together and rested his chin on them as he faced the Computer Consul, “but there is no evidence to support that, according to our scans, anyway.” He paused, “There’s also evidence that there was an intruder.”

“But…You said all Autobots were accorded for,” Megatron sat down next to him.

“I know,” Soundwave nodded, “but someone set fire to Skywarp’s berth.” It was just spit out.

Megatron’s optics went wide and looked at Starscream, “Where is he now?”

“S-Still recharging,” Starscream told him, trying not to get sick with worry.

“Soundwave, this is NOT Optimus’ M.O.,” the Decepticon Leader was alarmed now, “in other words, we have it all but confirmed that we’re dealing with either a rogue attacker or an unidentified enemy combatant here.”

“Right,” Soundwave got up, “check THIS out,” he showed them the damage to the French Doors of the Control Room.

“So, this is how he got broke in and shut down the Comm.-Links?” Megatron asked.

“Negative,” Soundwave told him, “the cameras were still recording at that point. No one was in the Control Room when they were shut down. Had to be remote access.”

Starscream: “So why did he break down the doors then?”

“To get to your brother,” Soundwave gave it to him as fact, even though he hadn’t confirmed it yet, “why else?”

Megatron questioned Laserbeak, “Why didn’t you answer your Father through your Bond?”

“I was recharging,” the Bird told him, “I have proof of my whereabouts and actions for the entire derating of the period in question.”

“And you’re SURE the Autobots were accounted for?” Megatron sat at the Computer Consul, “You checked your tapes?”

“Affirmative,” Laserbeak nodded, flying nearby, “however, Optimus Prime, Prowl, and Ratchet were absent for a period of two hours. But this did not occur in the period in question.”
Megatron looked at Soundwave, who answered, “They were there when I went there. So, whatever happened here occurred when I and my sons went to the Ark.” He sat down, across from Megatron, “I believe the false distress call was to draw myself and my sons out, in order for the mech to attack Skywarp alone.”

Starscream was trying to hide his distress at the thought of anyone going to such lengths to get to his little brother. He kept trying to be a hardened Air Commander. He examined the French Doors, “Are these…claw marks?”

The others looked at him. Megatron came over. “Put your talons here,” Megs told the Bird. Laserbeak did so; his were much too small to have made those marks.

“Soundwave!” the Gunformer shouted now, “This had to be a BIG mech to do this kind of damage! Surely there must be some way of tracking down who’s doing this?!” He wiped his mouth nervously, “You said Prime went somewhere. What did he go?”

Laserbeak: “He did not say.”

“So…” Megatron’s optics narrowed, “Prime’s hired some freelance assassin to break in and out of our Base. That’s GOT to be the answer!” He hoped so, looking again at the claw marks, “What about a Predicon?”

“A Predicon would have had to come from Cybertron,” Soundwave told him, “Shockwave has not listed any known Predicons arriving on Earth for years now.”

“Well ONE of them had to get through!” Megatron barked now.

“That doesn’t tell us why he’s after Warp!” Starscream told them.

Megatron had to sit down; this was all too much, “Besides the doors, what other physical evidence do we have?”

“A recording of the false distress call,” Soundwave came over again, and played the tape:

‘Laserbeak’: ::Father! Father! HELP ME!!!::

Soundwave: “W-WHAT?! BEAK! BEAK! ANSWER ME!”

‘Laserbeak’: ::HELP ME, FATHER! I’VE BEEN CAPTURED! THEY’RE GOING TO HAVE THE MEDIC SCAN MY PROCESSORS!! YOU’VE GOT TO GET ME OUTTA HERE!!!::

“How nonsensical,” the real Laserbeak scoffed, “I do not use contractions in my verbiage.”

“At the time, I didn’t think of that,” Soundwave told them. “It pinged from the Ark.”

“So, it came from the Autobots!” Megatron slammed his fist down, “Is there a way to analyze vocals to prove who sent this?”

“Of course,” the Tapedeck nodded, “it will take some time, but we have the capabilities.”

Turning to Laserbeak, Megatron demanded, “Show me when Prime left his party.”

The Condor did so, and the Decepticon Leader watched the chassis language of his rival.

“He’s behaving as if he was caught completely off guard,” Megatron narrowed his optics, “what’s his game plan?”
“The Autobots extended their…Ugh, shall we say, festivities, until his return,” Laserbeak explained. 

“Which is why Laserbeak stayed late,” Soundwave finished. “Then we got the distress call.”

“But that doesn’t make any sense,” Megatron shook his helm, “how did they even know Laserbeak was THERE. Whoever sent that message had to have foreseen the chain of events of our intel mission, Prime’s leaving, and delaying that stupid party of theirs, and by your leaving, Skywarp was alone on our Base!”

“I’m out of ideas,” Soundwave admitted. “After last night, I can’t think of any rational explanations.”

Megatron bit his lip components; maybe his theory was not as insane as he wanted to believe it was, simply because any rational explanation wouldn’t cover this. Before he could speak though, Starscream cut them off.

“WELL YOU HAD BETTER COME UP WITH WHAT’S GOING ON!” the red and white Seeker demanded, “This freak is out to kill my brother!”

“I’m thinking; I’m thinking,” Megatron insisted, “why don’t you see if Skywarp’s awake.”

“Fine,” Starscream stalked off to their quarters.

With his mate out of the Control Room, Megs whispered, “We need to be careful, Soundwave. I think whoever this fragger is; I’m beginning to think it’s not a spy at all. I think he’s only after Skywarp.”

“It looks that way,” Soundwave nodded.

“I think when this, this…burglar took my file, I think it was just a cover,” Megatron bit his lip components, “Soundwave, we need to look at our own troops.”

The implications of a Decepticon being responsible for the attacks was disturbing, to say the least. But they had to consider it.

“As far as I know,” Soundwave told him, “we’re the only ones here at this time.”

Megatron shook his helm, “Whoever this is could have snuck back in after telling us they were going away.”

Soundwave: “True…”

“Pull up a list of every mech and femme that has the entry codes,” the Decepticon Leader whispered, “let’s see if anything jumps out at us.”

Soundwave: “Affirmative.”

All the while, Laserbeak was getting frustrated, “I myself continue to question Ironhide’s suspicious behavior.” But the two Leaders ignored him, going to the already digitalized files.

:Hey Pop?: Rumble asked through their Bond, :How come you and Beak aren’t gonna tell Megatron about…y’know, what you saw in the trees?: the Casseticon had been eavesdropping.

:I cannot report insane theories to Megatron without any proof, Rumble,: Soundwave didn’t give away he was speaking to his son, :not until I can further analyze Laserbeak’s recordings of our chase.”
Rumble didn’t answer; instead, he just turned to Frenzy.

“What’d Pop say?” the red and black Cassette asked.

“He’s not telling Megatron,” Rumble shrugged.

“But…” Frenzy asked, “why not?”

“Know what I think, Frenz?” Rumble admitted, “I think Pop doesn’t want to tell him we have a ghost.”

When Skywarp onlined his optics, Starscream was sitting on the berth, stroking his forehelm. TC was slouching in his chair by the computer, “…and that’s when you came in.”

Starscream saw their little brother was awake, “Hey sweetspark,” the Trine Leader whispered, “How are you feeling?”

The pregnant flyer couldn’t answer; all he wanted to do was ball his optics out. Depression had sunked deep into his spark after Gravechaser’s latest stunt. He imagined his own Mother felt as much when the same mech would continue to harass her when she was carrying him, always threatening her and trying to turn Thundercracker against her.

Thundercracker. He didn’t want Thundercracker to hate him for not telling him what happened right away. But he didn’t want to spoil his Christmas vacation. He felt awful; worthless, unworthy, sad, hopeless…all the things a carrying Seeker should not be thinking.

And…Soundwave. What was he to make of Soundwave now? Skywarp felt…dirty? Dirty after his shower. Dirty all over for ever wanting the Tapedeck. He was throwing himself at a mech that could have killed both himself and his daughter…but, how could he get out the words to tell his big brothers.

He sent these thoughts and emotions to Starscream and Thundercracker through their Trine Bond, conveying what the English language could not.

In the end, he asked Starscream to go back to Tarn with Megatron.

“I’m not leaving you,” Star insisted at first.

But his young brother didn’t want to be responsible for cutting their family vacation by more than a week; the triplets would be traumatized, and that it would make him only feel worse.

After continued begging and pleading pulses, the red and white Seeker finally relented, looking at TC, “What should I do?”

“He’s gonna feel like slag if you stay,” Thundercracker sighed, “at least go and make sure the kids are alright.”

“Fine,” Starscream sighed, getting up, “maybe I can drag them away from the old witch and come back early.” Then, he noticed Teecece refused to look at him, and it made him wonder if there was more to the story. But then again, he had just settled a huge fight with the blue Seeker about trust, and he didn’t want to fight with him again so soon.

“TC,” Star begged, “promise me you’ll call me the minute whoever this is comes back.”
"I will," the blue Seeker nodded, then watched him leave. He couldn’t bring himself to tell him the truth.

Skywarp gave him a weak nod before drifted back into his self-pity and misery.

“I want you to send your reports to Shockwave as soon as they are ready,” Megatron insisted to his 3ic, “and if it’s one of ours, I want him or her taken into custody immediately.”

“Affirmative, Megatron,” Soundwave saluted.

Megatron had reluctantly agreed with Starscream to return to Cybertron, although neither were going to have much of a vacation after this latest mess.

They returned to Tarn and Esmeralda’s cottage.

It was almost dawn by now; the triplets were fast asleep, blissfully unaware of the turmoil; their grandmother recharging in her rocking chair next to their crib, and Shockwave snoring loudly from the sofa, where he had crashed after dinner.

Starscream sat on Megatron’s younglinghood berth now, “They’re not telling me everything, Megatron,” he said sadly, “I know they’re leaving things out.”

“So's Soundwave,” MEGS blurted out.

“You… You really think so?” the Seeker was surprised.

“I’ve known Soundwave going on thirty years,” the former Gladiator sat on the berth near his mate, “he couldn’t LOOK at me tonight, Star. I think he knows who’s behind this.”

Starscream didn’t know what to think now, “He’s protecting the burglar?”

Megatron: “He’s covering up for him, that’s for sure.”

“But…” Star asked, “Why?”

“He’s doesn’t want me to know who it is, that’s why,” Megatron insisted, “don’t tell me he has no clue with all those cameras of his.”

Starscream: “Megatron?”

Megatron: “What?”

“I think… Thundercracker and Skywarp didn’t want to tell me something tonight,” it was hard for him to admit this, “it’s like you with Soundwave.”

“And that’s why,” Megatron leaned in, “it’s up to US to find out what they’re all hiding.”

That had been a mistake. Attempting to engage that telepathic Tapedeck had been a big mistake. Gravechasser knew that now; he had to rethink his next approach. Until he figured that out, he opted to lay low for a while, and not return to the Decepticon Base when that big mech would be waiting for him. Instead, he traveled back to Cybertron, Iacon Correctional Center, to be exact.
Once there, the evil ghost floated through the winding halls, roaming for hours, even days—he didn’t know anymore—on end. Eventually, he returned to the cell that was his last residence. The messages he had written on the south wall were still there, hardly faded with time. He clawed them now…

Thundercracker waited a while to go to bed so that he would recharge in the evening hours and not have his chassis clock overly discombobulated by the nine-hour time different between Cybertron and Earth. Finally, around one-thirty in the morning on the day after Christmas, the blue Seeker laid down on the sofa bed next to his beloved sibling.

Skywarp had his optics shuttered, but he was only pretending to recharge. His spark was still racing; he couldn’t stop replaying the events of the day in his poor, tired CPU.

Soundwave.

How could Soundwave have turned on him so viciously? He couldn’t even blame it on Gravechaser because as soon as the ghost made himself apparent, the Tapedeck reacted in defense. So, every action prior to that was Soundwave’s own.

Coolant tears pooled his Skywarp’s optical shutters now; he couldn’t stop thinking about what happened. He didn’t know how he should respond going forward. Would he still want Soundwave to be his doctor? He needed someone to deliver his sparkling. Would he go back to working on the paperless society project in the Control Room? Shoulder to shoulder with this mech? He needed to tell Thundercracker; he needed to tell his big brother. This was worse than being haunted by Gravechaser; and where was Gravechaser now? When would he reemerge? All these questions were giving the carrying Seeker anxiety, making his spark beat faster and his air intakes hitch, both were upsetting to his unborn daughter, which only made him feel worse.

Thundercracker felt the other’s discomfort through their Trine Bond; he assumed his little brother was having a nightmare and turned over and wrapped his arm around him, :It’s alright, kiddo, just a nightmare…:

Skywarp just groaned, he knew he needed to tell him sooner rather than later, “You up, TC?”

TC: “Emm…” It was a yes.

“We went out on Christmas day…” then the darker Seeker got right to the point, “Soundwave saw the thing that’s been haunting Crystal and me.”

TC sat up now, fully awake, “What’d he say?”

“He, um,” Warp sat up as well, “he chased after it, but…it got away. And we came back here.”

TC: “Did you tell him what’s been going on?”

“N-No…” Skywarp didn’t want to tell his brother.

“But, why not?” the blue Seeker couldn’t understand this, “You like Soundwave, why didn’t you tell him the truth?”

“Because, right before, y-y’know,” Skywarp couldn’t stand this, “We had an argument…”

Thundercracker rolled his optics, “You wanna see if he’s still up or talk to ‘em tomorrow?”
Skywarp shook his helm, “Tomorrow…”

“Alright,” the blue Seeker told him, “then let’s just get some sleep.” He pulled the other to lay back down, “You need your rest.”

But Skywarp didn’t rest all night, even without Gravechaser’s torture for the time being. Instead, the carrying flyer laid online, replying the events of that day and playing out words and images of how a confrontation would play out, making his whole chassis and processor continue humming with activity and unrest.
And Skywarp was not the only Transformer that didn’t get any rest that night.

Soundwave spent the entire dark hours at his Computer Consul, researching paranormal activity, stories of hauntings, survivors’ accounts, equipment used by ghost hunters, etc. The Tapedeck was now waiting for a decent hour of the morning to call Cybertron and his old phone company to try to obtain some of the said equipment, although he knew that his old boss, Ratbat the Elder, was most likely on vacation for the Christmas through New Year’s break.

His thoughts were interrupted by Thundercracker’s vocals coming through his Comm.-Link, “Meet us in the mass hall.” Just as well, his Cassettes were urging him to have breakfast.

When he got there, Skywarp was sitting at the counter, optics looking down at his food, wrapped up in his usual blanket; it was very cold in the mass hall this morning.

Thundercracker got right to the point, “I heard about what you saw in the trees.”

“I’m still researching the possible answers,” the Tapedeck nodded.

“Yeah, well, my brother hasn’t been completely honest with you,” TC gestured towards the shame-ridden Seeker, “this has been going on for months. THIS is what’s been breaking into the Base every night. THIS is who the spy is.”

Soundwave was shocked; for the past twenty-four hours, he had wondered if the incidents were tied together with the supranational, malevolent force he had sensed, with the bizarre and still unexplained intrusions into their secured compound. But hearing it bluntly from the blue Seeker was not something he had expected at all.

He turned to Skywarp now, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

The darker flyer didn’t look up, “W-Would you have believed me?”

“You still should have told me,” Soundwave insisted, “when did this all begin?”

“When I got pregnant,” Skywarp still refused to tell either the true nature of the haunting and the wicked ghost’s real identity.

“It’s something that has to do with that fertility clinic,” Thundercracker stated matter-of-factly, truly believing his assumption, “either they’re attaching ghouls to their patients, or they’re built over one of Sentinel Prime’s Seeker graveyards.”

Soundwave had to sit down; he had to process this new information, “All my life, I had never seen a ghost until now…After what I witnessed.” He sighed now, “I’ve always held a belief in the afterlife; that we are all going to be at one with the Allspark, but…” he looked at the blue flyer, “When my wife died, I spent a long time researching if the deactivated could contact their loved ones from the other side…I looked into the White Noise…But, I could never prove anything. So, I just survived on
the notion that the departed, or some of their essence, live on in our sparks, until we were reunited with them. But…What I felt in the woods, that wasn’t just a disembodied spark; that was pure evil.”

Skywarp wasn’t surprised by this; he already knew Gravechaser was pure evil.

“I’d say it’s evil to knock a pregnant Seeker offline the way it did,” Thundercracker spat now, “and the break-ins, the scratches, the constant scaring him and stealing his things, the arguments with Starscream and everything else that’s been happening around here. We haven’t had a moment’s peace!"

“We have to contact Megatron,” Soundwave held his helm. “we need to tell him the truth. This is far too dangerous to keep it to ourselves.”

Thundercracker sighed now, “Where should we start?”

“I continue to exalt where we need to focus!” Laserbeak hissed, startling the two Jets, although his Sire had felt him enter the mass hall, “The answers continue to lay with Ironhide! We are wasting invaluable time by extending my abstinence from the Autobot Base. Father, I implore you! This mech is indeed interictal to the conspiracy!”

“I just thought we were on Christmas break from our missions,” the Tapedeck was dejected, “but it’s the only lead we’ve got. Go ahead.”

“Finally!” was the Bird’s parting shot before flying out.

“Ironhide?” TC asked, “What’s he got to do with any of this?”

Skywarp didn’t seem to know either, but he didn’t speak up about the ghost’s true nature.

“Apparently, he’s been smoking again and drinking more High-Grade lately,” Soundwave explained, “although I suspect that has more to do with Chronia’s upcoming nuptials to one of Shockwave’s Vehicons.”

Thundercracker didn’t know how to answer that one, “Alright, um, I’m gonna fix breakfast,” and went to do so.

Once the blue Seeker was out of audial range, Soundwave turned his chair and faced his friend, putting his hands on the table and lacing his digits together, “I couldn’t help but notice, you didn’t seem to tell your brother what preceded what we saw.”

“I figured you’d understand now,” the pregnant Seeker began, his vocals hushed, “and you’d…know it wasn’t me.”

“I’m sorry,” Soundwave reached across the table and clasped the flyer’s hands in his own, “I didn’t know…"

“I’m scared,” Skywarp admitted, “I’m scared…that I won’t be allowed to have my baby. That whatever Gravechaser is, will destroy me…and there’s nothing I can do to stop it.”

“I can promise you, Skywarp,” the Tapedeck began, “I will do everything in my power to protect you and your daughter from this entity.”

And that’s what he and Thundercracker did. For a while.
The last week of the year went by without any paranormal activity. Soundwave honestly wondered if he had either chased away the entity for good that Christmas morning, or if whatever it was, was now lying in wait, knowing the Tapedeck was ready for it.

Soundwave had contacted Ratbat the Elder and had Ravage pick up a shipment of such bizarre equipment; it peeked his youngest Cassette’s namesake’s curiosity. The Tapedeck lied at the time, telling his former employer he was doing some experiments. He ordered a portable electromagnetic field, or EMF readers, inferred goggles, vocal recorders, and even a tube television that was more than fifty years old. The later he used to wire to his other equipment to see if he could pick up disembodied vocals through the White Noise.

Every night, the large blue mech made his security rounds in the nearly deserted Base, carrying his recording devices, flashlight, and EMF readers, but nothing turned up. Several Decepticons were beginning to return from their vacations as scheduled, and Astrotrain asked him what he was looking for. Soundwave simply said he was doing extra security rounds.

The Seekers, meanwhile, kept mostly to themselves in their quarters. Conservations with Starscream, as was Soundwave’s conversations with Megatron, were kept short. No one wanted to tell them anything until they were back on Earth.

Skywarp liked the gifts Thundercracker had brought him back from Cybertron; their parents always liked to spoil him and his unborn sparkling. And he loved the things his brothers had ordered from the department store.

Thundercracker had a new mattress and box spring delivered from Cybertron, and Skywarp did find it pretty comfy, which was nice since he was spending most of his free time sprawled out on pillows and blankets in his berth, feeling bigger and bigger by the day.

Week twenty-nine in his pregnancy was at least uneventful, he was calm with his older brother and Soundwave always with him, and he was sleeping through the nights again. He even slept through the New Year’s Eve festivities, snuggled up in his blanket on the sofa. Cybertron, meanwhile, saw Shockwave hosting a ball-dropping ceremony; something he had seen humans do on television and decided it was only logical to copy.

They spent a lot of time with Soundwave in the Control Room, both helping with the paperless-society project, and Skywarp liked playing with the Tapedeck’s youngest Cassettes. However, he wasn’t taking any chances; he made sure his older brother stuck around whenever he was with the Tapedeck.

Soundwave sensed the change though: The Seeker was much less talkative; he would keep his optics on the papers.

At one point, when Thundercracker and the twins were in the basement bringing up more boxes, Frenzy asked Rumble, “You think Pop will let us take Crystal out flying?”

“Skywarp’ll probably freak out,” Rumble shrugged, “but she IS our sister. Pop’s the one that’s gonna be overprotective.”

TC noted this but figured it was up to their Sire to correct their erroneous information on the sparkling’s parentage.

Yes, everything was going along smoothly.

Until the night before Megatron and Starscream were scheduled to return.
Chapter 52: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 52:

By Transformersnewfan

Skywarp went to his berth reasonably early that night; there was nothing on television, and he was bored, so he climbed onto his new mattress—picking up his belly to do so—and covered himself up with his blanket and closed his optics.

Knock. Knock.

Someone knocked at the window.

Skywarp’s optics flew open. It was back. The haunting was back. His whole chassis immediately tightened up. He held the covers up to his chin and then held onto his middle, trying to protect his child. Then he waited for what would happen next; his chestplates tight, that pain coming and going. He waited for nearly an hour.

Then, he heard someone coming! He whimpered a little, gripped in fear…

It was only Thundercracker coming into their berthroom, “G’Night buddy,” he yawned before going into his own berth.

Skywarp didn’t want to tell his brother what he had heard. Because if he told him, it would make it real. And he didn’t want it to be real. And this could NOT be real again. Not again…Not again.

He pretended to sleep now, and eventually, he did fall asleep, convincing himself that he had imagined it all.

It was well past midnight. Everyone was in recharge on the Decepticon Underwater Base when the cameras were flipped off.

Gravechaser had watched Soundwave long enough to know which buttons and switches would raise the Tower and extend the runway.

In their berthroom, Skywarp was sound asleep on his back; so was Thundercracker.

In the stillness of the night, the pregnant flyer’s blanket was slowly pulled off his chassis, and then…his entire form was levitated off the berth.

He was floated out of their quarters, into the elevator, and out to the edge of the runway, where he was laid down on the ice-cold steel.

Skywarp woke up shivering; when he opened his optics, his entire chassis was covered by a thin layer of blowing snow. He tried to jump up, and nearly tore his metal skin, as he was frozen to the Tarmac.

“AUUGH!” he struggled to get his barring, seeing only the night’s skies surrounding him. The skies that were always comforting to a Seeker were now an ominous blackness, with white specs of snow
and ice flying around, nicking him like pinpricks.

His abdominal section was not injured, at least. But then he realized he was extremely close to the edge of the runway; hundreds of feet drop into frozen waters awaiting below.

“HELP ME!” he screamed into the night and was met with silence.

He knew he had to get to safety. So, he began to crawl, his palms and knees sticking with every move to the frozen Tarmac. It would have had to be open a while to get this way; Soundwave was religious about closing and locking the Tower at night.

His breath was showing in clouds in front of his freezing faceplates. Several times, he had to catch his air intakes and hold his belly. He kept feeling a tightness because the coldness was constricting his innards. His unborn sparkling’s little pedes moved from side to side nervously.

It was horrible; the runway never felt this long when he took off or landed. By the time he reached the elevator, he was having a hard time breathing. It was so cold; so very cold…

Finally, he reached the elevator. He pushed the button, but the light didn’t go on. He was getting scared and pushed it again several times, and nothing happened. Freezing cold, he didn’t even have his robe on. He wrapped his arms around his middle and tried to call Soundwave on his Comm.-Link.

And now, he couldn’t get a signal! The Comm.-Link software was malfunctioning AGAIN. This was the second time, and it had NEVER malfunctioned before this!

“S-S-Sound-Wave,” he stammered, “S-S-Soundwave…”

Inside the Base, the Tapedeck was sleeping. Only brief static came through his wrist radio; not enough to wake him.

Skywarp took another deep air intake. He tried his brother through their Trine Bond, :T-Teecee…Help me…Wake up…:

“Ummmm…” the blue Seeker, even after recharging on and off for hours, onlined still tired. The fear coming through his Trine Bond was palpable enough to wake him, “Warp?” he lifted his helm, and saw, once again, his little sibling’s berth was empty. The blanket, oddly, laid on the floor in a perfect rectangle.

“WARP?” he called out now, reality set back in, :SKYWARP?:

:T-Teecee…: Skywarp keened miserably, :I-I’m on the Tarmac…I w-woke up out here…H-Help me…:

“Oh, God!” Thundercracker jumped up, racing out of their quarters and to the elevator. Like his little brother, he pushed the button, and found it dead, “SLAG IT!”

The black and purple’s chestplates were hurting just from breathing now; coolant tears mixing with the snow hitting his faceplates, :H-Help me, T-Teecee…:

:Elevator’s dead,: Thundercracker answered, :Gotta reboot it. Be right back!: He headed for the Control Room.

:O-Okay…: Skywarp whimpered, wrapping his arms around himself. He looked around, trying to distract himself, “I-It’ll be okay, Crystal. Teecee’s coming for us.” His little one’s response was to
kick him nervously. Then…Skywarp saw a dark shape at the end of the runway. He squinted to make out what he was seeing and then realized it was the same, hideous form of Gravechaser: Pointed wings held high; snow passing through his unearthly form; Black optics burning into Skywarp’s spark.

“TEEEEEEECEEEEEE!” the young Seeker keened “HELP ME, TEECEE!!! HELP ME!!! SOMEBODY! ANYBODY! HELP ME!”

Thundercracker burst into the Control Room, trying to find the right buttons to reboot the elevator. He pressed several ones in panic before realizing they were all offline. He slammed his fists down hard, but Soundwave ran in that same moment.

“What’s going on?!” the 3ic demanded, “Why is everything dark?!”

“SKYWARP’S ON THE RUNWAY, AND I GOTTA GET TO HIM NOW!” Thundercracker bellowed, waving his arms, “GET THIS JUNK FIXED!”

Gravechaser began his slow float across the Tarmac now.

:TEECEE!: Skywarp cried through their Trine Bond, :HE’S HERE! HELP ME!: 

“We have to reboot the main system!” Soundwave dove under the Computer Consul, going for a panel in the floor.

“HE SAYS SOMETHING’S OUT THERE!” Thundercracker shouted, “Come on! Hurry!”

“TEECEE!!! HELP US, TEECEE!!!” Skywarp began jumping up and down, having a tantrum because he was so scared, “PLEASE!”

Gravechaser was coming closer. Closer. Closer.

Soundwave opened the panel and pulled out the plugs. Then he put them back in. The Computers immediately hummed to life.

“Give it fifteen to twenty seconds,” Soundwave had more than a hint of panic in his vocals, “Get to the elevator!”

“HELP US!!!” Skywarp was screaming in hysterics now, “TEEEEECEEEEEE!!”

Thundercracker ran as fast as he could down the hallway; his loud pede steps matched only by Soundwave’s right behind him. Their dual banging could be heard throughout the Base, waking several Decepticons. The blue Seeker thought about retrieving his handgun, but he knew it wouldn’t do any good against a ghost.

Now Gravechaser was only several feet away from the pregnant Seeker; he raised his red claws as he moved at his unnatural speed.

“HELP US, TEECEE!!!” Skywarp was banging on the doors, sobbing, keening for his life and his daughter’s life, “HELP US!!!”

The elevator powered up, returning to life. Thundercracker and Soundwave jumped inside, heading for the top floor. “Come on, come on!” TC kept telling the systems.

Skywarp didn’t want to be up there, “TEECEE!!!!!!” he didn’t want to look behind himself, fearing he would see something out of his worst nightmares. And Gravechaser fed off his fears like a
Soundwave briefly worried if the elevator would get stuck at the halfway point; he was already thinking of how he would have to climb up the emergency ladder and save his friend…

“AAAAAUUUUGHHHHH!!!” Skywarp could feel the intensity of the evil ghost coming towards him. It felt as if a fireball from a dragon’s breath was billowing towards him, matched only by the deathly cold air the being was emitting, definitely colder than what the Earth weather could ever produce.

Gravechaser clawed both of Skywarp’s wings, making long, deep gashes; the metal around them curling up like melted chocolate rolls.

“EEEEAAAAUUUUGGGGHHHHH!!!!” the carrying flyer keened in agony. He felt as though his wings were being torn to shreds.

The Elevator doors finally parted, and Thundercracker caught his little brother in his arms, pulling him inside.

“He’S THERE!” Skywarp pointed at where the ghost had been.

There was nothing there but wind and blowing snow.

“It’S gone,” Soundwave pushed the ‘Doors Closed’ button before anything else could happen.

“AAAAUUGHHH!!” Skywarp was still keening; traumatized badly this time; he buried his faceplates into TC’s neck cables, crying.

Thundercracker wrapped his arms around Skywarp, “I gotcha…” but his relief disappeared immediately when he felt the sensation of warm Energon-blood oozing onto his digits from the darker Seeker’s wings. His optics widened, and Soundwave went right to Skywarp’s back.

“He’s cut badly,” the Tapedeck turned the hysterical Jet around to show his older brother the wounds.

Skywarp’s wings each had five long, quarter-inch deep cuts, running down them from tip tops to bottoms, and they were beginning to bleed, several profusely. The younger Seeker sunk to the floor, dragging Thundercracker down with him, sobbing like a newling.

“You’re ice cold,” Thundercracker’s vocals were laced with worry, “We gotta get you to the Med-Bay.” He looked up at the ceiling; his fury at the sight of his hurting sibling making his anger boil over, “WHATEVER YOU ARE, STAY AWAY FROM MY LITTLE BROTHER!”

When they reached Base’s main floor again, several Decepticons, including Ravage and Dirge, were waiting for them.

“What happened?” Ravage asked.

“We’re not sure,” Soundwave answered back as he helped Thundercracker lift Skywarp up. They each held onto the pregnant Jet and walked him down the hallway. Skywarp was trembling badly, “Uunn, Unnn,” he couldn’t talk; just static came out. TC wondered if the other was going into early labor, triggered by the intense cold and subsequent attack.

“Reflector: Report to the Medical Bay,” Soundwave called through his now re-activated Comm.-Link; then he told Ravage, “Account for the other Decepticons, then secure the Tower.” Then he
told Thundercracker, “Be gentle with him, don’t move him too fast.”

Once at the Med-Bay, they took Skywarp into the examination room, placing him on a table and quickly wrapping him up in towels and blankets. Soundwave tried to turn him on his right side, but he refused, yelping and thrashing around.

“Alright,” Soundwave turned him on his left side, “just relax now.” He attached monitors and a fetal monitor to the pregnant Seeker’s belly, “Thundercracker, try to keep him calm.”

TC nodded, and began petting his little sibling’s helm and faceplates, “It’s okay…It’s okay…”

Soundwave applied warm compresses to the young Seeker’s chestplates and canopy; this was done to keep his spark chamber warm and prevent any damage to his spark. At the same time, Spectro and Viewfinder were busy sanitizing his injured wings. Spyglass then applied the gauze and bandages.

“Can you tell us what happened?” the Tapedeck asked softly, “Why were you outside?”

Skywarp was still in too much shock to answer.

Soundwave asked, “Did you open the Tower?”

The black and purple Jet could only communicate through his Trine Bond, :I…woke…up… outside…:

“He says he woke up outside,” Thundercracker relayed.

Soundwave’s thoughts went dark, “Skywarp, did you teleport outside?”

Skywarp’s optics widened; he shook his helm no.

“Are you absolutely certain?” Soundwave questioned now.

The younger Seeker’s optics filled with coolant tears. Had he? Had Gravechaser somehow activate his teleportation drive? What was going to happen to his sparkling now?

Soundwave turned to Thundercracker, “When was the last time you saw him?”

“He was sleeping,” the blue Seeker told him, “what are you saying?”

“Sleep-teleportation, maybe?” the Tapedeck was trying to be a serious medical officer and not just trying to be mean, “We have to look at all possibilities.”

TC shook his helm, “But he’s never done that before.”

“Has he ever gone seven months without teleporting?” Soundwave began gathering equipment, “It might be a malfunction.” He got his ultrasound equipment out, “We have to check on the sparkling now, which we need to do anyway.”

The Tapedeck hooked everything up and was able to detect the newling’s readings easily. After a few minutes, he noted, “Things seem to be alright…”

But Skywarp was not alright at all; the mere notion that his precious sparkling could be damaged cut his psyche all the way to its core.

“I-I mean,” Thundercracker stammered now, “even if it was an accident…ONE TIME wouldn’t hurt the baby, would it?”
“As I’ve said, the effects of teleporting are still unknown,” Soundwave told him, “we’ll just have to monitor the situation closely.”

As he walked towards his computers, Thundercracker paused, then told him back, “It’s not his fault, y’know! Whatever that…THING is did this to him! That THING that’s been tormenting him for months! And if you don’t see it, you’re more glitched than Sentinel Prime was!”

Soundwave stormed out of the room, “I have research to do.”

TC went back to his little brother, changing to a much softer tone, “Hey, it’ll be okay…” he took one of his sibling’s shaking hands and squeezed it, “We’ll figure this out…”

After the Reflectors finishing patching his wings up, Skywarp was moved to a room for observation, still hooked up to various monitors. He couldn’t stop crying though; he was curled up on his left side, hugging a pillow, under three blankets layered on top of his still-cold frame. The saddest part was that he was ignoring his sparkling’s movements inside him; he was turning away from the newling he had wanted so desperately because he felt she would not make it here. Thundercracker had not left his side for even a moment, holding his hand. Skywarp relayed all his frightened thoughts through their Trine Bond, thinking his sparkling was damaged; that she would be born missing crucial parts, or that she wouldn’t make it at all…

:Momma, Crystal here!: the little one could sense his distress, and tried in her own way to reassure her mother, but he wouldn’t listen.

When he kept adding more and more of his worries through their Trine Bond, Thundercracker finally told him, “Listen, whatever the situation is, we’ll deal with it. Remember how worried Star was all the time?”

Skywarp didn’t answer; he was lost in self-pity.

“Do you wanna talk to Star about this?” TC asked now, “Listen, he’s coming home in a couple of hours. Maybe when you get outta here, we’ll all spend some time together with the triplets. Would you like that?”

When his little brother didn’t answer for the second time, Thundercracker tried to comfort him, gesturing at the sparkling’s monitor, “She’s strong…her sparkbeat is strong.”

:Crystal strong!: the little one was capable of hearing her uncle and learning new words, :Crystal strong!:.

Meanwhile, Soundwave began investigating what exactly happened. He figured that if he understood the problem, he would have a better chance of solving it.

First, he studied both Skywarp and Crystal’s test results: Nothing detected any changes or disturbances in either’s electrical fields, which was a good sign, but did not garner any clues as to why they were outside on the Tarmac.

Next, he went to his cameras: He wanted to know if Skywarp had come into the Control Room and opened the Tower. He rewound the cameras, and found that they, like the Comm.-Links, had been mysteriously turned off before the events leading up to the Seeker’s discovery!
Keeping his composure, he checked other cameras. He tried the ones in the hallways and found that they had been shut down as well. He still had the secret one he had installed in the Seekers’ berthroom, something he was beginning to feel guilty about, but that too had been turned off. He checked each camera now; the ones in the mass hall, the kitchen, etc., and came up empty-handed.

Rumble, with Frenzy right behind him, crept into the Control Room now. They were worried about what had happened to Skywarp and the sparkling and were not getting any answers from Ravage. They heard their Sire contact their other brother now.

:Laserbeak,: Soundwave called through their Bond, :Status report,: Ironhide spent this evening in his quarters, Father,: the Bird replied before editorializing, :I assume over-energizing on High Grade,: Keep me posted, Soundwave told him before going back to his investigation. He held his helm and drummed his digits on the Computer Consul now. He thought of some other options: He switched systems and checked the cameras posted in the rock formations outside their Base. These cameras had been installed to monitor the Autobots, but he realized that one of the cameras in the east side of one of the mountains would be able to view the runway from where it was posted.

Soundwave pulled up the camera view now. He rewound the tape, and finally, unlike all the others, it had not been turned off. This was most likely because it was on a remote network and not directly connected to the main frame on the Base. He backed it up to around an hour before the Seekers had alerted him to the situation.

He hit play.

He watched the tape: The Tower elevated. The Runway opened. There was no activity for several minutes. And then…

Soundwave leaned forward and watched how the pregnant Seeker, clearly in his recharge cycle at the time, was floated out to the end of the runway by an unseen force. He was placed down at the edge, still asleep; the snows piling up around him. Ten minutes later, he woke up, shaking and startled, calling for help and keening, before struggling back to the elevator. It was excruciating to watch.

Moments later, Skywarp clearly saw something coming towards him, terrifying him, but the cameras did not pick up any image of the perpetrator. When he was attacked, claw marks appeared out of thin air on his wings, making him howl out in pain, right before the Tapedeck and Thundercracker came through the elevator and retrieved them.

Soundwave couldn’t believe his optics. He rewound the tape and watched it again. And again. Five times total. All the while, his twin sons watched quietly in the background.

Finally, Soundwave leaned back in his chair; his digits hung limply above the keyboard as he struggled to process what he had just seen.

Supernatural. Paranormal. Haunting. The words that he never believed in now swam around his CPU like a buzzing honeybee hive.

“Pop?” Rumble came forward now, “Did you see that?”

“Yes,” the blue mech answered, “I saw it.”
Skywarp was on his back now, propped up on several pillows and still all bundled up in the blankets. Thundercracker was trying to give him a cube of warm Energon, but he wasn’t having it.

“Come on, it’ll warm you up,” the blue Seeker tried, “you gotta eat…”

Skywarp just shirked his helm away, keeping his mouth tightly shut.

“It’ll make you feel better,” TC kept trying.

Again, Skywarp refused to listen.

“Okay,” Thundercracker put the cube on the nightstand, “it’s here when you want it.” He sat on the berth now and pulled the blankets up to the darker Jet’s chin, trying to comfort him, “It’s been two hours…hopefully, he’ll let you out soon, and we’ll go home. Maybe then you’ll feel like eating…” he was again met with no response, so he began stroking the younger Seeker’s helm and faceplates again, hoping it was somewhat comforting. Then he heard the Med-Bay doors open, “He’s coming back.”

“Um…” Soundwave came in, “I found out what happened.”

Skywarp didn’t even blink.

“And?” Thundercracker asked.

“And,” Soundwave walked over, found a chair, sat down, and mentally prepared himself to say it, “Something, of unknown origins, picked him up, and placed him on the Tarmac.” He couldn’t believe he had just vocalized this.

“Whaaat?” the blue Seeker didn’t know what to say now, “He…He what?”

“The camera on the east side of one of the mountains picked it up,” Soundwave continued, “he didn’t seem like he was possessed. Something levitated him. Whatever it was, it was invisible. But Skywarp was clearly asleep at the time.”

Thundercracker closed his optics; fear, relief, and rage each fighting for control, coming to the forefront. The ghost. It was the ghost. “This…This…” monster, he wanted to say, “was touching my brother.”

Skywarp curled against the blankets, feeling sick; feeling like he had been violated. He bit on his lip components to keep from screaming…

“What the entity was, is currently unknown at this time,” Soundwave continued, “I’ll need to further analyze the video.”

Thundercracker saw how Skywarp was about to break down, “Are you alright, kiddo?” he held the younger’s shoulders, “Did he hurt you, you think?”

Skywarp just looked away; coolant tears were beginning to form in his optics. The blue Seeker hugged him as he spoke to Soundwave, “Is he okay?”

“All the tests are coming back normal,” Soundwave nodded, “both for Skywarp and the sparkling.” He stood and came over, “You’re free to go when you’re ready…”

But Skywarp suddenly objected, :NO!: he was determined to take back a small measure of control here and wanted answers regarding his health problems.
“He says no,” Thundercracker relayed.

Soundwave just listened now.

:I’m not leaving until I know my sparkling is gonna be okay!: the black and purple Seeker insisted,
:You don’t care! Nobody cares about my sparkling!: On the inside, he seemed very strong, but his outside façade was utterly shattered.

Thundercracker put it more diplomatically, “He wants you to make sure his sparkling is doing well before he’s released.”

“Very well,” Soundwave nodded, “I’ll run some more tests.”

Throughout the night, the Tapedeck ran Energon-blood tests, more physical exams, and ran another ultrasound, during which, Skywarp was hoping he would determine the cause of his persisted pains in his right side.

“Everything seems to be fine,” Soundwave told him, looking at the monitors.

Skywarp deliberately leaned on his right, causing the stabbing pain, making him bite his lip components, :WELL?!:

But Soundwave shook his helm, “There are no disturbances in your gestation chamber.” He tried feeling the area with his hand while still looking at the monitor, “It could be a strained cable, and if it is, it’s nothing to worry about.”

Skywarp was not satisfied with this explanation; instead, it only made him more depressed. He knew something was seriously wrong with his chassis and he was terrified.

“Stress undoubtedly exacerbates symptoms,” the Tapedeck began as he removed the medical equipment, “try to get some rest, I’ll monitor the situation.” He paused for a moment, switching from doctor to friend, and leaned closer, “I’ll protect you, I promise…”

The pregnant Seeker was moved back to his room in the Med-Bay, and Thundercracker stayed with him for the rest of the night, laying down with him on the berth, trying to warm his little sibling up, “You feel any better?”

Skywarp didn’t answer him.
Chapter 53: By Transformersnewfan
Chapter by transformersnewfan

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By Transformersnewfan

“Such a handsome, smart young mech,” Gravechaser marveled as he ran his clawed hands lovingly
over Thundercracker’s photo, taken on the day of his graduation from the Cybertron War Academy,
“I’ve missed so much…so many years…”

After his attack on Skywarp, the ghost spent the rest of the night in the Seekers’ quarters. He used
the pregnant flyer’s hospitalization to snoop around their home, looking for anything else he could
utilize in his quest to drive Skywarp into insanity before inflicting the ultimate punishment on him.
At one point, he found their bookcase and the photo album with some of their family photos. He
pulled it out and stared at every picture in the pages. And while he HATED seeing the images of his
former Bondmate and her backdoor mech, it fascinated him to view photographs of his beloved
Thundercracker at various stages of his adolescent life. A photo of him at age six, two years after his
Sire had last seen him; another picture from a vacation when he was around nine years old. Another
at age twelve; another at age fifteen; at sixteen when he won a school award. Meeting and forming a
Trine Bond with Starscream. Photos from the Cybertron War Academy. Graduation day at said
Academy…

“My sparkling…I would always wonder what you looked like as you grew up,” Gravechaser mused,
alone in his son’s living room, “I tried to imagine it. I never stopped thinking about you…not for a
day…not for an hour…not even for a moment…” What was completely lost on his corrupted
essence was that in almost every photo, was Thundercracker’s unconditional, irrevocable brotherly
love for his little brother Skywarp, the object of Gravechaser’s scorn. It never occurred to the
monster spirit how he was hurting the one and only being—his son—that he ever truly loved.

Gravechaser had no concept of time; it was morning now. He heard the front door lock opening. He
put the photo album back and whisk up to the attic.

Thundercracker entered first, followed by Spyglass pushing Skywarp in a wheelchair. The darker
Seeker was wrapped up in a Med-Bay blanket, still refusing to speak, and he had a faraway look in
his optics.

“We’re home, Warp,” Thundercracker spoke softly, still trying to go easy on his little brother.

“Here’s everything you’re gonna need,” Spyglass handed him a medical kit full of bandages, gauze,
and saline to treat those deep cuts to Skywarp’s wings. “Call us if you have any questions,” the
Reflector left after that.

“Thank you,” TC let him out and promptly relocked the door. Next, he dragged the file cabinet in
front of it, “It’s my fault that thing got to you, Warp,” looking at his brother sadly, “I thought since
it’s a ghost, that blocking the door wouldn’t do any good, so I stopped doing it.” Now he began
moving a dresser in front of the door, “I never thought he’d drag YOU right outta here…”

Skywarp didn’t respond; the latest attack was not only physically violating and humiliating, the
subsequent stay in the Med-Bay was a disappointment in that it failed to answer his chief concerns
regarding his health and the health of his unborn sparkling. That ever-more-frequent stabbing pain in
his right side was basically classified as imaginary by his doctors (although Soundwave was kinder than the Reflectors, he had to admit), and he was still suffering from the mild hypothermia.

Thundercracker tried to think of what would help now, “Okay, how about a hot shower?” he slung Skywarp’s arm over his shoulders and helped him to his pedes, still being very gentle as he led the younger Seeker to the wash racks. TC didn’t think Skywarp was strong enough to stand for very long, so he dragged a chair into their small shower stall, just as he had after Warp had suffered the concussion months ago.

The blue Seeker detached the shower head and used it as a hand-held wand and cleaned his little brother, first using lukewarm waters and gradually raised the water temperature. He took the wet bandages off the other’s wings and cringed inwardly when he looked at the scratches up close. They were pretty deep, and one or two scars were still seeping some Energon-blood. He avoided spraying the shower wand directly on them, instead taking a washcloth and cleaned them softly.

All the while, Skywarp kept his holding his forearms, still cold but getting better, ignoring both his brother and his unborn daughter, who was kicking in a playful manner at the moment, but he couldn’t stop himself from worrying about when and where the ghost was going to strike next. Just THINKING about being on that Tarmac made him start shivering again.

Thundercracker noticed this and turned off the water, “Okay, okay, I gotcha,” he dried him off and then wrapped several towels around the pregnant flyer, “just let me patch up your wings and then we’ll get you into bed.”

Easier said than done, as Skywarp kept flinching when TC tried to clean his wounds. He first applied the saline, then the gauze, and finally taped on the bandages. By the time he was finished, Skywarp was whimpering in pain.

TC again pulled his little sibling up and carefully walked him to their berthroom. He wasn’t sure if Skywarp wanted to sleep in his own berth after what had happened, and his question was answered quickly as Skywarp pulled away and crawled into the blue flyer’s berth.

“No problem, you can sleep in my bed,” Thundercracker assured him; he got Skywarp’s robe and replaced the towels with it and wrapped him in it. Then he wrapped a blanket around the younger Seeker’s injured wings before laying him down and covering him with two more blankets.

Thundercracker: “You want some Energon-tea?”

Skywarp: :NO!:

“You need to have something,” the blue flyer sighed, “your fuel tank’s empty.”

But Skywarp just turned on his left side, facing the wall.

TC didn’t give up so easily though, “I’ll be right back.”

The blue Seeker went into their kitchen and warmed up a cube of Energon in the microwave. Then he filled the hot water bottle with hot water and wrapped it in a washcloth, before returning to their berthroom.

“Here you are, kiddo,” he handed him the cube, “and I got this for you,” handing him the hot water bottle. Then he got the chair, locked the berthroom door and put the chair under the doorknob, trying to protect his little brother. He went to the closet next, shutting it tightly and shoved a box in front of it. All the while, Skywarp sat up watching, holding the cube and debated if he should just drink the Energon and make TC happy, or continue to wallow in his self-pity. Crystal’s prodding him for the
fuel was making him lean towards the former.

:You know that’s not gonna keep him out, TC,: the black and purple Seeker was still refusing to use his vocalizer.

“Well,” Thundercracker looked up towards the ceiling, “if he tries the doors, I’ll hear this stuff moving, so that’s something.” He went to the window now, “It’s supposed to get really cold this week, maybe I should cover this up.”

His little brother didn’t care anymore; now he just wanted to sleep. Not just catch up on the sleep he didn’t have the night before, but a deep, restful recharge that would heal his hurting wings and let his little sparkling have peace. Maybe that warm Energon would knock him out. He drank the whole cube in a couple of gulps and laid back with the hot water bottle against his canopy glass.

Thundercracker took another blanket and covered the window. Then he took the empty Energon cube and put it on the floor, before laying down next to his younger sibling. It was morning, but they were both exhausted, having spent the night in the Med-Bay.

He hugged Skywarp protectively, “It’s gonna be okay…”

Skywarp only pretended to sleep; not answering.

“Star’s coming home today,” the blue Seeker yawned, “Why don’t you ask him about that side pain of yours.”

:No,: was Skywarp’s answer.

TC suddenly realized he should keep their conversation between their Trine Bond, just in case anyone…anything, was listening in, :Warp, we really should tell him what’s been going on.:”

:We said he’d never believe us,: Skywarp’s optics were closed, :he’s gonna say we’re both ready for the loony bin.:”

:Let me talk to him,: Thundercracker told him, :I’ll lead into it. You just ask him about being pregnant and stuff,: he glanced an optic up at the ceiling…waiting…

They both slept the morning away.

Soundwave didn’t sleep at all. The mech had gone from caring for his friend in the Med-Bay to guarding the Base from the unseen entity, to hurriedly compiling his report for Megatron on the latest bizarre incident.

By the time it was around one in the afternoon, it was below eight degrees outside. And he still had to retrieve the Decepticon Leader and his family at the Space Bridge.

The Tapedeck left Ravage in command before driving the transporter to the location of their intergalactic travel device. The snow had frozen over completely, and there was an eerie quiet outside on the second day of the new year.

Starscream had his triplets bundled up tightly as he and Megatron piled into the transporter with their little family. The Seeker cuddled with his babies in the backseat, while Megs rode shotgun.

“So, what’s this big report you wanna give me, Soundwave,” the Gunformer looked out the window
now, “did you have a breakthrough in the investigation?”

“You could say that,” the Tapedeck knew he had to present his evidence in a firm manner for
Megatron to take him seriously. With the video footage of Skywarp being levitated, he had
irrefutable proof of the paranormal activity.

“Oh?” Megatron asked.

Soundwave kept his optics on the road, “I think we should discuss it in the Control Room.”

Starscream narrowed his optics, “Listen Soundwave, I’m STILL the Second in Command around
here, and if you’re holding back information because I’m present, I’ll—”

Soundwave cut him off, “I don’t want to frighten the sparklings.”

“Has someone been in our Base again?” Megatron asked now. When there was no response, he
asked again, “Soundwave…”

“I got it on tape,” Soundwave stated flatly, “that’s all I’m going to say for now.”

Megatron nodded, understanding. Starscream, on the other hand, demanded, “What did you see?”

Soundwave stayed calm as always, “Talk to your Trine.”

Megatron intervened before a fight broke out, “Starscream, you go to your brothers, and I’ll view this
evidence, and then we’ll discuss our findings like rational mechs, alright?”

No one said anything else the whole way home.

It was bitingly cold outside, and the group was glad to get back to the Decepticon Underwater Base.

Megatron walked down the hallway with his Communications Officer, “Soundwave, we need to
lock down the Base, this weather is hazardous.”

“Affirmative.” Soundwave nodded.

The Decepticon Leader called on his Comm.-Link, “Attention Decepticons: We have returned from
Cybertron. In light of the recent turn in the Earth weather, we’re going into lockdown. Everyone is to
remain on the Base until further notice.”

Ramjet and Thrust had been out flying and quickly returned upon receiving the message. Onslaught
was intending to go out for a drive but returned to his quarters. As soon as there was a helm count,
Soundwave closed down the Tower and locked it for the rest of the day.

The Tapedeck was miffed that Laserbeak chose to remain at the Autobot Base, “Why does my son
always have to be different.”

But Megatron told him, “It’s probably safer for him there, rather than to fly in this weather. Prime
will likely do the same and keep the Ark secured. He’ll be safe.”

“Safer than you’ll all be…” Gravechaser noted as he held court in the attic, “Just you wait,
Gladiator.”
Starscream had gotten all three sparklings out of their snowsuits, gave them baths to warm up, fed them, and they were finally all settled down. He had called Thundercracker on his Comm.-Link, telling him that he could visit them with the babies now.

“Oh, I missed you!” Starscream hugged his older brother as soon as he opened the door.

“Hi-hi!” Dawning chirped. “Unkle!” Darkwing smiled. “We play now! We play now!” Darkmount told them; he was the most well-spoken of the trio.

“Whatsoever,” Thundercracker looked like a wreck, having slept on and off all day, caring for Skywarp, and again changing the bandages, “nice to have you guys back.”

He took Darkmount and led Starscream inside, “It’s been hell here, Star…”

“You look it,” Starscream smirked. “Why did he close the Trine Bond to me?”

“He’s not feeling well, and he didn’t want you to know,” Thundercracker again barricaded the front door, securing his brothers and little nephews inside with him, “he spent the night in the Med-Bay.”

Starscream’s faceplates fell, “What happened?”

“Well, um,” Thundercracker moved the dresser in front of the door now, “he didn’t feel well and wanted some tests done, um,” he didn’t want to launch right into telling him about the bizarre attack.

“Is it the baby?” Starscream was getting upset, “What?!”

“No, everything’s fine,” Thundercracker walked with him, “Just…Let him talk to you, he’s just not feeling so good and wants to stay in bed. Come on; you know more about this pregnancy stuff than I do.”

“Very well,” Star nodded, thinking they were awaiting his words of wisdom, “I DID successfully carry three sparklings, so I pretty much know everything about what to expect.”

Thundercracker just looked at him, “Okay…”

When they walked into the berthroom, Skywarp was laying on his left side, online, in his own berth, but still had that faraway look in his optics. His bandaged wings were completely covered by blankets.

“Hey sweetspark,” his Trine Leader cooed, “did you miss me?”

Skywarp gave a slight smile, and Starscream hugged him while he was laying down. Darkwing and Dawning bounced up and down on the berth.

“Okay, now that you’re here, I can go get our dinner,” TC let Darkmount down on his own berth and left the room. He hadn’t wanted to leave Warp alone until their brother came back.

“So how are you doing, huh?” Star asked as he sat down, “I heard you’re not feeling so well?”

Skywarp twisted a little to look at him, :Starscream, do I have a hernia?:

“Let me see,” the red and white Seeker reached under the covers and felt around the other’s belly, particularly in the front by his belly button, “Hmmm…I don’t feel anything.” There was nothing bulging that would characterize a hernia, “Does it hurt when I touch you?”

The younger flyer just shook his helm.
When Star felt around on his middle, Crystal kicked him back with her little pede, “Oh, hey there little one,” he laughed in a sing-song-y vocal before rubbing the other’s belly, “No, you don’t have a hernia. She might have had one of her little thrusters wedged against the wall of your gestation chamber.”

:It’s not like that,: Skywarp insisted, throwing his helm back in frustration, :it’s always on one side, and it’s like a knife…:

“Hmmm…Probably one of her wings was poking you,” Starscream kept rubbing the other’s pregnant belly, “did you have another ultrasound?”

:I had two since you’ve been away,: Skywarp didn’t seem to want to say more.

“Oh wow, was there something wrong?” Starscream was alarmed now, “Why didn’t you call me?”

:Soundwave said nothing’s wrong with Crystal,: again, Skywarp didn’t want to tell his brother the truth; he was still too afraid to come clean, :I asked him to check on stuff, and everything came back fine.:

“Well that’s good,” Starscream tried to reassure him. “Listen, I had all kinds of aches and pains when I was carrying, I mean, I’m sure you’ll be fine.”

Thundercracker returned with several Energon cubes and sparkling Energon sippy bottles for the sparklings, “I got our dinner. You guys talking?”

“Yes, he asked me if he has a hernia,” Starscream took a cube, “but I doubt that’s it.” He smirked at Skywarp playfully, “Most likely indigestion.”

The normal Skywarp would have retorted the insult, but his overwhelming depression forced him to not even look in Starscream’s direction. Instead, he just closed his optics and let his older brothers chat.

“I’m very familiar with hernias, as you both know,” Starscream huffed, thinking of the memory.

Thundercracker picked up Darkwing and give him his sippy cup, “Yeah, I remember.”

“I got mad at Megatron years ago, over lifting that stupid fixture,” Starscream put Dawning on his lap and gave him a sippy cup, “I think it’s still somewhere here on the Base.”

“Why?” TC asked.

“Because Megatron could not wait for two more boys,” Star insisted, referring to the Vehicons. “He had me lift one end, and he would lift the other. I said, ‘Megatron, I can’t do this.’ And he was all, ‘Oh come on! It’s not even heavy!’”

Darkmount could see that Skywarp wasn’t getting up to feed him, so he grabbed his sippy cup and fed himself.

“Oh Yeah,” TC rolled his optics, “cause he’s a big Gladiator, it’s easy for him.”

“And finally, Steve came, and that other one, George,” Star continued, “and the four of us lifted this HUGE fixture.”

“And that’s how you hurt yourself,” TC’s faceplates twisted at the memory.

“I swear, I was afraid I was going to feel something rip,” Starscream shook his helm, “but, I didn’t
feel anything rip at the time. But I paid for that later.”

Skywarp remembered that he was in New York, visiting Chris’ children at the time.

Star sighed heavily as he watched his sons eat, “I’ve been through four surgeries…” his thoughts went back to his struggles with infertility…

Flashback:

In the early morning, Megatron sat on the edge of his berth, finalizing his notes for the morning meeting. Starscream crawled over and leaned on his mate’s back, resting his hands on broad shoulders.

“Do you think we’ll ever have a family?” the red and white Seeker asked longingly.

“Starscream,” Megatron smiled, “YOU, are my family.”

End of Flashback:

All the sparkbreak, the trying, the waiting, collimating in a week-long stay in an alternative clinic in Vos, run by a bizarre alien Seeker named Windblade, putting him through painful ‘treatments.’ The real nature of which, he had yet to reveal to his own brothers. He had told them he was going to a spa and closed the Trine Bond.

“You ever going to tell us what happened in Vos?” Thundercracker asked.

“Um,” Starscream bit his lip components, “Someday…”

TC: “Did Megatron ever figure out where you were?”

“Ugh, I suspect so,” the Trine Leader grumbled, “there was a day, it was after the second treatment, that she let me out for an hour or so…”

Flashback:

Starscream limped to a park bench and sat carefully.

End of Flashback:

Starscream: “I had bought lunch from a food truck…”

Flashback:

The Seeker had an Energon-hot dog and Energon-coffee, but before he had his lunch, he saw a familiar black Panther whip around the corner.

End of Flashback:

Starscream: “…And I see Ravage watching me! I KNEW it was him! When was the last time you saw a Polyhexian Panther in downtown Vos? Hmmm?”

“Oh yeah,” Thundercracker nodded, “I’m sure Soundwave sent him to spy on ya.”

Starscream pointed a digit, “And I confronted him about that too!”

Flashback:
Starscream exited the transporter with his arm slung around Skywarp’s shoulders for support, while Thundercracker carried his bags.

When they passed the Control Room, the red and white Seeker peeked in: Soundwave was working at his Computer Consul, while Ravage was sitting on a small, round rug, checking his nails.

“Hey Ravage!” Starscream spat, “Were you spying on me in Vos?”

The Cat seemed to be expecting this, “No.”

“No one was in Vos.” Soundwave piped up, not pausing from his typing.

Starscream didn’t believe them.

End of Flashback:

“Megatron probably put them up to it,” Thundercracker insisted.

“Well, what did he think? That I was CHEATING on him?” Starscream hissed now, “Slag…I was trying to save our Bonding, for primus’ sake. Well, no matter…”

Flashback:

“I’m glad you’re home, Starscream,” Megatron purred as he took his Seeker into his arms, “been the longest week of my onlining.”

The Seeker got straight to the point, “Let’s go to the berthroom.”

“Don’t I have to buy you dinner and flowers first?” the former Gladiator chuckled.

“Just hurry,” Starscream knew he only had a twelve-hour window for the treatments to work, and the four-hour trip from Vos back to the Earth Decepticon Underwater Base had cut into that short timeframe, “I want you to take me, please!”

Megatron pressed his faceplates against his mate’s, “You don’t have to ask twice.”

End of Flashback:

“But it paid off, right?” Thundercracker smiled, holding up Darkwing and gesturing at the other two, “You got the family you always wanted.”

Flashback:

The three Seekers sat on their wash rack’s floor, smiling and hugging, with Starscream’s positive test in the Trine Leader’s hands.

“O-Okay, okay,” Starscream was practically hyperventilating with joy, “remember, we’re only telling Megatron and Soundwave for the time being. J-Just until we know everything’s going to be alright.”

End of Flashback:

“Yeah,” Starscream looked at his babies lovely; he turned and looked back at Skywarp, and began stroking the younger flyer’s forehelm, “I think…I think I was jealous of you. When you told me, you got pregnant so…EASILY, I mean,” he giggled, “No, I’m happy for you, I really am.”
But Skywarp still felt his brother’s Bonding to the Gladiator was the start of their arguments, :You’re always mad at me.: 

“Can I have another chance?” Starscream cooed to him, “I can do better.”

Skywarp thought about it, :Well…You didn’t tell Shockwave I was pregnant, did ya?:

“No, of course not,” the red and white Jet insisted, “You said it was a secret and it’s a secret.”

Skywarp began to doze off again; his Trine brother’s gentle belly rubs relaxing him back into recharge.

“Ugh, like they don’t know,” Thundercracker rolled his optics, adjusting Darkwing on his lap, “the gossips are all over the Base. And half of ‘em think Soundwave’s the Sire, INCLUDING Rumble and Frenzy.”

“Rumble and Frenzy think Soundwave’s the Sire?” Starscream repeated, “Oh, he really should tell them the truth.”

By now, Skywarp was asleep and had not heard those statements.

Thundercracker wondered if now was a good time to broach the subject of the ghost, “Hey Star?”

Starscream: “Yes?”
Chapter 54: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 54:

By Transformersnewfan

At the same time, the Seekers were talking in their berthroom, Megatron was busy checking in the last of the Decepticons onto the Base, making sure everyone was accounted for.

Now, he walked briskly to the Control Room, anticipating this important discovery from Soundwave. The Tapedeck had put him off twice, saying he wanted to make sure everyone was accounted for beforehand.

Finally, the Decepticon Leader met with his Third-in-Command, “Alright Soundwave, are you ready to show me your recordings?”

“Affirmative,” the blue mech sighed, motioning for him to sit.

Megatron did so, lacing his digits together and giving his friend his complete attention.

“When you were carrying,” Thundercracker began, “Do you…Did you remember anything strange happening to you? I mean, not pregnancy symptoms, like…”

Starscream didn’t understand, “Like what?”

“Like,” TC gestured at the sleeping Skywarp, “Like, getting beat up and stuff? What he’s had, I mean?”

In the Tapedeck’s quarters, Ravage, Buzzsaw, and Ratbat were in recharge in their respective berths. Rumble and Frenzy were each laying on Soundwave’s berth, trying to fall asleep. After what they had seen on the video, they didn’t want to sleep in their own room; now they were just waiting for Soundwave to come to bed.

Gravechaser sealed off the berthroom as if putting it in a bubble.

“What you’re about to see, may not make sense,” Soundwave began, “in fact, I would say it flies in the faceplates of any rational concept known to this Earth or Cybertron.”

“Sounds serious,” the Decepticon Leader whispered.

“No,” Starscream answered emphatically, “Although I will admit, Megatron refused to let me out of his sight even for a moment. I was forbidden to go anywhere unless I was either with him or with you two.”
TC put Darkwing down next to Darkmount, “Do you think he had some threats?”

“Ugh, pit no,” Star scoffed, “He was totally paranoid! He would sit up at night and look around at the walls.”

Flashback:

Carrying into his seventh week, Starscream was snuggled in the covers. He turned over to cuddle against his larger mech and didn’t feel him.

So, he opened his optics, and saw that Megatron was sitting up on their berth; his optics were darting around from wall to wall, looking like he was ready to attack a wild animal.

“Megatron…” Starscream moaned sleepily, “Why are you online?”

“Huh?” the Decepticon Leader turned around, “Sorry…Just, thinking is all.”

“Are you nervous about being a Creator?” the Seeker asked.

“No,” Megatron smiled now, “I couldn’t be happier.” He laid down next to his Bondmate and wrapped his arms around him.

End of Flashback:

I didn’t think too much about it,” Starscream shrugged, “maybe he’s just a little sensitive?”

“Hey Rumble?” Frenzy asked.

Rumble: “Yeah Frenz?”

“Are you ready?” Soundwave asked again.

“I am,” Megatron nodded.

The Communications Officer flipped the switch on and hit ‘play’: A screen came on, showing the previous night’s footage of the Tower and Runway.

“Star, there’s something we haven’t told you,” Thundercracker admitted, whispering, “Warp was attacked again last night.”

Skywarp was asleep at the moment.

Starscream looked back at his little brother, then again at TC, “Why didn’t either of you tell me?”

Frenzy: “Are you asleep?”

“Almost,” the blue Cassette nodded, “you okay?”

Frenzy nodded.
As Megatron and Soundwave watched the tape, neither made a sound. One could have heard a pin drop.

And then, right at the point where the footage was to replay the paranormal activity, the picture turned to snow.

“What’s going on?” Soundwave asked aloud as if asking his own equipment, “What?”

“We knew you were coming home tonight,” the blue Seeker tried, “we were gonna tell ya.”

“Skywarp!” Starscream shook the carrying Jet awake.

Skywarp moaned; he wanted to pull the covers up over his helm.

They had both felt the room change somehow.

Rumble’s optics opened, he heard scratching…

The tape showed only static where it had hours earlier shown Skywarp being floated onto the Tarmac. All the while, Megatron watched both the video and his friend wordlessly.

The snow-screen lasted for as long as Skywarp was outside. The tape sprung to life and played the image of the Tarmac and Tower again, but as the elevator doors closed, right after Soundwave and Thundercracker had rescued Skywarp.

“Um,” Thundercracker struggled to present this, “All the incidents that’s happened…That day we all slept late…His concussion, all these burglaries. Well, Warp and I think they’re related.”

“Yes, I think so too,” the Trine Leader nodded, “the Transformer with the red claws.”

The blue Cassette lifted his helm; he heard scratching coming from the window. It sounded like a sea creature trying to get in. It was getting louder and louder.

“Frenz,” Rumble whispered, “You heard that?”

Frenzy was scared, “Uh-huh…”

“Let’s try this again,” Soundwave rewound the tape, not yet panicking.

Again, he and Megatron watched the video. And again, the static and snow came on and ended after the carrying Seeker’s rescue.

“It can’t be,” Soundwave spat, “this recorded everything!”
Megatron contemplated what this could mean.

“Right,” TC bit his lip components, “Someone that’s primary blue with red claws, and all these different powers.”

“Invisibility, knowledge of espionage,” Starscream was nodding along, “those things point to either Mirage or someone closely related to him.”

“But there’s been other stuff too, Star,” the blue Seeker knew he had to spit it out, “there’s been manipulations with our equipment. I mean, stuff that Soundwave says is foolproof.”

Starscream just listened now.

“Frenzy,” the older twin ordered, “go check it out.”

The red Cassette gulped hard; he slid off the berth and slowly walked towards the window.

Soundwave stood and walked around; part of his markup was that he was a very calm mech. “Let me try a backup camera.”

The Tapedeck went to the Consul and retrieved footage from another camera in a south mountain, showing the back of the elevator and part of the runway.

Soundwave found the timeframe on the tape when the incident took place, “Okay, keep your optics on this area,” he pointed to top left corner of the screen.

“Alright,” Megatron nodded, pulling his swivel chair closer to the Consul.

“Mirage is a Dean Martin fanatic,” TC shook his helm in disbelief, “Soundwave told me he was singing Christmas carols at the same time Warp was putting out a fire on the Base!”

Skywarp sat up now, waiting for their middle brother’s reaction.

“You have proof of his whereabouts?” Starscream asked.

“Yeah,” Thundercracker nodded, “Laserbeak got it on tape.”

The scratching seemed to grow louder as Frenzy approached. The little red Cassette reached for the curtain and pulled it back…

Gravechaser’s’ horrendous faceplates starred back.

“AAAAAUUUUUGGGGHHHHH!!” Frenzy cried out; he was soon matched by his twin brother, “AAAAAUUUUUGGGHHHHHH!!”

Frenzy used his thrusters to fly back to the berth and into Rumble’s arms. The twins were keening
out in the way they had not since they were newlings, “AAAAUUUHHHH!!!!”
“AAAAUUUHHHH!!!!”

And once again, the tape turned to static, and for the exact same period of time.

“No,” Soundwave shook his helm, “NO! NO! NO!” he slammed his fists against the Consul before getting up, “I had it, Megatron! I had the entire episode on video!”

Megs watched his friend sympathetically as the blue mech stormed around the room, “Soundwave…”

Starscream turned to Skywarp, “And you’re sure of the timeline?”

Skywarp knew that his brother was going to react badly, but he also knew his continued lying wasn’t solving the problem. So, he just nodded yes.

“RAVAGE!” Rumble cried out, “RAVAGE!!!!”

But in the Cassettes’ berthroom, the Panther heard nothing, because there was no sound escaping from the sealed master berthroom.

“RAVAGE, HELP US!!!” Frenzy screamed now.

“I’ve been a sound engineer for over thirty years!” the Tapedeck rambled, “Now this is physically impossible. I KNOW how the software works. I know how to record footage!”

Megatron: “Soundwave…”

“It’s not Mirage,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “it’s not the Autobots.”

“So, who do you suspect then?” Starscream stared now.

The berth began rattling; then it started shaking violently! It was literally jumping up and down off the ground!

Rumble and Frenzy were screaming, “HELP!!!! RAVAGE!!! POP!!! HELP!!!”

“I’ve recorded over one hundred million hours of video surveillance!” Soundwave was ranting and raving now, “There’s no reason in the world that file shouldn’t have played back!”

Finally, the former Gladiator’s vocals broke through, “SOUNDWAVE!”

The blue mech was practically shaking now, “W-What?”
“It’s not the humans, it’s not rogue Cybertronians,” TC kept going.

“Do you KNOW who it is?” Starscream questioned.

Rumble saw it first; then Frenzy, they both yelped in terror as Gravechaser stood at the foot of their Sire’s berth, “AAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!”

“AAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGGGHHHHHHHH!!!!”

Megatron stood and put his hands on his friend’s broad shoulders, “Just tell me what you saw on the tape.” He nodded reassuringly, “I’ll believe you.”

“I saw an invisible force,” Soundwave began, “levitate Skywarp up, and place him out on the Tarmac.”

“He was actually lifted up, OFF the berth and taken out to the runway,” Thundercracker lifted his hands for emphasis, “and he put him there, so he’d freeze to death, and—”

“And you didn’t wake up?!” Starscream shrilled at his older brother.

“No,” TC lowered his hands, “and he got scratched all over his wings…”

“Now listen well,” the evil ghost began, “Tell your Father NOTHING about what you saw on that video. Or so help me, I will deactivate every Decepticon on his Base!”

Megatron and Soundwave’s faceplates were inches from each other now; they were optics to optics.

“He was asleep,” Soundwave continued, “when he woke up, he appeared startled, and he was calling for help. By the time Thundercracker and myself got to him, the same invisible force had scratched across his wings. And when we got him into the elevator, that’s where the tape plays again.” There, it was out. There was no going back now.

“Because…” TC stammered, “Because, we think whatever this thing is, is paranormal, Star.”

The mechlings continued to scream on the shaking berth,

“AAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGGGHHHHHHHH!!!!”

“AAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUGGGGGGHHHHHHHH!!!!”

Megatron looked at Soundwave: He knew there was no lie in his vocals.
Soundwave looked at Megatron: He knew his friend believed him.

“I believe you,” the Decepticon Leader said simply. “The question is, what do we do now?”

“Have you both completely GLITCHED?!” Starscream stood angrily; his sons stopping their chatter to watch him, “What are you talking about?”

Thundercracker stood as well, “I’m talking about everything that’s been happening around here, we can’t explain ANY of it, Star! How is it somebody can get into our berthroom every night? HUH? How can they get in and outta the Base and steal stuff and beat him up and NOTHING ever gets caught on the cameras?!”

Skywarp hugged his arms, trying to comfort himself; coolant tears welling his optics.

Darkwing whimpered at his mother’s tone.

And then suddenly, everything stopped.

Gravechaser vanished; the massive berth didn’t budge; the vail of the soundproof bubble lifted from the room. And Rumble and Frenzy were left trembling in each other’s arms, wondering if it was over.

“We’ve ruled out so many things,” Megatron whispered as if someone was listening in, “Something…otherworldly. What else is there?”

“Paranormal Activity,” Soundwave nodded in agreement.

“It’s the Autobots!” Starscream shot back, “Who else would know where our Base is?!”

“You’re not LISTENING to me!” Thundercracker roared now, “This isn’t just about being invisible! This is something that can get in and outta rooms and turn off the Comm.-Links! For Primus sake, Star, I don’t even know how to turn off the Comm.-Links!”

Dawning was watching them as they quarreled; he didn’t like that.

Rumble and Frenzy held onto one another as each tried to catch their air intakes.

Megatron bit his upper lip component, “What time is it now?”

“Almost eight in the evening,” Soundwave answered.

“So just because this spy’s extremely talented, you automatically start blaming GHOSTS?!”
Starscream was yelling now too, “That’s metaphorically impossible!”

“DON’T GIVE ME YOUR PSYCHO-BABBLE! the blue Seeker was fuming now. “THERE’S NO OTHER EXPLANATION FOR WHAT’S GOING ON! SOMETHING ATTACKED HIM IN THE WASH RACKS FOR PRIMUS SAKE!”

“R-R-Rumble,” Frenzy gasped, “W-What w-was t-that?”

“I-I-I d-don’t know…” Rumbled was shaking hard.

“It’s late,” Megatron continued in his hushed tone, “we can’t give this proper attention until morning. For now, let’s just secure the Base, turn on the cameras…”

Soundwave nodded in agreement.

Starscream shouted now, “JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN’T FIGURE OUT WHO’S DOING THIS DOESN’T AUTOMATICALLY MEAN THIS IS SOME HAUNTED BASE OR CLOSE ENCOUNTER HERE!”

Now all three sparklings were whimpering.

“T-That guy said, w-w-we can’t t-tell P-P-Pop,” Rumble was still hugging his twin.

“U-Uh-h-h-huh,” was all Frenzy could muster.

“And…” Megatron went on, “Let’s not mention this to the other Decepticons just yet. Just keep tomorrow’s planned agenda as is. We don’t want to create widespread panic.”

Soundwave: “Agreed.”

“LOOK AT HIM!” TC pulled Skywarp’s arm and turned him roughly, pulling the blanket down to show their unbelieving middle brother the heavily bandaged appendages, “LOOK AT HIS WINGS, STAR!”

Skywarp felt both shame and anxiety now.

Rumble: “We can’t tell him…”

“I’m taking Thundercracker and Skywarp with us tonight,” Megatron concluded, “it’ll be safer.”

“I’ll watch my boys,” Soundwave nodded.
“Listen to me, Thundercracker,” Starscream was exasperated, “Ghosts DO NOT exist!”

TC: “SOMETHING SCRATCHED HIM OUT ON THE TARMAC!”

“HE COULD’VE DONE THAT WHEN HE FELL ON THE RUNWAY!” Starscream talked about their youngest as if he wasn’t present, “THAT PROVES NOTHING!”

The twins summoned their collective courage and climbed off their Sire’s berth; they still held each other as they made their way to the door.

That’s when Megatron and Soundwave heard the yelling; both turned towards the French Doors.

Thundercracker was doing it now too, “THEN HOW THE HELL DID HE GET OUT THERE, HUH?!”

“How the frag should I know?!” Starscream shrieked, “I’VE BEEN ON CYBERTRON FOR THE PAST TWO WEEKS!”

Rumble turned the doorknob, and opened the door slowly…

Megatron opened the French Doors.

Then Thundercracker turned it personal, “You’re always off somewhere,” he grumbled, “never around when the slag hits the fan.”

“The REASON, nothing happens in front of me,” Starscream was being indigent, “is because I AM the only one that’s level-helmed in our family!”

“No! It’s because you’re never HERE!” Thundercracker was furious, “You tail after Megatron all the time, turning your back on us, cowering in his quarters, and REFUSING to acknowledge what’s been going on around here for MONTHS!”

“I AM TENDING TO MY SPARKLINGS!” the red and white Seeker jumped up and down in anger, “ARE YOU SAYING I SHOULDN’T TAKE CARE OF MY BABIES?!”

The twins went to their room: Everyone was sleeping peacefully, oblivious to their pleas for help and the Earth-shattering noise of the hundreds-of-pounds berth jumping up and down.
Megatron put his hand to his forehelm now.

“STAR, YOUR BABIES HAVE SEEN THIS TOO!” TC pointed at the frightened Seekerlings, “THEY STARE UP THE CEILING; THEY’RE CRYING ALL THE TIME, YOU JUST REFUSE TO SEE IT!”

Skywarp sunk into a deeper dispersion hearing his two brothers scream at each other. This was over HIS problem; HIS ghost. His sparkling could hear everything clearly as well; he could feel her trying to huddle her little helm against the wall of his gestation chamber, trying to block out their yelling. It made him feel horrible.

“WELL MAYBE,” Star got in his faceplates, “IT'S BECAUSE THEIR CRAZY UNCLE IS TORMENTING THEM WITH MADE-UP STORIES ABOUT FAKE DEMONS AND WEREWOLVES AND WITCHES AND ALL THAT SLAG!”

“I HAVEN’T BEEN TELLING THEM ANYTHING!” Thundercracker barked back.

“Rav,” Rumble whispered, “Rav…Wake up?”

“Hyph?” the Cat woke up groggily, “What is it?”

Megatron: “Oh God…”

Starscream grabbed his taller brother by his turbine covers, “You are insane, you know that?” his vocals were low and burning with fury, “I don’t care what Soundwave’s half-afted tests say, you have gone CRAZY!”’ he let him go, “And I WON’T have you around my sparklings filling their CPUs with your demented hallucinations.”

The Trine Leader grabbed his sparklings roughly; they were too shocked to make any sounds. He stormed out now, still barking, “You’re slagging messed up, TC, you need help!”

Rumble: “You hear anything?”

Ravage listened now, then answered, “No.”

Frenzy: “ Didn’t think so…”

Megatron saw his mate storming towards him down the hallway; their little ones in tow. Hours earlier, they were watching the ice skaters in downtown Iacon. And now, this.

Soundwave was embarrassed, “I should check on my kids,” and headed for his quarters.
“I’m sorry we ever came back to this dirtball planet!” Starscream hollered at Megatron as he blew violently into their quarters.

As the Cat listened, he heard their front door clink, “It’s Father.”

“Hey,” the Tapedeck entered now, “taking a break from work.” He sat on the coach, “You wouldn’t believe what just happened.”

The twins were both pail as sheets; “T-Try us…” Rumble stuttered.

“Guys…” the big mech sighed, “Whatever was out there that night, has erased the security tapes.”

Ravage stood now, ignoring his brothers and awaiting instructions.

“The good news is, Megatron still believed me,” gesturing at the two young Cassettes, “at least you two witnessed the footage.”

Neither said anything.

The Cat was at a loss for words, “What should we do, Father?”

Soundwave felt a resolve in his spark that he thought had long been extinguished, “Keep this demon away from Skywarp.”
Neither Megatron nor Starscream vocalized what previous conversations had taken place. Megatron didn’t tell Starscream because he didn’t want to scare him; Starscream didn’t tell Megatron because the Seeker thought it was crazy.

Star busied himself bathing his sparklings, followed by putting them to bed, while Megs pretended to stay up, watching television. When he was sure his mate was out of audial shot, he made a conference call to Soundwave and Thundercracker.

“I don’t want to say too much over the open air,” the Decepticon Leader began, “but I know what to do. You have to keep any negative energies away from Skywarp. Treat him with as much kindness as possible.”

Soundwave: “Affirmative.”

Thundercracker: “Sure.”

“For now, let’s just get through the night,” and Megatron closed the connection.

Soundwave checked on his family before returning to his Computer Consul in the Control Room for a few more hours before turning in for the evening; and Rumble and Frenzy went back to their own berths, laying wide awake and eventually watched their Sire come back and turn in for the evening in the exact same spot that they had shared their terrifying experience.

To put it bluntly, no one slept that night.

The only one that had a night of bliss was Gravechaser.

:I don’t wanna sleep,: Skywarp keened through the Trine Bond, :bad things happen when I sleep…:

Both brothers had been cut off by Starscream and were dreading the long night ahead; their first since the latest and very disturbing attack. They were both exhausted from the argument and from the haunting.

“I know,” Thundercracker bit his lip components, “but we gotta get through this.”

The two were laying in the blue Seeker’s berth, arms and legs intertwined trying to protect each other, with Skywarp facing the wall. The darker Seeker was bundled up in a blanket under his brother’s comforter.

:Listen, you go to sleep, and I’ll watch over you,: TC was trying to soothe him, :your baby needs you to sleep,:
Skywarp nodded a little, but mostly just decided to keep still, knowing full well they were being watched. He made himself calm down and focus on the tiny little shifts and wiggles of his little unborn sparkling.

:Night-Night, Momma,: Crystal was sleepy too. She was quite talkative these days, which was the only thing comforting his spark.

Eventually, all three of them fell to sleep.

All night long, Megatron and Starscream actually had a peaceful night. This was due to the former Gladiator’s knowledge of dealing with a haunting. Well before Skywarp and Thundercracker’s night went to hell, Starscream had put his sparklings to bed in their crib; their first night back on Earth since leaving for their Tarnian vacation two weeks earlier.

Megatron had the television on as a distraction, while he went to the kitchen. He took out two cartons of salt, and, making sure Starscream wasn’t looking, placed a handful of salt in the four corners of their quarters, followed by taking some virgin olive oil and drawing a cross over their front door. This was done to protect his family from negative energies.

Then he went to his sons’ room, where his Bondmate was leaning against their crib, watching their babies sleep. While Megs did not yet know the details of the Seeker Trine’s latest argument, he suspected it had to do with what Soundwave had told him. The negative energy in their Base was terribly palpable, and he knew the best way to combat negative was with positive. And he was going to lavish his mate with positive energy.

“Are they asleep?” the Gunformer asked softly.

Starscream turned and nodded.

“I apologize for not helping you,” Megatron smiled a little, “I was doing something.”

The red and white Seeker seemed upset, but not with his mate. “It’s alright…”

“Darkmount’s the most like me, don’t you think?” Megs whispered as he came over, looking at their triplets, “And Dawning’s most like you…”

“Dawning’s more like my Father,” Starscream shrugged, “he had that determination, yet quiet and resourcefulness.”

“Darkwing’s our baby,” Megatron stroked his sleeping son’s cheekplate, “he loves his pacifier.”

Starscream smiled a bit; he wanted to say Darkwing was almost like Skywarp, “Well, he likes to look up to his big brothers.”

“So, I take it Darkmount will lead the Decepticons one day, and Dawning will be the Trine Leader?” Megatron asked playfully.

Starscream’s faceplates dropped; he walked out the door and into the living room. The mention of being a Trine Leader made him remember the fight and how he was failing as one. Megatron checked the sparklings once more and followed him out.

“Thundercra...
“Oh, come now,” Megatron knew he had to keep the atmosphere positive, “you know he doesn’t mean that. Mechs say things when they’re angry. Slag, look at me.”

“What does he want me to do, HUH?” Starscream started whining, “I’ve been trying to balance my sparklings with my job and them, and, and…”

Megatron wrapped his arms around his mate; Starscream hugged him around the neck.

“Let’s not think about that now, Starscream,” Megatron was conscious of the possible evil audials listening in, “we’ve both had a long journey today. Let’s go to bed.”

Starscream: “O-Okay.”

The red and white flyer took his shower. Gravechaser walked around the attic, right above him, trying to access Megatron’s game. For some reason, Starscream started sobbing now.

The former Gladiator was not psychic or telepathic, but he was trying to see if he could sense anything. He was a fighter by nature and tried to rely on his instincts. He walked around their living room, looking for any dark shadows, and not seeing anything.

Starscream leaned his helm against the tiles, all of a sudden feeling like worthless slag, “MAYBE I SHOULD JUST KILL MYSELF?!”

Megatron heard his mate’s keens; he spat a threatening whisper, “Leave him alone, you retrorat.”

The Trine Leader felt his beloved’s hands pull him from the shower now, “Megatron, I-I’ve never done anything right in my whole l-life.”


“N-Nobody…” Starscream shook his helm, “I-I just…”

“Then it’s not true!” the Gunformer handed him a towel, “Look, do you have any idea how long I’d last without you?” he stared at his Seeker with hurt optics.

“I-I’m sorry,” Starscream wipes his optics, “I don’t know what’s come over me…”

“It’s going around,” Megatron grimaced by the ceiling, meaning what he said both literally and figuratively, “come on, time for bed.”

He got Starscream to lay on their berth, trying to distract him, “Primus, you look so hot when you’re right out of the shower.”

“Oh really?” that made the Jet smile, “You’re not so bad yourself, for an old fighter, I mean.”

“I’ll show you an old fighter,” Megatron smirked playfully, climbing into the berth.

The two began kissing and cuddling, followed by foreplay and eventually into interfacing.

All the while, Megatron kept alert to their surroundings, looking for anything that did not belong there.

Later that night, Gravechaser’s growing anger for his son’s devotion to the one he felt was the bane of his existence led the wicked ghost to target Thundercracker now…
It was around two in the morning when Skywarp’s closet door creaked open, a cloud of smoke visible.

TC’s optics opened, he caught a whiff of the strange smell. It was not a normal smell one would find in their berthroom or any part of their quarters. The blue Seeker knew he knew that smell; it was familiar to him from his sparklinghood.

He saw that the closet door was open. He looked over Skywarp, making sure he was still okay. So, he slowly got to his pedes and went to the closet. Looking inside, he knew that scent: the smell of High-Grade Energon exhaust. But there was no High-Grade in their quarters, and neither had consumed any.

The blue Seeker closed the closet door; he made sure he pushed it firmly and heard the lock click. He went back to his berth and laid down.

As he turned over, he saw that the closet door was wide open again. He got up again, and shut the door again, hearing it click. Now he was wondering, did the Base settle? No. He knew what it was. He just wanted to go back to sleep.

The door opened for the third time. TC got up for a third time, not wanting to believe this was happening. This time, as he approached the door, he got hit with a strong gust of cold air. He shut the door again, refusing to be defeated.

The repeated noises woke Skywarp up, he groaned and turned onto his back. He saw his brother standing and immediately became terrified he was possessed. He shot up in the berth.

“Closet door was open,” TC whispered, “let’s go back to sleep.” He laid back down, pulling the other down with him, “just…go back to sleep.”

In the closet, Gravechaser materialized in a cloud of smoke. Bent on harassing his own son as much as Skywarp tonight, he began reciting Edgar Allen Poe, “Hear the sledges with the bells—Silver bells! What a world of merriment their melody foretells! How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,— In the icy air of night!”

Thundercracker heard the whispering as soon as his helm hit the pillow. His optics looked around the room; it wasn’t loud enough to make out any words. Just whispering chatter.

Gravechaser: “While the stars that over sprinkle—All the heavens, seem to twinkle—With a crystalline delight—Keeping time, time, time—In a sort of Runic rhyme.”

:TC,: Skywarp asked, :What is that?:

:Somebody’s talking about something,: the blue Seeker struggled to listen, :I can’t make anything out.: Gravetvcher: “To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells—From the bells, bells, bells, bells,— Bells, bells, bells,—From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.”

“What the bells, hell’s bells or what?” TC rasped out in exhaustion, “I can’t make out what they’re saying.”

Gravechaser: “Here the mellow wedding bells—Golden bells!—What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!—Through the balmy air of night—How they ring out their delight!”

:It’s him, TC,: Skywarp was petrified now.
“I don’t know who’s talking,” Thundercracker didn’t want to believe this just yet, “I don’t know if it’s the guys or what.”

Gravechaser: “From the molten-golden notes,—And all in tune,—What a liquid ditty floats—To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats.”

“There’s gotta be a radio on somewhere,” TC sat up now.

Gravechaser: “On the moon!—Oh, from out the sounding cells,—What a gush of euphony voluminously wells! How it swells!—How it dwells.”

“I don’t know; this guy hasn’t stuttered, he hasn’t stammered or taken a slagging breath!” Thundercracker was so tired, and the reciting of the poem was keeping him from his needed recharge. “Who the slag IS that?!” he threw the comforter off and got up, “Stay here,” he went back to the closet and opened the door…and found nothing.

So, he went to the living room, pushed the dresser out of the way, and kept listening. Now the sounds were coming from the hallway.

Gravechaser: “On the Future! How it tells—Of the rapture that impels—To the swinging and the ringing.”

TC moved the file cabinet, still not able to make out the words.

Gravechaser: “Of the bells, bells, bells,—Of the bells, bells, bells,—bells, bells, bells—To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!”

“GUYS?” Thundercracker was beyond annoyed now; he unlocked the door and flung it open, “Dirge? RJ?” He didn’t see anyone, nor did it seem that anyone in the Base was online at the moment. He tried to listen now…

The chanting abruptly stopped.

Skywarp was trying to listen as well. When nothing happened, he threw his helm back and keened, tired. Tired of being haunted.

Gravechaser was now under the berth, he reached up under the covers at the end of the berth, “Skywarp…”

The pregnant Seeker didn’t have time to reach; he felt a clawed hand grab his right ankle.

“AAAAUUUUUGGGGGHHHHHHHHH!!!!!” Skywarp screamed now; he hadn’t made any audible vocalizations other than keens and whimpers over the past twenty-four hours, but the shock of being grabbed broke him out of his self-imposed silence.

“WARP!” Thundercracker slammed the door and ran back into their berthroom.

Skywarp sat up and pulled his legs up to his belly. He pulled all the covers off. Nothing was there. The carrying flyer was on the verge of hyperventilating now, “Augh, euuuu…”

“Hey, hey,” Thundercracker could see something had gotten his brother all worked up, “Hey, just calm down, calm down…” He went to him and stroked his shoulders; worried because of Skywarp’s delicate condition.

Then they both heard a different sound: Pom-poum, pom-poum, pom-poum, pom-poum.
Thundercracker was becoming as on edge as his little brother, “Now what the slag’s that?” He helped Skywarp to stand up, “Come on, let’s go in the living room.” He wrapped the blanket around his little brother’s wings and walked with him to the doorway.

Gravechaser paced by, just out of optic view. Skywarp thought he saw something.

“Um…” TC turned back and gathered the comforter, while the black and purple Seeker stepped out into the living room.

Gravechaser came out of nowhere and roared like a bear, right into Skywarp’s left audial.

“AAAUUUUGGGGHHHHH!” again, the poor Jet cried out.

Thundercracker grabbed him, trying to protect him, “Quiet, quiet,” he hushed, “it’s trying to make you go into labor.” He knew at twenty-nine weeks, the sparkling’s chances for survival were not the best as they could be, “just relax…”

Skywarp nodded, understanding.

“It’s trying to get to you,” TC held onto him, “I’m not gonna let it.” He walked his little brother to their kitchen, still trying to reassure him, “Come on, you want some Energon? I do…” Skywarp just shook his helm no. The blue Seeker let him sit down on a chair, and tried to change the subject, “Maybe Star’s right,” he tried joking, “maybe I am glitching…” He started towards the counter, groggy; he rubbed at his optics…

Skywarp was calming down again; he was looking at his brother, not at their living room…

When Thundercracker recalibrated his optics, he looked towards the living room, and there, TC saw Gravechaser for the first time: The evil ghost was standing in their berthroom doorway, floating just above the ground, with his cold, black optics looking back at his son.

Thundercracker’s spark ran cold; he screamed, “AAAUUUUGGGGHHHHH!!”

This time, it was Skywarp that looked up and didn’t see anything, “H-Huh?” he whimpered, gripping his stomach.

TC grabbed Skywarp and hurried him out the front door, “RUN!” the blue Seeker had never been so scared in his adult life; Skywarp was also terrified, but not vocalizing it the way his older brother was, “RUN, COME ON, RUN!” They ran out of their home and into the hallway.


“T-There’s someone in t-there,” Thundercracker was shaking like a sparkling now, pointing at their quarters.

Dirge went back for his gun; he and Ramjet entered slowly, the way law enforcement officers do when a suspect is on the premises. They crept around the darkened quarters, going from room to room. Finally, Dirge concluded, “There’s nobody here.”

By now, Soundwave had come, “What happened this time?” He saw that Skywarp was relatively okay, but it was Thundercracker that was hysterical. The blue Seeker was shaking badly, almost whimpering, “I-I saw…I s-saw…”

“Come on,” the Tapedeck took both Seekers to the Rec. Room; his chief concern was for Skywarp
and his sparkling, “Did anything hurt you?”

The black and purple Seeker shook his helm no.

Soundwave then went into their quarters; sensors stretched out in every direction. He crept into their berthroom now. Ramjet was there, looking around, and shrugged to indicate he didn’t find anything.

The Tapedeck could feel the residuals of the dark presence he had felt in the woods on Christmas Day. “Something was here…” he opened the closet door, and knew, he just knew that Gravechaser had been standing there. He went back to the Control Room and retrieved the EMF meter. He came back to the Seekers’ quarters; the small, hand-held device did not pick up any spikes, indicating that whatever spirit was there was now gone.

Thundercracker meanwhile, was shaking and crying, sitting on the sofa in the Rec. Room completely broken by what he had seen. He was holding his arms, rocking back and forth, making little whimperers. Thrust had gone back to his quarters, while Dirge stayed with them. TC closed his optics tightly, continuing to whimper, his thoughts going back to when he was very young. It all was coming back as if it had just happened: The killing of the police mechs…His Father swearing revenge…

Flashback:

“I’LL KILL YOU ALL!!!!” His Father shouted as Thundercracker looked back over policemech’s shoulder. His little vents gasping in terror; terror that no four-year-old should EVER have to experience. He was whisked to the manager’s office, where his Daddy was talking to several policemechs.

“THUNDERCRACKER!”

“DADDY!”

The big Seeker hugged the sparkling tightly to his chest, and little Thundercracker sobbed and hugged him around his neck.

End of Flashback:

“TC,” Skywarp had not spoken since he had been rescued from the Tarmac, but now, he needed to comfort his beloved brother, “don’t worry TC, he’s gone for now.” He knew very well what Thundercracker was going through now; that ghost was a horrific sight, especially when one saw him for the first time.

The pregnant flyer sat beside him and pulled him into a hug. Thundercracker immediately grabbed the younger Jet and sobbed into his chestplates. Skywarp started rubbing his brother’s helm, trying to comfort him. It was as if he was the older brother and TC was the younger brother.

“Don’t cry, TC,” Skywarp tried to tell him, “I promise, he’s not after you. He’s after me…”

Thundercracker sat up now, coming back to reality; he sighed, “I saw…Gravechaser.” He rubbed at his optics, “And…You were right…You’ve been trying…trying to tell me how bad it was…I-I knew, but…I didn’t know. I mean, I guess I couldn’t know how b-bad it really was.” He hugged Skywarp, and the two brothers cried together.

Soundwave came into the Rec. Room now, “I didn’t find anything. But there was something there.” Dirge didn’t know what to do to help, “Hey, why don’t you guys come stay with us?”
“No.” Thundercracker was firm; he didn’t want Thrust around his carrying sibling.

“I wouldn’t go back in there tonight,” Soundwave told them darkly, “these incidents are escalating rapidly.”

“C-Control Room,” Thundercracker was still shaky, but he managed to get to his pedes and hold onto Skywarp, pulling him along down the hallway.

Megatron had heard the commotion, opening his optics and raising his helm up. He had Starscream nestled in his arms, fast asleep. He listened for the sparklings: Darkwing whimpered but seemed to calm back down. He could hear Soundwave taking control of the situation and figured it would be the entity’s trick to get the former Gladiator out there and do whatever the hell it wanted to his Bondmate and sparklings, and Megs was not about to let that happen. When all the noises settled, he stayed vigilant, ready for anything.

It had been an hour. Both brothers were still online. Skywarp was lying down on the sofa bed, under the covers, trying to fall back asleep. Thundercracker was sitting up, legs crossed in a yoga position, looking at a tablet. His own tablet had been broken, so Soundwave loaned him a spare one. One of Frenzy’s it seemed since the screen was cracked. He was looking up paranormal activity.

Soundwave had given them the blankets also, and stayed with them for a bit, before returning to his quarters. When he returned, his sons were all asleep, so he went to his berthroom. He looked around, not knowing what he was looking for, but something told him that the presence had been in his quarters as well. Was his berth that far from the wall before?
Chapter 56: By Transformersnewfan

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It was the first official day of the new year for the Decepticons. All vacations were finished, and it was time to get back to business. As with tradition, a formal breakfast was held in the mass hall. Too bad everyone was a wreck.

“Anybody else hear that Moose-Bot-squealing last night?” Astrotrain groaned to Blitzwing.

“Who didn’t?” the Triple Changer grumbled back.

Megatron hadn’t had the best night of recharge, but he was in better shape than most of his crew: Starscream was depressed and still thinking about his argument with Thundercracker, even as he struggled to keep Dawning from grabbing things on the table, while holding Darkwing on his lap, and Darkmount kept trying to crawl under the table. Across from them was Soundwave and his brood; Rumble and Frenzy were still severely shaken from their ghostly encounter, unable to tell their Sire what had happened. Laserbeak was still away at the Ark. Ravage was getting annoyed with Buzzsaw and Ratbat.

“They saw something last night?” Megatron whispered to his friend, not wanting to alert Starscream.

Frenzy’s optics widened, thinking he was referring to himself and Rumble, “Y-You heard it?”

“I heard Thundercracker mostly,” Megatron rested his chin on his digits, “they spent the night with you guys?”

Rumble sank in the chair; Frenzy took a moment to understand, then realized they weren’t talking about the same two brothers.

“They opted to sleep in the Control Room on the sofa bed,” Soundwave answered.

“It’s freezing in there at night,” Megatron frowned, “why didn’t you bring them to our quarters?”

Starscream was listening now, hearing for the first time about this latest incident, but still sore at his brothers.

“They seemed to want to be alone,” the Tapedeck shrugged, “I’ve never seen Thundercracker so upset.”

Megatron’s vocals were barely a whisper, “We can’t let them be isolated.”

The two Seekers were the last to arrive at the breakfast. Skywarp had his blanket wrapped around himself as usual; Thundercracker hadn’t slept at all. The blue flyer’s optics were Energon-streaked, and he seemed to be trembling.

“TC, I can stay with Soundwave if you wanna sleep,” Skywarp tried.

Poor Thundercracker was out of it, “W-Wha? W-Why would I do that?” he rubbed at his optics, “Why would I sleep whenever I close my optics, I see that hideous creature?”
They went to sit at the others, but Starscream huffed, “This table is full.”

“F-Fine!” TC pulled Skywarp with him. They went to sit with the Conehead Seekers.

“Sit down,” Ramjet got up, “I’ll get you guys some Energon cubes.”

Skywarp was still self-conscious about his pregnant frame, and very uncomfortable with the other flyers. He kept trying to hide himself behind his older brother.

Dirge was concerned, “You know, TC, I looked everywhere in your quarters last night, and I didn’t see nothing,” he shook his helm. “You sure you weren’t recharge-walking or something?”

“I was awake,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “I swear I was awake.”

Thrust was more skeptical, “Have you been…y’know, seeing things? Stuff that’s not there?”

“No.” TC stated flatly, “And I’m NOT drunk.”

“Could be stress,” Dirge tried, “fighting with Screamer…” he didn’t want to bring up Skywarp’s ‘weight gain.’

At the same time, the Triple Changers were walking to their table.

“There’s some big rumors around here, Astro,” Octane punched his friend’s arm, “rumors that they’re gonna make you an officer.”

“Hey, I never believe anything around here unless it’s from Megs,” the Space Train smirked, holding his cube of Energon.

“Maybe you’re replacing Thundercracker,” Blitzwing added, “I hear he had to take a CPU exam!”

Thundercracker heard the whole conversation, “WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE ME, YOU PILES OF JUNK!”

“Hey, hey!” Astrotrain put a hand up.

Skywarp just sat there, not knowing what to do.

Thrust threw his two cents in, “You’re fighting with him now?”

“THUNDERCRACKER!” Megatron shouted, “That’s enough!”

The blue Seeker couldn’t take much more. He was cracking on the inside.

“TC, don’t fight with them,” Skywarp tried.

“I’M FIGHTING WITH EVERYBODY HERE!” Thundercracker was officially broken now, “WHY DON’T I JUST QUIT?!” he stormed out of the mass hall.

“Go get Skywarp,” Megatron whispered to Soundwave before changing his demeanor to address his troops, “ENOUGH! EVERYONE SETTLE DOWN! This is supposed to be a Prayer Breakfast!”

Skywarp got up and met Soundwave halfway. They went back to Megatron’s table.

Starscream was still refusing to look at his younger brother; the pregnant flyer sat down, looking like he was ashamed of himself. He felt as if he caused all this trouble by bringing the ghost. All he could
do was try to comfort his squirming sparking.

Megatron waited for a moment, then finally asked, “Something happen last night?’

“TC saw Gravechaser,” the black and purple Seeker rasped out, “he’d never seen him b-before…”

Starscream rolled his optics.

But Megatron took it seriously, “Well, then we have a problem.”

Starscream shook his helm, “Oh Megatron, you CAN NOT be taking them seriously.”

“Star, it’s real, I swear it!” Skywarp cried now.

“We have to have a private meeting on this,” the former Gladiator insisted, “but I want to try to maintain a level of decorum among our fellow Decepticons, please!” He stood now, raising his Energon cube, and began his speech.

Megatron: “Decepticons: A toast!”

“Here, here!” Onslaught shouted as he and the troops raised their cubes.

“Today is the first day of our new fiscal year,” the Decepticon Leader began, “together, we will continue to build our Earth operations, maintain Cybertron, and live off the fruits of our labors in Energon collection.”

Everyone applauded. Starscream gave a huff and still refused to acknowledge Skywarp.

“Da-Da speech!” Darkmount shrieked happily.

Thundercracker went to the Tarmac. He wanted to transform and fly off, maybe head west. He didn’t have a destination; he just wanted to fly away, as far and as fast as he could. He figured Skywarp would be safe as long as he stayed with Soundwave. He didn’t want to be on the Base. He didn’t want to see that demon again. He was scared; he wanted to just fly away, fly away and shoot at the clouds forever, or at least until that monster was gone…

But the blue flyer was now painfully low on fuel, and the weather was still bitterly cold. He knew he wouldn’t get very far, probably not even as far as the Autobot Base, and his rescue from the cave and subsequent virus he suffered from were still fresh in his CPU.

But, he just couldn’t go back into the Base. The ghost…

Flashback:

“I’LL KILL YOU ALL!!!” His Father shouted as Thundercracker looked back over policeman’s shoulder.

End of Flashback:

Whatever that…monster was had triggered memory files that had been long-dormant. Terrible memory files of raw fear, terror, hurt, all of it. It all had come back to him. He felt exactly like he had when he was a sparkling. He had never been so afraid. Not since his kidnapping…

Now on the same Tarmac that Skywarp had been transported to by Gravechaser, Thundercracker
burst into coolant tears, falling to his knee plates and curling into a ball in a pathetic heap.

After the Prayer Breakfast, Megatron and Soundwave handed out the new Energon scouting missions to various Decepticons. They had originally scheduled Thundercracker for an assignment in Scottsdale, Arizona, but neither Leader could locate him, and they weren’t sure of his mental state after whatever had happened the previous evening. Megatron instead gave the Scottsdale assignment to Vortex.

Meanwhile, Skywarp went looking for his brother, “Teecee?”

The blue Seeker wasn’t in the Control Room or the Rec. Room, or the kitchen. Skywarp figured with all these Decepticons online and walking about the Base during the daylight hours that it would be safe to walk about. Several of said Decepticons would point and titter at his increasingly large belly he was covering under the blanket.

:Teecee?: he tried their Trine Bond, and found that now BOTH brothers had cut him off. The black and purple Jet wanted to cry again; he didn’t want to go to his quarters alone. But…he had to find TC. He took a deep air intake, “Come on, Crystal, we gotta find your uncle.”

He turned the doorknob and opened the door.

Their quarters had been completely trashed.

Broken dishes, drawers dumped out, every cabinet in the kitchenette was open, papers and datapads all over the place. And, most disturbingly, their chairs, couch, tables, and odds and ends, were stacked…no, arranged in a bizarre tower.

Skywarp couldn’t even scream, he shut the door and fell to his knee plates, clenching his stomach. He didn’t know if the wreckage including his brother’s offline corpse or not. But he didn’t want to look himself.

Now both Seekers were in sobbing heaps.

At the same time, Megatron had scheduled an officers’ meeting for one in the afternoon. He was hoping that Thundercracker would return and Starscream would cool off by then. Well, maybe the former, at least. He kept trying to maintain their normal routine, refusing to show fear towards whatever entity had been invading their Base. In the meantime, he and Soundwave proceeded with their original agenda.

“Astrotrain, can you please meet with myself and Soundwave in my office?” the former Gladiator called through the Comm.-Link, using his most polite tone, “when you have time.”

The Triple Changer didn’t hesitate for a moment. When he entered, Megatron was at his desk, and Soundwave was in one of the two chairs in front. Both were relaxed and smiling, which was a good sign.

“You wanted to see me, Megs?” the Space Train asked, also smiling.

“Have a seat, Astrotrain,” Megatron nodded.

When he did, the Decepticon Leader began, “Listen, we had a meeting with Shockwave, and, we
feels, with two of our officers having the added responsibilities of sparklings, the time is right to add a new formal division to the Decepticons.”

“All right,” Astrotrain nodded, “makes sense.”

“We will be creating a Triple Changer division,” the Gunformer was proud to say, “and we would be honored if you would lead that division.”

After all these years. An Officer.

“Whoa!” the Space Train couldn’t help but be taken aback, “An Officer? Me? I’m gonna lead my own division?”

“I couldn’t imagine a more deserving mech,” Megatron shook his hand, “after all, we won more Gladiatorial matches together than Clutch and Cy-Kill!”

Soundwave groaned while the two went on with their reminiscences of their glory days in the Arena of Kaon.

“Remember the battle of the fourth round?” Astrotrain slapped his kneeplate.

“You think I’d ever forget?” Megs laughed, “Cy-Kill was literally climbing up the wall to get away from us!”

“Think I’ll go check on Skywarp,” the Tapedeck grumbled, “Congratulations, Astrotrain.”

“Oh yeah,” the crass Triple Changer laughed, “we know all about how you like ‘em knocked up!”

Just as Soundwave stepped into the hallway, he heard his friend keen, “AAAAUUUGGGGHHHH!”

“SKYWARP!” the blue mech tore through the crowded hallway, passing numerous mechs, some running towards the frightened cries as well.

“What happened?!” Soundwave took hold of the shaking flyer.

“S-Something…Something…” he couldn’t get it out; his sparkling was kicking and frightened as well.

“Something in your quarters?” Soundwave opened the door, “You saw ‘It’ again?”

Skywarp was hiding his optics, waiting for Soundwave to react to the sight of the destruction. But then, all he heard was the Tapedeck taking out his Barretta from its holster to enter his quarters, “I’m not sensing any presence, but I’ll look around.”

Huh? Soundwave was a calm mech, but he couldn’t be THAT calm, could he?

Skywarp took his hands away and peered inside:

His quarters was the same as it was when he and Thundercracker had fled the previous night. No datapads askew; no broken items. Furniture was in the same arrangements as always. All was as it should be.

Skywarp seriously wondered if he was going insane, “E-Everything w-was…w-was…”

Soundwave entered now, gun cocked, and at the ready, he checked the wash racks, “You see anything out of place?”
“I’m hallucinating…” Skywarp whispered to himself.

Soundwave went to the berthroom; he didn’t see anything wrong. In fact, it was the first time he was seeing the nursery the Seekers had prepared for the soon-to-arrive sparkling. The Tapedeck paused to take in the sweet little space. Then, he checked to make sure Skywarp wasn’t following him, and secretly wanted to detach the hidden camera he had placed before they could find it. But he was afraid of getting caught.

“It’s okay, Skywarp,” he called now, “there’s no one here.”

The pregnant flyer came in; his hands were grasping the air as if trying to understand what was happening all around him.

“The nursery is lovely,” Soundwave told him, “perfect for a newling femme.”

Skywarp didn’t know what to think anymore, “I-I don’t feel comfortable here, S-Soundwave. S-

“I spoke to Megatron last night,” the Tapedeck told him, “he’s going to assist us with this investigation.”

Skywarp just shook his helm, “I-I need to find TC.”

“Come on,” the Tapedeck told him, “we’ll check the cameras. Let’s go to the Control Room.”

Starscream went to his laboratory to work on his assignment. Part of him hated the desk duty, but he was the one that was still requesting in-house missions due to having young sparklings. He plopped his datapads on his desk; the fight with Thundercracker still weighing heavily on his processor. His older brother, the one he always looked up to, was behaving irrationally of late. Now he was supposedly seeing a ‘ghost.’ Starscream refused to even entertain such an insane notion. The attacks HAD to be the Autobots’ doings. They just had to be…

The red and white Seeker heard his older brother’s vocals now, “Starscream…”

“Yes, TC,” Starscream rolled his optics, wondering what this was about now; he turned to see—

There was no one else in the laboratory.

“Thundercracker?” Star asked now. He could have sworn he had heard the blue Seeker’s vocals. He stood now, “Is anyone there?”

No answer.

The Trine Leader brushed it off and went back to work.

Skywarp was feeling sick. He didn’t quite know how to define what was going on. It was a queasy, not quite nauseous feeling as if wanting to purge but not enough to actually do it. The pregnant Jet kept feeling fleeting pains in his belly; he didn’t know if he should say something or just ignore it. Now back in the Control Room, he sat on the sofa bed he and Thundercracker had spent their restless night on.

“Let’s figure this out,” Soundwave backed up the cameras to see where Thundercracker had gone.
He found where the blue Seeker had run onto the elevator. Switching to the camera on the Tarmac, he immediately spotted several flyers standing around in an uneven circle. Zooming in, Soundwave saw that Dirge, Thrust, Ramjet, Octane, Blitzwing, and Vortex were all trying to talk to the missing blue flyer, who was curled into a ball.

Soundwave groaned now, “Alright, I’m going to go get him.”

Skywarp didn’t see the tape, and suddenly hated the idea of being alone, “Where are you going?”

The Tapedeck didn’t want to alarm his friend, “I’ll be right back.”

Skywarp: “I don’t wanna be alone!”

Soundwave opened the doors, “Rumble, Frenzy, come inside.”

The twins were acting a bit out of character; they were standing in the hallway, looking around at one Decepticon or another, but not going into their quarters or talking or snarking at the mechs.

“Rumble,” Soundwave repeated.

Rumble: “HUH?” he was noticeably started.

“Stay with Skywarp,” the big mech told them. He would have to ask his sons later what was going on. One crisis at a time.

“Come on, mech,” Dirge tried, “get it together…”

Thundercracker couldn’t stop keening in despair; he was sitting on the Tarmac, hugging his knees and burying his helm into his arms, audibly sobbing. He was acting more like Skywarp than his usual self.

The dark blue Conehead knelt beside him, rubbing his wings. Ramjet bent down, “Is there anything we can do, TC?”

Vortex didn’t know what to do; thoroughly embarrassed to even be there.

Thrust stood with his arms folded. And Blitzwing rubbed the back of his own neck cables.

Octane called Starscream on his Comm.-Link, “Commander…Um, we’ve got a problem.”

Starscream: “Yes?”

Before the Triple Changer could say more, Soundwave stepped off the elevator, “What happened here?”

“We found him like this,” Dirge answered.

“Alright, let’s go to work,” Soundwave just wanted the flyers to leave, “I’ll tend to Thundercracker.”

They did as they were ordered, moving away one by one, with Dirge leaving lastly.

As Octane transformed and took off, he answered Starscream, “Thundercracker’s having some kind of breakdown.”
Now, this was bizarre. Wasn’t his brother just here? There was no way he could have gotten to the Tarmac so quickly, “Where is he now?”

Octane: “On the runway.”

Soundwave meanwhile, tried several different tactics with the blue flyer. First, he tried being direct, “Thundercracker, come inside.”

When all TC did was continue to cry out, the Tapedeck tried being firmer, “Come inside NOW.”

Still not reaching him, Soundwave ordered, “Thundercracker, get up, or I will file charges of dereliction of duty!”

The blue Seeker didn’t even react; just continuing to curl into himself and cry. He seemed to be shaking though.

Soundwave paused, noticing this, “I’m taking you to the Med-Bay.” He hefted the catatonic flyer over his shoulder and carried him inside.
Two hours. It was a long two hours. In that small waiting area, with the two benches, Skywarp was sitting between Frenzy and Rumble, while Starscream paced worriedly.

Megatron finished his morning target practice. He, Astrotrain, Onslaught, and Mixmaster were paling around, talking about the good old days, cursing out the Autobots, the usual. He checked on his sparklings and saw that Ravage was, again, their reluctant sitter.

Assuming Starscream was still in his lab, he went there next. When he again failed to locate his mate, he went to the Control Room, only to find Spectro Reflector and not Soundwave. Finally, the Camera-Bot told him everyone was in the Med-Bay with Thundercracker.

Starscream kept turning over the events of the past twenty-four hours in his processor, trying to figure out what was wrong with his beloved brother. He seemed fine when they were, well, fighting, “I mean, yeah, we were arguing last night but, I didn’t think he was…”

Skywarp kept his optics looking at the floor; his vocals barely a whisper, “It was after you left…”

Starscream stopped pacing, “Hmmm?”

“Star, that guy was back again…” Skywarp closed his optics, “and I’m so tired of this.”

“Wait, wait a minute,” Starscream couldn’t believe this, “you mean, Mirage was BACK on the Base last night?! Did Soundwave confirm this?”

“IT’S NOT MIRAGE, STAR!” the darker Seeker was on the verge of more coolant tears, “WE TOLD YOU THAT! WHY AREN’T YOU LISTENING TO ME?! HUH?!?”

“How am I supposed to listen when all you do is whine?!” Starscream shot back.

They were interrupted by Megatron coming through the doors, “Hey, what happened?”

Both Seekers clammed up; Rumble and Frenzy were just as silent.

“Why was Thundercracker taken to the emergency room?” the Decepticon Leader put his gun back in its holster; target practice being done for the morning.

“We don’t know yet,” Starscream answered, “Octane said he was having a breakdown on the Tarmac.”

“It was him…” Skywarp whispered darkly, “he did this to TC…”

Megatron looked at the younger Seeker.

Starscream interrupted, “Mirage was back, did you know that?”
Megatron: “No.”

But just as that was uttered, Skywarp blew up, “I TOLD YOU IT’S NOT MIRAGE!!! YOU KNOW WHO I’M TALKING ABOUT, STAR!”

“You’re not making any sense!” Starscream shot back, “You’re both talking like you’re insane, you know that?”

But this time, Megatron stopped their fight, “Starscream, let him speak,” he put a hand up to his mate, keeping his vocals even, “I want to know what happened.”

“That demon-thing was back in our room!” Skywarp kept insisting, “This time he was after TC!”

Starscream opened his mouth to fight back, but Megs was keeping him in check, “Start from the beginning.”

The black and purple Seeker was visibly shaking, “This MONSTER was doing everything last night! He was walking around in the attic, opening the closet, TC heard something about bells, I don’t know…” his sparkling was kicking him again, and he had to catch his air intakes.

“And this was all after you left, Starscream?” Megatron asked his Bondmate.

“Apparently!” the Trine Leader rolled his optics, “They keep coming up with new slag every day!”

“IT’S TRUE!” Skywarp shot back.

“Alright, alright,” Megatron struggled to keep the situation under control, “You say Thundercracker heard bells ringing?”

“No, somebody was TALKING about bells,” Skywarp corrected, “TC said he couldn’t make anything out, and that he thought it was a radio or something.”

The former Gladiator searched his memory files as fast as he could to think of what this could mean.

“Mirage was whispering on his Comm.-Link,” Starscream insisted.

“NO!” Skywarp was becoming upset. Rumble tried holding his arm, not knowing how to calm his ‘stepmother’ down. Frenzy was no help at all.

“But Soundwave was telling me that something paranormal was happening on the Base,” Megatron stroked his chin.

“Oh, come now,” Starscream was droll, “You cannot be serious, Megatron.”

“We have Laserbeak stationed at the Ark,” Megatron waved his hand now, “he couldn’t have missed Mirage exiting there.”

“But Mirage is the only Autobot capable of invisibility,” Starscream insisted.

“BUT TC SAW this monster and freaked out!” Skywarp was hollowing now, “He saw IT in our living room!”

“Alright, what did he see?” Megatron tried.

“The same ghost, demon-thing that’s been h-haunting me!” the pregnant flyer was stammered now, “He goes by Gravechaser.”
“What, with the black beard and the red claw and everything?” Megs tried to understand.

Skywarp: “Y-Yeah!”

“It’s not paranormal; there’s no such thing!” Starscream just couldn’t understand what was happening to his Trine brothers, “It’s Mirage.” He groaned, “Maybe, I don’t know, maybe Hound is with him projecting a hologram or something.”

“Well, we can answer that quickly,” Megatron went to his Comm.-Link, “Laserbeak: Were either Mirage or Hound outside the Autobot Base last night?”

“Negative Sir,” the Bird reported, “Mirage and Hound were both accounted for in their respective quarters.”

“Thank you,” Megatron went to close the connection.

“However, Ironhide, who is now the prime focus of my investigation,” Laserbeak continued, “was consuming a massive amount of High-Grade-laced cough suppressants, and—”

“Okay, thank you!” Megatron cut him off.
Laserbeak groaned audibility as the connection was closed.

“It wasn’t them,” Megatron shook his helm.

“That’s what I keep telling you guys!” Skywarp was very upset now, “WHY WON’T ANYBODY LISTEN TO ME?! WHY WON’T ANYBODY BELIEVE ME?!”

“I believe you,” Megatron’s tone was even, “what happened after you both saw this creature?”

“Megatron, are you fragged up?!” Starscream thought so.

“Well,” Skywarp had to admit this, “N-Nobody could find nothing. Dirge and the guys came in, but nothing. And…we spent the night in the Control Room.”

“Well maybe they don’t know what to look FOR,” Megs shrugged. “All I know is that Soundwave told me he had evidence on a tape of some unexplained activity, and when he went to show me, something had erased his tape.”

Frenzy looked at Rumble now.

“Now, I can’t explain THAT,” Megatron continued, “so SOMETHING’S happening around here, and the Autobots seem to be clueless,” he gave a smell-receptors sigh in frustration, “and we still don’t know what happened to Thundercracker.”

Starscream had a dark thought, “Are you two doing Dark Energon?”

“WHAT?!” Skywarp was stunned, “I’M CARRYING, STAR!”

“I know,” Starscream spat, “that’s what makes it worse.”

“NO!” Skywarp was starting to sound hysterical, “IT’S REAL, STAR! IT’S REAL!”

Megatron didn’t like that either, “Well what, are you gonna say Soundwave’s on drugs too? Cause he saw something on that tape!”
“What I’m saying is,” Starscream pinched the bridge between his optics, “is what they are insisting is metaphorically impossible!”

Finally, Soundwave stepped into the waiting room. Everyone went silent.

Skywarp: “Well?!”

“He’s in recovery,” the Tapedeck was his usual stoic tone, “he’s online now, much better.”

Megatron: “What happened?”

“Anxiety attack,” Soundwave told them, “compounded by a severe lack of Energon, lack of proper recharge. He had not refueled himself in over twenty-four hours. When he went to the Tarmac to take off, his systems basically rebelled, and he went into a partially systems shut down.”

Skywarp felt sick; his TC…his poor TC. He knew he had brought his horrible ghost upon their family, and it was now destroying his devoted, loving older brother. He curled into his pregnant frame, whimpering softly.

Starscream, on the other hand, was angry, “Any evidence of substance abuse?”

“Nothing like that was in his systems.” Soundwave answered, shuffling his pedes, “When I brought him here, he was in a full-blown panic-mode, incoherent, rambling about what’s been in his quarters. I had to struggle to understand him. See, when the chassis is lacking basic necessities, the CPU has trouble processing what’s happening.”

Megatron summed it all up, “Fear.”

“Right,” Soundwave nodded, “all we can do is treat the symptoms. He refused Energon cubes, so I had to refuel him with through his side fuel port. After a while, he seemed better, and he asked for the Energon cube. It’s pretty typical behavior of a mech in partial dehydration.”

They all listened as the blue mech continued, “I gave him a mild sedative. When he woke up, he asked if he could see Skywarp.”

The black and purple Seeker immediately got to his pedes and moved past the Tapedeck. Starscream went to go with him, but Skywarp spat, “ME! HE ONLY ASKED TO SEE ME!” leaving the group to find his brother.

Inwardly, Starscream was hurt, but he wasn’t about to show that now.

“Is he out of danger?” Megatron asked.

“Well out of danger,” Soundwave nodded, “In fact, he could leave the Med-Bay now if he wanted to, but he told me he has nowhere to go. He doesn’t want to go back to his quarters, that’s for sure.”

“I just don’t understand it,” Starscream shook his helm and sat down, “what is WRONG with those two?”

Soundwave turned to Megatron to update him, “There was another incident last night.”

Megs nodded a little, “That’s what Skywarp was telling me.”

“I didn’t find any evidence,” Soundwave began, “but that doesn’t mean something didn’t occur. Whatever is here is deliberately erasing evidence of its presence.”
“What do you suppose he, um, IT, is after?” Megatron asked now; his deep-seated suspensions still refusing to be vocalized, especially in front of his doubtful Bondmate.

“Tormenting the boys, it looks like,” Soundwave spat, “the only thing this perpetrator ever steals are items from Skywarp’s nursery and your Gladiatorial file.”

“That’s what worries me,” Megatron whispered.

Skywarp ran on unsteady pedes to Thundercracker’s room. He didn’t know how he was going to respond now. TC had always been the protector; the one he could turn to whenever he was scared or upset about something. Now, how could HE be the one to make things better? He didn’t have any idea HOW! He didn’t even know how he was going to take care of his sparkling!

He hesitated in front of Room 3. Finally, he opened the door a creak and looked inside.

Thundercracker appeared to be in recharge, laying on his right side. He had all his armor removed and was wearing a Med-Bay gown; an Energon pump was plugged into his emergency fuel port, still trying to refuel the starved Seeker. He had a thermal blanket covering most of his frame, and there were several bandages on his wrists, where the staff had drawn samples of Energon-blood.

Coolant tears pooled in the darker Jet’s optics; the sight of his best friend in that state made him feel as if his whole world was crashing down around him. He wanted to collapse, and leaned against the door, making it creek as it opened more against his weight.

Thundercracker heard this and opened his optics. He smiled and tilted his helm upwards, “Hey bro… come on inside.” He was still weak but managed to lift his left arm up in a welcoming gesture.

Skywarp was afraid to come any closer, for fear of hurting his TC even further.

“Come on,” TC waved, “it’s okay…”

Skywarp was so scared, he was clutching his belly now, walking slowly to the medical berth, “T-Thundercracker… I-I’m so sorry he did this to you.”

Being sedated, long explanations were too challenging for the blue flyer, so he spoke through their Trine Bond, :It’s not your fault. I was totally out of it. Soundwave said I was dehydrated, and my spark was racing. And, when I woke up, all I could think of was, where you were and if you two were safe. Were you in the Control Room?:

“Oh-huh,” Skywarp had coolant tears running down his faceplates now.

“Come here,” TC tried again.

This time, Skywarp ran over to him, climbing onto the medical berth and wrapping his arms around Thundercracker, sobbing into his chestplates. The blue Seeker returned the hug, gathering the pregnant Jet in his arms and rubbing the still-bandaged, black wings.

:I-I don’t know what to do now…: Skywarp keened through their Bond, :Y-You just… Y-You can’t leave me! I-I can’t do this by myself, TC… I-I can’t!: 

:Don’t cry, I’m not planning on going anywhere,: Thundercracker shushed him now, :I’m sorry I scared you,: he got Skywarp to lay down next to him, and pulled the thermal blanket over both their frames, “Let’s just… relax now… Soundwave said I could go when I want.” He was falling back into
recharge, “Just…wanted to make sure you’re safe.” He cuddled his crying little brother, the unborn sparkling nestled between them.

The blue Seeker tried to make light of their predicament; he saw their Trine Leader’s extremely animated movements through one of the glass panels; :Look at Starscream over there,: he chuckled through Bond, :last night, he was in our room, raising all kinds of Kane, and now he’s back for round two. He was yelling at us, and now he’s yelling at Megatron.: He saw the Tapedeck move towards the duo, :Now Soundwave’s going over there:.

Meanwhile, Starscream wasn’t about to let this go, “I REFUSED to make this discussion devolve into ghost stories and talk of unicon!”

Now Soundwave was getting fed up with the red and white Seeker’s refusal to listen, “And what makes you so slagging sure that everybody around here is crazy?”

“It is obvious,” Starscream began his rant, “that we are being manipulated by a very clever ploy by the Autobots into a communal psychosis, where the result is our forces’ incapacitation!”

“But it just isn’t Prime’ style, Starscream,” Megatron insisted, “he’s a lot of things, but he has no CPU for master manipulations.”

“Well, he’s clearly changed the playbook!” the Trine Leader spat.

“Rumble, Frenzy,” Soundwave addressed them, “You both saw the tape.”

The twins knew what they had seen. However, what they had not told their Sire was the threat they had received from Gravechaser: “Now listen well, tell your Father NOTHING about what you saw on that video. Or so help me, I will deactivate every Decepticon on his Base!”

“What tape, Pop?” Rumble asked in his most innocent tone.

“The tape that showed Skywarp being assaulted by an invisible force,” Soundwave told him.

Rumble acted puzzled, “When was that, Pop?”

Soundwave: “WHAT?”

Frenzy followed his twin’s lead, shrugging his shoulders.

Soundwave was flabbergasted, “Rumble, Frenzy, you were standing behind me in the Control Room when we all viewed that footage!” He didn’t want Megatron to think he had gone insane, “Tell Megatron and Starscream what you saw on that tape!”

Megatron listened.

“WELL?!” Starscream demanded.

“There was nothing on there, Pop,” Rumble couldn’t look his Father in the optics, “just…snow.”

“DO NOT LIE, RUMBLE,” Soundwave bellowed, “YOU BOTH SAW WHAT WAS ON THAT VIDEO!”

“I didn’t see nothing, Pop,” Frenzy shook his helm,
“Your sons can’t even lie for you,” Starscream shook his helm, “I’m not going to stand here and listen to this slag any longer.”

The Seeker walked away. He had to get away from everyone before this banal discussion crashed his CPU.

“Do not speak to me again,” Soundwave fumed as he went back to the Control Room.

With both of his Lieutenants gone, Megatron was left standing in the waiting area. He leaned his back against the wall, arms folded, trying to process all this conflicting evidence. With no tape and no witnesses, the waters were muddier. But the Gunformer still believed something paranormal was happening on their Base. He wanted to speak to Thundercracker about his attack but didn’t want to interview the Seeker in his weakened state, so he decided he would talk to him once he was released from the Med-Bay.

Forced to wait, Megatron opted to resume business as usual, until further developments.
Chapter 58: By Transformersnewfan

Darkness was falling over the city as Laserbeak returned to the Decepticon Base. When the wicked Condor emerged from the elevator on the main floor, he was disgusted by the lack of definitive intel he had collected from the Ark.

The Autobots’ daily lives were as dull as dishwater. They watched television mostly; had various chatter (“I haven’t seen the Bean since they polished it.”), and the most exciting news came via Sam Witwicky, who earned an A in his History exam. Optimus Prime had helped him with his homework for four days straight.

“Zilch,” he cursed under his air intakes as he entered his family quarters. He was embarrassed by the failure of his mission, not yet ready to face his Sire with his report.

Directly across the hall in the Control Room, Soundwave heard his second son return and was grateful to have his small family back together.

Throwing his gear and backpack onto his berth, the Bird was in no mood to rest. He wanted to get his high-speed processor off his failures. He heard the faint sound of media files that he had come to recognize as video game sound effects.

“Hmmm…” maybe a good game was just the thing.

Rumble and Frenzy were sitting on the floor of their shared berthroom, mindlessly playing the same rounds over and over, in an effort to calm themselves.

Their older brother entered, “Might there be room for a third team member?”

Frenzy nodded, tossing over a controller.

Rumble watched Laserbeak sit beside them, “Um…So…”

“My investigation was an exercise in futility,” the Bird grumbled, “the less stated on the matter, the better.”

The blue Cassette’s processor wandered as his hands made the repetitive motions of the game, he wondered if sharing their ghostly, terrifying experience with their espionage specialist brother would shed light on how to proceed.

Frenzy was too scared to even vocalize about what happened.

“Hey Beak?” Rumble tried.

Laserbeak’s optics didn’t move from the screen, “Yes?”

“Um…” he was afraid to launch into the story of the encounter, “Pop’s upset with us.”

“Meh,” the Condor wasn’t interested.
“We lied to ‘em,” the blue Cassette continued, “cause…we were scared.”

Laserbeak groaned, “Where is the mess located, and do I require a shovel to dispose of it?”

“Nothing like that,” Rumble tried to laugh, but no sound came out.

When nothing else was said for a few minutes, curiosity got the better of the Condor, “Are you planning to tell myself what occurred?” he won the round, so the game could be paused, “It might actually be more intriguing than anything I had the displeasure of witnessing over the past ninety-six hours.”

“What if somebody told ya not to tell something?” Rumble asked.

Frenzy leaned against his twin.

“Sounds serious,” the Bird had never cared much for his younger siblings, save for Buzzsaw, but he wasn’t about to have any of his little brothers pushed around, “did you inform Ravage?”

Both twins shook their helms.

“Whom are you referring to?” Laserbeak asked.

“Not…sure…” Rumble suddenly felt fearful about what would happen if he told him.

“Frenzy?” the Bird asked.

The red Cassette picked up the controller to continue the game, only to have metal-feathered digits gently take it from his hands.

“What happened?” Laserbeak was calm, dropping his cold exterior for once, hoping his little brothers would feel they could talk to him.

“If someone told somebody to not tell Pop something…” Rumble began, “cause…something bad would happen…how do you tell Pop and make sure nothing bad happens?”

“You would tell Ravage or myself,” Laserbeak answered, “and one of us would inform Father.”

“But…” Rumble was still hesitant, “What if…you and Rav are like, extensions of Pop, and, it would be like telling Pop?”

The Condor reflected for a moment, “Then you need to inform someone that is unrelated to our family.”

“Um, okay,” Rumble turned to Frenzy, who was still scared, but nodded in approval, “We’ll think about it.” He picked up the controller, “in the meantime, stay close, alright?”

“Very well,” the Bird knew this needed some time, but, as with his missions, he was extremely patient.

The trio continued with their video game.

Skywarp was laying on his back, in his brother’s rather uncomfortable medical berth. He was covered up to his chin with an itchy, wool blanket.
“How much longer, TC?” the pregnant flyer moaned.

Thundercracker was sitting with his legs crossed in a yoga position, replaying what he had seen the night before in his CPU over and over. He had been disconnected from the Energon pump and was eating on his own, so technically, he could leave the Med-Bay anytime he wanted. But he was choosing to continue his recovery in the hospital setting, rather than their quarters, and ignoring his brother’s questions.

Skywarp adjusted his chassis again, “Can’t we go?”

“So…” the blue Seeker looked down at his hands, “just…i don’t know where we’d go, is all.”

When Skywarp didn’t say anything, TC added, “I don’t wanna go back to our quarters.”

“We could sleep in the Control Room,” Skywarp tried, “PLEASE?!”

The blue flyer looked at Viewfinder through the glass, who was reading a medical datapad, “I’ll ask Soundwave.”

Despite being the Leader of the Decepticons, Megatron had been forbidden to meet with his officers by his Bondmate. And while he technically didn’t need Starscream’s approval for anything, he found that, as he got older, he chose not to argue with the Seeker on matters that he was stridently obstinate about. Especially now, when the former Gladiator believed that, if there were a negative entity present on their Base, any argument between them would only feed this evil presence.

He was avoiding his mate now, working late in his office, busying himself with his datapads, writing the latest report for Shockwave. He sighed aloud, looking over the data on a Texas oil refinery when he felt as if he was being watched.

He looked straight ahead: there were shadows moving under his office door.

“Come in,” the Gunformer ordered, half-expecting the shadows to either vanish or have the door come flying off its hinges and knock him over.

It was only Ravage.

“Sir, I need to make a request,” the Cat began, “and I want to speak in a very frank matter.”

“Sure,” Megatron waved him over, “what do you want to talk about?” As if he didn’t already know.

The Panther curled on the nearby sofa; his triangular optics never leaving his Leader as he made his case. “Megatron, I believe you need to address this increasingly volatile situation on our Base. These incidents, break-ins, disturbances, individuals under attack, scratches, kidnappings, evidence strangely disappearing, and so on. I don’t think I need to rattle off every peculiar incident, other than my observation that Skywarp seems to be on the receiving end of the lion’s share of the attacks. The fact that he is carrying a sparkling only makes that fact more disturbing.”

The Decepticon Leader didn’t interrupt.

“I do not possess my Father’s powers,” Ravage continued, “however, my own level of reading and authenticating others is, I would say, above the average Cybertronian.” He seemed to glare now, “I’ll be blunt: your sparklings are scared. your family members are scared. your soldiers’ performances in both their practices and actual missions are suffering. And last night’s incidents have served only to heighten the level of anxiety. Now, I usually, by my own choice, stay silent on personal matters.
But now, I have detected an unusual spike in agitation over my sibling Bond with Rumble and Frenzy. My Father is worried; my wretched Condor brother continues to tell me his findings have been overlooked; and now, Thundercracker is lying in the Med-Bay following a complete breakdown. All the while, you have been unusually silent and lost in your own thoughts. So basically, my question to you is, with all due respect, what are you going to do about this, Gladiator?"

The Cat, like his Sire, was one of very few that could confront Megatron so bluntly.

“I know…I think I know what’s going on…” the Gunformer admitted.

Ravage was seething, “You know more than you’ve admitted to my Father.”

“It’s not that I’m not admitting, Ravage,” Megatron shook his helm, “I can’t just babble my crazy theories as if they were facts.” He was frustrated as well, gesturing wildly as he leaned back in his chair, “you know how many Decepticons would have me committed to an insane asylum if they heard what I believe?! I have no proof of any of this other than what my old mech told me.”

“Try me,” Ravage dared.

It took a few minutes, but then Megatron got up, walked over, and sat on the sofa next to the Cat, and laid out everything on the Tarnian folklore.

As darkness fell, Soundwave paced through the hallways of the Decepticon Underwater Base. He stretched his sensors out, desperately looking for any threat. He had once heard from a fellow telepath, many years ago on Cybertron, that his telepathy could be used to force back free-floating energies, such as force fields. But he had never been in a situation where said energy was sentient, let alone a malicious one.

Skywarp. His thoughts kept going back to Skywarp. How he was continuing to fail him. The carrying Seeker had cared for not only him but for his sons, deeply since becoming pregnant and working together. And these horrific attacks from his evil entity threatened both Skywarp’s life and the life of his unborn daughter. And the Tapedeck felt terribly powerless to protect them.

He knew he had to. He knew he had to stop this. He had to save Skywarp and the sparkling, and the best way to do that was to reconcile and seek forgiveness for his terrible misjudgment on Christmas Day.

As if on cue, his Comm.-Link rang. It was Viewfinder, telling him that Thundercracker wanted to see him.

“I’ll be right there,” he responded as he headed to the Med-Bay.

They were on to him. Too many of them were on to him. It would only be a matter of time before they all put the pieces together and figured out how to defeat him, Gravechaser knew now. He knew they would be coming for him, but not before he completed his work. Oh, he would succeed in killing Skywarp; no question. But he would have to add some tricks in order to deal with these other interferences. Annoyances, nothing more. Gnats. Just gnats. Bugbots at a picnic. Annoyances to be swatted away. Nothing. Nothing. And nothing that would interfere in his quest to destroy Skywarp’s spark.
The two Seekers were sitting up on the medical berth when Soundwave walked in.

“You wanted to see me?” the Tapedeck asked.

TC suddenly didn’t want to speak, instead studying his hands.

Soundwave: “Thundercracker?”

“I don’t know where to go…” was the only thing the blue Seeker uttered.

Skywarp was tired; he hadn’t been able to recharge in the medical berth and was becoming exhausted, “Come on, TC, ask him if you can go, please?”

Thundercracker wanted to tell his little brother to shut up but was still a bit too tired to fight. So instead, he spoke to his doctor, “I feel better, but I’m not ready to go back to our quarters.”

Soundwave focused on the medical side of the situation, “Have you been able to keep your fuel down?”

The blue Seeker nodded.

Soundwave: “Do you feel you’re strong enough to leave the Med-Bay?”

TC considered this, “I guess.”

“Well, you can spend tonight in the Control Room with me,” Soundwave nodded, “you can stay in my quarters, or you can stay with Starscream and his family.”

Thundercracker’s expression was blank; tiredness setting in again. He wanted to collapse back onto the medical berth and go limp.

“Don’t worry, TC, I’ll take care of you,” Skywarp told him, “just like you always take care of Crystal and me.”

They took Thundercracker to the Control Room, via a wheelchair, and got him into the sofa bed. He fell into deep recharge as soon as his helm hit the pillow.

Skywarp sat on the edge of the sofa bed; he felt too uncomfortable to lay down. He had aches and pains in his legs, possibly from carrying around the extra pounds.

Soundwave noticed this, “How are you doing?”

“O-Okay, I guess,” the flyer groaned, pushing the right side of his belly with his hand, “Stress.”

“Just relax,” the Tapedeck ordered, “I’m going to lock down the Base for the evening.” He realized he couldn’t risk leaving them alone, “I’ll have Ravage stay with you.”

Moments earlier, in Megatron’s office, the Decepticon Leader finished reciting the last of his Father’s fables.

“Wow,” was the dull, shocked response Ravage was able to muster, “Is there any way, Sir, to defeat it?”
“We have to find a way…” Megatron mused.

They stopped when they heard Soundwave knock before entering, “I released Thundercracker from the Med-Bay.”

Megatron: “Where is he?”

“They’ve opted to spend the night in the Control Room,” the Tapedeck explained, “I need Ravage to stand guard while I make my rounds.”

Struggling to keep his calm after what had just learned, the Cat jumped off the sofa; racing passed his Sire.

Just as quickly, Megatron got up, “I’ll go with you!”

Soundwave wondered what they had been talking about that had them both so unnerved, but he guessed it was the subject of the intruder.
In the nursery, Starscream was rocking Darkwing, trying to get the sparkling to fall asleep. Dawning and Darkmount were just as wide awake.

“Come on, guys,” the red and white Seeker begged his sons, “why are you all up?”

“Scared, Momma,” Darkmount answered.

“There’s nothing to be afraid of, darling,” Starscream stood, going to the crib and rubbing his eldest triplet’s cheekplate, “your uncle’s going to be fine.”

With his Trine Bond closed to both brothers, he had no idea that TC had been released from the Med-Bay, but he was confident in Soundwave’s care of the blue Seeker.

And he was still clinging to the idea that the incidents could always be explained away. After this night, however, he never believed THAT again.

Megatron and Soundwave walked the halls, knocking on the doors of each quarters and doing a helm count. They inspected the Med-Bay before locking it up for the night. They checked the Conference Rooms as well.

“Do you think Thundercracker will be able to tell us what happened by morning?” Megatron asked.

“Affirmative,” Soundwave sworn his flashlight around, “He’ll be himself by morning.”

As the Tapedeck checked off the Coneheads’ attendance, the Decepticon Leader looked towards his young brothers-in-law’s quarters. He knew what Soundwave had told him, so this sight did not make sense. He tested the waters, “I just hate the idea of them staying in their room unguarded.”

“Negative,” Soundwave corrected, “Ravage is guarding them in the Control Room.”

There was a pause, so Soundwave looked up as Megatron finally spoke, “…Then, why is the light on in there?”

From under the door of Thundercracker and Skywarp’s shared apartment, you could indeed see the lights were turned on.

The two Leaders looked at each other silently.

Soundwave went to his Comm.-Link, “Ravage: Status report.”

“All is well, Father,” the Cat stated, “nothing on the monitors.”

Soundwave: “The boys are there?”
Ravage: “Affirmative.”

“Thank you,” he closed the connection. They both draw their handguns. Megatron whispered, “Let’s go inside.”

Soundwave opened the door with his master key code, and the duo went inside.

The main lights were on, but at first glance, nothing seemed out of place. They checked the wash racks, the kitchen, etc. Megatron couldn’t help but notice how several datapads were open on Thundercracker’s desk; pages open to pregnancy complications. He wondered if there were problems he wasn’t aware of when Soundwave suddenly took hold of his shoulder, “Something’s in the berthroom.”

They went there, guns drawn, each with the safety off, and entered slowly.

The evidence showed that TC and Warp had left in a hurry the previous night; their blankets rumpled, empty Energon cubes from their dinner, closet door open…

Megatron stepped into the nook that was decorated as the sparkling’s nursery, looking for anything amiss, and finding no one.

“I could have sworn I felt an energy signal,” Soundwave grumbled.

Megatron was still whispering, “Well, somebody had turned the lights on.”

“I may have left them on earlier,” the Tapedeck shrugged, referring to when he left with Skywarp hours ago.

But the former Gladiator wasn’t entirely convinced. He walked back, towards the open closet.

Megatron went inside the small room, careful to keep the door from slamming and locking him inside. Nothing was unusual about the space; it had the usual messiness. He looked up, and saw that there was a trap door, leading to the attic, “Soundwave,” he gestured upwards, “that’s how he’s getting in and out. That’s why the cameras aren’t seeing anything.”

“I’ve had it sealed twice,” Soundwave sighed, “apparently not enough.”

Megatron: “What’s up there anyway?”

“Just crawl space,” Soundwave answered, “we have the ducts up there. The only bots that ever go up there are the Constructicons, which they hate to do.”

Megatron tried to figure this out, “Any way to the outside?”

“Impossible,” the Tapedeck shook his helm, “the exterior of the Base is quadruple reinforced steel. Anything less wouldn’t be able to withstand the tons of gallons of water we’re beneath.”

Yes, he knew that. Megatron knew that. He knew that because he had helped design the building with Soundwave and Shockwave. Feeling defeated, Megs walked out of the closet and closed the door, “Who are we fooling Soundwave? Whatever’s here isn’t any Autobot spy…whatever’s here got in months ago…and haven’t left.”

Soundwave nodded; both felt an immense sense of defeat and hopelessness. They stood in the doorway between the berthroom and the living room.

Megatron: “No wonder Skywarp’s having problems.”
Behind them, the closet door opened in complete silence.

“Well, what are we going to do?” the Tapedeck felt angry, “We can’t just pack up and move.”

Gravechaser stepped out of the closet and leaned against the frame; chassis language a mixture of boredom, disinterest, and disgust.

“We need to fully understand what we’re dealing with,” Megatron looked upwards, “and the best way to get there is to interview everyone that’s seen this thing, gather evidence, see patterns emerge, and then we’ll have a better understanding of our options.”

“MEGATRON!” Soundwave felt the negative presence within inches of their frames. They both jumped and turned around, only to see nothing there. Shaken and off their balances, they had to catch their air intakes.

“Damn door is open!” Megatron barked as he went back and slammed it. Now, he was getting furious with this unwanted guest, “Alright whatever slugoid slime you are! This is MY Base! You think you can frag with ME?! You’ve got a world of pain coming your way!”

Turning back to Soundwave, “Come on, before it heads back to Starscream and Skywarp!”

:Momma sleep?: Crystal wanted her mommy to lay down, :Crystal sleep with Momma.: The carrying Seeker was at Soundwave’s Computer Consul, looking up what he could expect in the thirtieth week of his pregnancy, which he would start the following day, but hadn’t had a chance to read up on, with everything that was going on. He glanced over at Thundercracker every so often to make sure he was still okay.

“Emm, trouble sleeping,” he read aloud, holding his helm, “swelling, I’m already swollen…” he turned, “Hey Ravage?”

The Cat’s spark was pounding, ready to pounce as he stared at the French Doors, looking for the faintest of a shadow.

Skywarp: “Ravage?”

“What?!” Ravage jumped.

“S-Sorry,” the flyer got scared, “I-I was just gonna ask you something.”

“I’m on the edge,” the Cat picked at his nails nervously, “what is the question?”

“You’re the eldest,” Skywarp began, “Did Celene have problems when she was carrying your brothers?”

Ravage tried to think, “I don’t recall.”

“I mean,” Skywarp kept worrying, “Well…Maybe you don’t remember with Laserbeak, cause; you were young, right? But, what about with Rumble and Frenzy?”

“To be honest, I didn’t pay attention,” the Cat admitted, “I never cared for my siblings.”

Then they heard Megatron and Soundwave talking as they barged down the hallway.
“Troops are accounted for,” Megatron stalked in, “secure the Tower.” The Decepticon Leader was acting the way he usually did when he was ready for battle, rather than turning in for the night.

Soundwave immediately went to his Computer Consul, typing furiously, “It was for a split second, but I felt someone come into your berthroom. And when we turned around, your closet door was open.”

“Yeah…Um, he does that a lot,” Skywarp sighed, “he needs new material.”

Megatron came over, “Skywarp, you’re coming with me.”

But the Seeker refused to budge from his chair, “Why?”

“You’re spending the night with Starscream and me,” the Gunformer, still shaken by what had happened, was in a hurry to get back to his mate and sparklings.

“No!” Skywarp sneered back.

Megatron’s optics flared, “Don’t you defy me, you—”

“I SAID NO!” Skywarp stood quickly, ignoring the sudden dizziness, “I’m staying here with TC!”

“No problem, cause he’s coming too,” Megatron moved towards the sofa bed, but Skywarp pushed him backward, earning the Seeker another glare.

“Leave him alone; he’s sleeping!” Skywarp refused to stand for this, “I’M NOT GOING WITH YOU!”

“Who do you think you’re talking to?!” Megatron barked, “I SAID LET’S GO!” He grabbed the Jet’s arm and pulled.

Skywarp: “OW!”

“Megatron, don’t,” Soundwave stopped what he was doing and stood, remaining calm, “don’t pull his arm like that.”

Megatron: “BUT HE—”

“Just speak,” Soundwave told him, “remember, he’s carrying.”

“I know THAT!” Megatron was frustrated but had to calm himself.

Skywarp sat back in the chair, defiantly refusing to budge. His hurt and depression, coupled with his lingering pains and worries for his sparkling finally boiled over and he snapped. Seeing his older brother broken by this was worse than what he was going through himself.

The Decepticon Leader tried to speak normally, “It’s safer in our quarters.”

“I’m not going,” Skywarp folded his arms over his belly, “Starscream never believed me! I was always getting hurt, and he acted like he cared and slag, but he didn’t! HE NEVER DID! You don’t know how he talked to TC last night, Megatron, he called him stupid, and crazy and a bunch of other names. He said he didn’t want us teaching HIS sparklings this stuff!”

Megatron listened; he had always tried to stay out of his Bondmate’s fights with his brothers, so he hadn’t paid attention to their latest skirmish, but now, their safety was in danger.
“He’s always called me stupid, but that’s nothing new!” Skywarp continued, “but this time it’s different! This time, he really hurt TC! He grabbed him, called him insane, and he said to stay away from his sparklings! And then TC was hurt, and he didn’t even care! He didn’t even visit him in the Med-Bay!”

While Megatron knew that Thundercracker hadn’t wanted to see Starscream either, he chose not to correct the pregnant flyer, instead just listening.

“And TC’s been the only one that cared about me and Crystal!” Skywarp was looking down now, getting tired of talking, “J-Just…leave us alone.”

“Alright, Skywarp,” Megatron conceded, “I’m not going to interfere. But I’m warning you, whatever’s in your room is nothing to mess with.” Deep inside, he was shocked; he had not realized the fights had reached this level.

“Thank you,” was all the black and purple Seeker offered.

“I can stay with them,” Soundwave let go of Megatron, “I’ll stay online. Get back to your family.”

The former Gladiator nodded and reluctantly left the Control Room, hoping for the best, but expecting the worst.

He locked the door to his quarters and prayed for a peaceful night.

“Your son refuses to sleep,” Starscream came out of the nursery holding Darkmount, who was normally very brave, “care you help me?”

“Sure,” again, the former Gladiator tried to create a positive environment, “why is that, they’re YOUR sparklings when they’re calm, and MY sparklings when they’re crying?”

Starscream simply held their son, who immediately glommed onto his Sire.

“Here, let’s take them into our room,” Megatron directed, “they’ll be calm if we’re with them.”

They had their triplets calm now, in various positions on their berth. Megatron decided to broach the subject, “Starscream, we’re facing a potential threat.”

“His name’s Mirage,” Starscream insisted, “just Mirage.”

“I don’t know anymore,” Megatron admitted, “Soundwave and I…we were searching your brothers’ quarters tonight…and—”

“And noting!” the red and white Seeker insisted, I don’t want to hear any of the crazy slag Thundercracker is hallucinating about!”

“It’s not just Thundercracker,” Megatron remained calm, “our sparklings have seen things as well.”

He bit his upper lit components, “There was a day…”

Flashback:

Esmerelda was watching dishes in her kitchen, while the triplets toddled around. Suddenly, Darkmount, the toughest of the threesome, began whimpering and keening, “Grandma!” he cried out, “Grandma!”

The retired Gladiatorial left her dishes and went to the boy. Megatron heard this and got up to check it out.
“What is it, darling?” the Hooded Ma asked the sparkling.

“Gravechaser!” Darkmount was scared and pointing at an Icon on the wall.

“Gravechaser?” Esmerelda didn’t know where the boy had heard such a vile designation.

Megatron heard it as well as Darkmount repeated, “Gravechaser!”

The Icon that Darkmount was pointing at was of St. Michael defeating the devil. The sparkling was pointing at the depiction of the evil figure with pointed wings.

“Megatron,” Esmeralda was alarmed, “he’s seen something!”

“Come on,” he told his Mother as he picked up the boy, “we need to handle this!”

End of Flashback:

“After that, we searched my Father’s desk,” Megatron told his mate, “I found his Book of Primus and the cross from his casket.” He turned to face Starscream, “After you came back, Ma and I went into town and bought some incense, and more crosses. Anything we could think of for protection.”

Starscream had always believed in God, but he had never been one to buy into superstitions or hauntings. His own Sire had been a renowned scientist, and always found explanations for the unknown.

“Kids get scared all the time, Megatron,” the Seeker tried to dismiss the former Gladiator’s suspicions, “Darkmount probably saw a horror film on television or something.”

“It doesn’t hurt to be vigilant, Starscream,” the Gunformer told him, “it’s alright if you think it’s Mirage, but it doesn’t hurt to protect ourselves just in case.”

Starscream just laid down next to his sons, not wishing to talk anymore.

Megatron stayed online though, watching, waiting for anything.

Protecting his family, as well as the other Decepticons, was becoming his top priority.
By ten in the evening, all Decepticons were accounted for, and the Base was on full lockdown. It was an early curfew, especially for many of the seasoned mechs, but Megatron had cited security concerns for the reason for the lockdown; supernatural forces notwithstanding, the official word was still the reoccurring break-ins by the ‘Autobot Spy.’

While the Decepticon Leader huddled with his family in his quarters, Soundwave ordered his six sons into the Control Room, citing, “safety in numbers.”

Rumble and Frenzy were more than relieved.

Buzzsaw brought some of his coloring books and drew some pictures before bed; Ratbat was, as usual, bouncy and taking his time laying down for the night; Ravage brought some extra baskets; and Laserbeak sat at the Computer Consul, uploading his latest, albeit boring, recordings of the Ark’s inhabitants, “One would surmise the Autobots knew every line of dialogue from these wretched human programs, based upon their prolonged viewing habits.”

Soundwave took one long look through at the hallway again, not sensing any nefarious presence, he locked the French Doors and went to his Computer Consul.

With Thundercracker still in his recharge mode, Skywarp sat up on the edge of the sofa bed, by his brother’s pedes, feeling restless and in pain. The side pains were coming and going; frightening him.

:Momma sleep,: his unborn daughter continued to prod, :Crystal love Momma.:  

“Ugh, maybe,” Skywarp knew his sparkling wanted him to lay down, but he just couldn’t yet. Instead, he stood up and paced around. He saw little Ratbat drumming his tiny digits against a table, trying to get attention from his Sire, who was busy at the Computer Consul.

“Aww, what’s the matter, little fella?” Skywarp cooed, hefting the Bat up, balancing him on his abdomen, “you can’t sleep either?” he strolled around, carrying the sparkling and humming to him.

Laserbeak was fixated on his tapes when Soundwave noticed what the Seeker was doing, “Skywarp, don’t carry him.” He got up to meet them.

“WHY NOT?!” the pregnant Jet’s emotions peaked again, frightening the little Bat.

Soundwave: “You can’t pick him up and carry him around like that.”

“WELL I’M SORRY!” Skywarp spat, “I FORGOT HE WAS ONLY YOUR SON AND YOU DON’T WANT ME NEAR YOUR PRECIOUS SPARKLINGS!”

The others (except for the sleeping Thundercracker) all turned their helms.

“No, I mean he’s too heavy for you to carry,” he moved to take his youngest son, only to have the flyer keep a firm grip on the sparkling. Soundwave tried to explain, “You shouldn’t be carrying heavy objects, and he weighs a ton.”
Ratbat’s optics kept darting back and forth between them as Soundwave continued, “Look if you want to hold him, why don’t you lay down or sit together?”

“I’m not ready to lay down,” Skywarp’s emotions were a mixture of hurt and confusion; not yet ready to trust Soundwave, let alone think of him the way he did before Christmas.

“Come on,” Soundwave led him to his chair at the Computer Consul, “sit down, just relax.”

Skywarp did so, still looking at Soundwave with some distrust. He adjusted the sparkling against his big belly and fidgeted with the computer mouse, again looking up pregnancy.

Ratbat in turn yawned and curled against the pregnant Seeker, making himself comfy. Skywarp could feel his unborn sparkling turn over in his gestation chamber and stretch out her little legs, going to sleep for the night. He stayed as still as he could, rubbing his tummy, trying not to disturb his little baby.

Soundwave looked at the French Doors again, then decided to stack some of their boxes against the doors, so if anyone were to push them open, the boxes would fall and wake them, “There, that ought to do nicely.”

Rumble and Frenzy, both being uncharacteristically quiet while playing their hand-held video games, watched their Sire work at the makeshift barricade, “Need help, Pop?” the blue Cassette asked.

Soundwave glared at him, “No.”

Frenzy wanted some attention; he stepped in front of his Creator. Soundwave stepped around him coldly, “Excuse me.”

Skywarp noticed this, “Uh oh…” he grinned curiously, “Are you guys in trouble?”

Laserbeak, although busy with his analysis, kept an audial on the conversation.

“Sort of,” Frenzy admitted.

“Did you guys do something fun?” Skywarp was nosey now, “A prank maybe? I missed pranking.”

Frenzy didn’t answer, so Rumble did, “Pop’s not speaking to us.” He came over and leaned against the Computer Consul, “We um…” he suddenly decided against telling Skywarp the truth, especially at night.

“It’s not that I’m not speaking,” Soundwave snarled as he moved another box, plopping it down in front of the doors, “it’s that I disapprove of lying.”

Skywarp: “What happened?”

Neither boy answered.

“They both saw the evidence of the haunting on that recording,” Soundwave folded his arms over his chest deck, “and then refused to confirm this to Megatron and Starscream.”

The pregnant flyer was confused, “When was that?”

Rumble: “In the Med-Bay.”

Skywarp: “But I was with you guys, I don’t remember…”
Frenzy: “It was after you went to see Thundercracker.”

Despite all his encounters with Gravechaser, Skywarp didn’t suspect that the Cassettes had had their own experience. Instead, he suspected his Trine Leader.

“So basically,” he glared at Soundwave as he addressed the twins, “Starscream was yelling and stuff, and acting like TC and I are crazy, and you guys didn’t wanna get hollered at too?”

Rumble didn’t want to confirm or deny this; Frenzy nodded in agreement with the Seeker.

“Star’s been like this ever since he Bonded to Megatron,” Skywarp shook his helm bitterly, “I can see why, when he’s yelling and stuff, that you wouldn’t wanna be on the receiving end of that.”

Soundwave looked at his sons for confirmation. Rumble bit his lip components, willing to go along with this story.

“Soundwave, think about it,” Skywarp told his friend, “He’s been accusing TC of being crazy; he called him names, screaming in the hallway, won’t listen to anything we’re telling him, even though I’m torn up, and you want Rumble and Frenzy to fly in the faceplates of all this?”

Laserbeak narrowed his optics, unsure if this was what had affected his younger brothers earlier or not. But he doubted it.

“Well…” Soundwave conceded, “I just don’t approve of lying.”

Rumble went to his Father now, still unable to come completely clean, but Skywarp had given them a partial way out of trouble, “Pop, I’m sorry we lied in front of Starscream.”

“I’m sorry too, Pop,” Frenzy followed his older twin’s lead.

“Thank you,” Soundwave nodded, “apologies accepted.” Then he bent down and let his sons hug him.

Skywarp smiled sweetly at this; and even though he couldn’t see beneath Soundwave’s mask, he sensed the mech was giving him a thankful smile.

Soundwave stood, in a much lighter mood now, “Well, as long as we’re all spending the night in the Control Room, how about we make the best of it. Who wants to watch a movie over Energon?”

“I do! I do!” Buzzsaw flapped over.

Rumble: “Sure!”

Frenzy: “Me too!”

But despite being a bit hungry (when wasn’t he these days?), Skywarp was worried, “Aren’t you afraid…I mean, to go to the mass hall?”

“I can detect any threat,” Soundwave assured him, “I won’t be long.” He moved some of the boxes to get out, “Don’t worry, Skywarp, you’ve got six mechlings able to sense anyone coming, you’ll be safe.”

Skywarp wasn’t so sure.

After their Sire left, Ravage stayed at the French Doors, listening carefully. The younger siblings chattered happily now; Ratbat and Buzzsaw started roughhousing with the twins, while Laserbeak
continued his research.

Skywarp, still restless, decided to ask Laserbeak now, “So um…Anything interesting on there?”

“Hardly,” was all the Bird offered.

“Hey, um,” Skywarp fidgeted with the computer mouse, “You used to go with your mom to work, right?”

Laserbeak: “Correct.”

“When…When she saw her patients,” Skywarp began, trying to broach the subject of his frequent pains, “did she ever…”

But Laserbeak possessed a nasty sense of humor, “Yes, you ARE most definitely the largest one I have witnessed for thirty weeks.”

“That’s NOT—” Skywarp’s cheekplates flushed in embarrassment.

“Mother cared for many expectant Transformers,” the wicked Condor continued, “but you are, by far, the record breaker.”

Skywarp was immediately hurt and embarrassed.

Rumble started laughing, “I’m sure the Constructicons have a tape measurer.”

Skywarp: “NO!”

Ravage had been nervous since his conversation with Megatron, but now, the lightheartedness of the topic put the Panther at ease, “When we have a sparkling shower, you know who would make a marvelous microphone controller? Cascade.”

“Oh wow! Yes!” Rumble loved the idea.

“What? NO WAY!” Skywarp cried, “I don’t want her to know!”

Laserbeak: “She would be fabulous.”

“Cascade?” Buzzsaw was curious.

“Buzzsaw, you were not around for the moment,” Laserbeak remembered happily, “but I assure you, this lovely femme roasted Skywarp with all the flair of a chief of the Le Cordon Bleu.”

“She is a retired chemistry teacher from the Cybertron War Academy,” Ravage added, “Starscream keeps in touch with her.”

“SHUT UP!” Skywarp was very upset now, “I don’t want her here! She’s a harpy!”

“I remember her!” Frenzy piped up, “She has the best jokes about Skywarp!”

Rumble: “My favorite was the one about, when he walked by the tv, they missed three programs!”

They all started laughing, except for Skywarp, “I-I said no!”

Frenzy: “Oh, how about the one that went, ‘You were so fat, when you went to class, you sat next to everybody!’ HAHAHAHAHA!”
Skywarp: “S-Stop…”

Now even little Ratbat was giggling.

Rumble: “Or the one that went, when he stepped on the scale, it said, one Seeker at a time, please! HAHAHHAHA!”

“And then it said, ‘To be continued,’ hilarious!” Frenzy remembered.

“There was one in particular,” Ravage smiled, “that went, Goodyear, wanted to fly you over the Super Bowl.”

“Oh, how interesting,” Laserbeak scratched his beak in thought, “the latest chapter of the Super Bowl is upon us. Perhaps, if we were to get in touch with the right authorities…”

“No!” Skywarp stood angrily, “THIS ISN’T FUNNY! YOU’RE NOT WRITING GOOD YEAR ON ME!”

But the Cassettes all continued to laugh and josh each other until finally, Soundwave returned, carrying a tray of Energon cubes.

“Okay, here’s our dinner,” Soundwave announced, “I brought an extra one for Thundercracker in case he wakes up hungry.” He set the tray down on the coffee table and saw his Cassettes all tittering and Skywarp visibly upset, “What happened?”

“They’re all laughing at me!” Skywarp keened, “THEY’RE ALL MAKING FUN OF ME!”

“Father,” Laserbeak smirked, “I was merely facetious.”

Rumble: “We were talking about having Cascade over for a baby shower, and how she tells great jokes.”

Skywarp kept crying, “THEY WERE SAYING THEY WANNA RENT ME OUT AS A GOODYEAR BLIMP!”

“For currency,” Laserbeak corrected, “nothing personal.”

Soundwave couldn’t help but be amused by his sons, chuckling and smiling beneath his face mask.

Skywarp: “IT’S NOT FUNNY!”

Thundercracker stirred with all the noise but quickly went back to sleep.

“Come down, Skywarp,” Soundwave came over, “You’ll wake your brother.”

“But they were bullying me!” the pregnant flyer shot back.

“We are NOT bullying you,” Ravage told him, “discussing a sparkling shower is not bullying.”

Soundwave: “They’re not bullying.”

“N-No!” Skywarp shook his helm, “T-They were saying how fat I am!”

“You inquired about my late Mother’s patients,” Laserbeak was firm, “and I was answering your inquiries.”
“You said I was huge!” Skywarp sobbed, “Like a safari elephant!”

“Laserbeak,” Soundwave rolled his optics, “did you really say that?”

“Negative,” Laserbeak shrugged his metal feathers, “I never mentioned safari.”

“Listen, Skywarp,” Soundwave tried to reassure him, “they’re not making fun of you. This is simply our family’s sense of humor.”

Rumble: “Sure, Warp.”

“This is their way of accepting you into the family,” the Tapedeck put his arm around his friend, “now come on, have your Energon.”

“YOU EXPECT ME TO EAT IN FRONT OF THEM?!” Skywarp keened loudly, “I CAN’T EAT IN FRONT OF THEM!”

“Sure, you can,” Soundwave led him to the sofa, “Boys, keep your optics on the screens.”

The Cassettes kept giggling and laughing, but did what their Father told them, each taking their Energon cubes and faced the Computer Consul.

Soundwave helped his friend to sit on the couch and gave him one of the Energon cubes, “Now just calm yourself, they mean you no harm.” He stroked the flyer’s shoulders to calm him, “There you go.”

Skywarp was still upset; his insides were hurting, but only stressed. Nothing like the stabbing pain in his right side, mercifully absent for the moment. He started to drink his Energon, and Ratbat flew over and got on his lap.

“No, no,” Soundwave told his youngest, “go to the Consul.”

“I can sit here,” the little one smiled, “I no laugh at baby.”

Well, that was true, and Skywarp didn’t seem to object. So, neither did Soundwave.

Frenzy looked at Skywarp and giggled.

“Frenzy,” Soundwave gestured at the screens.

“Well, since we have been persuaded to change the subject matter,” Laserbeak finished his cube and turned his chair to the Computer Consul, “I would like to present my latest intel findings.” He turned some knobs, “Father, please observe this footage.”

The tape played: At the Autobot Ark, Ironhide entered the Rec. Room; a small cube of colored Energon, which Soundwave recognized to be High-Grade, in his hand. He seemed agitated. On the floor, Sideswipe and Sunstreaker played with their tablets.

“Now, watch what occurs,” Laserbeak told his Sire.

Skywarp was still ticked off with the Condor but watched as well. At least his sparkling was calm and sleeping peacefully.

“Ooh, ooh! Check this out!” Sideswipe showed his twin his tablet, “There’s a show on tonight about that prison break!”
“The one where those two guys tied the bedsheets together and climbed down the wall?” Sunstreaker asked, “Sweet!”

Ironhide shifted uncomfortably.

Sideswipe: “I wanna see if they’ll say the guards helped!”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” the red Van suddenly erupted, “Who are you two younglings to defame the good names of those guards! I was a guard, and I’ll have you know we did our best! You hear me?! We did our best! I doubt you beans would’ve made it two weeks without breaking your circuits under that!” He stormed out, leaving the twins wholly bewildered.

“This is interesting because of the prison connection to our suspect,” Soundwave stretched his chin, “we know that our suspect, whether spirit or mech, was likely in the prison system on Cybertron. And we know Ironhide was a guard at the Iacon Correctional Center.”

Skywarp listened carefully now.

“Tell me, Laserbeak,” Soundwave continued, “have you witnessed Ironhide acting as if he’s being haunted?”

“Negative,” the Condor stated, “I have not observed Ironhide perpetuating the classic symptoms of being haunted, such as, but not limited to, looking at walls, ceilings, or perpetual jerking.”

The pregnant flyer was surprised, “Um, is that what I do?”

Laserbeak: “Yes.”

The Jet hugged his arms now; embarrassed.

The tape continued, now showing Ironhide in the hallway, rubbing his faceplates, sighing. Prowl entered the frame, and placed a hand on the older mech’s shoulder, “Hey bud, you feel alright?”

“I’m all okay, Prowl,” Ironhide pinched the bridge between his optics, “maybe I can talk to Prime once he comes back.”

“Where is he?” Soundwave asked, referring to the Autobot Leader.

“At Kensington Palace,” Laserbeak answered, “on an invitation of the Queen.”

Soundwave: “When is he scheduled for return?”

Laserbeak: “Nine days.”

“Alright,” Soundwave nodded, “I don’t think Ironhide’s going to give us anything until then. So, when Prime’s back in town, you can observe their interaction. Until then, you’ve earned yourself a few days off.”

“Thank you, Father,” this stroked the Bird’s ego immensely.

“So, you see Skywarp,” Soundwave returned to his friend, “We ARE actively investigating what’s going on. Don’t believe that because we’re not over there right now, doesn’t mean we’ve abandoned the issue.”

The pregnant Seeker sighed, shrugged, “Guess so…”
“And with my well-earned, several days off from work,” Laserbeak grinned, “I shall work on our application to submit our idea to the Goodyear corporation.”

“AHAHAH!” Rumble laughed, giving his Bird brother a high-five.

Skywarp: “HUH?”

Soundwave facepalmed, “What have I told you about not spiking the football?”

In their quarters, Megatron laid online, staring at the ceiling while his Bondmate and three sons slept peacefully by his side in their berth. Like Laserbeak had described, his optics darted from wall to ceiling to wall, listening, and waiting for the slightest provocation. His thoughts returned to a story his beloved, late Father had read to him as a sparkling, it was called ‘the heralds of Unicron,’ and it focused on the folklore that a dead mech, usually one troubled in onlining, would make a deal with Unicron for a new body, in exchange for serving the monster. Skywarp’s description of Gravechaser having a black beard and blood red claws definitely fit the popular, Tarnian pop culture images of heralds, who often took on the planet eater’s physical appearance. But…Megatron bit his lip components, what could they do to save Skywarp and his child from this horrid abomination?
Chapter 61: By Transformersnewfan

By Transformersnewfan

It was late: Soundwave woke Thundercracker up to refuel himself, not wanting him to slip back into his earlier state of dehydration. The blue Seeker was still exhausted, finishing his cube of Energon quickly and pulling Skywarp to lay down with him.

“No, TC,” Skywarp protested, “I wanna stay up for a while.”

The blue flyer nodded and closed his optics again.

By now, Ratbat and Buzzsaw were fast asleep on sofa bed, towards the blue Seeker’s pedes; Ravage slept curled on a small rug, right at the French Doors, guarding his family; and Laserbeak laid on a sleeping bag on the floor, one wing propping his helm up as he read from one of his beloved biographies of historical human figures.

Rumble and Frenzy weren’t quite ready to sleep, but their reason had to do with their previous encounter with Gravechaser.

“Hey Pop?” Rumble asked.

Soundwave was gathering their empty cubes and throwing them in the recycling bin, “Yes, Rumble?”

Rumble: “You feel any bad stuff around?”

Skywarp looked at the Tapedeck worriedly.

“No,” Soundwave told them firmly, “and I’ve been listening intently.” He noticed Skywarp reaching behind himself to scratch his wings, “Skywarp, did the Reflectors change your bandages?”

The dark flyer shook his helm no.

“Slag,” the Tapedeck grumbled, “I told them to do that.” He motioned for the flyer to sit at the Computer Consul, “Come here.”

Skywarp sat down, and Soundwave gently peeled the medical tape off the injured wings, earning a keen from his friend.

The cuts on his wings were still profound, even after several treatments of saline.

“Whoa,” Rumble came over, gapping at the wounds.

Frenzy came over too, “Those look like, from Wolverine.”

“More like Freddy Kruger,” Rumble cringed.

Skywarp just whimpered in pain.
“Boys, you are not to make Skywarp feel uncomfortable,” Soundwave scolded, “if you want to help, hand me my tools.”

The Tapedeck applied saline soaked cloths to injured appendages, “There…Is that better?”

Skywarp had coolant tears in his optics but nodded. Frenzy saw this; he took Skywarp’s hand and squeezed it.

“This happened right before we could reach him on the Tarmac,” Soundwave brought up the incident that his sons had refused to acknowledge in front of Starscream, “it will not occur again.”

Rumble sensed the anger in his Father’s vocals, and he was unable to look at him as he handed him the gauze, “Y-Yeah, we’ll protect ya, Warp.”

“N-Not your fault,” Skywarp bit his lip components as Soundwave finished taping the gauze on his wings, “…He’s…This guy’s after me for some reason…I don’t know…I didn’t do anything.”

“Of course, you didn’t,” Soundwave petted his friend’s shoulder, before wrapping the blanket back on his wings, “now, just relax, and let’s all get some rest.” The Tapedeck wanted to massage the Seeker’s wings to relax him, but he didn’t know if it would be welcomed or not.

“What if he’s out there?” Skywarp was terrified; terrified his attacker would hurt Soundwave or the Cassettes, not knowing about the previous evening’s incident with the twins.

“I’ll make another security check,” the Tapedeck leaned over and flipped through the channels of his various cameras.

Skywarp turned away, afraid to look up and see his tormentor.

The Tapedeck then walked around, end to end of the Control Room, around their boxes, stacks of papers, etc., and finally pronouncing things sound, “It’s alright, I don’t sense any presence, other than our own.” He started back, “I’ll keep watch, you can get some recharge.”

The two boys nodded and went to their sleeping bags, near Laserbeak, who was almost ready to lay his datapad down for the night. They cuddled close to their brother, much like the way Skywarp always did with his big brother.

“You guys wanna sleep on the sofa bed with us?” Skywarp asked.

“Uh, no thanks,” Rumble remarked, “not comfortable in beds right now.” Frenzy, as usual, followed his lead.

Skywarp wondered what that meant, but let it go. He got up with some effort and held his belly as he climbed over the Cassettes and laid down next to Thundercracker.

Two hours later, the pregnant Jet still lay awake on the sofa bed. His older brother and all the Cassettes were in their respective recharges, with Thundercracker snoring. Only Soundwave was up, doing research at his Computer Consul.

Skywarp tried several different positions but was unable to relax. He wanted to cuddle TC, but his brother was on the darker Seeker’s right side, and that would mean turning over on his right side and having that stabbing pain. Rolling onto his belly was out; sleeping on his left wasn’t much better; he
cringed at sleeping facing the French Doors, where Gravechaser could burst through at any moment and claw his belly to shreds. The image making the Seeker keen, so the only other position on flat on his back, but restlessness and the bar across the sofa bed were very uncomfortable, something everyone else did not seem to bare mind.

Skywarp looked towards Soundwave now, “Hey, how come you’re still working?”

“I always work into the night,” the Tapedeck answered, not pausing in his typing, “with six sparklings, coupled with all of my duties, the night is the most peaceful time to work.”

Skywarp sat up slightly, “Um, need me to sort stuff for ya?”

“No, no,” Soundwave told him, “I’m not working on our project. This is research on extra security measures.”

The carrying flyer got up, carefully walking around the sleeping Cassettes, and sitting down next to his friend at the Computer Consul. He wanted to look up pregnancy pains, still trying to solve the riddle of what was ailing him.

The Control Room was very quiet and peaceful at night; most of the screens were off, save for two that were wired to the security system, automatically flipping back and forth between cameras in and around the Base.

“Why can’t you sleep, Skywarp?” Soundwave asked; a look of unsureness beneath his facemask.

Skywarp just shrugged. He wasn’t sure himself if it was just restlessness due to his advancing pregnancy or if he was coming down with something or if he was stressed out over the haunting and couldn’t relax, “Maybe I’m waiting for what’s gonna happen next…”

Soundwave wanted to comfort his…lover. At least put his arms around him and hold him. But he couldn’t be sure it would be welcomed.

After a moment, he told him, “I’ll make you some Energon-tea.” He got up and went to the station where he always made Energon-coffee for Megatron in the mornings.

Skywarp suddenly realized something: With everyone asleep, this was the first time he would be ‘alone’ with the Tapedeck since their budding romance was derailed by the incident on Christmas Eve, followed by Soundwave’s frightening rage in the forest, where he seemed willing to kill him… He stilted his air intakes, suddenly afraid. While they had worked together since then, it was always when either the Cassettes or TC or even Megatron was present.

“Let’s sit on the couch,” Soundwave directed. Skywarp let him help him up and walked him to the sofa. The Tapedeck pulled one of the blankets from the sofa bed and wrapped it around the flyer’s wings and shoulders. Skywarp sat down, still leery of the other.

“Here,” Soundwave slide over the ottoman, “put your pedes up.”

Skywarp did so, leaning back and situating his big belly. Soundwave got the comforter and laid it over his friend. Then he retrieved the Energon-tea and handed it to the Seeker. The Tapedeck sat down next to him, leaning forward and lacing his digits together. Skywarp refused to make optic contact with him. It was so quiet; one could hear a pin drop.

“Skywarp, I owe you an apology,” Soundwave began, “I should never have reacted the way I did.”

The black and purple Seeker drank the Energon-tea, “You scared me…”
“I’m sorry,” Soundwave told him, “I’m sorry for not trusting you, I’m sorry I scared you,” he turned and faced the smaller mech, “I know you probably don’t feel the same about me, and I wouldn’t expect you to. I just hope that, in time, you can forgive me.”

The pregnant flyer wanted to forgive; he missed their conversations; their friendship, but still…

“So, if you suspect me of pulling a prank on your kids,” Skywarp asked, “are you gonna throw me down the stairs?”

“No,” Soundwave sighed. “I…I had no idea what was really going on. I’ve never had any experience with the paranormal.”

Skywarp had a thought now, “Did he tell you to hurt us?”

“I don’t believe so,” Soundwave thought out loud, “I just…it’s hard.”

The Seeker was confused, “What’s hard?”

Soundwave paused, trying to put it into words, “I’m not over Celene.”

The pregnant Seeker listened now.

“The idea of having a new relationship,” Soundwave signed, “she was…I feel like I’m cheating on her.”

“But you’re not,” Skywarp whispered, “I’m sure she wanted you to be happy.”

“I think what’s been hard about it is,” the Tapedeck continued, “she was taken from me. She was taken from our sons…And, I’ll probably never be over her death.”

“That’s okay not to be over it,” Skywarp nodded, “but…does that mean you never want anyone else? Not even me?”

“I do want to be with you, Skywarp,” Soundwave turned and took hold of his lover’s shoulders, “I don’t want us to be apart. I want you…I just, have to work through my feelings.”

“I wanna be together too,” Skywarp leaned his forehelm against the Tapedeck’s, whispering, “You’re not cheating on Celene. She’ll always be with you…can we be like, your second family?”

Soundwave stoked Skywarp’s cheekplates as the Seeker continued, “I can get along with her memory. I’ll be nice to her kids…and her husband. What would she say about me?”

Soundwave thought was this, “She would hate that something is attacking you. If she were here, she would be telling me to protect you.”

“But what is it YOU would like to do?” the pregnant flyer felt his pheromone levels raising again; the first time since the near-fatal fire and clean-up activities, “Would you like to…?”

Soundwave: “I don’t want to do anything until you’re ready.”

The Seeker wanted to kiss him, “Can you take off your mask?”

The Tapedeck did; then he leaned in and kissed his lover. They began kissing passionately again, with Skywarp reaching up and wrapping his arms around the larger mech. Their glossas danced together before separating, and the pair gazed lovingly into each other’s optics.
“I honestly never believed I would be with anyone again,” Soundwave whispered, “yet here you are…”

Skywarp grinned, “Are you ready to show me your tricks?”

“Maybe you should be careful what you wish for…” Soundwave teased, “because I can—” he saw Ratbat’s wing twist, and stiffened, sitting up straight, “Skywarp, we have to be careful of waking the boys.”

Hmmm, the pregnant Jet had not considered that; his older brother could sleep through an earthquake. He also wondered how they were going to interface with his large belly in the way on this somewhat cramped sofa.

“So…” Skywarp leaned close to the Tapedeck, who wrapped his arm around him and let him snuggle close, “soon?”

“Soon,” Soundwave nodded, “but you should rest.”

Skywarp felt his baby move in her sleep, “She likes you…” He curled against the larger mech and laid his helm against Soundwave’s broad shoulder. The Tapedeck stroked the carrying flyer’s helm vents until he finally fell asleep. Soundwave put his mouthplate back on and now thought over a possible bright future with his lover.

Gravechaser was too smart, MUCH too smart to go anywhere near Skywarp when he lay in that telepath’s arms. The ghost suspected that Soundwave was either online beneath that visor of his, or he recharged with one optic open. No, he couldn’t get to Skywarp on this evening. If he even attempted to go down into the Control Room…even if he did want to apologize to Thundercracker for involving him…which, he had to punish his son for being loyal to Skywarp, of course, getting that close to where his own son was resting was too close to the Tapedeck. And if he were to get snared into Soundwave’s telepathic sensors, he would be weakened for days, even weeks. No. All that was out. Gravechaser developed a new strategy: Lay low…so low in fact, they would believe Skywarp had made the entire saga up. Yes. That was the plan…

But that did not mean Gravechaser was AFRAID of Soundwave, “No…No, not at all,” the monster flexed his claws, “It is Soundwave that will be afraid…” he walked back to Skywarp’s quarters, “He will pay for helping that wretch…"

Pacing. Pacing back and forth. Back and forth, throughout the night. All night long, “That wretched retrorat thinks he can stop ME? I’ve traveled to the very Pit and back to get that son of those slaggers, and I’m not about to be stopped now.” He was fuming, repeating Skywarp’s name over and over in his profane rants, lasting into the morning. He desperately needed to lay low now. Keep them all guessing. Let Skywarp think he’s safe, and then strike him down! He knew he had to get Soundwave out of the way, and he would make him pay…Oh, how he would make him pay.
Chapter 62: By Transformersnewfan

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By Transformersnewfan

In the morning, Thundercracker opened his optics, realizing he had slept through the night for the first time in weeks, save for his vacation on Cybertron.

He looked to his left, and saw that his brother was gone, “SKYWARP?”

“He’s alright,” Soundwave told him calmly, sitting at the Computer Consul, “he was uncomfortable, so he slept on the sofa,” tilting his helm towards there.

Skywarp was still half-asleep, curled up under the blanket, “Ummm…TC?”

Relieved, the blue Seeker climbed off the sofa bed and went to his little brother, hugging him, “Are you okay?”

“Uh-huh,” Skywarp yawned a little, “you okay?”

“First full-night of sleep in weeks,” TC kept holding him; hand checking the other’s pregnant belly. He stroked the darker Seeker’s wings and held onto him, “maybe the ghost just stayed in our room.”

The Cassettes began waking now. Rumble looked around and sighed in relief that they had gotten through the night.

Megatron entered now, carrying Darkwing and Dawning, with Darkmount toddling behind him, “Hey, anybody hear anything last night?”

“Negative,” Soundwave told him, pulling the swivel chair back for him to sit down, “all was well.”

“We need to have our meeting now, while this, ‘Thing’ is dormant,” the Gunformer insisted, letting his sparklings down, “Come on, we don’t have a lot of time before the other Decepticons wake up.”

“Been dying to,” Thundercracker got up and went to the others. Skywarp, on the other hand, didn’t like where this was going; he worried that revealing too much would set off another attack. Rumble and Frenzy also, had similar fears.

The Decepticon Leader went to the cart table, where Thundercracker, Soundwave, Laserbeak, and Ravage joined him. Skywarp chose to hide himself in his blanket and sit at the Computer Consul, while Soundwave’s younger sparklings kept the triplets occupied.

“Am I to assume that Lieutenant Starscream is not to be invited?” Laserbeak inquired.

“I’m done with Starscream,” the blue Seeker stated flatly as he sat down, “closed the Trine Bond; we’re both done with ‘em.”

“He’s…not interested,” Megatron bit his upper lip components, “the truth is, I want to speak to you guys before he wakes up. He would never understand this.”
At the same time, Starscream turned over in the berth and realized he was alone in his spacious quarters. Everything was so quiet; it seemed that Megatron had taken their sons without telling him. Alone. Between fighting with his brothers and now his Bondmate missing this morning, the red and white Seeker felt terribly alone.

“Thundercracker,” Megatron began, “what did you see over the past forty-eight hours?”

“Two nights ago,” TC began, “I woke up and saw the closet door open.”

Megatron: “Your closet or Skywarp’s?”

Thundercracker: “Skywarp’s. I closed it, and when I went back to bed, it was open again.”

Megatron: “So, it always targets Skywarp.”

Skywarp flinched now, knowing where this was going. That and little Crystal kicked him hard.

“Right, and this went on at least three times,” TC continued, “and then the talking started.”

Megatron: “One or two mechs talking?”

Thundercracker: “Just one. I really couldn’t make out what he was saying.”

“Was it like communicating with a third party?” Soundwave asked.

“Nah, it wasn’t like that,” TC shrugged, “It wasn’t like, he was on a Comm.-Link, he was talking and talking about bells like he was reciting a chant. And I’m telling ya, he never took a breath!”

“Bells, huh?” Soundwave got up and went to his Computer Consul.

“The frag?” Megatron tried to process this, leaning his helm on his fists.

Not having been told his older brother had been released, Starscream went to the Med-Bay, “Thundercracker, I want to talk to—” he opened the door and saw the room was empty.

“Can you remember how it went, Warp?” Thundercracker asked.

The darker Seeker jerked his helm no, too scared to help.

“It was something like, ‘To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells,’” TC grasped at the air, trying to remember, “and the rest was about bells…”

“That’s Edgar Allen Poe,” Megatron realized.

Thundercracker turned suddenly, “HUH?”

“Edgar Allen Poe, he was a human writer,” Megs told him, “Sentinel Prime was a huge fun. He would often plagiarize him in his speeches.”
The red and white Seeker was confused; he looked around and didn’t see any of the Reflectors to ask them where his brother was, so it turned and left.

“Sentinel never admitted he was quoting Poe,” Megatron continued, “but Impactor gave me one of the human’s books, and it was published in eighteen-fifty, which would predate Sentinel’s first public address by over a hundred years.”

Thudercracker asked now, “So, when do you think this was?”

“Around the mid-nineteen fifties,” Megs told him.

“Oh,” TC thought about this carefully, almost whispering, “right around when I was kidnapped.”

Skywarp was becoming more and more uncomfortable with where this was going.

And he was not the only one.

Gravechaser watched from a safe distance in the attic, “Too close. Much too close now.” He dashed off to create a diversion.

Thundercracker just listened now.

“Prime had his poetry books in the prisons,” Ravage added. “that, along with the chanting, puts our suspect tied again within the prison system.”

“And, when you heard the Gregorian chanting,” Megatron raised a digit, “we thought THAT proved this Thing knows about the prison system.”

“But we’ve hit a dead end where our files are concerned,” Soundwave shook his helm.

“Show me the prison files again,” Megatron stood and went to the Computer Counsel.

“Of course,” Soundwave began pulling up the digital files.

As he did this, Skywarp tried to slip away, sliding out of his chair.

“You don’t have to get up,” Megatron told him.

But Skywarp just wanted to get away from this meeting. He got up, getting away from Megatron and Soundwave, but then TC pulled him down to sit next to him. UGH…

Starscream stalked down the hallways now; he decided to just go to his lab and try to get his processor off everything.

Soundwave began typing into his database. A lot of names and data regarding the former inmates of the four Cybertronian correctional facilities scrolled across the screens.
“If we knew who we were looking for, we could narrow it down,” Soundwave noted.

The data swimming on the screen, Megatron asked now, “So, these files are complete?”

“Affirmative,” the Tapedeck told him, “however, any information on the Iacon Correctional Center was cursive, to say the least. No mugshots, no criminal records. Only designations and dates.”

Laserbeak was about to bring up the fact that Ironhide had been a guard at the Iacon Correctional Center, but Ravage spoke at the same up, causing the Condor to grind his dental plate.

“Well, can you look up what years the Gregorian chanting was practiced?” the Panther asked.

Soundwave typed in the request, and came up with the answer, “The years nineteen-fifty to nineteen-sixty-three.”

“President Kennedy told him it was torture,” Megatron noted. “Narrow down the list of names to those years.”

Again, Soundwave did so, “A little over a thousand designations.” Scourge’s name was included on that list, but Skywarp refused to point this out.

“How many are Seekers?” Thundercracker asked.

“Unfortunately, they are ALL Seekers,” Soundwave told him, “your kind was persecuted brutally by that regime.”

This made the two brothers quiet.

Their third brother, Starscream, suddenly felt a cold chill in the hallway.

Most, if not all, of the names, were written in a red font.

“What’s the red mean, Pop?” Rumble asked.

Soundwave: “Those are the deactivated mechs.”

Rumble: “But they’re ALL in red.”

“Yes,” Soundwave noted grimly, “most died within the prisons, but other succumb to illnesses shortly after their releases when we shut down these institutions. They had been without medical treatment for too long…”

Skywarp knew they were so close to figuring it out; on the one hand, he WANTED them to solve the mystery and save him. But on the other, he knew when they found out; it would expose that he had been keeping Gravechaser’s true identity a secret the entire time. He began chewing on his digits nervously.

Megatron was dead silent, still debating vocalizing his theory. Ravage had his optics on his Leader, wondering what his next move was.

Soundwave: “So…”
“Megatron, Soundwave…” Thundercracker shook his helm, “After we heard the vocal, we got up and walked around, and…” it was hard for him.

Megatron nodded a little, inviting his younger brother-in-law to continue.

Thundercracker chose his words very carefully, never exposing the secrets his little brother had told him about the previous attacks and used only his personal experiences to illustrate his point.

“I saw this guy standing there,” the blue Seeker began, “He was there, but…he…wasn’t there. I could see, like, the doorknob on the other side of him. It was supernatural. It wasn’t invisible like Mirage. I’ve seen Mirage appear and disappear more times than I can remember. And I’m telling ya, THIS was different. This was a GHOST.”

Skywarp just looked down, fidgeting with his hands and curling around his carrying belly. He refused to confirm or deny his brother’s statements.

But Soundwave was willing, “Megatron, you know I can attest to what I saw on that videotape, even though I cannot prove it. And while I have not seen the figure with my own optics, there was another incident…”

Megatron looked at his friend now.

“I took Skywarp and the boys out for the day,” the Tapedeck kept his vocals steady, “it was Christmas Day. I believe I sensed a negative presence not far from here. However, I have not confirmed this being, and the one that’s been on the Base are one and the same. But these incidents predate that day by several months.”

Thundercracker: “I’m really worried because Skywarp’s carrying.”

“S-STOP!” Skywarp keened suddenly, “S-STOP IT, TC! N-Nobody’s gonna believe us!” he was scared; scared of having his sparkling taken away; scared of his brother being lock up; scared of the ghost retaliating; scared of Megatron’s reaction. But then…

“I believe you,” Megatron nodded.

“W-What?” the pregnant Seeker was so confused.

“I said, I believe you,” Megatron reiterated, “I believe all of you. It’s paranormal activity.”

“B-But…” Skywarp jerked his helm, “H-How can…”?

As Starscream reached his lab, he unlocked the door. As he was about to enter, he didn’t know why, but he glanced down the hallway…
Chapter 63: By Transformersnewfan

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The Decepticon Leader, the Great Gladiator of Tarn, Hero to so many Cybertronians, dropped all his bravado and bluster, and came clean, “From as far back as I can remember, I knew about the legends. Growing up in Tarn, everyone was very superstitious. When I was a newling, not much older than my sons are now, my Father would read me the stories. I would wait for him to come home from a hard day at the Energon mines, and this was our, y’know, special time together. He would read from these very old datapads; they were probably from his own sparklinghood, in fact. And one of those stories, one of those, urban legends, you could call it, was that an evil ghost would stalk and torment a carrying Transformer.”

Skywarp just stared now; he had never heard this before. Likewise, Thundercracker’s optics were as wide as saucers.

“Sometimes, they even killed them,” Megatron folded his arms over his chestplates, “the stories were, that the ghost was once a living Transformer, usually one that did bad things in life, like a killer, and then when he deactivated, he went to the Pit. But then, he made a deal with the Undermaker to return to Cybertron in a new form, usually one that resembled Unicron himself, and stalk the pregnant Transformer…”

Soundwave had never heard this before either. He listened carefully as Megatron continued, “Assaults, scratches, a lot of scratches...beating them up, punching, choking, all those things. It’s a matter of making you afraid and keeping you afraid. Because this ‘Thing’ feeds off your fears.”

Skywarp felt like purging his tanks; he was shaking, unable to vocalize anything.

Thundercracker felt his resolve breaking, but he tried to keep strong, “Do you feel this ghost is after his baby?”

“No,” Megatron stated flatly.

“No,” TC repeated back, not yet understanding.

“See, here’s what’s going on,” Megatron clarified, “according to the legends, the ghosts are never after the sparklings. If this is what I think it is, this ghost is after Skywarp.” He looked at the carrying Seeker with sympathy in his optics, “it’s because it’s the best time to kill a Seeker due to their weakened state, and It’s been lying in wait in hell since It’s death for just the opportunity. Think about it; you can’t teleport to safety; you can’t travel to Cybertron; towards the end, you can’t fly.”

The revelations made Thundercracker realize just how calculated the attacks were, “So...Skywarp conceived his child, and, this, this...MONSTER comes out of the woodwork?!”

“I can’t prove this though,” Megatron insisted, “remember, this is only a theory...this has always been a legend. But I will say, I’ve wondered about it since we’ve moved to Earth. I read that the leading cause of death of pregnant Earth females is a homicide. Usually by the father of her baby. But then again, who knows? Remember the Laci Peterson case? And I’ll tell you all right now; I would never speak of these stories after the sun sets.”
“Megatron, this is insane,” Soundwave couldn’t comprehend this, in spite of what he had witnessed. “Celene delivered hundreds of sparklings, and I never heard anything about this.”

“And I keep telling you, Soundwave,” Megatron insisted, “it’s a legend. A myth! I’ve never seen a case of this until now. If Starscream heard me talking like this—”

Thundercracker cut him off, “Did Starscream go through this?” he had been by Starscream’s side for his middle brother’s entire pregnancy with the triplets and had not encountered this. Both he and Skywarp currently had their Trine Bond closed off to Starscream because of their argument, so they weren’t worried about accidentally disclosing something.

“No. I’m sure of that.” Megatron was adamant, “He didn’t have anything like this. In Tarn, everyone tells everyone everything, it’s a Tarnian trait that everyone’s a gossip, while Seekers tend to be private about their pregnancies, and the ghosts tend to prey on this.” He addressed Skywarp now, “I know how you Seekers are, you don’t tell others you’re carrying until you have to. Am I right, Soundwave? Wasn’t Celene this way?”

“Yes,” the Tapedeck confirmed weakly, “it was something I respected.”

“I respect it,” Megatron continued, “but I’m saying, these entities prey on that. When Starscream finally told me he was carrying, I checked for this. I watched him closely; I would…I would stay up all night sometimes, listening, looking for anything out of the ordinary. I told him he wasn’t allowed to go anywhere unless it was with his Trine or with me. I told him I was afraid of external threats, or even from the Autobots. But he never felt anything, and I never felt anything. So, I assumed it was just…made up stories. But my Mother kept telling me, ‘How’s Starscream? Where’s Starscream?’ and I kept telling her, ‘Ma, it’s just some old wives’ tale.’”

Skywarp was venting heavily, on the verge of a panic attack.

Megatron stated darkly, “My Mother used to say, there was a story, or a saying, or whatever, that ‘When you carry, you walk with one pede in your grave.’ I have never vocalized this to anyone other than my Mother. But now, I believe it.”

“O-Oh God…” the blue Seeker stuttered, “that’s what that femme at the department store said.”

“Wow…” Megatron whispered, realizing others knew the legends.

The younger Seeker looked like he was ready to give up.

“NO!” Thundercracker finally snapped, “I can’t let this THING just…hurt, TAKE my brother! We have to stop this! Is there a way to save them?!”

“Of course,” Megatron smiled and nodded, “There’s always ways to defeat evil.”

Meanwhile, Starscream was making himself busy with his work, gathering his research…

Skywarp had uttered precious little throughout the conversation. Now, he burst into coolant tears; the months of attacks were finally catching up with him, and, on some level, his sparkling understood what was happening and became equally afraid.

“I-It’s m-my f-f-fault…I-I’m cursed!” he sobbed and keened uncontrollably, only uttering a few
legible words, “M-My sparkling…My sparkling…C-Crystal…I-I never meant t-to hurt y-you…”

Thundercracker wrapped his arms around his little brother; the news was devastating to the blue Seeker as well, but he was more determined than ever to protect Skywarp and his unborn baby, “Skywarp, we’re going to fix this…I promise you; we’re gonna fix this.” His soft tone hardened when he addressed his Leaders, “Come on, tell me what to do to get rid of this crazy ghost! If you knew all that stuff about how this started, you must know how to get rid of it!”

“OF COURSE I know what to do!” Megatron stood quickly, “You think I’m going to let this THING just have It’s way?!” He went to the sofa bed and grabbed a blanket, “We need to wrap his pedes. If we keep them covered, he can’t be taken.”

Skywarp just kept sobbing, clinging to TC as they bundled him up.

“Starscream…” the vocal called from the doorway.

“Ah, there you are,” Starscream turned around, “I was wondering what—”

There was no one there.

“TC?” the Trine Leader stood, “TC…” he went to the door.

Skywarp sat on the sofa now, wrapped up in blankets. His pedes were wrapped individually in smaller blankets. But he was shaking; practically in a state of shock. On his right was Thundercracker; on the left, Soundwave, both trying to be as supportive as possible.

Soundwave’s sons sat in varies places as Megatron paced around, his acute detective instincts buzzing. The triplets didn’t enjoy being put on the sofa bed and somewhat ignored, but they seemed to understand their Sire was still holding his meeting.

“According to Tarnian legend, the way to defeat this creature is by sending it back to its own dimension,” Megatron stated as he paced back and forth, “but to do that, we need to determine several factors: We need to know how it got into our world; when this all started; what’s it’s connection to you, Skywarp, and most importantly, we need to learn it’s true name. If we can get this monster to admit its real name, only then will it submit to the Power of the Church.”

“Whatever it takes,” Thundercracker answered.

“Thundercracker, where are you going?” Starscream opened the door and stepped into the hallway.

There were several Decepticons milling around, and at the end of the hallway, he saw who he believed to be his older brother standing there. Dirge walked right past the Lieutenant and got on the elevator. His assignment in hand.

“Skywarp, can you tell me when this all started,” Megatron began, “what’s the first incident you remember?”

The carrying Seeker took a moment to answer before stuttering, “K-Kitchen…” then remembered,
“N-No…I had the nightmares…”

“And when did the nightmares start?” Megatron asked now.

Skywarp was no help, “…don’t…remember…”

Thundercracker was better at this, “That was a couple of weeks after he got pregnant. He woke up in the middle of the night crying. He, um, he thought he’d lost the sparkling. We went to see Soundwave, and he said the sparkling was fine.”

“Affirmative,” the Tapedeck confirmed.

“And then he had a lot of trouble sleeping,” TC continued, “around two-and-a-half months, he saw this guy at night in the kitchen.”

“Yes, that’s when we thought it was Mirage,” Megatron confirmed.

“Thundercracker, I just want to talk to you,” Starscream walked down the hallway, towards his ‘brother.’

That’s when he saw ‘Thundercracker’ go into his quarters and shut the door behind himself.

“Thundercracker,” Starscream asked again, “Wait!”

“He wanted a sparkling, we ALL want this sparkling,” TC insisted, “but it’s like you said about your Father’s stories, this horrible ghost moved in right after that.”

“I’m pretty sure it was dormant from the beginning,” Megatron noted, “I’d say it moved in the day you conceived. No offense.”

The Cassettes, all the while still believing their Father to be the Sire of Skywarp’s baby, looked at Soundwave now.

“Do you think that too, Pop?” Rumble asked.

“But how?” Soundwave wondered, “There is nothing in the Base’s history to explain the presence of a ghost. We built this structure ourselves, and we’re the only ones that ever lived here.” He kept squeezing his friend’s shaking hand, “And no one ever died here.”

Starscream grabbed the doorknob, only to find it locked, “Thundercracker! Come on, open the door!” He waited for a moment, then jiggled the knob again, “THUNDERCRACKER!”

The Decepticons had built their Underwater Base around their crashed space cruiser, “It’s not the Base,” Megatron shook his helm, “if it were the Base, you wouldn’t have sensed whatever you sensed in the woods. Besides, as I said, nothing came after Starscream. No, whatever this is, is after Skywarp in particular.”
“Well, I’m just coming in then,” Starscream got out his key and tried the lock. But even after he turned his key, the door refused to open, “COME ON, THUNDERCRACKER!”

“Skywarp, can you think of any reason this ghost could be after you?” Megatron asked, trying not to sound too gruff.

The young Seeker was too afraid to come clean; he couldn’t tell them it was TC’s Father. So, he just shook his helm and prayed silently that his family could figure it out without him having to expose it himself.

“Something in the past?” Megs kept trying.

“Like what?” TC wanted to help, “Maybe I can answer.”

Starscream tried their Trine Bond again, finding it still closed, “THUNDERCRACKER!” he shrieked now, “OPEN THIS DOOR NOW!” he began banging and punching the door.

“When you were sparklings,” Megatron bit his lip components, “did either of you dabble in the occult?”

“No.” TC shook his helm.

Megatron: “Spirit boards?”

TC: “No.”

Megatron: “Ever go to a haunted house?”

TC: “No.”

Megatron: “Did Skywarp ever do any of this?”

TC: “No. I would have known.”

Megatron: “Did anyone ever die in the house you grew up in?”

“My pets died,” Thundercracker nodded, “my Father killed them. This was when I was two years old.”

“But that’s you,” Megatron shook his helm, “no, this entity is after Skywarp.”

“Right,” TC admitted, “but I can’t think of anything in our sparklinghood that would explain this.”

Starscream was becoming fit to be tied, “DON’T IGNORE ME!” He began kicking the door now.

“Have you tried…” Megatron had to ask, “to contact your friend, Agent Williams?”
Skywarp shook his helm.

“No, this isn’t a human,” TC confirmed, “this thing I saw was dark blue, and had a beard, and claws…” then he remembered something, “Wait a minute, the Sleepy-Tyme Motel!”

“What about it?” Megatron knew they had lived there after graduating from the Cybertron War Academy.

“I was four years old, my Father kidnapped me, remember?” TC began, “Megatron, he shot and killed two policemechs that day. And after Star got arrested, we went back to live there!”

Megatron considered this momentarily.

Skywarp hoped against hope that they would connect the dots.

“THUNDERCRACKER!” Starscream was about to bust the door off its hinges; he was furious and having a fit.

“But if it’s either of those cops, why would they be after your brother?” Megatron wondered, “I mean, if they would go after somebody, they’d go after your Father.”

“My Father…” Thundercracker began to think…

Finally, Starscream used his Comm.-Link, “THUNDERCRACKER!”

The blue Seeker’s Comm.-Link blurred the familiar screech, making several of the Decepticons jump back, startled.

Thundercracker answered calmly, “Yeah Starscream?”

Starscream: “OPEN THIS SLAGGING DOOR NOW!!!”

“The door?” TC wondered aloud, looking at the French Doors, but not seeing any silhouette of his brother, “Are the doors locked?”

“Not sure,” Soundwave stood, unlocked the French Doors and opened them, but seeing no one.

“N-No…” Skywarp whispered; their focus was slipping away from the answers. They were so close to figuring it out now, “Please…Don’t…”

“WELL?!” Starscream bellowed.

“The doors are open, Star,” the blue Seeker told him.

“WHAT THE SLAG ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!” the red and white Seeker sounded like he was hysterical, “OPEN THE DOOR!”

“I’m in the Control Room, and the doors are open,” TC gestured at the French Doors as if to point it
out to his brother via his vocals, “where are you?”

Megatron stopped his pacing and raised an optic brow, “The frag?”

“What?!” Starscream immediately felt he was being lied to; didn’t he just see his older brother walk into his quarters? He looked at the battered door, realizing that his key didn’t work and there was no reason it should not have worked. He thought Thundercracker was inside, holding the door shut.

TC: “Star?”

Instead of answering Thundercracker, Starscream switched his Comm.-Link to call Dirge, “This is Starscream! Come in!”

“Dirge here,” the dark blue Conehead answered.

“Did you see Thundercracker go into his quarters?!” Starscream knew he was beginning to sound insane.

“No Screamer,” Dirge answered.

“Are you sure?” the Air Commander persisted, “Please Dirge, I need to know.”

“I haven’t seen Thundercracker yet,” Dirge answered, “I know he spent the night in the Control Room, did you look there?”

But, he had just seen…?
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“It’s the ‘Thing’ toying with us,” Megatron whispered darkly.

Starscream burst into the Control Room, still completely wound up, “THUNDERCRACKER!”

The blue Seeker stood calmly, biting his lip components, his past anger for his younger Trine Leader subsiding due to the frightening realization that their little brother and his unborn sparkling were in immense danger.

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!” Starscream yelled at the top of his air intakes, “I DON’T UNDERSTAND YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!”

Skywarp could feel his hope for the others solving the case slipping through his digits now. He so hoped that Starscream would not derail the subject…

“We were just talking,” TC tried.

“How did you get from there to here?!” Starscream demanded.

“I was released from the Med-Bay last night, and then I came here,” Thundercracker explained.

“No, you weren’t!” the red and white Seeker shouted, “You were in your quarters!”

“Star, I’ve been here the whole time,” TC was confused, “I just woke up.”

“I just saw you going into your quarters!” Starscream insisted again; his brother’s insistence on what he thought was feigned innocence was only feeding his ire.

“Alright, just calm down,” Megatron grabbed his Bondmate’s arm as he stepped in, “tell me what happened.”

“No!” Starscream pulled his arm back, “Don’t touch me! Leave me alone!”

Little Darkwing didn’t like this, “WAAAAHRRHHH!”

“Star calm down!” Thundercracker echoed Megatron now, “You’re upsetting your sparklings!”

“You’re the one that’s upsetting everyone!” Starscream barked back.

Seeing that his mate wasn’t going for the seekerling, Megatron picked up Darkwing to comfort him. Then the older two started whimpering.

And in the middle of all this, Skywarp felt his world crashing in all around him. His optics distant; he had to muster what little resolve he could to try to keep his family from crumbling. After a third try, he stood up and was in between his brothers.
“Starscream, please,” the pregnant Seeker begged, “You have to listen to me, you have to help me!” Seeing that he had his Trine Leader’s attention, he continued, “This monster-thing is after us…”

“NOT AGAIN WITH THIS GHOST SLAG!” Starscream was already overly-hyped up from what had happened in the hallway, and this just sent him into hysterics, “STOP! JUST STOP IT NOW! NO MORE OF THIS CRAZY TALK!”

“This isn’t crazy talk,” Megatron approached his Bondmate now, still holding their youngest sparkling, “there is some kind of evil spirit attacking him.”

Soundwave tried to back him up, “It’s a negative anomaly that we are still trying to fully understand.”

But Starscream just shook his helm, “Why are you doing this?” he looked at Megatron with hurt optics, ignoring his pleading brothers, “Megatron, why are you doing this?”

Megatron tried, “I’m not the one you—”

But the red and white Seeker cut him off, “YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT THIS IRRATIONAL—”

“IT’S NOT IRRATIONAL, STAR!” Thundercracker yelled now, “AND IF YOU DON’T GET IT, YOU NEED TO SHUT UP AND STAY OUTTA THIS!”

“NO, YOU STOP IT!” Starscream had finally had enough, “YOU ALL NEED TO STOP THIS! I-I WON’T HAVE IT! I WON’T HAVE MY SPARKLINGS EXPOSED TO THIS SUPERSTITIOUS HARANGUE!”

But Megatron was strong, “Starscream, we must entertain the notice that the intruder is supernatural,” he put his son down on the berth and tried to reason with his Bondmate, “there’s been a lot of things that can’t be explained away.”

“But there’s no such thing!” the red and white Seeker was almost crying now, “I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU’RE TALKING LIKE THIS, MEGATRON!”

“There IS an entity, Starscream,” Soundwave stepped in now, “the tape I had—”

“You have no proof!” Starscream interrupted.

Rumble and Frenzy knew they should say something, but didn’t. They were beginning to feel as guilty as they were scared.

“None of you have witnessed anything that couldn’t be explained away except for TC and Skywarp!” Starscream was hysterical now, “Why you two are making all this up is what I can’t understand!”

“It’s real, Star,” Skywarp kept trying, “I-I swear it’s real.”

“Why don’t you just shut up and listen!” Thundercracker barked back.

Megatron refused to match his mate’s shrill tirade, instead staying stern, with his arms folded over his chestplates, knowing full well the real culprit of this argument.

“I won’t shut up! I won’t!!!” Starscream was on the verge of coolant tears now, “I don’t
KNOW WHY YOU’RE ALL DOING THIS TO ME!!” looking at Megatron now, “M-
Megatron…J-Just….Stop…I-If you keep talking about this nonsense, I-I’ll leave you!”

The Decepticon Leader’s optics widened despite his otherwise hardened exterior. Inwardly, he
couldn’t believe his beloved mate would take their argument to this level.

“I-I’ll go!” Starscream continued, “And I’m taking the sparklings with me! I’m serious!”

Before Megatron could answer, Thundercracker came to his defense, “You’re really slagged up to
use your own kids like that !”

“I’M NOT USING THEM!” Starscream was hollering again, “I’M TRYING TO PROTECT
THEM!”

Thundercracker: “FROM WHO?!”

“FROM ALL THIS CRAZY NONSENSE!” Starscream kept on.

Skywarp couldn’t believe how this had escalated; he was speechless.

“YOU’RE SCARING THEM, DON’T YOU UNDERSTAND?!” Starscream was still going on,
“DOESN’T ANY OF YOU UNDERSTAND?! THEY CAN’T SLEEP AT NIGHT, AND
THEY’RE UP FOR DAYS ON END!!! ALL BECAUSE OF THIS INSANITY !!!”

“YEAH WELL, GO SLAG YOURSELF!” TC scoffed and turned away, “Where do ya think
you’re gonna go with three kids?!”

Starscream kept on, “I’ll go back to Vos!”

Thundercracker barked back, “Mom and Dad are NOT gonna help you take those kids away from
me and Warp!”

But Starscream had a different idea, “I’M CALLING CASCADE! S-SHE’LL TAKE ME IN! I-I
KNOW SHE WILL!”

Okay, that sentence sent a wave of panic over the room. Cascade was their former science professor
and had been a good friend of Starscream’s late Father, Darkwing. She loved Starscream like he was
her own sparkling; if the red and white Seeker were to take his sons and live with the wealthy retiree,
the chances were that none of them, least of all Megatron, would ever have access to the triplets
again.

After what seemed like an eternity of dead silence, Megatron finally sighed, and addressed his mate
in the calmest manner he could muster, “Very well, Starscream. You want me to stop; then I’ll stop.
You win. We wouldn’t talk about this any longer.”

From above the French Doors, just out of Soundwave’s range, Gravechaser watched the scene.

Starscream was still cycling air heavily from all his yelling and didn’t answer for a moment. Finally,
he asked aloud, “Are you going to beat me up?”

“I haven’t laid a servo on you harmfully since I vowed to stop,” Megatron stated coldly, almost
hatefully, “And I always keep my vows. Unlike you.”

Skywarp’s optics were filled with coolant tears; he never wanted to break apart his family.

Starscream kept his optics on Megatron as he gathered their sparklings off the sofa berth and began
to leave with them.

As he opened the French Doors, Soundwave decided to throw his two cents in, “They don’t belong to you, you know. We can always sue you for joint custody!”

“I’m their Mother,” Starscream sneered lowly, “And I will decide who sees my sons! IT’S MY DECISION!”

“Soundwave,” Megatron waved his hand, “let him go.”

The big mech stopped, narrowing his optics at the Seeker.

Finally, Starscream took the kids and went to his quarters, slamming the door behind them.

Soundwave, in turn, slammed the French Doors.

The only sounds afterward were Skywarp’s openly sobbing.

But something else happened that none of them realized at the time: Gravechaser, who had been using Starscream as a means to his end up until that point, was appalled by the red and white Seeker’s treatment of his Bondmate; the Father of his sons. The ghost had wound Starscream up for the purpose of starting an argument that would put an end to Megatron’s investigation, but the Seeker’s threats and dominance over this large mech…his own mate, the Sire of the sparklings, made those all-too-familiar feelings of ire stir in the former Seeker.

“That glitch…” he vowed to himself, “I will demolish them BOTH!”
The Decepticons were quiet for now.

Soundwave was working at his Computer Consul, with Megatron in the other swivel chair, sitting quietly.

The Cassettes all taking the cue from their Father to remain silent.

Thundercracker also sat silently but thinking about how far things had gone. He and his little brother had switched places on the couch because the other was uncomfortable, and now the blue Seeker was leaning to his left against the armrest.

And finally, Skywarp, the focus of the ghost’s disdain, was laying across the sofa; his pregnant belly hidden under several blankets and his helm resting on his older brother’s leg. His pedes wrapped warmly. He wasn’t so much sleeping as he was exhausted by the argument. He wanted to take a brief recharge, especially with TC usually reaching over and massaging his wings, but his processor was racing too much.

“He didn’t want me to take him outside,” Skywarp whispered, his vocals a little raspy from all the crying, “he screamed at me for taking him outside.”

While the others didn’t say anything, they were listening, with TC continuing to rub his wings.

“That’s when I decided I wanted my own sparkling,” the black and purple Jet continued, “I was tired of him taking his triplets away from us, yelling and stuff. I just wanted a little sparkling that was all mine that nobody would take away from me.”

“Oh? He yelled at you guys too?” Megatron snort laughed.

“All the time,” Thundercracker added, “he’d want us to babysit, and then act like we’re teaching them evil by reading Disney stories to ‘em.”

“Funny,” Megatron sat back in his chair, “he’s always telling me that they like you two better, or that he worried that they couldn’t tell him apart from you guys.”

“Really?” TC was surprised, “No kidding?”

“I’m serious,” Megatron shrugged, “and he’s always accusing ME of being the favorite. He doesn’t know what he wants.”

“He’s an idiot,” the blue Seeker spat bitterly.

“I trace it back to when he started taking his anti-rejection medication,” Megatron held his helm, “that’s when he got different.”

“No,” Skywarp knew better, “it was before that. Nineteen-ninety-seven.” He didn’t want to add that it had to do with his Bonding to the former Gladiator.
It wasn’t yet time for breakfast to be served in the mass hall since it was only dawn when their melee broke out.

“He’s damn lucky he’s not my Bondmate,” Soundwave muttered, “because I would have slapped him hard.”

“We’ve been all over that, Soundwave,” Megatron rubbed at his temples, “if I did that again, I’d never hear the end of it.”

A sharp backstruct spasm seized the carrying flyer, and he had to sit up. His older brother sensed this and helped lift him up to a sit.

“I-I’m gonna take my sparkling and move to the o-other side of the galaxy,” Skywarp keened, “j-just as soon as I can teleport.”

“Negative, you’re going to love Polyhex,” Soundwave told him, “skies are so clear, you can see all the way to Iacon.”

“No, forget it,” Megatron snorted, “you guys are staying, and we’re gonna kick his aft out.”

Skywarp was shocked, “You mean Starscream?”

Megs huffed, “No, the ghost!”

Skywarp was more surprised than Thundercracker was at this.

Skywarp: “B-But, Star said you couldn’t help me anymore.”

“Nah, it just means we have to work behind his back is all,” Megatron dropped his vocals and glanced at the French Doors, making sure his Bonded wasn’t out there, “and besides, you think I want this slugger in my Base? Walking around all night like he owns the place? Besides everything It’s done to you, that Thing’s been stealing our files, glitching up missions, and the lost productivity we’ve all spent because of the arguments from that slugger’s negative vibes!”

Thundercracker listened before he gathered his thoughts together and finally asked, “Is Starscream possessed?”

“No,” Megatron stated firmly.

The blue Seeker wasn’t convinced, “How can you be so sure that you answered that so quickly?”

“His optics were normal,” Megatron turned in his swivel chair, “and nothing came out of his mouth that I wouldn’t have expected him to say. However, I DO think that this Thing affected him. He came in here screaming at the top of his air intakes.”

“I couldn’t reason with him,” TC agreed, “he was saying I was in our quarters or something.”

“Uh-huh,” Megs nodded, “how much you want to bet who he thought was you was the ghost?”

Ravage tried to understand, “Then, the ghost is now targeting Starscream?”

“Not exactly,” Megatron clarified, “just using him. This slugger figured out that I’m a threat and that was It’s way of putting an end to our meeting. Think about it, what’s the result of Starscream coming in here?”

“We stopped talking,” Soundwave agreed.
“Exactly,” Megatron stood and paced a bit, “we just need to work around this, at least until we can either rid our Base of this ghost or convince Starscream of what’s going on.”

“We’d have a better chance of convincing the ghost to behave,” TC sighed.

“Sadly, yes,” Megatron rolled his optics, “let’s go for breakfast.”

Tensions were high in the mass hall, Megatron refused to sit with his Bondmate and their sons. In fact, TC and Warp didn’t want to sit with him either, opting for the Coneheads’ company.

“Rumble, what are we gonna do?” Frenzy whispered, “We gotta tell somebody!”

“Let’s ask ‘Beak,” the blue twin told him.

The Cassettes sat next to their winged brother in a corner.

Rumble: “Hey, ‘Beak?”

The Bird had his own thoughts, “Yes?”

“Do you…Y’know, believe in that…what Megatron was saying?” Rumble asked, “About ghosts and stuff?”

“I believe Father,” was his simple answer.

The twins looked at each other briefly, before Rumble continued, “You ‘member the other day when we were playing video games and…”

They didn’t have to explain; the Condor just knew.

Rumble: “Can you come with us?”

“Of course,” Laserbeak nodded, “as a matter of fact, I intend to have a few words with our Leader myself.

Afterward, Megatron went to his office, while Soundwave took Skywarp with him back to go back to the Control Room. Thundercracker wasn’t scheduled for anything this day since he had been in the Med-Bay a day earlier, so he was just going to help with the paperless-society-project.

“We might as well get our work done,” Soundwave stated as he and Ravage headed down the basement stairs to retrieve more boxes. Skywarp peered down the darkened, scary area; even in the morning, it was dark down there.

“Stay there, Skywarp,” the Tapedeck ordered, “no heavy lifting.”

The blue Seeker got to the Control Room first and began folding up the sofa bed to get to the boxes.

“Lieutenant,” Laserbeak entered with his younger twin siblings, “we humbly request a meeting.”

TC looked up, “Hey guys,” smiling at the blue and red Casetticons.

“Hey, um, TC?” Rumble stepped forward, “Frenz and I wanna…well, we gotta tell you something.”

“Okay,” the blue Jet crouched down to look at the twins in the optics, folding his hands together,
“what’s up?”
“Remember that tape of Skywarp on the Tarmac?” Rumble tried to just spit it out.

TC: “Uh-huh.”

“Well, Frenzy and I saw the tape…but,” the blue Cassette continued, “we were standing behind Pop when he watched it, y’know, before the tape broke or something…”

Laserbeak watched wordlessly; Frenzy kept looking at the ceiling, expecting it to fall on them.

“But, the night that Megatron and Starscream came back…” Rumble was hoping Frenzy would add details to the story, but realized his brother was frozen in fear; he knew he had to get this out, “Frenz and I were in Pop’s room, and…”

Unbeknownst to the boys, Skywarp came through the French Doors now.

“We started hearing weird noises,” Rumble continued, “and…Frenz saw faceplates in the window.”

“Y-Yeah…” was all Frenzy had to add.

“And then,” Rumble continued, “the berth started shaken,’ and was were screaming and calling for Pop and Ravage, but it was like nobody could hear us.”

“Wow…” Thundercracker had no idea.

“And the guy that was outside the window was all of a sudden in Pop’s room!” Rumble explained, “And he threatened us that we couldn’t tell anybody that we saw the video too, or he would…um, that he would kill everybody on the Base.”

Before the blue Seeker could respond, Skywarp exploded, screaming and keening towards the attic, “WHY ARE YOU PICKING ON THEM FOR?! HUH?! WHY ARE YOU GOING AFTER THEM FOR?! YOU KNOW IT’S ME YOU WANT! LEAVE THEM ALONE!”


Skywarp took the twins and hugged them both tightly, crying now, “I-I’m so sorry you’re involved…”

“Um, the same ghost threatened them,” Thundercracker explained, “they were told to lie about seeing that tape. They were attacked in your quarters.”

Soundwave was horrified, “MY quarters…MY SONS?!” he was stammering uncharacteristically. He approached the darker Seeker and the twins now, “Boys…Why didn’t you come to me?”

“He said if we did, he’d kill everybody,” Rumble looked at his Sire in the optics; no lie in his vocals.

“H-He looked like a vampire!” Frenzy added.

“Y-Yeah,” Rumble agreed, “a blue vampire with pointy wings, and his optics were black, Pop!”

“That’s the same guy,” TC sighed miserably, remembering the fear he felt when he saw the creature.

Rumble: “S-Sorry, Pop.”

“You didn’t say anything to me,” Ravage was upset; he fancied himself the protector of his younger
siblings, “why?”

“Well, they came to myself,” Laserbeak pointed out, “the information was cursory, but I convinced them to confide in an adult.”

“H-He said not to tell you anything, Pop,” Rumble told him, “b-but, he didn’t say we couldn’t tell TC, and then he could tell you.”

“He’s not gonna kill everyone, is he?” Frenzy asked, “Is he, Pop?”

“N-No,” Skywarp answered, “h-he’s supposed to only be after m-me…”

Shattered inside, Soundwave took the Cassettes into his arms, “Boys, I’m so sorry…I’m so sorry I didn’t protect you.” He pulled Skywarp into their group hug.

Later that day, the Tapedeck recounted everything to Megatron.

“Smoke and mirrors, nothing more,” the Decepticon Leader wasn’t fooled, “this Thing is all puff and bluster. He doesn’t have the power to deactivate anyone.” He began pacing, “It’s after Skywarp, not your sons, not you, not me. It’s just trying to throw our investigation off the tracks.”

Soundwave still couldn’t believe the ghost had been in his quarters, even though he had suspected it, hearing it confirmed, plus the attack on his twins, was just too much, “We can’t have this…we just —”

Starscream walked by the Control Room holding Darkwing, peering in and giving everyone a dirty glare.

“Oh, he’s checking on us now?” Thundercracker hissed, getting up and closing the French Doors before Starscream made another pass by.

“I-I don’t c-care…” Skywarp whispered, shaking his helm, “h-he doesn’t wanna help us.”

Everyone waited for the red and white Seeker’s silhouette to leave before they could speak again.

Laserbeak seized the opportunity; it was now or never to get his Leaders and family to listen to him, “Permission to speak, please.”

Megatron and Soundwave looked at the Condor.

Laserbeak boasted, “I have formulated a proposal that of action sits upon the preverbal fence between our plight rendered by a paranormal force, and Starscream’s insistence upon placing blame on a worldlier force.”

Ravage couldn’t help but roll his optics.

Skywarp: “Huh?”

Megatron nodded, “Such as?”

“I myself have collected substantial evidence that Ironhide holds the information that will connect all our theories together,” the Condor beamed, finally having an audience with Megatron, “this Autobot was previously employed as a security personnel in the penal system of Cybertron, and since the date of the Autobots being informed of the paranormal events, the subject has exhibited symptoms of
paranoia, bursts of exaggerated emotions, and substance abuse.”

Megatron raised an optic brow, “You mean he’s been drinking?”

“His quarters reeks of a distillery,” the Bird confirmed.

“He was a guard…” the former Gladiator pondered, “what do you have?”

“A wealth, actually,” Laserbeak bragged as he began typing at the Computer Consul, “Observe!”

The two Leaders joined him there; Thundercracker came over now, leaning against Megatron’s swivel chair. The Condor began with the tape of the Christmas party at the Ark.

Everyone is seen talking, dancing, hugging, and full of holiday cheer, all except for the red Van, who was nervously having a cy-gar and had a cube of High-Grade Energon.

Megatron leaned forward, looking at the crowd, “Now, you’re sure they are no new recruits?”

“Negative,” Soundwave answered, “I hacked their personnel files.”

The Decepticon Leader was more focused on his Autobot counterpart, “Show me the part where Prime left.”

Soundwave did so, and the tape showed the Truck looking frantic as he spoke to Prowl.

“What proceeded this?” Megatron asked.

“I was unable to pick up the audio in real time,” Laserbeak explained, “but I was able to enhance background sounds via our Consul sound enhancers.”

Skywarp came over to listen now.

Ironhide: “Prime, something’s been eating at me.”

Optimus Prime: “Yes, Ironhide?”

Ironhide: “You remember that day when Thundercracker broke into Sam’s school?”

The Autobot Leader was seen tapping his left audial, indicating he was receiving a call, “Excuse me, Ironhide,” and left the frame.

The tape again focused on Ironhide smoking and drinking, but this time, other sounds were heightened, “A very peculiar exchanged occurred here,” Laserbeak explained.

‘Bumblebee’: ::PRIME!::

Optimus Prime: “Bumblebee? What’s wrong?!?”

But Megatron was smarter, “That’s not Bumblebee’s vocals.”

“Negative,” Soundwave agreed, “it’s not.”

‘Bumblebee’: ::A-Accident…W-We swerved…Cliff…Went down embankment…Sam…Bleeding out…Pain….::

Optimus Prime: “NO!”
“Who the slag is that?” Megatron wondered aloud, “Why’s Prime so stupid?”

:Momma!: Crystal begged her mother, :Momma! Tell!:

Skywarp decided to risk it, “That’s…That’s his vocals.”

TC looked at his brother, “You sure?”

Skywarp nodded, “He can sound like…anybody he wants.”

“So, he’s involving the Autobots,” Megatron noted, “what’s the game here?”

“He stopped the conversation between Ironhide and Prime,” Soundwave picked up on, “he was about to confide in him.”

“Right,” Megatron agreed, glad the others were learning, “the same way this Thing got Starscream to stop all of US from talking.”

Skywarp shook his helm, realizing how the ghost would and could do anything to get his way.

Thundercracker: “Oh man…”

They watched the rest of the tape, showing the Autobot Leader and his officers leaving, and then Bumblebee happily entering the party, confirming all their suspicions.

During this, Starscream peered into the Control Room, again checking up on them.

“With Optimus Prime away in England for the next eight days,” Megatron pondered aloud, “we can target the other Autobots.”

Starscream left.

“He’s gone?” Megatron asked.

TC: “Yep.”

Megatron shook his helm.

Laserbeak hissed now, knowing he had to again relive the second phony distress call.

Soundwave leaned back in his chair, knowing this was going to be long, “It all started on Christmas Eve, we were enjoying a movie, and I lost track of time.”

Skywarp was embarrassed by this now.

They watched the tape but were unable to pick up any other conversations that went on because of the music. And again, they listened to ‘Laserbeak’s’ phony distress call.

‘Laserbeak’: ::Father! Father! HELP ME!!!::

Soundwave: “W-WHAT?! BEAK! BEAK! ANSWER ME!”

‘Laserbeak’: ::HELP ME, FATHER! I’VE BEEN CAPTURED! THEY’RE GOING TO HAVE THE MEDIC SCAN MY PROCESSORS!! YOU’VE GOT TO GET ME OUTTA HERE!!!::

The genuine Laserbeak gave his Sire a side glare now.
“I didn’t know…” Soundwave admitted, “I panicked.”

“What was going on that It did this?” Megatron asked now.

“Um, I was sleeping,” Skywarp answered.

“We were all sleeping,” Soundwave continued, “but I now feel that it was all a ruse to get me out of the Base and attack him,” he paused before added, “as well as…cause friction between us.”

The pregnant Seeker didn’t say anything; not wishing to stir up the fight again.

Soundwave didn’t want to fight either, so he tried to change the subject, “Up until this point, I had been trying to tie Ironhide’s bizarre behavior with Mirage and or the attacks. After I discovered this new supernatural angle, all these tapes take on a different view.”

Megatron was silent for what seemed like a long time. Then finally, he said, “I’ve got a plan. We’ll send this monster to the Autobots.”
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Megatron could not risk vocalizing his master plan aloud to his team, knowing Gravechaser was no
doubt in listening distance. Instead, he let Soundwave tell the Seekers to simply follow their lead.

They waited until after dinner, at dusk, and with Starscream present, to lure the wicked ghost in.

The Gunformer made a grand show, “I’ve come to the conclusion that there’s only one angle to
pursue in our investigation, we have to interrogate Ironhide ourselves.”

Soundwave and Thundercracker played along, while Skywarp was worried he would blow the act.

Megatron continued, “Laserbeak, you’re going to go to the Ark, and shadow Ironhide.”

Laserbeak: “Affirmative.”

“Once you’re there, I’m going to call and ask to speak with him,” the Decepticon Leader spoke his
lie with conviction, “with Prime in England, it shouldn’t be too hard to get his nut to crack.”

Laserbeak: “Finally!”

Soundwave: “So much for your vacation.” He was good.

“So, you’re going to focus on Ironhide exclusively now?” Starscream was fooled, “Instead of
Mirage?”

“Ironhide is a weak mech,” Megatron knew he had his mate fooled, “he’ll be an easier target to break
for information.”

Starscream nodded, “Okay.”

“That’s what YOU think, Gladiator!” Gravechaser snarled, leaving his attic lair, flying off to buy
himself more time.

“The meeting is adjourned for today,” Megatron closed his datapad and exited the Control Room,
not making optic contact with Starscream. Thundercracker and Skywarp followed him out.

The Bird headed for the elevator, leaving for his mission, while Soundwave opened the Tower to let
his Condor out.

All the while, the Tapedeck ignored Starscream.

The red and white Seeker figured out that he was being shunned, so he got up and left, sighing and
walking into his quarters.

Megatron watched his mate through the open crack in his office door, and, as soon as Starscream
shut the door to their quarters, the former Gladiator headed down the hallway, several objects of
protection in his hands.
Thundercracker pulled Skywarp along, making sure Starscream wasn’t following them.

“W-We can’t go back, TC,” the pregnant flyer whimpered, “y-you saw him now too.”

“Megatron just said to meet him there,” the blue flyer whispered, “let’s just see what he wants to do.”

The Seekers were met by Megatron and then Soundwave at their quarters. The damage to the front door was noticeable.

“Primus, this Thing tried to break the door down,” Thundercracker whispered before realizing it was his brother’s handiwork, “Wait, maybe Star did that.”

The Decepticon Leader motioned at the door, “Let Soundwave go in first.”

The Tapedeck did so, checking for any negative energy, before telling them, “All clear.”

Megatron pulled out some matches and some old Cybertronian incense, “When somebody leaves a home or abandons their house because of a haunting, sometimes the spirit gains power, thinking It’s won. So, the best thing to do is to stay in the home and perform a cleansing.”

The two Seekers watched silently as Megatron lit the incense and went from room to room, filling their quarters with the smoke. He also placed dabs of olive oil and salt at the four corners and placed several crosses throughout.

When he finished, Megatron looked around, feeling nothing out of the ordinary, and addressed the boys, “Should be safe for now, at least while there’s smoke. After a few days, we’ll do it again.”

“Okay,” TC nodded.

“Do my quarters next,” Soundwave told him, to which Megatron nodded.

“And the attic,” Thundercracker added, “there’s where we hear a lot of stuff.”

“Alright,” Megatron agreed, “also, it’s best not to tell the others, for now, so we don’t have widespread panic.”

While the cleansing was taking place, the Autobots were having dinner.

Red Alert’s sensors went off, signaling a distress call, so he excused himself from the table.

::This is Prime, come in!: the vocal ordered.

“Red Alert here,” the red and white Bot answered, “what’s up?”

::I’ve received a death threat on Doctor Fujiyama, the Famous Scientist!: the fake Autobot Leader stated, ::We need to provide him with security immediately!:.

“Well do, Prime!” Red Alert took the message down, “Who do you want to assign?”

‘Prime’: ::Ironhide.::

“Who else?” the Head of Security asked.
‘Prime’: :: Only Ironhide.::

Red Alert: “Not Hound or Jazz too?”

::NO!: ‘Prime’ barked uncharacteristically, ::AND THAT’S AN ORDER!: the connection closed abruptly.

Red Alert shook his helm but wrote up the assignment.

Meanwhile, Laserbeak moved through the rafters and located the subject of his mission.

Ironhide seemed okay at the moment, watching television in the Rec. Room, when Red Alert approached, “Sorry to interrupt your program, Bud, but you got an emergency assignment.”

The Condor’s audials perked.

“What’s that?” Ironhide asked.

“Prime just called,” Red Alert explained, “Doctor Fujiyama, the Famous Scientist, had some death threats. And Prime needs to you guard him.”

“Tokyo, eh?” Ironhide noted, “Who else’s going?”

Red Alert: “Prime said only you.”

“Just me?” the Van questioned, “Must not be too bad of a threat if he only needs one of us.”

“It was a direct order from Prime himself,” Red Alert confirmed.

“Ah right,” Ironhide picked up the remote, “just let me set my DVR.”

“Got it?” Soundwave asked as he held the ladder in Skywarp’s closet.

“Almost,” Megatron was on the top step, cracking open the trap door and placing the incense holder into the attic, “few more minutes, and the attic’s gonna fill up with smoke.”

Skywarp paced around the berthroom nervously; his sparkling kicking him, “You know for sure this is gonna work?”

“The incense is protection,” Megatron explained, “that Thing wouldn’t be able to get to you as long as we keep the smoke up.” He pulled the incense holder back down and closed the hatch. Then his and Soundwave’s Comm.-Links went off.

Soundwave: “Report.”

Laserbeak: “Father, Megatron, Ironhide has been called away to Tokyo on a bodyguard assignment.”

“Why am I NOT surprised,” Megs laughed as he descended the ladder.

Laserbeak: “Do you request I shadow the subject during his mission?”

Megatron shook his helm.
“Negative,” Soundwave told his son, “return to Base.”

Thundercracker tried to follow now, “What’s going on?”

“What’s going on is we sent the fragger to the Autobots,” Megatron smirked before it faded, “at least for now.”

“Whoa!” TC was shocked, “You mean?”

“Yep,” Megatron gathered his items, “we said that I was going to call Ironhide, so It sent Ironhide to Japan. It’s the same buying-time M.O. It’s been using with these phone distress calls and with Starscream. Trust me; this ghost is completely repetitive in It’s actions.”

Skywarp was still scared but tried to joke, “I told you, he needs new material.”

“Once Prime returns, he will help us banish this monster using the Matrix,” Megatron told everyone, “we just have to keep our guard up now, the incense is only a temporary solution. We still need to find out where It came from to send It back. And I need to keep this from Starscream.”

“Where’d you learn all this, anyway?” Soundwave asked.

“Tarnians passed this down from generation to generation,” Megatron explained, “Y’know, like Rasputin did, remember him?” referring to their 1984 Russian debacle.

“Ugh, don’t remind me,” TC sighed.

“Alright, we've got at least a few days,” Megatron concluded, “in the meantime, I’m going to contact Shockwave and task him with getting additional information on the Iacon Correctional Center, and the Church. But just to be safe, I’m not going to mention anything about the paranormal activity. The less he knows about this, the better. Otherwise, he could be in danger.”

“I’ll have Ravage stay with you guys, just in case,” Soundwave told them.

TC: “Thank you.”

“Come on, I’ll do your quarters now,” Megatron told Soundwave. As they left, the former Gladiator told the Seekers, “Don’t leave each other alone. We just have to keep vigilant, and things will stay under control.” He looked at them very seriously, “Don’t give this, ‘Thing’ any strength. No negativity. Don’t fight with each other.”

“I’ll call you,” Soundwave whispered as he squeezed Skywarp’s hand.

They both understood completely.

By nightfall, Laserbeak had returned, and Soundwave accounted for all the Decepticons and immediately locked down the Base.

Ravage laid on the floor of the Seekers’ living room, not really paying attention to the television.

“Whatever you can find out about what the prisoners’ designations were, that would help,” Megatron explained to the President of Cybertron, “also, anything about what they were serving time for…”

“I’ll do what I can,” Shockwave told him as he made his nightly Energon-tea, “but it might take me a few days.”
“Anything you can come up with would be appreciated.” Megatron finished, “Alright, I’ll be in touch, Shock.” and then closed the connection.

Starscream was pacing around, upset because Thundercracker and Skywarp were still keeping the Trine Bond closed, “What are they doing?! I don’t know what they’re doing!” He was all wound up; his little sparklings’ optics following their Mother’s every move.

As soon as Megatron was off the phone, Starscream screeched, “WHO WERE YOU TALKING TO?!”

The last thing the Gunformer wanted to do now was fight with his mate and bring in any negative energy, especially since he hadn’t smoked their quarters; not after how the Seeker had blown his stack in the Control Room.

He faked a smirk and joked, “My old girlfriend I cheat on you with,” petting/slapping the other’s faceplates.

“WHAT?!” the red and white Seeker shrieked, “WHO WERE YOU TALKING TO?! I DEMAND TO KNOW WHO YOU WERE TALKING TO!”

“Shockwave,” the Gunformer finally signed.

Starscream: “THEN WHY DID YOU LIE TO ME?!”

“I’m not lying, Starscream,” Megatron was holding his own helm now, “I just don’t want to fight with you.”

The Seeker turned on his heels and picked up two of the sparklings—Darkmount toddled—to give them their baths.

Megatron: “I’ll help you.”

“I’M PERFECTLY CAPABLE OF TAKING CARE OF MY SONS!” Starscream barked.

At this point, Megatron sat on the sofa and turned on the television. His mate was itching for a huge brawl, and it was highly dangerous at this time. Later, Starscream locked himself in their berthroom. Just as well.

Thundercracker and Skywarp were at least calm. They took turns standing guard over each other in the wash racks, with TC helping the pregnant Seeker. Then he put the warm pede covers on Skywarp, the ones he had gotten at the department store. Skywarp thought they looked silly, ” all fluffy and stuff.” Neither wanted to sleep in the berthroom. It was still too risky when they didn’t know where the ghost was. So, the blue Seeker opened the sofa bed in their living room.

Poor Skywarp wasn’t feeling that great though; his fuel tanks were rumbling, and his daughter-to-be was playing, doing jumping jacks in his gestation chamber. He had wolfed the two cubes of Energon down again. He knew he probably should sit up or walk around, but he was nervous about being back in their quarters, and he just wanted to wrap up in the blankets and cuddle against his big brother’s frame, just like they did when they were little.

Their bodyguard Panther kept watch, optics on the front door.

“You sure I can’t make you some Energon-tea?” Thundercracker asked.
Skywarp just mewled and reached for his brother, who climbed onto the sofa bed and let the other lay on his shoulder while he rubbed his wings.

:It’s gonna be okay, kiddo,: TC whispered through their Trine Bond, :I’m protecting both of you.: They were quiet for a while; Thundercracker’s optics looked around the room, at the thin mist of the incense that hung in the air protectively.

:Hey, TC?: Skywarp asked. :You up?:

TC: :Yea…:

Skywarp: :You think that guy’ll stay away?:

:Hope so…: TC thought back to all the information they learned earlier in the day, :I had never heard any of that stuff that Megatron was saying before…about, y’know, ghosts that hunt pregnant Seekers.: he flashed on how his Father had gone after their Mother so viciously while she was carrying Skywarp. His little brother…he hugged him closer. :I was really shocked…:

:I guess I wasn’t surprised…: Skywarp admitted, :I mean, I knew this guy was after me all this time.: They were quiet again, drifting off to sleep…

Gravechaser was livid! After impersonating Optimus Prime, he wondered why the Tapedeck’s Condor was so quick to leave the Ark, especially since that tinfoil turkey usually camped out here for days. The ghost lingered longer, to make sure that Ironhide had boarded that white Shuttle off to Tokyo, making sure his distraction had gone through, before heading off.

But when he tried to return to the Decepticon Underwater Base, the ghost found he could not enter! Forces were preventing his return to his attic lair! After several attempts, he realized that it must have been Megatron that had banished him! Furious, Gravechaser let out a powerful roar, and smashed the top of the Base with both clawed fists!

The reverberations shook the entire structure, waking many of the sleeping Decepticons!

Skywarp and Thundercracker were both jolted awake! The pregnant Seeker keening in fear; with TC tightening his protective hold on him, even though he was frightened himself.

Ravage leaped to his pedes, hissing and ready for action!

Megatron was laying on the sofa at the time. He too jumped up with a start. He ran to check on his sparklings. The triplets were huddled together, with Dawning sitting up and looking around. He picked up the boy and got on his Comm.-Link.

Soundwave meanwhile, was at his Computer Consul. When the impacted happened, he reminded calm and immediately switched to the camera feeds above their Base.

“Soundwave, what was that?” Megatron asked through their radio.

The Tapedeck flipped through the images, and saw nothing, “Whatever it was, nothing is visible on
the cameras.”

“It’s trying to get in,” Megatron guessed correctly.

Soundwave called his eldest Creation, “Ravage: status report.”

The Cat had gone into the berthroom, checking room to room for damages, “All clear, Father.”

Switching feeds, Megatron called Thundercracker, “You feel that?”

“What was it?” TC whispered back.

“We’re not sure yet,” Megatron answered, “let us know if you hear anything else.”

He put his son down, and went to the window, his old Gladiator instincts humming. He opened the curtains and peered out. The winter waters were calm; no sea life around that was large enough to create such an impact.

“Oh my god, Starscream!” he suddenly realized his mate was alone and vulnerable to attack.

He ran to their berthroom, still finding the door locked, so he shoved it hard. It was enough to shake the lock loose from the frame and let him inside.

Fortunately, Starscream was fast asleep.

Megatron sighed in relief. The Seeker had apparently taken some Energon-sleeping supplements to calm down, as evident on their nightstand. This, coupled with his medications, had helped him sleep through the bizarre attack on their Base. The Decepticon Leader reached down and pulled the blankets up over his mate’s wings.

After another few minutes, with no further sounds or movements, everyone settled down.

Soundwave walked the hallways, trying to sense anything negative. Finally, he reported, “No foreign energies on the premises, Megatron.”

“Whatever that was must have put a dent in the roof, Soundwave,” the Gunformer told him, “we just have to keep our guard up.”

The Decepticon Leader decided to stay awake, turned the television volume back on, and attached his Fusion Cannon. He was ready.

With no other options, Gravechaser retreated to Cybertron and the Iacon Correctional Center. He had to figure out how to get back to Skywarp and finish his plans for the Seeker. Megatron could not protect that wrench forever. No, he could not. He would think about this and formulate a plan.

Two hours had passed with no further incident.

Soundwave gathered his five younger sons in their quarters to get ready for bed.

“Hey Pop?” Rumble asked.

Soundwave: “Yes?”
“You scared, Pop?”

“Megatron said we must stand our ground, Rumble,” the Tapedeck told him as he put Ratbat to bed, “we must not be driven from our home by fear.”

“In Ravage’s absence,” Laserbeak volunteered, “I shall protect the youngers.”

When all the Cassettes were in their berths, Soundwave went to his berthroom.

“Pop!” Frenzy called out, “You’re gonna sleep in there alone?”

“I’m a light sleeper, Frenzy,” Soundwave told him, “I’m able to detect any presence. Have a peaceful evening.”

The twins doubted they would.

Nothing happened for another hour or so. No more noises; no pedesteps, no vocals. Soundwave listened carefully, of course. But it was clear that their intruder was absent this evening.

The Tapedeck’s thoughts drifted back to his pregnant flyer. He found himself wishing Skywarp was with him now, sleeping in his berth with him. He hadn’t shared his berth with a lover since Celene. It would be so nice to caress and kiss his new potential mate, instead of the usual: One of the Cassettes having a nightmare and stealing his blankets.

His hands danced in the air as he imagined what it would be like to tickle the sensitive wiring beneath the plates of Skywarp’s wings. Seekers smelled a certain, seductive scent when they were carrying. He wasn’t sure if only he smelled it, or if others smelled it as well. When Starscream was pregnant, it secretly drove the Tapedeck to near sexual insanity.

Soundwave wanted his Seeker now, but he was still afraid of coming on too strong and scaring him. He wanted to protect Skywarp, and he knew, besides falling in love with him, he knew he was the best choice since he would be able to sense a predator well before anyone else could, including Thundercracker.

The Tapedeck thought about it a bit longer and decided to call.

Skywarp was almost asleep, but not quite. He had rolled onto his back, trying to get comfortable, feeling crushed under his heavy belly. At least his little Crystal had settled down and was sleeping. Thundercracker was sleeping too, snoring loudly. Ravage was the weirdest though; the Cat seemed to have a hissing sound when he snored.

He was rubbing his belly now, still trying to settle his fuel tanks. But, mercifully, he had not felt that knife-like pain in his right side. Recharging on sofa beds, whether this one or the one in the Control Room, was never the greatest, although, TC had no issue with them.

His Comm.-Link lit up; it was on mute because of the nightly hours, but he noticed it. He smiled now: It was Soundwave.

Skywarp: “Hey there…”

“Hi,” the Tapedeck was nervous about what to say, “I just wanted to check on you.”

“That’s so sweet of you,” the Seeker whispered back; careful not to wake his older brother, “I miss
“I miss you as well,” Soundwave sat up. “Has anything strange occurred in your quarters.”

“No…I don’t feel the ghost here,” Skywarp looked around, “too early to think he’s gone?”

“Well, we have to stay vigilant,” the larger mech told him, his digits again imagining playing with those wings, “maybe you’ll come over some night and let me watch you sleep.” It was a bold statement, one that he hoped was not too bold.

But Skywarp was bolder, “Who says I have to sleep?” He bit on his glossa playfully, “Why can’t I be tied to your berth while you interface me?”

“Maybe I will…” Soundwave laughed, “we just have to find the right moment.”

“You mean, we have to create the moment,” Skywarp saw TC shift in his sleep and dropped his vocals a notch, “I’m sure you’ll think of something.”

“I’ve been known to pull a few strings,” Soundwave whispered, “and I’ve been known to pull a few wires as well.” He wanted to leave it there, “Until tomorrow, darling.”

“Mmm, okay,” Skywarp heard the connection close and was finally able to sleep peacefully.
Chapter 67: By Transformersnewfan

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The rest of the night went by without incident. The next day, everything was normal and ordinary. The only unusual activity were the Constructicons hammering out the dents in the outer roof of the Base. Cons were sent on missions; eating in the mass hall, patrols were accomplished, and the Leaders planned future Energon raids. At the end of the first normal day in a long time, the evening came and went, and again, without incident. And then, another ordinary day. Skywarp turned 31 weeks carrying without any complications.

The only discordant note was that no one, including Megatron, was speaking to Starscream. And the red and white Seeker was beginning to feel very isolated from every member of his family. Skywarp and TC love the triplets; they liked playing with the boys despite the breakup with their brother. Starscream often found himself alone in his laboratory, with no one to talk to. And every time he passed his mate or one of his brothers in the hallways, they would dart their optics and ignore him, as if he wasn’t there.

With Megatron, it wasn’t that he hated his Bondmate; he was merely trying to avoid arguing with the Seeker. He didn’t want to set him off, so something terrible wouldn’t happen. Either Starscream would leave with the triplets, and he would never see any of them again, or the ghost would feed off the negative energy a screaming match would generate. Ignoring Starscream wasn’t a good solution, but it was the best for now.

By the fourth day with no paranormal activity, Skywarp had finally begun to relax again. He and his older brother were back to sleeping in their own berths, and without Ravage guarding them! The carrying Seeker would like to spend a night—or two, or three—with Soundwave, but for now, Thundercracker was not letting him out of his sight, nightly bundling him up in blankets, “Night buddy,” and keeping a close watch. Skywarp longed to be alone with Soundwave.

The next day and night were the same. No activity! Everyone began to relax, for now anyway.

Megatron decided the Decepticons could resume their Energon raids safely. They had to get at least ONE mission in before Optimus Prime’s return in three days. He asked Thundercracker if he was up for it; the Seeker said he was, but just as long as Soundwave promised to watch over Skywarp.

“Oooo, did you hear that, Soundwave?” Skywarp teased as he stood over the remaining boxes of files, “you get to be my bodyguard.”

“I’ll be Kevin Costner to your Whitney Houston,” the Tapedeck flirted back, “we can recreate the film.”

Rumble and Frenzy made nervous giggles, while Ravage was a bit mortified, but all were glad to see their Sire happy with a new mate.

But it would not last.

The incense had just about cleared as the Coneheads headed up the elevator to the Tarmac.
“Grand Coulee Dam, here we come!” Dirge proclaimed. Travel time would be several hours, and then the raid was expected to last well into the night.

Megatron was still leery about leaving the Base and his family, but he hoped things would stay calm while they were away. He planned to burn incense again tonight, after the mission.

Starscream had wanted to come along; his role in this raid had been that of a tactician, planning out what they needed to retrieve for a successful Energon run. Before all the arguments, Megatron had intended to have Starscream on this mission, leaving the triplets in the care of Skywarp and Soundwave, but the Trine Leader and his oldest brother had not spoken to each other in days, and neither said anything about working together here. So, Megatron decided to let it be, not realizing that Starscream sat miserably in his lab, hoping one of them would invite him along.

As the elevator doors opened at the top, the Coneheaded flyers bounced off, hooting and hollering, and ready for the mission!

“WOOT! Look at that blue sky!” Ramjet proclaimed.

“Let’s hit it!” Dirge jogged out, slamming his ‘lieutenant’ on the shoulder vent, “Come on, TC! Let’s go!” The blue Conehead transformed into his Jet Mode and flew up, following Ramjet, as ‘Thundercracker’ turned to glare at the crass mech…with his black optics.

Thrust was looking down at his compass as he walked out of the elevator. It was now or never for the ghost to do what he had trained for over the past few days.

It was a matter of a split second, Gravechaser dropped his disguise and jumped INTO the maroon Conehead from behind! Thrust froze; his optics turned pitch black, and he stood there motionless.

It had been a lucky break—or a critical mistake—that Soundwave had not been watching the monitors when this happened. He was standing faceplates to faceplates with Skywarp, with the pregnant Seeker leaning against the boxes, as close as their frames allow, trading flirtations and soft touches.

Skywarp was playing Rachel Marron from the film, The Bodyguard, “Well, you don’t look like a bodyguard.”

“What’d you expect?” Soundwave did his best Frank Farmer.

Skywarp: “Well, I don't know, maybe a tough guy?”

Soundwave: “This is my disguise.”

The two started laughing together.

“That was a pretty bad Clint Eastwood impression, Pop,” Frenzy shook his helm.

“Clint Eastwood was in the OTHER movie, In the Line of Fire, Frenz,” Rumble punched his twin in the arm, “You got your nineties’ classics scrambled!”

On the main floor once again, the elevator doors opened.

‘Thrust’ emerged slowly, walking stiffly, as if he had been deactivated for two decades, shuffling his way to the basement door.

Gravechaser exited the Conehead’s chassis, “Thanks for the taxi!” he quipped as he went through
the basement door without opening it. The ghost knew that Megatron had been secretly afraid of the basement and guessed correctly that the Gunformer had not covered the area with the incense holder. Now, Gravechaser descended the wooden stairs far enough, so that his dead, black optics could watch them from the crack under the door.

Thrust blinked several times before his optics re-lit their normal red color. He woke up fully just as Megatron was coming down the hallway.

“Megatron?” the maroon Conehead was confused, “W-Where’s Dirge?”

“Dirge?” Megatron shrugged, “I thought you guys were going on ahead together.”

Thrust looked around, “H-How’d I get back down here?”

Megatron just listened now.

“I-I was on the elevator with the guys,” Thrust explained, “I-I must’ve went offline or something, and…I don’t remember coming back down.”

“You’re feeling okay?” Megatron asked now, “Do you want to get checked out in the Med-Bay?”

“No, I’m good,” Thrust waved it off; he didn’t want his Leader to think he was weak, “I’ll catch up with the guys.”

Oh no.

Megatron felt his fuel tanks sink into his pedes. What had just—

“Come on, Megs!” Astrotrain slapped his friend on the backstruct, “Let’s go!” The Space Train was anxious to start his first mission as Leader of the Triple Changers Division, having Blitzwing and Octane close behind and jogging with excitement. The trio pretty much dragged Megatron onto the elevator with them.

Once on the Tarmac, they all took off. Megatron tried to shake off the growing fear and anxieties he was feeling. He radioed his Communications Officer, “Soundwave: No matter what happens, be on high alert!”

It didn’t take long for Gravechaser’s negative energy to become palpable again.

Skywarp was sorting the files on the Computer Consul when Thundercracker came into the Control Room to say goodbye.

“Okay, I THINK I’m ready,” the blue Seeker was nervous about leaving Skywarp, “just promise me you’ll stay with Soundwave and his Cassettes, alright?”

“Soundwave for sure. The Cassettes, maybe,” the pregnant Jet had a silly grin on his faceplates, “I sent Rumble and Frenzy on a DVD run. ‘The Bodyguard,’ ‘In the Line of Fire,’ y’know, Rom-Coms.”

“I don’t think those are comedies, little brother,” Thundercracker knew he was stalling now, but he was still reluctant to leave him. He went over to Soundwave now, “Just…please, please, don’t let anything bad happen to them, okay?”

“It’s only for a few hours,” Soundwave promised, “it will be uneventful.”
“It won’t be uneventful if I can help it,” Skywarp giggled.

The monitor suddenly switched from CNN to the local news, where the weather report was about to come up.

Soundwave thought Skywarp had changed the channel; Skywarp thought that Buzzsaw had the remote, but Buzzsaw was on the couch, coloring in his coloring book.

The meteorologist, a heavy-set man in his mid-60s, began singing the praises of the evening’s forecast, “Tonight’s skies are going to be the clearest we’ve seen in weeks, and with more storms on the radar, I’d recommend anyone that’s traveling by air to do it tonight! It’s great flying weather!”

“Oh! I miss flying!” Skywarp moaned, “I haven’t been out of this Base in weeks now!” the last time he was outside was on Christmas Day, nearly a month earlier.

“Alright, I should go,” Thundercracker almost, almost got out of the room without arguing.

“Soundwave,” Skywarp made his vocals like a sparkling, “Can I PLEASE go flying with TC when he comes back?”

“That’s fine,” Soundwave nodded.

“YES! YES!” Skywarp shrieked excitedly, “TC! You hear that?! We’re going flying tonight!”

But the blue Seeker was having none of that, “Um, I don’t THINK so!”

“Huh?” Skywarp tilted his helm, “Why not?”

“Why?!” Thundercracker barked, “Do you want me to spell it out for you?!”

Skywarp looked hurt as his beloved older brother sneered, “Maybe you haven’t noticed, but everyone else has noticed, you’ve put on a ton of weight.”

“I CAN STILL FLY!” Skywarp shouted back, “I can still transform!”

“Yeah, good luck with THAT,” TC rolled his optics.

“S-Soundwave!” Skywarp was shrieking like Starscream now, “YOU SAID I COULD FLY!”

“Well, thirty weeks is usually right at the limit, but, um,” Soundwave didn’t want to backpedal, “but, he’s young and healthy, so I think thirty-one weeks is still acceptable if you accompany him.”

“Yeah, but he’s about a hundred pounds over the average!” TC pointed out, rather cruelly, “listen, I read the datapads too, y’know.”

“I-I’M NOT THAT HEAVY!” Skywarp was yelling and sobbing now, “Y-YOU’RE A BULLY!”

“WELL, I DON’T CARE IF YOU AGREE WITH ME OR NOT!” Thundercracker roared back, “BUT YOU’RE THE SIZE OF THE GOODYEAR BLIMP IN CASE YOU CAN’T TELL!”

“I still proclaim,” Laserbeak smirked, “that we must try him out for the Superbowl.”

Soundwave facepalmed, “You’re not helping.”

“You want me to paint it on him?” Buzzsaw smiled.
“Buzzsaw…” Soundwave sighed.

“STOP IT!” Skywarp was hurting now, “STOP PICKING ON ME!”

“Nobody’s picking on you!” Thundercracker barked, “You’re just being a brat!”

Skywarp: “YOU’RE BEING A JERK!”

Thundercracker: “HAVEN’T I DONE—”

Skywarp: “YOU’RE SUCH A JERK!”

Thundercracker: “HAVEN’T I DONE EVERYTHING FOR YOU DAY AND NIGHT SINCE YOU STARTED ALL THIS?!”

Skywarp: “JUST SLAG YOU!”

“SLAG YOU TOO!” Thundercracker sneered, and stalked out of the Control Room, “YOU’RE AN UNGRATEFUL SLUGOID!”

Skywarp plopped down and buried his faceplates into his arms on the Computer Consul, sobbing his optics out.

“Well, that just all came out of nowhere,” Soundwave thought to himself; now he wondered if their villainous ghost was back, influencing the environment with It’s poisonous negative energy. He looked around at the ceiling but didn’t sense anything.

The Condors were talking to each other; then Laserbeak stated, “Father, we have a proposal: I will take Skywarp flying, but only if he permits Buzzsaw to paint the trademarked image of ‘Goodyear’ across his midsection.”

Soundwave refused to dignify that statement was an answer. Instead, he went to Skywarp, “Hey now…” he tried rubbing his shoulders and sides, “come on now…”

He coaxed the pregnant Seeker into his arms and let him cry in his hold for a while.

At the Grand Coulee Dam, the Decepticons waited until nightfall before blasting their way into the deserted power plant. Only the elderly security guard was inside at the time, and he ran outside just in time! Megatron radioed that they had arrived and checked for any guards and Autobots.

The Gunformer and his team collected the resources with precession. They would be in and out well before the Autobots were called, especially since they tended to bumble around when Optimus Prime wasn’t available to lead them.

At the same time, Soundwave monitored the Control Room and the Comm.-Links, “No distress calls yet, Megatron,” he reported. As much as he wanted to comfort Skywarp, the Tapedeck could not risk leaving the Computer Consul during an Energon retrieval mission. So, he entrusted the Seeker to his sons, which, was not always the best option.

In the kitchen, Skywarp sat at the island, keening and stuffing himself with anything he could get his hands on, “As l-long as he thinks I’m such a pig…M-Might as well make myself fatter!” There was an Energon-pecan pie in the refrigerator: he ate that; there was also some leftover Energon meatloaf: he ate that as well, cold. And then he polished off those Energon-cream pastries that Mixmaster had
tried making from a recipe he had found online, recommended by some human celebrity. Those were only so-so. That was all before the six Energon cubes. He had closed the Trine Bond to the blue Seeker so that he could eat in peace.

Buzzsaw and Ratbat watched in amazement as the Seeker put it all away, “How can you eat so much?” the yellow Condor asked.

“C-Cause TC grounded me,” the pregnant Seeker sobbed, “I HATE BEING GROUNDED!”

Ravage came in the kitchen now, “It’s late, and Father wants you accounted for.”

Skywarp groaned before walking down the hallways carefully; maybe TC had been right, his center of gravity had severely shifted.

By then, Rumble and Frenzy had returned with the DVDs, and Soundwave brought the carrying Seeker into his quarters, “I need to monitor the situation for any dangers. I expect all six of you to keep Skywarp safe while I do so.”

“No sweat, Pop,” Rumble agreed, “as long as that creep’s gone, we’re all good.”

“Thank you,” Soundwave suspected something was going on in the Base, but the argument between the two Seekers wasn’t enough to get a ruling. So, he instructed his Cassettes to take care of Skywarp in their quarters, “Just make sure he’s comfortable.” He then returned to the Control Room.

The pregnant Seeker sat miserably on their green sofa, ready to purge his tanks due to eating so much.

“We can play video games,” Rumble offered.

“Later,” Ravage exerted his authority, “right now, it’s time for dinner.”

The four oldest Cassettes had no clue how much the Seeker had eaten already. And Buzzsaw and Ratbat giggled that they weren’t telling.

“Whatsoever…” was Skywarp’s response. As requested, the Cassettes brought him more food. This time, he wolfed down not one, but four more Energon cubes, plus the three rust sticks that Frenzy had given him as a present. So, this made, what, ten cubes, plus all the goodies. By the time they were finished, Skywarp was seriously sick.

“OW…OOOOOWWW…” he keened miserably; barely able to cycle air since he was so full.

“If you KNEW he had already eaten,” Ravage scolded the twins, “why did you give him more?”

“Hey, we didn’t know!” Rumble protested, “It was Buzzsaw and Ratbat that knew!”

“We wanted to see if he would explode,” the yellow Condor shrugged.

“Well, if he does so,” Laserbeak smirked, “then you both will be tasked to clean it up.”

Ravage and the red Condor had a staring contest before the Cat finally asked, “You have a lot of time to come up with these lines, don’t you?”

It didn’t matter, they had a bigger problem, literally.

The black and purple Seeker was keening and moaning now; his belly had never felt so tight; he had been powerless to control himself, and now his bloated fuel tank was resting uncomfortably on his
gestation chamber, pushing it out even further. He pulled the blanket over his belly, hoping they wouldn’t notice.

Buzzsaw did though.

“Are you gonna blow up?” the yellow Condor grinned, “If you blow up, will the baby pop out sooner?”

“F-Feel like I’m g-gonna,” the flyer’s guts throbbed, trying to burp but couldn’t.

“Is that why you wanted more cubes?” Ratbat tilted his helm curiously.

“Maybe Crystal was hungry,” Frenzy theorized.

But Skywarp shook his helm, “She’s sleeping.” He twisted and flinched, “Ugh, and I’m itchy all over.”

“Hey Beak,” Rumble asked, “any ideas?”

“Common enough problem,” the Bird shrugged.

“I’m going to get Father,” Ravage turned to leave, but Rumble stopped him.

“No Rav,” the blue Cassette explained, “we gotta prove to Pop that we can take good care of Skywarp by ourselves. Otherwise, he’ll never let us babysit.”

“Oh, I wanna babysit!” little Ratbat chirped.

“Listen, someday I’m gonna be a medic,” Rumble asserted, “so I know some stuff!”

“Such as?” Ravage raised an optic brow.

“Okay, listen,” Rumble went to the pregnant Seeker, “you need to relax, cause when you relax, all the cables relax, and when the cables relax, the pain goes away, am I right?”

“S-Sounds right,” Skywarp gasped out.

“And you’re a Seeker, right?” Rumble continued.

Skywarp nodded.

“Any update on whether water is still wet?” Laserbeak quipped.

Ravage: “Oh, can it.”

“No, that’s exactly what I’m getting at,” Rumble stated, “Seekers love their showers, right?”

“W-We need to be clean,” Skywarp was suffering even to speak now.

“So, I say, we’ll put you in the water,” Rumble concluded.

Skywarp shrugged, thinking it might help, although, Thundercracker had to help him with reaching his wings lately.

“We’ve got a huge bathtub,” Rumble told him, “you’ll be able to lay down in it.”

The black and purple Seeker tense up, shaking his helm, “I-I’d never be able to get back up.”
“Pop can help you up,” Frenzy told him, “he’s a pretty strong guy.”

Skywarp held his helm, “He would need Hook, in his Crane Mode, to get me back up.”

The Cassettes couldn’t help it, they all burst out laughing. Skywarp smiled shyly.

“You’re so funny!” Buzzsaw laughed.

“Okay, okay,” Rumble laughed, “then we’ll use Pop’s shower.”

“Rumble!” Frenzy gasped, “That’s Pop’s private sanctuary! He’d kill us!”

“Not necessarily,” Ravage scratched his chin, “Father did say we must make him comfortable. And Skywarp is going to join our family shortly.”

“But Daddy keeps it locked,” Buzzsaw pointed out, “We would need the key.”

“Oh, I know where he keeps the key,” Laserbeak flexed his metal-feather digits.

Ravage raised an optic brow again at that.

“You won’t tell Pop, will ya, Rav?” Rumble asked.

“Very well,” the Panther agreed, “but only because Skywarp is suffering.”
“S-So, this is S-Soundwave’s room?” the pregnant Jet walked very carefully, feeling like he would burst if he moved too suddenly.

“Yes,” Rumble told him, “hope you like co-sleeping, cause Frenz and I are usually in here.”

“O-Oh, sure,” Skywarp took a moment to cycle air, “I-I sleep with my big brothers a-all the time.”

The Cassettes showed him their Sire’s berthroom, and then the en-suite, “Father had the Constructicons build this after several viewings of the House and Garden channel,” Ravage explained, “if you’ll notice, every program on the network mentions a private wash racks adjourning to a berthroom.”

As Laserbeak opened the door with that secret key, the Cat continued, “That, and open concept kitchens.”

When they opened the door, Skywarp peered in to see an exquisite wash racks with a huge shower stall. It was entirely encased by frosted glass, with a glass door. It was quite different from the cramped stall and shower certain he and Thundercracker were so used to.

“Wow…” was all the pregnant Seeker could think of to say.

“It’s the one luxury Father allows for himself,” Ravage explained, “we are never permitted in here. And the walls are not only soundproof; they have built-in deflectors of telepathy. That way, Father can relax without being bothered by the constant bombardment of others’ thoughts and vocals.”

“I think I know what I’m gonna do,” Skywarp felt a bit better just being in the calm, cool structure, “d-don’t tell him I’m in here…T-Tell him I’ll meet him in the berthroom. A-And, when he comes in, I’ll be laying on his berth, looking all sexy and—” he looked at his belly, “w-well, not that sexy.”

“When Megatron is flying inbound, Father usually relaxes his guard duties,” Ravage nodded, “I will offer to take over viewing the monitors at that time.”

Skywarp: “C-Cool…” Whatever helps.

“We’ll be in the living room,” Rumble told him; then he and the others all left Skywarp in the en-suite, thinking to give him privacy and (falsely) convinced the ghost was gone for the time being.

“T-This is so cool, huh Crystal?” he whispered to his little sparkling. Her response was to squirm and stretch out her tiny thrusters, :Tight, Momma…:

“Y-Yeah, sorry about that,” his over-full fuel tanks were pushing out his gestation chamber, “I-It’ll get better, I promise.”

He took off his protective pede covers.

He took off his robe and looked at his pregnant frame through Soundwave’s mirror. “No wonder TC
thinks I’m a fat slugoid,” he sighed, wondering how much bigger he would grow in the next ten weeks before his sparkling was ready to become online. He had to get his diet under control.

He was feeling sad again, thinking about his brothers and how they both hated him so much. They used to love him. He keened and sniffled as he stepped into the dark gray shower stall, holding onto the dials to balance himself. Thundercracker had to help him get a shower these days, and that was in THEIR shower stall, with the grab bar and the chair the carrying flyer usually sat in. This shower stall was made of smooth steel and nothing to grab onto for balance.

“No wonder Soundwave doesn’t allow the Cassettes in here,” Skywarp thought to himself, “they could hurt themselves.”

He decided to get started, he turned the knob, and the water started trickling out. When it was warm enough, he turned it on fully. There was a total of six shower spouts, “Oh, that feels so good,” he closed the shower door, hearing the ‘click’ echo in the all-steel structure. He felt the warm, calming waters slowly relaxing his bloated frame, “This is nice,” he kept repeating to himself and his daughter-to-be.

The steam from the waters fogged the frosted glass, making it even less transparent. Skywarp was afraid to move around too much, even though he was feeling much better now, he didn’t want to fall. So instead, he kept his hands on the dials and carefully moved his frame around under the shower spouts.

Through the floor vents, Gravechaser floated up from the ground.

Skywarp was looking up at the shower spout, optics closed, letting the waters wash his faceplates. When he moved his helm down and opened his optics, he saw a tall blue figure on the other side of the frosted glass.

Thinking it was Soundwave, he giggled, “You couldn’t wait, could you, big fella?”

There was no response.

“Soundwave?” the Seeker was puzzled, but then realized, “Oh, that’s right, this is soundproof.” He opened the door, and, as he did, he saw there was no one in the room with him.

Skywarp’s optics widened, “Soundwave?” he peered out the door and looked around. There was no one there, “O-Oh no…”

Terrified, he shut the shower door, hoping it would somehow keep him and his sparkling safe. His spark was racing; he pressed his faceplates against the cool metal momentarily to compose himself.

“Oh, okay,” he whispered, then looked out again. There was no figure on the outside of the glass.

He sighed in relief and tried to finish his shower, again trying to focus on the warm waters.

Red claws reached for him slowly…

Skywarp was beginning to feel sick again; panic was raising in his systems. He tried opening the Trine Bond and found both his brothers still had him blocked. He began keening again.

Gravechaser grabbed Skywarp by the back of his neck cables.

Skywarp’s optics bugged out, “AAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUGGGGGGGGGGHYYYYYYYYYYYYY!!!”
Outside in the living room, the Cassettes played ‘Call of Duty’ on their video game consul, completely oblivious.

“Go ahead and scream, slugoid,” Gravechaser hissed, “Soundproof wash racks, or did you forget that little fact?”

The freezing temperature the negative entity gave off was like being next to an iceberg. Skywarp cycled air in short bursts, almost hyperventilating. His hand went protectively to his middle.

“Miss me?” Gravechaser teased, “ Been a few days. Thought you were rid of me? Think again! I’ve set up my new lair in the basement.”

Skywarp bit his quivering lip components, and tried to fane courage, “S-Sounds more like you can’t stay away from me!”

“Hardly!” the ghost scoffed, “It’s becoming increasingly hard to look at your disguising chassis.” He looked the Seeker up and down with disdain, “Anybody tell you, you’ve gained a ton.”

Skywarp tried to pretend he was annoyed instead of terrified, “I’m in the shower, Gravechaser,” he clutched his jaw, “might I have a LITTLE privacy, please? Perverted fragger.”

“Oh please,” Gravechaser was droll, “ you’re hardly my type.” The shower stall was large enough for the ghost to stroll around to the Seeker’s side, “Do you have any idea how many mechs I had to share the shower with in the ten years I served in prison?!”

“N-No,” Skywarp tried to distract him, pretending to care, “how many?”

“We were all herded into a cellar, like Earth cattle, you could say,” Gravechaser had never had the opportunity to talk about this before, “this was once a week, and the guards would open the sprinklers in the ceiling.”

Skywarp thought if he pretended to be concerned, perhaps he could buy himself some time, at least enough time to where Soundwave would come looking for him.

“Was the water cold?” the pregnant Seeker asked.

“Always.” Gravechaser’s black optics looked off into the void, “But that wasn’t the worst of it. Oh no, far from it. The worst part was that we never knew when…” he trailed off.

Skywarp: “When what, Gravechaser?”

“The prisons would get overcrowded every so often,” Gravechaser fidgeted with his craws, “so the guards were instructed to make room. There were only so many cells. Four prisoners to a cell. Not counting solitary.”

Skywarp was holding his air intakes; the water still flowing down on him, but he had lost all interest in that.

“So, on those occasions,” Gravechaser continued, “they would call the prisoners in for their weekly shower. The ones in that rotation. They would have the prisoners there, thinking it was the weekly shower…” he paused for what felt like an hour. Skywarp thought he was going to die. Finally, the entity finished, “Except…Except it was not water. It was Cosmic Rust.”

Visions Skywarp could only imagine of the atrocity committed on Seekers, many of whom were innocent and without a trial, was enough to make the carrying Jet’s fuel tanks turn over. He retched
and choked on his own drool, coughing.

“They never took the ones that were Creators,” Gravechaser continued, revealing how he had survived, “not that I knew that until after I had deactivated. So, you never knew when it was your time…”

Skywarp clutched his belly, coughing and choking. He was practically doubled over.

“My will to survive was fueled by revenge,” the entity’s vocals turned into a snarl, “revenge for the one who had done this to me…the one who had separated me from my sparkling…the one who cost me my freedom! And with that, my sanity! And finally, my very existence!”

“W-W-Wha?” Skywarp tried to look up; he could feel his sparkling squirming.

“I could cut your Energon lines with my claws if I wanted to…” Gravechaser sneered, “But you see, I’ve been denied from tormenting you for so long, that I have an urge to satisfy.”

Skywarp hacked and coughed, trying to keep his balance and figure out what was going on.

“I have ALWAYS wanted to do this,” Gravechaser snarled, stepping backward and fading through the shower door.

The shower water suddenly turned icy cold, making the pregnant Seeker shriek out in pain, “AAAAAEEEEAAAAA!”

Gravechaser smirked, leaning against a towel rack, watching.

Skywarp opened the shower door.

Gravechaser flicked his wrist as if he had an invisible remote control, and the shower door slammed shut, trapping his prey like an animal in an aquatic cage. The ghost flicked his wrist again, and a broom floated across the wash racks, landing against the door handle.

Skywarp frantically tried the door handle on the inside, “C-Come on, come o-on!” he began rattling the shower door frantically, the cold water hitting his carrying chassis like pinpricks.

Gravechaser flicked his wrist for the third time, and the showers were turned on full blast, almost knocking Skywarp over. He frantically had to steady himself before he fell. He feared for his sparkling now!

Finally, Gravechaser made a final flick of his wrist and then watched the show with glee.

A washcloth seemed to come to life and jump off the shower ledge. Skywarp watched it hit the stall ground with a loud SPLAT, only to get sucked down the drain. A loud noise from the pipes that sounded like it belched was heard, and the shower waters began to pool. The washcloth had wholly stopped up the drain; and the shower stall had instantly become a glass imprisonment, quickly filling up with the icy waters.

Immediately, Skywarp was sent into an intense panic, “HHHEELLPPP!!! SOUNDWAVE!!! HELP!” he slammed his palms against the glass, banging and kicking and screaming, “HELP US!!!!”

All the while, Gravechaser smirked and enjoyed the show.
“Come on, Warp,” Thundercracker was holding his chestplates, “open the Trine Bond, will ya?”

The Decepticons worked to collect and process all the fuel as quickly as they could. The blue Seeker tried to focus on his work, but worry for his younger brother was overwhelming him. Now, they were all safely out of the plant and hidden in a nearby rocky formation until the state police and helicopters were gone. They just had to wait, sitting by a campfire in the snow, trying to keep warm.

Megatron noticed this, “You alright, Thundercracker?”

“I guess,” the blue Seeker shrugged, “had a fight with Skywarp.”

“I told you not to do that,” Megatron put his gear down, “I told you to be careful until we can make sure that, that, THING is gone!”

“I-It just…like, happened, I don’t know,” TC stammered, “one minute, we were fine, joking around, and the next thing I knew, I was screaming at him.”

Megatron wondered if this, coupled with Thrust’s temporary amnesia, were signs that the ghost had returned. But, he didn’t want to worry his young brother-in-law when they were so far from the Base.

“Um,” the former Gladiator tried to stay calm, “can I ask you…What were you fighting about?”

“Well, he saw on TV that tonight was the last night until a snowstorm,” the blue Seeker explained, “and he wanted me to take him flying, y’know? And I kinda…”

Megatron made a grimace, knowing all too well how Seekers need to fly, “You said no…”

“I actually said he looked like the Goodyear blimp and a fat slugoid,” Thundercracker admitted sheepishly. He pulled his legs up to his chestplates, and hung his arms over his legs, feeling like slag.

“WHOA!” Ramjet exclaimed, “Brutal, TC, just brutal.”

Megatron didn’t know what to say at first. There was a period of silence. Then a blissful memory file surfaced.

“When Starscream was carrying, he used to want to fly too,” the former Gladiator began, “I remember, I remember the last month, or so, he was saying he was going crazy cause he couldn’t fly.”

Thundercracker listened now.

“And this was a big fight with Soundwave,” Megatron continued, “he forbid Starscream from flying.”

“I remember that,” the blue Jet nodded, “that’s when Star tried to get the Combaticons to assassinate
“Right,” Megs nodded, “so, I tried to find a compromise. I told Starscream that, even if he couldn’t fly, we could go outside and at least LOOK at the skies.” He leaned back on the rocks, “I would go open the Tower after Soundwave turned in for the night,” he chuckled now, “I’m almost certain he knew, but he never said anything. And, I would bundle my Seeker up in blankets, and we would sit out on the Runway and look up at the skies.”

TC had never known this, “Bet he liked that…”

“He used to ask me to talk to him all night,” Megatron remembered fondly, “and I would say, ‘What should I talk about?’ and he would say, ‘Anything…’ So, you know me, I always fall back on the Arena. I would, um, tell him about one of my matches or another, until he was ready to go back inside and go to bed.” The Gunformer sighed, suddenly feeling sad.

“You okay?” TC asked.

“Just…” Megatron admitted, “I miss how close we used to be… I… I don’t know what happened.”

“Yeah, I know what you mean,” TC held his helm, “Us too. We used to be the Three Musketeers.” He tried to remember when this all started, “I mean, we always had our fights… He’s been hard on Warp for a while now… Hey, how was he to you over Christmas?”

“You mean at Ma’s cottage?” Megatron remembered, “He was fine. He was having a good time, shopping, flying, playing with the triplets. We went ice skating together. He likes my Mother.”

TC: “Weird…”

“And then, when we came back here, he was like a different mech, I tell you,” Megatron shook his helm, “Screaming. Screaming at me; screaming at you two. He’s hiding in his lab all the time. Doesn’t talk to me unless he’s hysterical… I’ll tell you this, Thundercracker, now I honestly believe it was that negative entity that was affecting him. But, he refuses to even entertain my theory, and now…”

“Now what?” TC asked.

“I don’t want to scare you,” Megatron dropped his vocals, “I’m going to burn incense again tonight, because…” he looked around, making sure Gravechaser wasn’t around, “I’m worried It’s back.”

“But…” Thundercracker DID get scared right away, “H-How?”

“Not sure,” Megatron sighed, “I was hoping by the time Optimus Prime came back, he would take care of this. But there was something weird going on when we left tonight, and… I mean, you even said that fight came out of nowhere.”

“I-I know,” TC nodded nervously, “I-I didn’t even mean it. It’s like it wasn’t even me, y’know? Like, I was hurting him, and I KNEW I was hurting him, and, and I knew it was wrong—”

Dirge interrupted, “What I wanna know is, why’d you even go back down there?”

“Why’d I go back down where?” TC asked.

“Back down to the Control Room,” the blue Conehead asked. Megatron’s optics widened.
“What are you talking about, Dirge?” Thundercracker stood, completely perplexed, “I had a fight with Skywarp, and THEN I left.”

“You were on the Runway,” Dirge stated firmly, with utmost certainty. “I spoke to you!”

“Dirge, I swear,” TC gulped, “when I got up there, you guys were already gone!”

“I TALKED TO YOU!” Dirge insisted again, “RJ and Thrust saw you too!”

The two other Coneheads stepped forward now.

“I saw you, but…” Ramjet hesitated, “I didn’t see your faceplates.”

“Hey, hey,” Thrust jumped in, “maybe you had what I had?!”

“What’d you have?” TC asked.

“I was on the Runway,” Thrust explained, “and the next thing I remember was, I was back in the Base!”

Megatron stood up now, fear again washing over him.

“Mega, you saw me, remember?” Thrust told him, “I was by the basement!”

The basement. Megatron realized he had never taken incense into the basement.

“IT’S IN THE BASE!” Megatron shouted, “IT’S IN THE DECEPTICON BASE! GO! GO! GO NOW! WE HAVE TO GET BACK TO THE DECEPTICON UNDERWATER BASE!”

“Oh my God,” Thundercracker transformed and took off, “SKYWARP!”

Everyone gathered their supplies and flew off as fast as they could!

The Cassettes played their video games with gusto. “Yea! WOOT! ALRIGHT!” were among their boasts, completely oblivious to what was occurring in their Sire’s luxurious en-suite.

“HHHEEEELLLLPPPP!!!” Skywarp continued to cry out, “HELP US!!!!”

The waters were accumulating higher and higher, up to his thighs already! He tried to stop the waters, but the knobs seemed to be glued in place. He looked up and saw a gap between the glass and the ceiling, he tried to reach it, but he was too short. Soundwave was a big mech and apparently had wanted a high enclosure. He thought he could climb up, but the glass was too smooth. He couldn’t get any traction. He grabbed the main water spout and tried to pull himself up, but his weight was too much, and he accidentally pulled the spout clean off the wall, and the water gushed out of the pipe with more force than ever!

“Wow,” Gravechaser snickered, “that was better than I could have thought up.”

Meanwhile, Soundwave was at his Computer Consul, when the red button lit up, signaling a call from Megatron.

Gravechaser sensed this, but he already had a plan.
All the power in the Control Room suddenly shut down, making a winding down hum.

“Slag!” Soundwave looked around: all the monitors had gone down, and the red light faded before he could receive Megatron’s message. He ran out into the hallway to check the lights. The rest of the Base seemed to be unaffected by the outage; he could even hear his Cassettes still playing their game consul.

The Tapedeck immediately started flicking switches and pushing buttons, trying to get the power back on.

“H-Help!” Skywarp’s keenings were getting weak as the freezing waters crept past his chestplates. His chassis was hurting from the cold, and his cables were stiffening. His still-overfull fuel tanks hurt so bad…so bad. But he was most fearful of how this was affecting his precious sparkling. He knew she was scared, huddling towards his backstruct for warmth.

“Soundwave! COME IN!” Megatron tried his Comm.-Link again, “SOUNDWAVE!”

The Decepticons were flying as fast as they could!

Skywarp gasped, waters raising to chin level now, and he had to crane his neck cables upwards just to cycle air! He knew that in moments, the water would be past his helm. So, he took in a huge breath and dropped back down, holding his breath and trying again with the door handle, again to no avail.

His optics stung against the ice water. He looked around frantically for a way to escape, tiny air bubbles escaping from his mouth.

The only way out was still that gap over the stall. But he had a bit of an advantage he did not have before. The waters had risen high enough that he could SWIM up there! It wouldn’t be easy though; his fuel tanks were so heavy, and so was his gestation chamber, but he had to do it! He moved and kicked as hard as he could! His thrusters were refusing to ignite under water. He reached and reached several times before his shaking, stiff digits gripped the top of the glass, finally able to get a bit of friction, he got his other hand on the ledge as well and pulled himself up with a lot of difficulties.

“AUGH!” he let out a huge gasp, inhaling oxygen again. There was no way he could fit through the space between the stall and the ceiling, even in his thinnest days. But at least he could breathe again. The waters were freezing him though; it was making him stiff and in terrible pain. His right side began throbbing now; it had been a shooting pain before, but now it was throbbing, weakening him faster than the waters did. His arms were getting numb, but he had to hold on, even though he could barely keep himself afloat.

He looked out and saw the ghost watching him.

“G-Gravechaser…P-Please…D-Don’t k-kill me,” Skywarp pleaded, “I-If I die…M-My sparkling w-would die too…Y-You can’t…You can’t…”

The ghost had never intended to harm the black and purple Seeker’s offspring. But he saw that Skywarp was breathing, so it’s not like he was in mortal danger.
Skywarp gasped for air again, trying again to call out, “HHHEEELLLPPP!!! RAVAGE!!! LASERBEAK!!!”

Much like when Rumble and Frenzy were scared by the ghost, the Cassettes could not hear him in the other room.

Soundwave tried unplugging and re-plugging in the power cords again, but nothing happened. He would have to restart the Computer Consul by the main switch of the power grid, located near the Energon storage room in the basement.

Skywarp was feeling extremely weak now; he was whimpering and crying, knowing that no one was coming for him. They would find his chassis, drowned in a shower. “N-No…” he told himself. He had to find a way out of this.

Soundwave used his telepathy to tell Ravage, “We’ve got a situation: We’ve lost power in the Control Room. I’ll have to reboot the systems from the main grid. Be extremely vigilante.”

The Cat sat up, careful not to alert his younger siblings and frighten them unnecessarily. He checked the time, “We need to check on Skywarp.”

Gravechaser sensed this. He quickly phased out of the wash racks.

“Huh?” Skywarp was barely conscious now, but this surprised him. He took another deep air intake. He felt like he could process his thoughts more clearly with Gravechaser out of the room!

At the exact same time, before the Cassettes knew anything, Gravechaser walked, no, sauntered out of Soundwave’s berthroom, his black optics fixed on the six siblings.

“EEEEEEEEEEKKKKKKK!!!! Rumble and Frenzy’s high-pitch screamed in unison.

“EEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!” Buzzsaw screeched now.

Laserbeak froze.

“AAAAAHH” Ratbat wailed.

Ravage leaped in front of his brothers, growling ferociously, and hissing like a teapot, telling the entity to stay back.

Skywarp knew he had to stop the water from getting any higher, or he would have no way to breathe. The only way to get rid of the water was to open that drain.

Ravage growled again, inching towards the wicked ghost in a threatening manner.

Gravechaser only stared him down, acting as if he could snap the Cat’s neck cables with a flick of his blood-red claws.
Laserbeak was the first to panic, “FIRE!” he drew both his guns and began a barrage of laser fire.

Frenzy and Rumble drew their weapons as well, then Buzzsaw, while Ratbat picked up and threw anything that was within reach. Now there were lasers and bullets flying everywhere, bouncing and pinging in every direction, and all passing harmlessly through the ghost.

Skywarp took another deep breath and held up, this time driving down towards the drain. His optics stung again, but he had to keep them unshuttered to see.

Starscream leaped up when he heard the gunfire, “EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!” he screamed into his Comm.-Link on all channels, “SHOTS FIRED! SHOTS FIRED!!”

He did an army crawl on his front; he had to get to his sparklings.

In the basement, Soundwave snapped at attention; his sparklings’ distress was blaring through his processor. He knew instinctively that he had to get to the power grid and get to them immediately.

“WE’RE COMING!” Megatron and the Decepticons were flying in at their top speed. Thundercracker was flying so fast he was nearly burning out his left engine!

Skywarp reached the drain, he dug his digits in and after a struggle, got a good grip on the washcloth that was clogging the drain.

“AAAAUUUUUGGGHHH!!!” The Cassettes were firing wildly at the blue ghost that had invaded their home. They were in such a panic that it never occurred to them that their weapons were useless against a transparent ghost!

Laser fire, bullets, and even their game controllers pinged, bounced, and flew in every direction, bouncing off the walls and ceiling! The lamp shattered; the shade tumbling to the ground; framed photographs cracked and tore; datapads were knocked off their shelves; furniture began looking like swiss cheese. And the whole time, Gravechaser casually checked his claws.

Starscream crawled through his quarters and to the nursery, where his precious sparklings were in hysterics.

“C-Come on, guys,” he stood quickly pulled them out, all three at once, and pulled them down on the ground, “You gotta lay down, you gotta lay down!” he told them, flattening them down with his hands.

Ravage realized what was happening as a bullet zoomed past one of his audials. “Hold your fire!” he
yelped, “Hold fire!” He grabbed Rumble and Buzzsaw with both paws and pulled them down, “We’re going to end up shooting each other!”

Soundwave threw the switch, and it made a loud hum. Then he ran back as fast as his legs would carry him.

Skywarp yanked the washcloth as hard as he could. At first, he didn’t budge. He pulled and pulled, straining every cable while still trying to hold his breath.

Laserbeak was absolutely petrified; Frenzy too. Ratbat was hiding behind the game consul. Ravage held Buzzsaw and Rumble tightly; his triangular optics fixed on the blue ghost before them. “You stay back!” hissing again with all his fury.

Gravechaser, toying with them, approached, slowly floating towards them.

“I COMMAND YOU TO STAY BACK!” Ravage growled, then roared gutturally to try to frighten him, “STAY BACK, I SAY!”

Skywarp was beginning to get a terrible processor ache from lack of oxygen. He blinked his optics several times to refocus them. He gave the washcloth several tugs as hard as his weakened arms could do, and finally, the washcloth began to tear.

Soundwave raced up the wooden stairs and burst out the basement door, barreling through the hallways.

“P-POP!!” Rumble cried out, “POP!”

“POP! POP!!” Frenzy yelled.

Ratbat: “DADDY!”

The washcloth ripped in two. Skywarp swung his arms wildly as the impact sent him backward. The other half of the washcloth that was still struck was quickly sucked down the drain, and now, so were the icy waters! But he knew it would still be a few minutes before the waters receded utterly, so he got to his pedes and swam back up to the top. This was much harder this time, as he was near exhaustion.

Soundwave was running so fast now that he didn’t even stop to use the doorknob. He busted through his front door with such force that both hinges tore off as if a bomb had hit it!
In that split second, the six Cassettes turned at once to see their Father come to their rescue.

“WHERE IS IT?!” the Tapedeck demanded, “WHERE’S THE SLAGGER?!”

Wait. Didn’t he see…

Ravage, still holding his brothers, turned back first, towards where Gravechaser had been parked. Their quarters was in shambles.

There was no one there.

“HE WAS RIGHT THERE, FATHER!” Ravage yelped.

“THERE! THERE!” Rumble pointed.

But Soundwave had already changed his focus. Seeing all his sons online, his visored optics darted around from corner to corner, “WHERE IS SKYWARP?!”

Starscream waited until the gunfire had stopped. He hitched his air intakes and gathered his courage now.

Incredibly, Skywarp made it back up to the ledge, but this time, his hand slipped, and only one of his hands were strong enough to pull himself up. He was able to get his helm above the water, and he gasped for air. But he was so weak now; he couldn’t hold on. His digits were slipping…

“WHERE IS HE?!” Soundwave hollered.

“W-Wash racks,” Frenzy told him, shakily trying to point.

Soundwave jumped over his sons, still cowering together, and drove into the main wash racks. He turned the lights on, not seeing Warp, just as his sons began yelling in unison, “No! No! Other wash racks!”

Starscream hid his boys under their crib and crept out of the nursery. Drawing one of his null-rays, he stood and went to his front door.

By now, many of the Decepticons had come out of their respective quarters, weapons drawn and asking each other what was going on.

The waters were going down the drain, making a funnel image in the liquid. Pregnant Skywarp sighed in relief and was even more relieved that his precious sparkling continued to move around inside him, telling him she was very much alive. The dark Seeker himself, though, was another story. He was extremely weak and could barely stay online. He felt his systems screaming for his chassis to rest, and he was fighting to keep his helm above water. Dizzy…dizzy…
Soundwave figured out what they meant and ran to his berthroom. He slammed his shoulder into the en-suite’s door, breaking it open.

Starscream went to the Control Room, seeing it dark, and then his optics saw Soundwave’s damaged front door, swinging by its half-remaining hinge.

Skywarp didn’t see Soundwave come in. He slipped into a semi-conscious state and sunk under the ice-cold water.

The image of his lover’s seemingly drowned chassis descending the water-filled stall would stay in Soundwave’s processor for a while. Moving the broomstick blocking the shower door handle would have sufficed, but he panicked and pulled out his Barretta, shooting the lock several times, and, in doing so, shattered the glass.

Ice water gushed forward as Soundwave tore into the door frame just in time to catch the Seeker. Skywarp’s chassis was so numb that he barely felt Soundwave’s arms wrap around him. Relaxing against his mate’s chestdeck, the poor Seeker gave in to his exhaustion.

“Skywarp…” the larger mech held back a sob in his throat; he gently shook him, “Skywarp, come on…” He saw the carrying Jet’s optics open, looking slightly cloudy, before slowly closing again; the response was enough to assure the Tapedeck that he was still functioning.

Starscream stepped into the doorway just in time for he and the Cassettes to witness a wave of water and glass flow out of the berthroom. The red and white Seeker at first thought a pipe had burst, but Soundwave’s family knew better.

The Tapedeck grabbed a towel and wrapped Skywarp up as carefully as he could. He got his arm under the Seeker’s knees to get a steadier grip on him before lifting him up into his arms, “Easy… Easy…Taking you to the Med-Bay.”

When Soundwave emerged from the berthroom, holding the limp, blue chassis of the carrying flyer, his sons all began yelling and screaming various keens and cries, with only Ravage looking silently, jaw dropped in horror.

“AAAUUUUGHHHH!!!” Starscream screeched out before covering his mouth with both hands in shock.

The Tapedeck rushed by all of them and headed for the Medical Bay.
Chapter 70: By Transformersnewfan

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After flying 120mph, the elevator ride down to the main floor of the Decepticon Underwater Base was torturously slow.

When the doors finally parted, Megatron and Thundercracker ran down the hallways, calling their families’ names out, “SKYWARP! STARCREAM! SOUNDWAVE!”

The Triple Changers and the Coneheads were worried too, also running around and talking to whoever they could find. Onslaught told Astrotrain that whatever had happened had happened in Soundwave’s quarters.

Finally, after several attempts, Megatron got a hold of the Tapedeck, “We’re in the Med-Bay.”

Thundercracker actually ran faster than Megatron there.

The six Cassettes were sitting together, looking traumatized. Buzzsaw was drawing fervently; Ravage was pondering how in the world he had let this all happen; Laserbeak was sucking on a rust stick as if he was pretending it was an illegal drug; Ratbat was curled up in a ball; and Rumble and Frenzy were holding Dawning, Darkwing, and Darkmount, and looked like they were going to get cooked for this one.

Their Sire, Soundwave, sat with his legs sprawled out in a chair, trying to comprehend the evening’s events.

“Soundwave,” Megatron asked, “what’s going on? What’s happened?”

“Ugh, he’s in there,” the Tapedeck was rung out, “I was in no condition to treat him, so I let the Reflectors do it.”

Thundercracker ran into the small room: Starscream was fawning over Skywarp, who was sleeping but thankfully, alive. Both he and Crystal: Alive. The two different spark monitors were so beautiful to the blue Seeker’s audials.

Spectro Reflector summarized the carrying Seeker’s treatment, “Well, the first thing we did was check on the sparkling. We put a monitor on his belly and found the sparkling’s lifeforce right away. The sparkbeat’s fine; the sparkling’s doing well. As for Warp, he’s suffering from a mild case of hyperthermia and had some water in his air intakes, but other than that, he wasn’t in too bad a shape.”

Skywarp was laying on his left side, facing Starscream. He had a spark monitor strapped to his chestplates; sparkling monitor around his belly; oxygen mask to help clear his air intakes; he had a heating pad over his spark, and another heating pad over his belly, and he was wrapped up in blankets, but those seemed to be more from Starscream. He was wearing pede covers that had belonged to Starscream.

The red and white Seeker was sitting one leg on the medical berth, stroking the darker Seeker...
forehead. “He’s gonna be alright, TC,” Starscream whispered, “he’s conscious, he’s just very tired now.”

But seeing Skywarp so hurt was enough to send Thundercracker over the edge. He began sobbing, replaying their argument on a loop in his CPU, “O-Oh Warpy…” he climbed onto the berth and took Skywarp into his arms. The black and purple Seeker was too weak to hold his helm up, mewling and curling into his big brother’s chestplates. His wings hung limply on his back. He opened his optics once and then closed them again. TC gathered his baby brother and held him, crying openly and nestling Skywarp’s helm. Starscream came closer and hugged their youngest brother from behind, getting his arms around his belly, trying to help warm him up. They both knew that, in some way, their little brother felt them there and that he and his sparkling were safe.

“Thundercracker?” Starscream whispered, “They’re saying he almost drowned in a shower stall. How could—”

TC wasn’t having any more of this fight; he wiped his optics, “Open you Bond.”

Starscream cuddled Skywarp when the other let out a whimper in his sleep, “Um…”

“Open your Trine Bond now,” the blue Seeker was forceful, tapping his digit against Starscream’s chestplates for emphasis, “enough with this fighting.” He was still the eldest and had to put Screamer in his place this time.

“O-Okay,” Starscream did as he was told, opening the Trine Bond up to both his brothers again. Skywarp’s was still closed, but he could feel Thundercracker’s side of the Bond open. The red and white Seeker had missed feeling his older brother’s presence in his spark more than he could have imagined. It felt so good to have him back.

:No more fighting,: Thundercracker’s tone was firm, despite the coolant tears falling from his optics for their baby brother. :from now on, we gotta take care of each other.: He adjusted Skywarp in his arms so that the pregnant Seeker’s belly wasn’t being squeezed, and pulled a pillow under his right side, knowing that there had been a problem there.

Between the two rooms, Rumble began explaining what happened to Megatron and the others, “We just…We thought he’d like the shower, y’know?”

“You left him by himself?” Megatron asked.

“Well, yeah…” Rumble shrugged sadly, “We didn’t think it was dangerous.”

“We were playing video games,” Frenzy added, looking down and studying his hands. Soundwave didn’t add a thing; he was beyond upset.

“And then what?” Megatron folded his arms.

“Well…” Rumble stretched the back of his neck cables, “That’s when the ghost guy showed up.”

“GHOST?” Dirge was stunned, looking at Megatron.

“We started shooting,” Rumble admitted.

“THEY started shooting,” Ravage came over, “I didn’t have time to tell them that bullets are futile against a negative entity!”
Laserbeak was still visibly shaking, “W-Well if you possess such intellect, why did you not know what should have been done?”

“I panicked, alright!” Ravage shot back, “I panicked! There, I admit it, I panicked.” He scoffed, “I had never been witnessed to such an entity. It was an absolute albatross!”

“What did It look like?” Megatron pressed for details.

“It was a blue mech,” Ravage explained, “and It was either wearing a cape, or those were extremely bizarre wings.”

Megatron: “Red claws again?”

“Affirmative,” the Cat confirmed, “very long ones at that.”

“Same guy,” Megatron shook his helm, “everybody’s telling the same story.”

“Whoa, whoa,” Dirge came over, “are you saying that you knew about this?”

“It’s been sighted all over the Base,” the former Gladiator admitted. “We’ve been trying to chase It away.”

“How come none of you said anything?” the blue Conehead was upset.

“Look, I was trying to keep the panic to a level four, alright?” Megatron held his helm, “I’ll get rid of It! I know how!”

“Hey,” Thrust interrupted, “that have anything to do with what happened to me and TC?”

“I WASN’T ON THE SLAGGING TARMAC!” Thundercracker barked.

This was enough for the Coneheads, “I-I’m getting outta here,” Thrust left for his quarters, “I can’t deal with vampires! I need a string of garlic!” The other two Coneheads followed suit.

Astrotrain folded his arms and whispered to Megatron, “You think you need to call…um,”

“Yeah,” Megatron nodded, “I’m definitely going to call him. But he’s in England right now.”

“Okay,” the Space Train nodded, before shrugging and making his exit, “well, least we can do to go process the booty from tonight.”

Thundercracker sat up and shot a look at Starscream, :There, you see now?! You hear them talking? Everybody’s telling the same story about this guy! Don’t tell me that you’re still gonna stick to your psycho-babble and threats and tell me you can’t see what’s really going on!:

:I-I don’t know what to think anymore, TC…: Starscream admitted, :I was trying to figure, I mean, if those two…: meaning Rumble and Frenzy, :…were, you know, playing a prank on him or something, they wouldn’t have tried to kill him. A-And, for sure, Ravage wouldn’t have been involved in that.: He paused when Skywarp moaned in his sleep, then admitted, :I don’t know who would do this.: 

:Well you can stop screaming and putting a halt to any talk of it!: Thundercracker let his little brother know when he meant business, :OUR BROTHER COULD HAVE DIED!: 

Starscream looked like he was going to cry now.
TC thought back to the fight that he and Star had in the Control Room, and how the red and white Seeker was convinced that he had seen him in the hallway. "This THING seems to go around pretending to be me. Tonight, Dirge told me he saw me on the Tarmac, but I was down in the Control Room. And Ramjet said he didn’t see the faceplates on whoever was on the Tarmac. He pointed at Starscream for emphasis, "YOU’VE seen this guy. And I know Warp has seen him look like me. I KNOW HE HAS! He looked away, biting his lip components, "Sometimes, he’ll stare at my optics like he’s checking if it’s me."

:"I don’t have an explanation," Starscream admitted; he had wondered about holograms; he knew Hound could project holograms, but after this evening, he wondered aloud, "how did he get around Soundwave? He’s a telepath?!"

:"So are his kids," TC reminded him.

Skywarp shifted again, optics opening and closing again, and moaning beneath the oxygen mask.

They both stopped and watched him. The pregnant flyer seemed to go back to sleep.

:"Come on," Thundercracker told him, "let’s just go to sleep. I’ll stay up and watch over you guys."

Starscream nodded, only getting up to gather his sparklings and then joined them again. Skywarp was still shaking, despite all the heating pads and blankets. He was whimpering in his sleep every so often. Thundercracker saw this and wrapped his arms around him, and that seemed to settle the carrying Jet down for the night.

"Come on," Megatron gathered his incense burner and materials from his office, "Starscream’s with Skywarp, so we can go around with this," he realized he was still strapped from the mission, "probably could take my gear off."

Soundwave had his arms folded and leaned in the doorframe, still processing everything.

"You’ll notice how calm I am," Megatron emerged from his quarters, "we must not show It fear, Soundwave. See, if this THING thinks even for a moment that I’m afraid of It, It’ll feed off of that."

Megatron and Soundwave stopped. They both saw a dark figure shaped like a Seeker at the end of the hallway. They could tell It was blue from the hint of light that came from the brake lights. The figure seemed to be making sure the two Leaders saw him and then proceeded to enter Thundercracker and Skywarp’s quarters, and then slam the door loud enough for the entire Decepticon Base to hear it.

The Cassettes were in the Control Room when they heard the door slam. Rumble came out and looked.

"AHAHHAHAHAHA," Megatron burst into sarcastic laughter, "you see this, Soundwave? You see this slugger?! He makes SURE we saw him, and then he just saunters in there like that’s his frigging quarters now?! HAHHAHHAHAH! I’d say this Thing owes us some rent!"

"That is the proverbial final straw for myself," Laserbeak flew shakily, "I am heading for the Autobot Base. At least there, I shall be safe."

Soundwave didn’t stop him.

Megatron and Soundwave went around the Base with the incense burner, reciting prayers for the
deceased and prayers for protection. When they finished, they tried the Seekers’ quarters but found it locked, which, didn’t surprise them.

“We burned enough smoke to trapped It in there,” Megatron hoped, “at least for now.”

During the night, Skywarp opened his optics slowly, groggily, and looked up at the ceiling. :Hi Momma,: Crystal was up, moving her tiny legs to say hi. The pregnant Seeker looked around and realized he was in the Med-Bay. He was feeling much better than earlier, albeit still stiff and the oxygen mask was rather annoying. He saw monitors; at least his sparkling was doing well. His cables were still weak and slightly numb; it took him a minute to realize he was in Thundercracker’s arms.

The blue Seeker had fallen into a light recharge; his helm was leaning against his fist, and his other arm was around Skywarp’s belly in a protective hold. Starscream was on his left, helm on Skywarp’s shoulder, keeping his wings warm. The triplets were sleeping their own unique positions. It made him wonder what Crystal will look like when she sleeps. His optics darted back and forth to look at his brothers. He was surprised they were here, hugging him. He honestly thought they hated him. It made him wonder what was real and what had been a bad dream. He didn’t want to disturb them, and he was still weak, so he decided to go back to into recharge.

An hour later, Thundercracker woke up and called their Creators in Vos, knowing that their Mother was probably very worried about Skywarp.

Skywarp was still groggy but pretended to be asleep just to listen in.

“He’s okay, Mom,” TC was on the phone. “No, don’t worry, I won’t let him outta my sight. Okay, I’ll call again…Love you Mom.” He hung up the phone and sat there for a moment, thinking about everything.

Starscream turned over, looking at his sleeping sparklings, wishing he had a Parental Bond; he didn’t have one with any of the triplets, “I never know how they’re doing,” he stated, seemingly randomly, “right now, you’re the only one speaking to me.” He had Megatron cut off since the argument in the Control Room, and both his brothers since returning from Cybertron, but he had both ends of the Trine Bond open currently. However, Skywarp was still closing him off, “I just wish I hadn’t yelled at him like I did,” he turned over, “I don’t want that to be…” he couldn’t say it, “You’re right, TC, I don’t wanna fight anymore.”

“If it makes you feel any better,” TC rubbed at his optics, tiredly, “I had a big fight with ‘em.” Sighing now, “was…so stupid.”

Skywarp was nervous since he couldn’t see his brother’s faceplates by the position he was sitting in. Now he was watching him. He saw the being stand up and walk towards him. The darker Seeker whimpered, the monitor picking up his elevated spark rate.

“Hey kiddo,” TC cooed as he saw that his baby brother was finally awake, “how are you feeling?”

The black and purple Seeker saw those familiar red optics, reassuring him of his brother’s true identity, he tried to speak, but only bursts of coughs came through the oxygen mask.

“Here,” Thundercracker helped get him into a sitting position while Starscream removed the straps on the mask and lifted it off.

The poor Seeker coughed and choked, trying to spit up the water he had swallowed and could still
feel in his air intakes.

TC petted him on the back several times before hugging him tightly and rubbing his back, while Starscream took one of the blankets and covered Skywarp’s back and wings.

Skywarp’s throat hurt too much to speak; he opened his end of the Trine Bond out of necessity, and was surprised by the affection, love, and worry his older brothers were sending him over their Bond.

“Feeling any better?” Thundercracker asked, petting the back of his little brother’s helm, “It’s gonna be okay…”

Skywarp’s chassis still felt weak; he leaned against TC’s shoulder and tried not to move, fearing another coughing fit.

:Please speak to us, Warp,: Starscream pleaded, :You can tell us what happened.:

The black and purple Seeker keened and hid against his brother’s shoulder, quiet again. They watched him for a bit, :Maybe we should let him sleep,: TC whispered before Skywarp finally admitted, :…He locked me in the shower…:

:Who?!: Starscream asked, :Who locked you in the shower?! Please Skywarp, who did this to you?!”

The pregnant flyer kept hiding his faceplates, trying to hide in his big brother’s embrace. Starscream could tell he was afraid of their reaction. Sensing this, Thundercracker told him, :It’s okay, Warp, we’re not going to be mad at you…:

:T-The same guy,: Skywarp finally keened before dissolving into sobs.

:The mech that hurt you the other times?: Starscream asked, realizing just how bad things were, :Warp?: he was almost in coolant tears himself, thinking of how hurt his little brother was.

They could both tell Skywarp was scared to go on. Thundercracker looked at Starscream now, :Tell him he can tell you these things and you’re going to believe him,: He looked around, making sure there was no one watching them before continuing, :He needs to know he can trust us.:

The red and white Seeker understood completely; he had to put his own preconceived notices about who this mech was, if it was Mirage or if it was a rogue Cybertronian or even the supernatural theory. He realized that Skywarp was not only physically assaulted, but he was also MENTALLY assaulted. The very idea of being in the shower, weaponless and feeling exposed at every angle. Being trapped, fearing for his own life and the life of his unborn sparkling. It was too much. It was just too much.

:Skywarp, please,: Starscream began, :whatever happened, you can tell me and Thundercracker. We both love you and your sparkling so much. I promise you, whatever it is, I wouldn’t get mad, or blame you, or accuse you. And I know TC won’t either.:

:You know you can trust me, brother,: Thundercracker leaned against Skywarp’s helm, nuzzling him, :I’ll do whatever I can to protect you and the baby. You’ll always be my baby brother, and nothing will ever change that.:

Skywarp hoped against hope that they both meant the sweet things they were saying to him now. He was still a little scared, but finally, he shifted enough so that he was looking at their faceplates.

:Y-Yeah, he locked me in the shower,: Skywarp began, :and he stopped up the drain trying to drown us…: he tried, through their Trine Bond, to show them how scared he was emotionally; how he
fought to stay online if only to save his tiny sparkling. He was standing there...watching me...then he left...I got the washcloth outta the drain, but...was really tired by then...Don't remember what...anything else. Now, he only whimpered and keened miserably.

Thundercracker and Starscream wrapped their arms around their youngest brother, holding him and rocking him, rubbing his pregnant belly, and sending him loving and reassuring vibes through their Trine Bond.

“Why did I leave and go on that mission?” Thundercracker wondered aloud, “I-I’m so sorry, Warp...I’m sorry we were fighting, I’m sorry I left you alone...”

“I’m sorry too,” Starscream was crying now, “I don’t know who or what this mech is, but... We’re not going to let him come after you again.”

The triplets would occasionally look up, or roll over, and go back to sleep with all this, just making sure they were still there.

The three Seekers held onto each other, protecting each other, for the rest of the night. Eventually, they got Skywarp settled back down and fall back into recharge.

The next morning, Scrapper and Soundwave walked around the wreckage of the Tapedeck’s quarters, assessing the extensive damage, while Megatron stood in the doorway.

“Well, you’ve got a busted shower stall,” the Constructicon began, “and since that was a custom piece, that’s gonna cost ya.” He walked around, “Lotta water damage here,” they walked into Soundwave’s berthroom, hearing the floor creak loudly, “structural damage in your berthroom.” the floor creaked even louder in the main part of the quarters, “and in your living room, y’know, from the water.” He pointed at the walls, “Ya got, bullet holes all over the joint,” he sighed, “that’s gonna run ya the usual: drywall, plaster. As long as we’re gonna pull all that down, you want us to check on the support beams, y’know, in case the lasers hit ‘em?”

“Why not?” Soundwave groaned.

“You might wanna get some new furniture too, y’know,” Scrapper continued, “and of course, new doors. Plus, the labor of course.”

“Of course,” Soundwave oozed sarcasm.

Scrapper passed Megatron as he went into the hallway, “Alright, Soundwave, I’ll write you up an estimate and get back to ya in a few days.”

“A few days?” the Tapedeck asked, thinking it was a long time.

Scrapper: “More like a week.”

“Can you at least hang my front door?” Soundwave asked, “I have enough credits for that on me.”

“Nah!” Scrapper laughed, “I’d need to get the materials for that!”

“Fine,” Soundwave didn’t care to argue, “it’s just that my sons and I slept in the Control Room.”

“Oh, you’re gonna be there for a while, big fella!” the Constructicon guffawed, “With all that structural damage ya got, you and your kids could end up falling right into the basement if you
“stayed in there!”

“I said, fine,” Soundwave had enough, “just let me know when you have a quote.”

“Well do,” Scrapper saluted before leaving.

Megatron followed the Tapedeck back into the quarters as Soundwave finally began to talk about the attack, “I can’t believe it, Megatron. I just don’t believe it! How did I raise such incompetent boobs!” He sat down on the sofa, then immediately stood back up, “Why did they have to let him into my en-suite?!”

“Your inner sanctuary,” Megatron commented, knowing about this all too well.

“The single luxury I allowed for myself, Megatron!” Soundwave barked, “Wrecked! Completely and utterly wrecked! Slag, my entire quarters is a wreck! Look at this place! We’re going to be sleeping in the Control Room for months!” he sat down again, “I’m sorry. I just needed to get that out.” There was a pause, then finally, “I’m very grateful that no one was hurt.”

“I’m trying to think of how It got into the wash racks,” Megatron pondered, arms folded as he paced, hearing the floorboards creak under his weight, “I sealed off the attic. But after I spoke to Thrust, I’m thinking this flagger was in the basement.” He stepped into the berthroom.

“Careful,” Soundwave sighed, helm backward, resting on the sofa, “don’t fall through the floor and land on the ghost.”

Megatron looked at the en-suite from the berthroom, not risking stepping inside, “You’ve got floor vents.”

“I like central heating and air,” Soundwave admitted.

“That’s how It got in,” Megatron grumbled, coming back out. As he stepped into the living room, the floor made a dangerous crack, “probably shouldn’t walk here.” That’s when he noticed the broken picture frames among the debris. He picked up one, shaking the broken glass off. It showed Celene, holding a blue blanket with her newling inside.

“That’s the worst part,” Soundwave shook his helm, “I can’t replace those photos.”

“Um, that’s Celene,” Megatron didn’t know what to say, “which, um…which one is this?”

“That’s the day we brought Laserbeak home from the hospital,” Soundwave’s CPU was elsewhere.

“Second son,” Megatron commenting, thinking about how, during the ghost-fueled melee, a photo that got broken was a Mother with her second son, “like Skywarp.”

“That’s not the only one,” Soundwave got up, “you remember that full-length shot from my wedding day?” he was referring to a large framed photograph of himself and Celene, dressed in her wedding gown, that hung on the wall of their living room, “well…” he showed Megatron the photo at right, ripped to shreds when the glass and frame shattered, “not very fond of having my wedding pictures cut up.”

“I’m sorry, Soundwave,” Megatron sighed, “I shouldn’t have…gone on that mission last night. I wasn’t sure enough that It was back.”

“Eh,” the Tapedeck led him out, “so you just would have been home when my sons trashed the place.”
They went into the Control Room, where Ravage, Rumble, and Frenzy were sitting on the sofa. Buzzsaw was still drawing the picture he had been drawing since the night before, and Ratbat played absentmindedly with his toy.

Soundwave refused to look at any of them.

“How’s everything?” Megatron at least asked.

“We’re fine,” Ravage spoke for the group, “How is Skywarp?”

Megatron looked at his Third in Command for an answer.

“Stable,” was all Soundwave cared to say.

“It’s none of their fault, Soundwave,” Megatron finally told him, “it’s not their fault, and it’s not Skywarp’s fault.”

“I know that,” Soundwave admitted.

“Your Father’s just upset,” the Gunformer whispered to the Cassettes, “it’s okay.”

They nodded in response.

“Listen, Soundwave,” Megatron continued, “You know we’ve got some spare quarters here and there on the Base. With Motormaster and the Stunticons at the East Coast Base for the next few months, you guys could move in their apartments for the time being.”

“That’s all the way on the other side of the Base, Megs,” the Tapedeck grumbled, “it’ll take me forty-five minutes to walk to the Control Room every day.”

“It’s better than nothing, isn’t it?” the Gunformer tried.

The Tapedeck didn’t answer.

“Well...” Megatron tried to focus on their more pressing problem, “Could I see the footage from last night?”

Soundwave: “Like what?”

“Well, I know you keep cameras in your quarters,” the Decepticon Leader tried, “maybe they caught something.”

The Tapedeck typed in the request on his Computer Consul. The tape came up, showing only snow for that period of time.

“It didn’t work,” Soundwave suddenly slammed his fists on the Consul, making his sons jump, “OF COURSE IT DIDN’T WORK! NOTHING WORKS WHEN THAT THING IS AROUND!”

Megatron paced for a moment, “Think I’ll go check on the boys.”
“You guys were hungry, weren’t you?” Starscream had gotten good at feeding all three of his sons their sparkling-Energon simultaneously. He sat in a nearby chair, two of the boys on his lap and one on the berth, “Aren’t you good little mechlings? Yes, you are. Yes, you are!”

Thundercracker was not having the same luck with Skywarp, “Come on, kiddo, you haveta eat.” Skywarp was propped up by two pillows in a sitting-up position, with the blanket pulled up to his shoulders, :Why?:

“Because we have to show Spectro that you can breathe and eat on your own,” the blue Seeker explained, “otherwise, we can’t take you back home.”

:I don’t care,: Skywarp turned away, genuinely not caring.

“Your baby needs to eat,” TC told him.

:She’s fine,: the black and purple Seeker kept looking away, :…too full,: his fuel tanks were not as stuffed or hurting like they had been the night before, but they were still pretty full. Now, he just wanted to go back to recharge.

Thundercracker put the cube down on the nightstand for a moment and sat on the edge of the medical berth. He knew he had not resolved things between them, “Listen, Warp, I’m really sorry about how I yelled at ya last night. I shouldn’t have picked on your weight like that. I know you’re under a lotta stress because of this…attacker, whatever…” he looked away, “I’m sorry, I should have been more understanding.”

Skywarp refused to look at him; his faceplates seemed so sad and hurt.

“Tell you what,” TC stroked Warp’s cheekplate with his thumb, “the weather’s not supposed to turn bad until later today. Why don’t the three of us go up to the Tarmac and look at the skies.” He looked at Starscream, “We could bring the sparklings.”

“Oh, I loved doing that when I was carrying,” the red and white Seeker smiled, “Megatron used to take me out to look at the stars.”

But Skywarp was not interested, :….too cold,:.

“You still feel cold, eh?” TC cringed, “hope you don’t get a virus like I did.” He pulled up the blanket that was around the darker Seeker’s wings up and wrapped him up to his neck cables, “Well, maybe later. In the meantime, you should have your breakfast.”

Skywarp let out a keen as if he was being tortured. They could see his hands holding his belly under the blankets.

Starscream came over now, “Maybe that monitor is on too tight.”
I don’t feel good; Skywarp’s legs twisted, I stuffed myself.

“You’re still feeling sick from two night ago?” TC asked.

I ate twice as much last night; Skywarp couldn’t look at either of his brothers, feeling ashamed, I can’t control myself…

“Well, that’s partially my fault because I made you upset,” TC stroked his little brother’s helm lovingly, “You wanna stand up and walk around?”

Skywarp didn’t answer.

Thundercracker thought about it, “I’ll warm up the Energon cube in the microwave.” He stood up, “You just gotta take half of it to show the Reflectors.”

Starscream stayed close, rubbing the other’s pregnant belly, “Do you think you can speak?”

The black and purple Seeker stopped answering their questions. He didn’t seem to have any interest in getting out of the Med-Bay. The latest attack had left him completely drained, both physically and mentally.

Spectro Reflector came in, “Well? How’s he doing?”

“Been off the oxygen mask for three hours now,” TC was coming back with the Energon cube, “now, he’s just about to have breakfast.”

“Well, you can take your time with that,” the medic told them, “I need Soundwave to sign off on his release, and I can’t get a hold of him.”

Thundercracker was surprised, “He’s not in the Control Room?”

“I keep getting vocal mail,” Spectro shrugged, “so until he comes in, I can’t do anything.”

“What’s the matter with him, not taking calls?” TC barked.

“He’s not taking anybody’s calls; it seems,” Megatron stepped into the room, “he’s sorting his feelings out,” he rolled his optics on the last line.

“DADDY!” Darkmount was happy to see his Sire, who promptly picked the boy up.

Megatron: “So, how’s everything?”

“Well, I’d say he’s feeling better because he’s back to his usual stubborn self,” Starscream smirked, leaning over his little brother. “Now, you’re going to behave in front of your Leader, aren’t you?”

Again, Skywarp didn’t seem to care.

“He slept on and off all night,” Thundercracker was more serious, “we’re trying to get him to eat now.”

“So, I’m guessing…” Megatron figured he had better bring this up, “that you were here all last night?”

“Yes,” TC nodded, “I got up to call my Creators around midnight, but that was just in the next room. Why?”
“Because,” Megs adjusted Darkmount in his arms, “I saw someone enter your quarters last night.”

“WHAT?!” Thundercracker and Starscream shouted in unison, with the red and white Seeker leaping up from the berth.

Skywarp was still lethargic, but now he looked scared.

“You saw the ghost?!” TC asked, stunned.

“Can we talk about this…openly?” Megs’ optics looked towards his mate.

“Yes,” Starscream was serious, “I want to know what’s happening.”

Thudnercracker nodded as well, letting Megatron know with his optics that he had spoken to Starscream about being open to discussion.

“Well,” Megatron shrugged, “Soundwave and I both saw this mech at the end of the hallway, standing there like he owned the joint, and then he slammed the door of your quarters. Any other time, I would have just assumed it was you, but y’know, this seems to be a recurring event.”

“You saw the faceplates?” TC asked, his spark beginning to race, “This mech really looks like me?”

“It was dark, so I couldn’t tell you,” Megatron bit his lip components, “I would say though, It stood there to make sure we saw It.”

“Wait, wait a minute,” Starscream tried to understand, “I keep hearing about these bat wings and red claws.”

“It’s the same guy, Star,” TC told him, “he’s completely hideous, with blood red claws and upturned wings. He looks like a gargoyle from Notre Dame! But then I got Warp and Dirge and the others telling me that he looks like me! Now, what’s going on?”

“Oh…” Starscream thought aloud, “That’s what I saw the other day,” remembering how he wanted to talk to who he thought was his brother, only to be ignored and find out Thundercracker was in the Control Room, “I didn’t think…” then his optics widened, remembering, “AND DIRGE DIDN’T SEE HIM!”

“I TOLD YOU THAT IT WASN’T ME!” Thundercracker was getting nervous, “HOW COME THIS GUY’S DOING IDENTITY THEFT ON ME?!”

But Megatron was more thoughtful, “I’m wondering, if this Thing isn’t pretending to look like you, but rather, that’s how It looked before.” He stared at them, “From what I could tell; It didn’t look EXACTLY like you. It could have been another blue Seeker, and we’re just mistaken.”

The Decepticon Leader placed his son down with his brothers and paced around, “So, you and Skywarp have seen It’s Herald form, but others have seen the Seeker form.”

“Warp’s seen the Seeker form,” TC clarified, “he thought it was me.”

“The Cassettes all saw the Herald form last night,” Megatron continued, adding up the facts in his CPU, “but Soundwave and I didn’t. It only showed us the Seeker form. I haven’t seen the Herald form.”

“Do you think it’s two different mechs?” Starscream asked.

Thundercracker shook his helm.
“I think this Thing is the same being,” Megatron stretched his chin, “and It knows we’re onto It now. That’s for sure.” He looked at Skywarp now, hoping the hurt Seeker would add something to the conversation, but the youngest Jet just curled into himself.

TC looked at his brother as well.

“I’m sorry,” Megatron continued, “I thought it was best to stay in the home and stand your ground, but now, I’m thinking the longer It’s been in the Base, the more adapt It’s become to the surroundings.” He hated to admit this, “It’s gaining strength.” He paused again, “I think you two need to stay with Starscream and I. It’s not safe in your quarters.”

“Y-Yes, absolutely,” Starscream nodded, “I agree, you’re staying with us!”

“If I can get him outta here, that is,” Thundercracker told them, “Soundwave’s supposed to sign him out.”

“Hmmm…He’s too busy fighting with his Cassettes at the moment,” Megatron realized, “he could have been worried you guys would go to your quarters. I’ll go tell him you’re staying with us.”

When the Decepticon Leader left, Skywarp looked up at his brothers, “The Cassettes saw Gravechaser?:

“Well, they were firing at him and damaged their quarters,” Starscream explained, “I heard the shots, and I was protecting the sparklings. When I came to see what happened, I saw Soundwave carry you out.” It was hard for the red and white Seeker to talk about. The image of his little brother, limp and pale, and none of them even knew if he was alive.

“You didn’t tell me that, buddy,” Thundercracker found himself feeling sorry now for what BOTH his brothers had gone through.

But hearing that Soundwave’s sons had been subjected to the horror of seeing Gravechaser and the feeling of being under attack, hurt the black and purple Seeker all the way down deep into his spark. He knew the ghost only targeted them because they were taking care of him, and probably due to his relationship with Soundwave. Skywarp knew this was enough to drive Soundwave from his life completely. The Tapedeck had already made it clear that if his sons were ever put in any kind of compromising situation because of the Seeker, that it would never be tolerated. He knew that this was the reason Soundwave was refusing to treat him or even see him now. The coolant tears flowed freely now down his cheekplates.

Meanwhile, Soundwave finally snapped out of his anger and grief loop in the late afternoon. He was sitting wordlessly at his Computer Consul, flipping back and forth between camera feeds, turning over his old memory files: His Bonding day; the births of his sparklings; the rise of Sentinel Prime, Celene’s deactivation, followed by joining forces with the Gladiator known as Megatron, the rise of the Decepticons, coming to Earth, followed by the adoption of his two youngest sons two years apart, and finally…Skywarp. He had not even begun to think about the Seeker he had grown to have feelings for. He was still processing the information that his sons were confronted by this negative entity. He worried how this would affect them, but he was refusing to let his CPU go through what COULD have happened. They could have accidentally hit and killed each other. So instead, he told himself to be angry over the damage to their quarters and possessions, refusing to fully comprehend everything that had happened.

Rumble and Frenzy had tried to speak to him every so often, usually asking, “You need anything,
Pop?” to which he only grunted at them.

Megatron had also come in to speak to him about something or other, but seeing his friend in the present day, when he was so profoundly thinking about the past, was a bit jarring.

Finally, after sitting through an entire episode of ‘Maury Povich,’ he decided to stand and stretch his legs. He was vaguely aware that Buzzsaw had been drawing almost nonstop since the previous night, and now, the little yellow Bird seemed to have put his colored pencils down.

“Finished your latest masterpiece?” the Tapedeck quipped.

Buzzsaw nodded wordlessly.

Soundwave came over now, “Can I have a look?”

“Yes,” the small Condor nodded.

Soundwave picked up the sketchbook: It was an incredibly detailed rendering of a heinous looking mech, appearing in almost all blue, with a black beard, and pitch-black optics. Long, snake-like red claws were very much emphasized. And a look of complete disdain on the wicked mech’s faceplates.

Soundwave snapped out of his funk right away, “Son? Is this what you saw?”

The little guy nodded.

“I’m so sorry,” Soundwave bent down and wrapped his arms around his young son; the full horror of who, or what, they had seen in their own quarters finally hitting him like a ton of bricks. Or a bridge falling on him. Or a plane falling on him.

“Boys,” he called them both verbally and telepathically.

The other four that were on the Base gathered, “You requested our presence, Father?” Ravage asked.

By then, the big blue mech was practically in coolant tears. Gravechaser’s image seemed to have that effect on everyone.

“I’m so sorry…I didn’t understand,” his vocals cracking, shocking his Cassettes, “I’m very sorry.” He opened his arms to hug them, and they all gathered around him, all holding onto to him and each other.

“Does this mean you’re not mad anymore, Pop?” Frenzy asked. “Even about your Royal Dolton?”

Soundwave: “That broke as well?”

Frenzy: “Uh huh.”

“Even that,” Soundwave sighed, “possessions can be replaced. But none of you could ever be.”

They stayed together, hugging each other, for a while.

It was almost two in the afternoon now, Skywarp was fast asleep, laying on his left side with both arms wrapped protectively around his pregnant belly. Thundercracker had coaxed him into having
half of the cube of warm Energon, and it put him right into his recharge mode. His older brothers kept a careful watch over him. He was cycling air normally now, without the oxygen mask and not coughing anymore, but Starscream worried that he had not vocalized anything.

“I feel like his throat must be hurting,” the red and white Seeker commented as he rubbed his little brother’s wings. Every time he stopped, Skywarp whimpered in his sleep, so he kept rubbing his wings to keep him calm. The carrying flyer was bundled up, shivering every so often.

“I just wish we could get them outta here,” Thundercracker was sitting on Skywarp’s other side, facing him; he stoked the younger Jet’s forehelm.

“Okay, fellas,” Spectro came in, “Soundwave signed the discharge datapads. You’re free to go.”

“He did that without seeing Warp himself?” Starscream questioned.

“Who cares?” TC was glad, “We’re free to go!” He gently shook Skywarp’s shoulder now, “Come on, Warpy, time to wake up…”

A keen was Skywarp’s only response at first. A few more gentle nudges and the groggy Seeker turned over. His optics were blurry at first, and he saw a shape of a blue figure over his chassis.

“AUGGH!” and he started coughing again.

“It’s me, buddy,” Thundercracker whispered, “it’s me, it’s me…” he and Starscream kept trying to hold him and rub his wings.

Skywarp’s optics came into sharper focus, and he could see the blue figure was indeed Thundercracker.

“It’s alright,” Starscream told him, “we can leave the Med-Bay now.”

Skywarp didn’t fight them, but he secretly felt safer where he was. He liked hearing his sparkling’s strong sparkbeat on the monitor and being able to rest properly. And he was STILL hoping to get some answers on why his right side was still giving off that stabbing pain. Nevertheless, he did not resist when Spectro Reflector removed the IV and the monitor straps, and he was lifted into an awaiting wheelchair.

His sparkling was awake as well now, starfishing inside him.

The black and purple Seeker looked lost; he was still so weak as if his cables had not yet woken up. He was vaguely aware of his brothers moving around him; TC telling Starscream he can put one or two of the sparklings on the pregnant flyer’s lap, instead of trying to carry all three himself, and Starscream wondering aloud if they could still fit. He put Darkwing and Dawning on him.

“Skywarp, hold your nephews,” Thundercracker ordered.

They wheeled him back to Starscream’s quarters. Even wrapped up in the blankets, Skywarp’s hypothermia was still very much present. He was shaking, and his dentra started chattering. He was so cold, even though the sparklings seemed to be unaffected.

“I’m giving you my mother-in-law’s room,” Starscream told him as they entered the spacious quarters the red and white Seeker shared with the Decepticon Leader and their sons. It was when they wheeled Skywarp into the guestroom and picked him up and sat him on the berth that they realized he was trembling.
“What’s wrong?” Starscream suddenly worried that they had made a mistake taking Skywarp out of the Med-Bay, “Why’s he shaking like that?”

“He’s still cold,” TC sat down across from the youngest Seeker and rubbed his arms, trying to get Skywarp to look him in the optics, “you alright, kiddo?” He knew that feeling all too recently; the way that prolonged exposure to the cold could make you feel both exhausted and unnaturally sleepy, “Hope you’re not getting a virus like I did.”

Viruses were more severe with pregnant Seekers, “Then we need to get him into a warm shower,” Starscream told them.

Skywarp’s optics went wide with fear; he sent all his fears and anxieties through the Trine Bond, begging his brothers not to make him take a shower. The memory files from the previous night were still too fresh.

“Come on, up!” Starscream insisted again.

The black and purple Seeker started keening loudly as Thundercracker lifted him up and placed him back in the wheelchair, “Listen, we’re not gonna leave you alone, promise.”

Skywarp didn’t have the strength to physical resist, so instead, he just cried. He cried when they wheeled him to the wash racks; he was sobbing.

“What’s the matter with you?” Starscream pulled the shower curtain back, “This is MY shower!”

Skywarp still wasn’t speaking, but he was keening and sobbing audibly.

Thundercracker tried to ignore his little brother’s whimpering and hoped that this would help, “He likes to sit in the shower, Starscream,” he told him, “you got a chair?”

“Oh, um, no,” the Trine Leader looked around; the sparklings were giggling underpede.

“Alright, we gotta be careful then,” TC forced the blankets off and hefted the pregnant flyer up, “Come on, you’re shaking like a leaf.”

“HHHHWWWWAAAAWAWA!!” Skywarp cried loudly as if he was being torn apart. All his brothers were doing was helping him stand in the shower stall, under the nice, warm water.

“What’s wrong?” Starscream couldn’t understand what the problem was.

“He’s scared is what’s wrong,” TC barked, then tried to be sweet to their youngest, “come on now, Warpy, that’s not gonna happen again. He pulled Starscream along so that they were both holding onto their little brother.

Skywarp was on the verge of a panic attack now; he was crying and whimpering, even as his brothers were telling him that this was a regular shower stall; that this was a simple shower curtain. They tried hurrying up though, trying to get the warm water on his wings. The black and purple Jet leaned against Thundercracker’s shoulder miserably.

When they were finished, they turned off the water and wrapped him in towels.

Starscream: “You have his robe?”

TC: “I didn’t ask Soundwave.”

“I still have the one I wore when I was carrying,” Starscream gave their youngest brother his robe
and his warmest pede coverings.

They wheeled Skywarp back into the guest room and helped him into the berth. As soon as the carrying Seeker’s helm hit the pillow, he turned over on his left side and hid under the comforter. Being in the shower had warmed his chassis, but then because he wasn’t completely dried off; he was shivering again and had to bundle up. It wasn’t just that though; it was traumatic after the previous night.

“Do you want something?” Starscream tried, “Are you hungry, Sweetspark?”

Skywarp didn’t acknowledge him.

Thundercracker tried rubbing their little brother’s wings.

Starscream pretended not to be hurt, “Skywarp, I bought a lot of nice things for your sparkling over Christmas,” he got up, “would you like to see them now?”

Again, Skywarp refused to respond.

“Ummm…” the Trine Leader stammered before leaving the room.

:I know we’re still mad at him, but he’s at least TRYING to be nice,: Thundercracker scolded his youngest brother, :you could at least thank him:.

The black and purple Seeker just didn’t seem to care anymore; he didn’t feel like caring about anything. He didn’t even care about his own survival anymore; he just wanted to be allowed to carry his sparkling to term.

TC didn’t want to be mean to him either. He leaned over and rubbed the pregnant Jet’s back and wings while he was hiding under the blanket.

When Starscream came back in with the packages, the blue Seeker told him, “I think it was very nice of you to give him your robe and let him stay here. Just saying.”

Starscream could see that Skywarp was not interested in him or anything he had to say.

“Come on,” Thundercracker tried to distract him, “let him sleep. Let’s play with the kids.”

The red and white Seeker agreed but was still bothered by the still-frosty atmosphere between his Trine.
Chapter 72: By Transformersnewfan

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The snowstorms that had threatened for most of the day finally came at around five in the early evening. It was surprising that it could snow like this when there were freezing temperatures.

Just as he had recently, Megatron called for another early curfew and lockdown of the Decepticon Underwater Base.

Laserbeak opted to stay at the Ark for another night, much to his Sire’s dismay.

“He makes his own schedule,” Soundwave hissed.

“All the better to tell us when Prime gets in tomorrow morning,” Megatron tried, “if he’s on his way back from London, he’ll likely have a layover in New York.”

As the Decepticons checked in one by one, Megatron and Soundwave sat in the Control Room at the Computer Consul.

“How’s the Stunticons’ quarters?” Megatron asked offhandedly.

“I vacuumed twice already,” the Tapedeck groaned. He and his Cassettes had moved into their temporary quarters, much to the Tapedeck’s annoyance, “how can such a big mech like Motormaster have a square-shaped bathtub?”

“Matches his helm, I guess,” Megatron yawned, “remember, it’s only temporary. It could have been a lot worse, you know.”

Soundwave just huffed.

“I’d invite you to stay with Starscream and I, but we’ve got his brothers in Ma’s room,” Megatron sat back, trying to make conversation, “unless you and your kids want the sofa bed?”

“Think I’ll sleep in here,” the Tapedeck mumbled, “I need to watch the cameras at all times. Having a forty-five-minute walk back and forth isn’t going to be high efficiency.” He crumbled up some papers and threw them away in disgust.

Megatron didn’t move a circuit. He just waited for Soundwave to work his feelings out.

Finally, Soundwave turned towards his friend and began, “I’m always working. It’s not you, I used to work all hours for Ratbat,” referring to the retired senator and his youngest’s namesake, “I worked sixteen hours a day sometimes, and yet, I never made a lot of credits. I was never one of the mechs that made the big credits.”

The Gunformer just listened as Soundwave continued, “That’s why Celene was working on the third shift. She worked the third shift because it was late, and I could come home and take care of the sparklings, and she went to work at the lab.” He sat forward and folded his hands on the Consul, “She was working when the fire—” He suddenly slammed his hands down and stood up, pacing around and rubbing his facemask.
“You’re afraid of losing him the way you lost Celene,” Megatron concluded correctly, “and that’s why you’re ignoring him now.”

“It’s more than that,” Soundwave leaned against the wall, refusing to look at his friend, “she was a fertility specialist. Did this Thing kill my wife? Did I bring this Thing to Skywarp?”

“It’s an interesting theory,” Megatron pondered, “but I doubt it’s true. You and she had four sparklings together, and you’ve never sensed anything like this before.” He paused, “Have you?”

“No,” Soundwave confirmed.

“I doubt you would have missed THAT,” Megatron looked back at the screens, “and as I’ve told you. I’ve never seen this before. Personally, I think this entity is unique to Skywarp. Problem is, I don’t think he has any idea what brought It on.”

“How is Skywarp?” Soundwave finally asked.

“Depressed, at least from what Starscream tells me,” Megatron looked at him, “why don’t you go see him?”

Before Soundwave could vocalize it, the former Gladiator added, “And don’t say, you have work to do.”

Skywarp had a nice dream for once: He was playing with his daughter Crystal. She looked around six months old in his dream. She cooed and fluttered her little wings; the way he imagined she did inside him. He held her up in the air and kissed her on the forehelm. He just loved her so much.

When the black and purple Seeker woke up, he found his little nephew, Darkwing, curled up next to him. He yawned and rubbed at his optics, the little sparkling watching him while sucking on his pacifier. The room was small but pleasant enough; the door was open, it was apparent his brothers were keeping watch over him. The pregnant flyer could feel his baby moving around; calmly for once.

“Hey,” Thundercracker came into the doorway, “you’re up.”

“I guess…” the darker Seeker spoke for the first time since his near-deactivation in Soundwave’s shower stall; his vocalizer was raspy from not being used for almost a day, “can we go home now?”

TC didn’t want to rock the boat, “Well, they want us to spend the night.”

Skywarp didn’t believe that, “Star’s just gonna blow up at us again.”

“He’s been pretty good so far,” TC whispered, not wanting to let their brother hear, “look, I know this is rough, but, let’s just try and make the best of it, alright?”

The pregnant Seeker just laid there, feeling depressed again.

“You haven’t eaten much today,” the blue Seeker noted, “aren’t you hungry?”

Skywarp rolled his optics; it had taken practically all day for his systems to process his last binge, and his brother’s insults were still fresh in his CPU, “No, I’m a fat slugoid, remember?”

“Sorry,” TC sighed, “I said I was sorry.” He didn’t even know why he had gotten so mad. “Come on, I’ll make you Energon-spaghetti-O’s.”
Skywarp sighed, then thought it over, “Okay.”

TC: “You want us to feed your kids?”

“I don’t need your help!” Starscream was upset about being ignored, “I can take care of my own sparklings!”

There was still a frost between the carrying Seeker and Starscream, so they just said they were going to get dinner and left their Trine Leader with his sparklings.

“Come on, we can’t let this slagger Gravechaser keep us from living,” Thundercracker pulled his little brother along, “we’ll be fine, there’s a lot of Decepticons still awake.”

They went to the kitchen; Skywarp was sullen, sitting at the island, the same place he had been sitting months earlier when he first found out the ghost was more than just a few nightmares.

Thundercracker was mumbling to himself as he made the Energon-Spaghetti-O’s, “It’s rough, y’know? This fragger’s got us living in the Control Room, eating in the Mass Hall instead of our own quarters,” he fumbled with the pot holders, “disrupted our lives…when we should be getting ready for Crystal’s arrival.”

Skywarp had coolant tears in his optics again; his older brother was right, they should only be focusing on his sparkling-to-be now. Instead, they were afraid to so much as live in their own home, or even fighting with Starscream the way they had been. He knew deep in his spark that it was the negative entity that either caused the tension between their Trine, or their tension fed the negative entity. Six of one; half a dozen of the other.

The pregnant Jet thought about what Megatron had said; that this ghost was bullying and destroying him and how Gravechaser had such an unfair advantage because he couldn’t teleport. He had probably been waiting for this opportunity ever since Skywarp had been born. Slag, probably even BEFORE he was born, and now, he was using the Seeker’s delicate condition as a shield to hurt both himself and his beloved unborn sparkling. It hurt so much that this ghost was frightening his sparkling; it hurt so much to fight with TC; it hurt…it hurt…

“What’s the matter?” TC asked as he bought the food over.

“I-I’m s-sorry I was a brat, TC,” Skywarp keened, “D-Don’t h-hate m-me…”

“Oh,” the blue Seeker came over and hugged the sitting younger flyer to his chestplates, resting his helm against the other’s, “don’t cry, please…I’m sorry I yelled at ya.” He hated it whenever he made his baby brother cry, “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean it.”

“I-I’m s-sorry…its m-my fault he’s h-here,” Skywarp sobbed, “I-I’m sorry, I-I didn’t mean to hurt y-you, and C-Crystal…I-I brought this on…I-I wish I was n-never b-born…” he buried his faceplates into his big brother’s chestplates.

“Don’t ever say that,” it ripped Thundercracker’s spark into pieces to hear such things, “it’s not your fault, none of this is your fault,” he rocked the carrying Jet in his arms and stroked his wings.

At the same time, Soundwave gathered Buzzsaw and Ratbat and began walking to the kitchen. He had seen the Seekers go there on the camera and hoped that having his youngest sons along would soften everyone’s mood.
Meanwhile, Megatron sat at the Computer Consul; he flipped between the cameras, looking for any anomalies. While Soundwave would look for intruders, the Gunformer was looking for any signs of the ghost’s presence. He hadn’t lit any incense that day and was worried that it had now cleared in the attic, but he was waiting for Starscream to go to bed, just in case the Seeker would go off on him again.

The sun was going down…

“Can I tell you something?” Skywarp whispered, “And you won’t hate me?”

“I’ll never hate you, my brother,” Thundercracker kept hugging him and rocking him, “what is it you wanna tell me?”

Skywarp wanted to tell him that Gravechaser was his really Scourge, his biological Sire. He had to tell him; the secret was eating him.

“I-know w-why he’s after m-me,” the black and purple Seeker began, “H-He’s the ghost…He’s the ghost of y—”

BOOM! It sounded like something was tipped over up in the attic.

Both Seekers jumped; stunned silent. Skywarp hitched his air intakes, giving up a yelp.

There were heavy pede steps coming from the attic as if there was someone walking with big, heavy boots.

Skywarp was terrified; he knew Gravechaser was determined to stop him from telling Thundercracker the truth.

For his part, TC tried to make a brave outward appearance, holding his brother tightly, “We’re not afraid of you…” he threatened lowly at the ceiling; he was scared too, but he was not about to let this Thing hurt Skywarp or his niece-to-be, “…not afraid of you.”

:He’s trying to distract us, TC,: Skywarp whispered through the Trine Bond, :he can hear us when we talk….:

They had to remember to only communicate through their Trine Bond.

:Let’s go back to the Control Room,: TC told him, trying to nudge the younger Seeker to stand.

There was more pede steps, these even louder than before. Back and forth, back and forth they went, seemingly circling them from above like a shark.

Megatron saw how they were reacting through the cameras; he leaned in for a better look.

Now Soundwave came into the kitchen and saw their same, frightened reaction that the Decepticon Leader was seeing.

“What is going on?” the Tapedeck asked in a lower tone. That’s when he heard the pede steps for himself; he had never heard them before now, “There’s something up there.”

Megatron went to his Comm.-Link, “Get them outta there, Soundwave.”

“D-Daddy?” Buzzsaw keened; Ratbat whimpered in fear.

Soundwave clinched both his sons to his frame; he could feel the negative presence now, “He’s not
confined to your quarters as we thought.”

He went to take Skywarp by the hand; the pregnant Seeker took it, and he and Thundercracker edged towards the Tapedeck.

“Wait,” Soundwave felt a heaviness in the hallway he had never felt before since moving into their Earth home. “It’s in the hallway,” he let go of Skywarp, and instead pushed his sons towards the two brothers, “stay here…”

Ratbat and Buzzsaw were terrified; Skywarp grabbed each of them and hugged them.

“You feel it?” TC whispered.

There were no more pede steps in the attic, so they knew whatever it was had moved down a floor.

“Take the back exit,” Soundwave whispered, “If I see It, I can catch It.” The Tapedeck crept out into the main hallway, alone, stretching his sensors out, trying to get a bead on exactly where Gravechaser was at the moment.

Megatron watched from the Control Room; every plate in his chassis wanted to charge down the hallway and fight this Thing, but he knew that he would be of more help by watching through the cameras. “What do you see, Soundwave?” he radioed.

“Not sure,” the blue mech answered, beginning to edge further into the hallway, “It’s disappeared.”

At the same time, Thundercracker peered down the other hallway from the kitchen’s back entrance; it was pitch black despite the brake lights. He swallowed hard; his spark was pounding in his chestplates. He felt Starscream through the Trine Bond now; :TC, what’s wrong?: The blue Seeker realized it must feel like he was having a spark attack; :Stay inside with the kids, Star, don’t leave your quarters.: He had his handgun with him, but he knew it wouldn’t do any good against a paranormal being. He felt as if he had no way of defending himself or his brother; this would be like trying to fight smoke.

Skywarp kept his optics on his older brother; his spark was racing as well, and it was making his unborn sparkling very upset. He held onto the two Cassettes and jerked a bit and felt the pain in his right side. He just tried to ignore it. What he couldn’t ignore was the feeling of the tips of claws on his wings…

Skywarp gulped hard, “T-Thundercracker?”

“Yeah?” the blue Seeker was looking out into the hallway.

“He’s behind me,” Skywarp exhaled.

Gravechaser shoved the pregnant Seeker forward with both hands. Skywarp tumbled forward; his weight gain had made him unbalanced anyway, but he didn’t need this. He crashed into the stove, awkwardly grabbing onto the burners to keep his abdomen safe.

The Cassettes had seen the whole thing but had been unable to stop it. It had all happened in a matter of seconds.

And before Thundercracker had time to react, Gravechaser snipped his digits and turned on the burner on full force, burning Skywarp’s left hand.
Soundwave and Thundercracker came running back in, “SKYWARP!” the blue Seeker pulled him away and shut the stove.

“HERE!” Soundwave quickly pulled him to the sink and ran cool water over the keening flyer’s hand, trying to minimize the damage.

Not surprisingly, Gravechaser vanished in the confusion.

“AWAWWAA OOOOWWEEE!” Skywarp wailed in agony, “OOOOWWWEEE!”

“It’s okay, it’s okay, Warpy,” Thundercracker wrapped his arms around his little brother, “it’s okay.”

Megatron had seen the entire incident on the camera; his mouth gaped wide as he had seen the Seeker thrown across the room.

“We have to keep his hand on the ice,” Soundwave told them, trying to focus and not let his emotions get in the way again, “I have sulfadiazine in the Med-Bay.”

And as he had done a mere twenty-four hours earlier, the Tapedeck hefted the pregnant Jet into his arms and raced him to the medical wing. This time with Thundercracker and his Cassettes following.

At the same time, Megatron ran to his quarters, “LOCK YOURSELF INSIDE, STARSCREAM!” and ran down the hallway towards the others.

The red and white Seeker jumped up, completely lost on what was happening now. His sparklings gathered around him.

The Gunformer stormed down the hallway, pulling a large can of salt from his subspace, “ALRIGHT WHATEVER YOU ARE, I WANT YOU THE SLAG OFF MY PROPERTY!” He poured salt throughout the hallways, “GET OUT! YOU HEAR ME?! YOU HAVE NO POWER HERE!”

The Coneheads, Triple Changers, and Combaticons were all out of their respective quarters now, barking and yelling.

“Mega, what’s going on?!” Astrotrain yelled.

“Help me find the slagger!” Megatron bellowed as he busted into his office, “Look for anything that doesn’t feel right! Any sounds, any shadows!” he retrieved his incense burner, lit it, and waved it around wildly all over the Base: the hallways, the Control Room, the kitchen, especially the kitchen, where the latest incident had taken place.

“Come on,” he told Astro as they went into the basement. There was no way he was going down there alone.

Finally, he went to the Seekers’ quarters. The door was still locked, and the keys didn’t work, so he left the burner right outside the door, along with a line of poured salt. The Decepticons were all gathered around him now.

“Alright guys,” Megatron groaned, “you know the drill: If you see something, say something.”
“Easy now, Skywarp,” Soundwave instructed.

The pregnant Seeker’s screams were now died down to a low, pained keening. The Tapedeck had treated his seared hand with burn salve and carefully wrapped it in bandages. He also did a quick scan on the unborn sparkling, who was kicking a lot but was uninjured due to being well insulated in Skywarp’s gestation chamber. All the while, Thundercracker was holding him and doing his best to comfort him.

The two Cassettes watched nervously.

When he finished, Soundwave stroked the flyer’s cheekplate, “Hey, listen, I should not have ignored you all day,” his visored optics met the Seeker’s blurry ones, “it will not occur again.”

Skywarp tried to give a weak smile between sobs.

“Let’s take him back,” Thundercracker told him.

Again, Skywarp was wheeled back to their middle brother’s quarters in a wheelchair; a dazed look on his faceplates.

Starscream was completely freaking out, demanding from Megatron to know where his brother was, “I WANNA SEE HIM! WHERE IS HE?!”

“He’s coming,” Megatron told him calmly.

When they brought Skywarp back, Starscream threw his arms around him, “Oh! What happened?! Did you see the guy again? What happened?!”

“The slagger pushed him right into the stove,” TC was exhausted now, “I was fragging STANDING there, and he pushed him.” He couldn’t believe that he had not been able to protect his baby brother.

Skywarp was feeling slightly out of it now; both emotionally and physically drained. He had keened and cried so much, that his vocalizer hurt, and he thought he couldn’t cry anymore; he couldn’t feel enough to cry anymore.

The two older Seekers took him into the guest berthroom and bundled him up in the blankets. TC decided to make him another batch of Energon-Spaghetti-O’s, and this time, he had Dirge bring the box from the kitchen, and he made it in Megatron and Starscream’s kitchen. They also made him some Energon-tea.

All the while, the former Gladiator and Soundwave conferred in the doorway.

“I thought to stay in their quarters was best, but this Thing seems to be using their quarters like a slagging fort!” Megatron bit his lip components, “Then, we all have to stay together.”

“Very well,” Soundwave agreed.

They gathered his sons in the Control Room, not wishing them to be far away.

They opened the sofa bed and got dinner together.

“Pop, what’s going on?” Rumble asked, “Why are we moving again?”

“Safety in numbers,” was all Soundwave was willing to say.

“How’s Skywarp?” Frenzy asked.
“He’s um, he’s stable again,” the Tapedeck wasn’t sure how much he should say without scaring them. He did briefly go to the Computer Consul to make sure everyone was accorded for on the Base and ensure that all the doors were locked, and the Tower was lowered and secured. Megatron stayed in his quarters’ doorway, watching everyone.

“I don’t suppose the cameras were working in the kitchen?” Soundwave asked.

“They were,” Megs confirmed, “they just didn’t pick up It’s image.”

“Wow…” Soundwave wiped the sweat off his brow as he considered this. He called Laserbeak again, asking if anything had happened.

“Nil, Father,” Laserbeak signed, “Optimus Prime is scheduled for a return in the morning.”

“Thank you,” Soundwave told him, “and… I love you, son.” and he closed the connection. He looked back at Megatron, “This ghost is getting out of hand.”

“We just have to get through this night,” Megatron whispered, “we just have to talk to Prime in the morning and figure out Ironhide’s connection. It’s the only answer I can come up with right now. Tomorrow, we’re all going in for battle with this Thing.”

It was an early turn in; TC was in the shower, and Starscream had to watch over Skywarp. Megatron moved their sons’ crib to their master berthroom for their protection.

“Will you all PLEASE tell me what’s going on?” Starscream hissed a whispering demand from his mate and Soundwave, “My Trine won’t tell me,” looking at Soundwave, “you won’t tell me,” turning to Megatron, “YOU had better tell me!”

The Decepticon Leader had been trying extremely hard to pacify his Bondmate throughout this ordeal, but now he had had enough, “Starscream, the last time we tried to explain things to you, you threatened to go home to your old science teacher. So, why should I bother now?” He was hurt; and Starscream was hurt too because now, the red and white Seeker was truly confused by all the circumstances of the accidents.

“I just…” Starscream began, “I just don’ know what to think anymore.”

“Just go to bed,” Megatron shook his helm, “we’ll talk in the morning.” He went to the Control Room now.

“Aren’t you coming?” Star asked.

“I have research to do,” the Decepticon Leader went to the Computer Consul, where he and Soundwave sat to work and flip back and forth between the cameras.

So, Starscream went to his berthroom, feeling alone and dejected once again.

Poor Skywarp laid on his back in misery. He had been able to get some sleep by turning on his left side at night. But now, with his bandaged, throbbing left hand, that was not possible. His right side would stab him to near insanity from pain if he tried to lean against that side, so his only option was flat on his back, under his heavy pregnant belly.

“Try putting your hand up here,” Thundercracker laid Skywarp’s hand over the carrying Seeker’s canopy glass and covered him up to his chin before laying down next to him, “hopefully you can get
some sleep, huh kiddo?”

The berth was smaller than the ones in their quarters, but neither minded since they wanted to stay close to each other.

TC: :How’s your baby?:

Skywarp groaned, :Practicing for the Olympics:.

Crystal found out that when she balanced herself on her little hands, she could stretch her tiny thrusters up and push out against the surface of Skywarp’s belly, making him wince in pain.

“Awww, you need to go to sleep now, sweetspark,” Thundercracker whispered to his little niece-to-be, “it’s bedtime now.”

She seemed to understand her uncle, curling up and calming down, :Uncle, Crystal sleep now…:

:She says to tell you goodnight,: Skywarp was still miserable though; thinking about the last crazy two nights, one where he almost succumbed to hypothermia in Soundwave’s en-suite, and the other getting tossed across the kitchen like a huggy android, and then burned.

Thundercracker wrapped his arms around his little brother, kissing him on the forehelm, determined not to let this ghost get another chance to hurt him.
By two in the morning, everyone was in a fitful recharge — all except for two: A blue ghost with red claws, and a certain red and white Seeker.

Megatron had opted to move his Father’s old recliner into the living room, of which he had finally nodded off in, fusion cannon still attached.

In the Control Room, Soundwave was laying on the edge of the sofa bed, next to five of his six Cassettes, sleeping with his arm propping up his helm.

Megatron’s front door was barricaded with two tables, and with crosses and a string of garlic, just in case.

Skywarp had twice keened in his recharge when he accidentally moved his arm. Thundercracker had to put his injured hand back on his canopy glass and rub his helm to get him to settle down again.

The triplets were sleeping with their little arms intertwined around each other in their crib.

Starscream sat up in the middle of his berth; arms folded over his knees, which were pulled up to his chestplates. The silence of the night was driving him insane. He thought deeply and analyzed the situation. Someone, either an Autobot, a Neutral, or some sort of being with a seemingly endless array of powers, was after his younger brother and the sparkling he was carrying. Starscream was still not convinced this was supernatural or paranormal, but whoever…whatever this offender was, had clearly breached their security parameters at every turn, and somehow had even evaded Soundwave’s telepathy. It seemed as if whenever this mech wanted to attack Skywarp, he succeeded, despite the Decepticons’ best efforts to protect him.

He realized that Skywarp very well could have been killed in that shower stall. What, Starscream wondered, would he do without his little brother? How could he and Thundercracker go on without their brother? He was a third of their sparks.

They were so close always. Well, he had to admit to himself that he fought a lot with the darker Seeker. Why? He wondered now. What were they fighting about? He didn’t even know why he was so angry. Did it really have to do with Bonding to Megatron? He realized it fit the timeframe when they began to grow apart, but…There were his procedures. The ones he never told Thundercracker or Skywarp about. The ones he would be on medications for the rest of his life for. But, he thought, nobody had to know about that, right? Skywarp didn’t know about them, so why was he always snapping at the younger Jet.

Flashback:

At night, Starscream lay on his berth staring at the ceiling and replaying the night he last saw his Bondmate in his processor. “‘Yes, your Lordship, he’s a classmate.’” repeating it as if Skyfire had stated it with far more confidence than he had when he originally said it. “‘We don’t have anything…Please leave…please leave NOW.’” He sighed, tears forming in his optics again, “How could you, Skyfire? How could you…”
Skywarp: “Hey Screamer?”

The red and white flyer was pulled out of his self-pity by his little brother’s sympathetic vocals. He turned to face him.

“I just wanted to say…Even if things didn’t work out with, um, that Shuttle-Bot that you said not to say the name of,” the darker flyer tried to lighten the mood. “You’ll always have Thundercracker and me…”

Starscream still didn’t crack a smile; he was still sparkbroken by Skyfire’s betrayal. But he pulled Skywarp down and hugged him, burying his faceplates into the younger Seeker’s chestplates and cried.

End of Flashback:

Starscream smiled at the memory file now. There were more recent memories too, like how his brothers were at his side through all seventeen hours of labor when he gave birth to his sons. He didn’t want to fight with TC or Skywarp like this. He should never have accused TC of having mental issues, and he should never have yelled at Skywarp all those times. He was hearing rumors around the Base, rumors that Skywarp had banned him, or was planning on banning him from the delivery room. He was hoping they would be on speaking terms by the time the sparkling was ready to be born, and he would be allowed to witness the birth. He hadn’t even gotten the chance to show his brothers that he had finally finished that blanket he was making for the sparkling.

Said blanket caught his optic now, neatly folded on a nearby chair. Starscream scooted off the berth and went over to it. He picked it up and held it up, making sure it was perfect. He folded it now, sighing, maybe Skywarp was still up?

The red and white Seeker stepped out of his berthroom, surveying how Megatron was recharging. He tiptoed to the guest berthroom, and peeked inside: Thundercracker was sleeping, but Skywarp had a pained look like his faceplates, as if he was either having a nightmare or in some kind of pain, perhaps from his burned hand, while he was half-asleep.

Starscream crept inside, and adjusted the blankets around the youngest Jet, and smoothed the worried lines on his brow, before leaving the baby blanket in the room with them.

The Trine Leader walked around the living room now, studying his Bondmate…

Flashback:

“I WON’T SHUT UP! I WON’T!!” Starscream was on the verge of coolant tears now, “I DON’T KNOW WHY YOU’RE ALL DOING THIS TO ME!!!” looking at Megatron now, “M-Megatron…J-Just…Stop…I-If you keep talking about this nonsense, I-I’ll leave you!”

The Decepticon Leader’s optics widened despite his otherwise hardened exterior. Inwardly, he couldn’t believe his beloved mate would take their argument to this level.

“I’ll go!” Starscream continued, “And I’m taking the sparklings with me! I’m serious!”

End of Flashback:

He realized now that he had made rifts between not only his brothers, but with Megatron as well. He had gone too far when he used their sons. Oh, God…

The boys had seen them argue too much; too many times. This was not good. No wonder
Darkmount was seeing things. Wait…

Flashback:

“Kids get scared all the time, Megatron,” the Seeker tried to dismiss the former Gladiator’s suspicions, “Darkmount probably saw a horror film on television or something.”

End of Flashback:

He realized now that Darkmount had seen whoever…WHATEVER had been attacking Skywarp. The same being that, when Thundercracker saw him, it put him into the Med-Bay out of sheer terror. Starscream thought about it now; when was the last time TC was scared of anything like that? He couldn’t think of anything. And his little SON saw the same being?!

Between seeing his younger brother suffering, his older brother was now suffering, and hearing that his son was frightened, Starscream pondered what he should do about this. Finally, he decided enough was enough. This mech had too much freedom; too much control; too free to have reign over the Decepticons. Who was this ‘Gravechaser’ anyway? And who was he to hurt his baby brother?!

“Enough is enough,” Starscream whispered lowly. His brothers had always been there for him, and now, it was time to return the favor.

The red and white Seeker went to his closet and retrieved his Null-Rays and a baseball bat. He carefully moved the tables and slipped out of the quarters.

Now in the Control Room, Starscream took some of Soundwave’s tools, including a flashlight, tape recorder, and a hand-held motion detector. “All right, I don’t know what’s going on,” Starscream stated aloud, “but I’m gonna figure it out.”

The Tapedeck and the Cassettes didn’t notice him.

The hallway was cold again, which didn’t surprise the Seeker since it was still snowing outside. In fact, he could hear the winds hallowing, even though they were under water. Said seas were rough tonight as well, crashing against the frame of the Base, making it creak and crack.

Unlike Megatron, Starscream never opted for brute force, but rather cunning and craftiness. He wanted to psych out his opponent, take him out with his wits instead of physical strength. He would find this mech and confront him. By the end of tonight, he would have this intruder laying on the ground and begging for mercy. Most likely Mirage.

Gravechaser wandered about his son’s quarters aimlessly. The others were catching onto his tracks almost as fast as he could think them up. This Tarnian Gladiator, Megatron, obviously knew a lot about the spiritual realm. He was sealed up in here, at least until the smoke cleared.

Suddenly, the front door clicked open.

The ghost turned suddenly, “Thundercracker?” he hoped, but he knew really that his son would probably never come back to this home in the middle of the night. It was just a sweet fantasy that they could just…talk. Gravechaser went invisible again.

Starscream entered his brothers’ quarters now. The place he himself called home for many years until his Bonding. He looked around: It was dark, and there was a strange chill in the air as if a door or a hatch—perhaps the one that led to the attic—was open somewhere. The red and white Seeker
narrowed his optics, ready for the battle.

“Well, you must be very satisfied with yourself, aren’t you?” Starscream sneered at the nothingness, “You got them out. You chased them both out of our home, didn’t you?”

Gravechaser momentarily wondered if Starscream could somehow see him, but it soon became clear that the Seeker was addressing someone he thought was alive.

“I’ll bet you think you’ve won, don’t you?” Starscream sauntered around cockily, “Yes, you’ve got them all fooled, don’t you? Even Megatron; they all believe you’re some sort of super force.”

He spotted Thundercracker’s broken tablet in the corner, where it had been flung, and picked it up, “But you can only fool some of the mechs some of the time, you know,” he shook the glass into a trash can, “and you couldn’t fool me.”

He went to the kitchenette, running his digits along the countertop, “So what’s your game, hmmm?” he kept looking around for someone to respond, “You think by targeting Skywarp that you’re going to get something? Are you trying to get some information out of him, maybe? What is it you want to know? Perhaps I can answer your questions.”

Gravechaser shook his helm in disgust.

“Let me guess,” Starscream continued, “you think by scaring him, scratching him, and beating him up, that you’re going to get some pertinent information? Why is that? Because he’s not allowed to teleport. That’s it, isn’t it?”

The flyer moved to the wash racks now, opening the door, “I doubt that you are aware what an offense it is in the Seeker culture to touch wings offensively,” he looked around at the laundry hamper and shower curtain, “well, I’m from Northern Vos, and we have a bit of a credo of our own, you know,” he pulled back the shower curtain suddenly, “It goes, ‘You fight with one Seeker, you fight with all of us!’”

There was no one there.

Starscream narrowed his optics as he returned to the living room, “I’m the Trine Leader! Do you have any idea what that means? Well, to put it in the simplest of terms, since, well, you don’t seem the intellectual type, we’re brothers for life.”

Gravechaser watched him soundlessly.

“It was THEIR idea to make ME the Trine Leader,” Starscream proclaimed proudly, “Thundercracker is the oldest; but he said to me, ‘No Star, you’re the one with the drive.’ He told me he was more laid back, and he would support me. And Warp? You know what he said to me? He said, ‘We’ll follow you anywhere, Star.’ No one…NO ONE ever believed in me like that before.”

Gravechaser rolled his black optics.

“I am the Second in Command of the Decepticons,” Starscream pontificated, “I am the Air Commander of the Decepticon Air Force. I am Bonded to the most powerful mech in the galaxy, and I am the carrier of his sparklings. But before all this, I was their brother. And I will ALWAYS be their brother.”

Gravechaser sarcastically clapped his claws in silence.

“I know who you are, you know,” Starscream smirked. “I know your secret.”
The ghost stopped clapping. What?

“You know that little paperless-society-project Skywarp and Soundwave are doing, right?”
Starscream let out a little giggle, “Now all the data we’ve collected over the years is just a click away on a datapad. Just. A. Click. Away.”

The ghost listened.

“You wanted to be a Decepticon,” Starscream strolled around, “you applied for it.”

Gravechaser realized that the Seeker had it all wrong.

“You didn’t think I knew, did you?” Starscream went on, “Because this was back when the Decepticons were just a precious few, when they had that little office, you know, the one in the back of the detective agency on Circuit Street?”

“What are you rambling about, fool?” Gravechaser asked to himself, too silently for Starscream to hear.

“Isn’t that right, Dino?” the red and white Seeker smirked, “It IS Dino, isn’t it? That was your designation, you know, before you changed your name, right…MIRAGE?!”

“Oh, again with this Mirage fragger?” Gravechaser could not believe this, “The one singing with the pink bot? He can’t be serious.”

“My poor brother,” Starscream continued, “you’ve got him fooled that you’ve been targeting him since he got pregnant. But I know better. You started coming here after he took the job doing the paperless-society-project. It was at the same time, you know because he must work a desk job. So, I can understand how he would be confused, and believe that you were after his sparkling. But I KNOW what you’re after, you slagger, you’re out to keep your secret buried. Because you know as well as I do, that once Optimus Prime returns tomorrow, and finds out who you really are, that you’re going to lose your cushy little espionage agent title you treasure so dearly.”

“Seriously?” Gravechaser wondered.

“Well, it didn’t work, Mirage,” Starscream went to the berthroom, “your little tricks and scare tactics have all failed. You’re so desperate; you tried to drown him? Pul-luze…You think you can deactivate my strong little brother that easily?!’” he looked at their berths, thinking how they had left in a hurry, “You think I’m going to let that go?!” he looked at the closet now, “Do you honestly believe that I would just let something like that go unpunished?!’” he flung the closet door open, and found nothing. He looked up and saw the trap door, and raised an optic brow, “You hear me, Mirage? You Tower mechs, I tell you, Chris was right, you just can’t trust the coastal elite.”

A moment passed, and Gravechaser shook his helm, “Of course, you know, this means war!”

Starscream shut the berthroom door and then the closet door, “Hmph!” he picked up the blankets that were on the floor and put them on the berths, “Might as well clean up while I wait.” He made their berths, then went to the nursery.

The red and white Jet sat in the rocking chair and looked over the sparkling crib. He ran his digits over the railing gently, smiling. He picked up some of the huggy androids he and Thundercracker had picked out and placed them in the crib. Then he began going through the unopened layette box sets and began folding the tiny sleepers and hooded bath towels, and the little blankets. Then he stacked up the boxes of diapers, thinking they needed to buy more, knowing full well how newlings go through at least six a day.
When Starscream finished arranging everything, he yawned and decided to turn in for the night. He decided to sleep in Skywarp’s berth. He got under the blankets and covered his helm, pretending to be Skywarp, thinking that the intruder, or Mirage, would think he was the darker Seeker, and, once the blue Autobot showed up, Starscream would be ready for him.
Chapter 74: By Transformersnewfan

Gravechaser waited for a little over an hour before retaliating. It would have been smarter of the ghost to hide, letting Starscream continue to believe in his Mirage theory. An even better idea would have been to appear as Mirage, running and escaping, and from there, the Seeker would boast and bellow how his theory was correct and throw Megatron and Soundwave’s entire investigation into turmoil. Or the simplest idea: to escape into the hallway now that Starscream had breached the salt and move about the Base to find his next hiding place. Yes, all those ideas were very good, Gravechaser considered. But, alias, Starscream had to be punished now.

“Screamer?” the fake ‘Thundercracker’ lied, “Screamer?”

Starscream sighed and rolled over, peering out of the blankets.

The berthroom door was open now, and the outline of a blue Seeker in the darkness was visible.

“TC?” Star asked groggily, “W-Wha?”

Something was very wrong. The first thing Starscream realized was how deathly cold the berthroom had become; a whiff of his breath was seen as if he were outside in the snowstorm. The second was that the shadowy figure before him was definitely NOT Thundercracker. He reached out for his Trine brother through their Bond and found the blue Seeker was sleeping. They had been cutting each other off for weeks, but they had only reopened their Bond the previous night, at TC’s insistence; an act that would probably save Starscream’s life now.

The strange blue Seeker stood before him in the darkness, a faint sneer on his…It’s faceplates. All Starscream kept thinking over and over again was that this was not Thundercracker. This was who he had seen in the hallway that day. This was who Dirge must have seen on the Tarmac last night. This was who was hurting Skywarp. This...

“Who are you?” the red and white Seeker gasped as he sat up slowly; he was suddenly terrified.

Gravechaser approached now, and as he did, he started to change, growing and morphing into his evil form: black beard, upturned pointed wings, red, insanely long claws, and those cold, black, unlit optics.

Starscream was petrified; he now had a full view of the entity that was stalking his younger brother. It was not a mech; It actually had a more transparent essence, almost like pure electricity, and It was there, but not there. The very existence of this being shattered everything Starscream had ever been taught about science and the universe around him. He felt his sanity crumbling in his processor.

Gravechaser began laughing in a mocking way, “Muhahahahahahaha….”

And that was when it hit the Trine Leader: THIS was Gravechaser. THIS was what poor Skywarp was seeing. This is what poor Skywarp was being attacked by. THIS was who Thundercracker had seen in their living room that made him run away from their home screaming. THIS was who had hit
Skywarp with the sonogram tape. THIS was who had started the fire in the Base on Christmas Eve. THIS was who burned Skywarp’s hand and nearly froze him to death in a deadly water tank made from Soundwave’s shower stall. THIS was who the Cassettes had seen and begun firing on wildly. THIS was who Darkmount and his brothers were terrified of. THIS WAS GRAVECHASER!

“AAAAUUUUGGGGHHHH!!!” Starscream shrieked like he never had before.

Gravechaser then smacked him across the faceplates, leaving long claw marks across.

“AAAAUUUUGGGGHHHHH!!!” bleeding, Starscream fell on the ground, his faceplates burning.

Gravechaser leaned over him now, an evil, cold, menacing presence.

“NNNNNOOOOOO!!!” Starscream began crawling away from the monster, towards the door.

The entity continued to laugh, “Muhahahahahahaha….”

Starscream managed to get to the living room, “HELP ME!”

That’s when Gravechaser stopped laughing. There was dead silence.

Starscream looked up.

Energon blood began to drip from the wall. First, it was one drop, then two, then there were many drips, all dripping Energon blood, and a specific kind at that. The Seeker reached out to touch it, and felt the tacky, thick liquid on his digits: It was Seeker blood.

“AUUGGHHH!!!” the red and white Seeker choked; he couldn’t scream; that was when it began to snow. Yes, SNOW in the quarters. Snow began blowing in their quarters! Starscream keened now, trying to curl into a ball.

“Come on, Starscream,” a vocal from the past called out, “just a few miles further!”

No. It couldn’t be. It just couldn’t be! “S-Skyfire?” Starscream whimpered, “S-Skyfire, NO!”

That’s when he heard the voice of his old captor, “What will you promise me if I let you out?”

“N-No…” Starscream sobbed, “Y-You’re not r-real…”

The front door burst open!

Then the Gregorian chanting started.

The poor Seeker suddenly felt as if there was something behind him, coming from the berthroom.

“Still think it’s your friend, Mirage?” Gravechaser snarled, gripping Starscream by his neck cables and lifting him into the air like a toothpick, “Can Mirage do this?”

Starscream saw the walls crumbling around them. It wasn’t physically possible, but by now, he was pretty sure this being had taken him to some other realm. Suddenly, there was grungy, dirty steel and dirt all around them. It looked like…an old mine?

“This IS your fault, you know,” Gravechaser had such a belittling tone to his wicked vocal, “If you hadn’t yelled at Skywarp that day, I wouldn’t be here.”

“W-What?” Starscream didn’t understand, “I-I didn’t yell—”
“If you hadn’t yelled at Skywarp the way you did,” Gravechaser teased, “Skywarp wouldn’t have gotten himself knocked up without a physical, and he wouldn’t be dying now…”

“D-Dying?” Starscream’s processor couldn’t understand, “M-My brother’s dying?”

“And I wouldn’t be here, terrorizing him…” Gravechaser then snapped his digits, and Starscream heard his own vocals now, as if on a playback loop.

“WHERE THE SLAG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH MY SON?!!”
“I did NOT give you permission to take my son off the Base, Skywarp!”
“You had NO BUSINESS teaching my sparkling how to fly! I’m their Creator and I and their Sire alone will decide how they learn to fly! You have NO RIGHT to do that! Do you hear me???”
“They had no business teaching MY son anything! You’re not his Creator!”
“Listen to me, you little fool, NEVER, EVER teach MY sparklings anything! DO YOU HEAR ME?!”

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“Listen to me, you little fool, NEVER, EVER teach MY sparklings anything! DO YOU HEAR ME?!”

Starscream wanted to curl into a ball, shaking and whimpering like a sparkling now. Did he really sound like this? But his thoughts of grief and self-pity were interrupted when he felt the horrible ghost’s claws tighten around his neck cables, enough to draw Energon-blood.

“I can’t help but notice those maggots aren’t in your visions,” Gravechaser dragged him out the door, “I wonder why?”
“NNNOOOO!!!” Starscream was keening now, coolant tears in his optics. He tried to pull the claws off of himself, but the ghost was much too strong.

Gravechaser raised an optic brow over his black, dead optics, and a sickening grin grew across his transparent faceplates as he realized, “They don’t belong to you, do they? They’re not even your spawns!”

What was left of Starscream’s sanity seemed to slip away as he realized the ghost knew his secret.

Gravechaser lifted them both into the air and dragged the helpless Seeker through the hallway. The elevator doors were open, but there was no elevator car!

“Well, this has been fun,” Gravechaser cackled, “but, as you well know,” he was mocking him, “You’re not the one I came back for.” Then he flung the red and white Seeker down the elevator shaft.

“AAAAUUUUGGGGHHHH!!!!” Starscream felt himself falling down the dark shaft, much further than what should have been their basement, screaming all the way down. And when he crash-landed on the bottom, he felt every bit of his metal frame shatter into little pieces. He felt the most excruciating agony! He couldn’t move at all. Dying…Dying…He felt his systems shutting down one by one now…His CPU blinked several times…He couldn’t speak…all he could do was send pleas for help through his Bonds.

It was only going on for mere minutes. Simultaneously, Megatron, Thundercracker, and Skywarp were jerked awake by the agonizing distress calls from Starscream.

“YYEOWWW!” Skywarp cried out as he was reached from his sleep, while practically jerked off the berth.

Thundercracker woke up with a start, “WHAT? WHERE?”

“STARCREAM!” Megatron bolted online; he raced to his berthroom, not seeing his mate there, “WHERE ARE YOU?!” His little sons were waking up and whimpering.

In the Control Room, Soundwave heard the ruckus and got up now, “What’s going on?” his Cassettes looking around one by one, hearing only Megatron hollering.

“I GOTTA FIND HIM!!!” Megatron grabbed the crosses and the salt, knowing he wouldn’t be needing his Fusion Cannon.

“I’ll go with you,” Soundwave told him.

“NO!” the Decepticon shook his helm, “Stay with them! It’ll come after Skywarp next!”

So, the Tapedeck ran to the back berthroom, telling his sons, “Get the sparklings!”

Ravage in turn, went to the triplets.

The Gunformer ran down the hallway as fast as he could.

Lights inside every quarters began turning on, and Decepticons began coming into the hallway.

Megatron found the Seekers’ quarters door locked, he kicked it in and burst through, holding the cross out in front of himself.
As soon as the former Gladiator entered with the cross, the quarters became completely normal again. The coldness vanished. Megatron had not felt a thing out of the ordinary.

Starscream was laying in the middle of the living room floor, sobbing and keening in a fetal position, “H-Help m-mee…”

“STARCREAM!” Megatron bend down and took hold of him, “Starscream, wake up!”

“N-No…” the red and white flyer was shaking like a leaf, feeling the agony of his injuries, “N-No…”

“Starscream, please wake up,” Megatron spoke as softly as he could, reaching through their Bond with comforting thoughts to his beloved Seeker, “it’s me, Megatron.”

Megatron? Megatron was here? With him, in the elevator shaft? Starscream forced his optics open and saw his Bondmate’s worried faceplates.

“It’s alright, my love,” Megatron wrapped his arms around him, “I’m here now…”

Starscream suddenly realized he was laying on the floor of his brothers’ quarters. There was no elevator shaft; no snow; no Skyfire; and no ghost… “M-Megatron?” When his mate helped him to sit up, he realized he wasn’t injured at all.

“Are you alright?” Megatron worried, “It didn’t hurt you, did It?”

The Energon-blood. He remembered the blood now.

“T-The wall!” Starscream rasped out, pointing towards it. When he and Megatron both looked at it, the wall was completely normal.

“B-But, i-it was covered in Energon-blood!” the Seeker insisted.

Megatron looked at it but didn’t see any blood.

Starscream went to look at the blood on his hand, but there was nothing on his hand, “B-But, I-I…” he felt his faceplates for the scratches but didn’t feel them now, and he could tell that Megatron didn’t see anything wrong with him. Now, he felt as if he must have had a break with reality, “Oh…God in heaven, what just happened to me?!”

Megatron put his arms around his smaller mate, “It’s alright…It’s alright, my Star, I’m here….” He picked Starscream up, letting the Seeker wraps his legs around his waist and held him tightly, “Come on, I’ll take you home…”

The poor Seeker began wailing like a sparkling, burying his faceplates into Megatron’s neck cables. He was broken by the attack; all his pride had left him, as he let his Bondmate carry him out, both ignoring the looks from the other Decepticons.

“Return to your quarters!” the Gunformer barked at his troops.

:Please don’t cry, my Seeker,: Megatron whispered through their Bond, :I have you now…: When he reached their quarters, he carried Starscream in, shut the door behind them, and proceeded to sink to the floor, still holding his mate, who was clinging to him for dear life.

“Oh Starscream, why don’t you ever listen to me?” the former Gladiator sighed, “Why did you go in there by yourself? I wouldn’t have even gone in there alone at three in the morning!”
I’m s-sorry…: the poor Seeker keened, coolant tears streaming down his faceplates, It w-was h-horrible…I-I didn’t…I didn’t…:

Megatron sighed, rubbing the back of his Seeker’s helm.

Megatron, h-how?: Starscream pleaded, H-How…This is not possible! This is metaphorically impossible!:

I don’t know, darling,: the Gunformer admitted, I never believed it either until now.: 

T-There was Energon-blood,: Starscream couldn’t stop thinking about it, But…Megatron, it was H-2 compound Energon-blood! That’s SEEKER Energon-blood, Megatron! I-I thought that was o-our blood!”

My Star, I promise you,: Megatron was almost crying himself now, I will do everything in my power to keep you, and our sparklings, and your brothers safe.: he kissed his mate’s cheekplate, I love you…:

I-I love you,: Starscream was shaking now, I-I’ve always loved you…F-From the moment I first saw you, I-I loved you,: 

Oh Star, you know I’ve always loved you,” Megatron told him out loud now, “you know I’ve always loved you.”

I-I love y-you and…and…I’ll always, always, l-loved you,“ Starscream kept holding on, “I-I’m so sorry…sorry…sorry, I-I’m sorry…”

I’m sorry too, my Seeker,” Megatron was rocking him now, trying to comfort him, “You have no idea…I would just die without you…”

Starscream was still sobbing.

You’re my life; you know that?” Megatron kissed him again, “Don’t ever…I could’ve lost you!”

N-No, I-I’m s-sorry…” Starscream sobbed, “I-I’ve been a horrible—”

No, you haven’t,” Megatron told him, “don’t ever tell yourself that. I love you, my Star, my Seeker…” he hugged him tightly again; they were both crying now. Crying and loving on each other. And with that powerful love between them, Gravechaser could never intervene.

Similarly, Soundwave clung to Skywarp, stretching his sensors out at the ceiling, waiting for the second shoe to drop.

I wanna go out there,” TC was listening at the door, “come on, he could be hurt!”

The Tapedeck used his Comm.-Link, “Megatron: Status report.”

The former Gladiator had carried his little mate into their berthroom, where the Cassettes watched as he laid Starscream on the berth.

Momma! Momma! Momma!” the triplets had figured out how to use their wings enough that they could fly small distances, so they flew out of their crib and crowded around their Mother, nuzzling against him.
Starscream just looked at them sadly, as if he had failed them somehow.

“Whoa,” Rumble remarked, “What did that blue bandit do to ‘em?”

“Not sure,” Megatron shrugged. That’s when Soundwave came through the Comm.-Link, asking for a status report. “It’s alright now,” he told his 3ic, “I got him back…in more ways than one, you could say.”

Thundercracker sighed in relief, plopping back on the berth.

Soundwave went to go out there, but Skywarp clung to him; he was still affected deeply and, much like the Starscream held onto Megatron, the pregnant Seeker liked being in the big Tapedeck’s arms.

“I should go check on them,” Soundwave told him.

“But I like it when you hold me,” Skywarp whispered, “please stay…”

Soundwave brushed the flyer’s helm vents, looking into those huge red optics.

A few minutes passed, and then a knock at the door.

Thundercracker sat up again, “Wha?” he was exhausted.

Megatron came in, practically carrying Starscream, “Someone wanted to see you guys.”

“Oh, Thank God!” Thundercracker grabbed his younger Trine Leader and hugged him tightly. Starscream started whimpering and crying all over again, clinging to his big brother.

Skywarp didn’t know what to expect from Starscream anymore, so he just sat there on the berth as Soundwave got up and went to Megatron, letting the three brothers be together.

Soundwave: “So what was it, Megs?”

“Whatever form this Thing took,” Megatron shook his helm, “absolutely destroyed him.”

Starscream kept replying images he had seen in his processor, shaking and keening. Thundercracker took him over to the berth, letting him down there but still holding him.

“S-Skywarp?” the red and white Seeker shakily reached for their youngest, “S-Skywarp?”

The pregnant Jet just gave him a pouty look and turned away.

“Skywarp,” Starscream took his shoulder, “I-I… I saw Gravechaser,” he made the other look at him in the optics, “I get it now…”

Skywarp could tell by the hurt and pain in his brother’s faceplates that the experience had shattered him, “Yeah?”

“Y-Yeah…” Starscream nodded.

Skywarp came over and hugged him now; Thundercracker hugged both.

“I’m so sorry, guys,” Starscream kept repeating over and over.

“Y-You see now, Star?” Skywarp keened, “I-It wasn’t u-us.”

“T-This is new territory for me,” the red and white Seeker was still shaking his helm in disbelief, he
hugged Skywarp again, crying, “O-Oh God…I didn’t believe my brother…I didn’t…”

“What’d he do to you?” TC whispered.

“He knew things…about Skyfire,” Starscream felt so ashamed; he couldn’t tell them. He couldn’t even tell his own brothers, “and…Russia….”

Flashback:

“I can’t help but notice those maggots aren’t in your visions,” Gravechaser dragged him out the door, “I wonder why?”

End of Flashback:

Starscream couldn’t tell them the truth; he trailed off into sobs.

“It wasn’t real, Starscream,” Megatron told him assuredly, “this entity, these Things, they can look into your spark, and manifest into your worst fears. Or in this case, things that still seem to eat at your spark,” he sighed aloud, “I’m so sorry, my Star…”

Starscream just cried more now; his two brothers held him and rocked him. They stayed like this for a while.

Megatron held his helm, telling Soundwave, “Let’s just get through tonight, okay?”

“As if I can get them back to sleep,” the Tapedeck gestured towards his Cassettes.

None of them got any more sleep that night.
Chapter 75:

By Transformersnewfan

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By Transformersnewfan

By morning, all the Decepticons were sleep deprived.

“All right, time to wake up Prime,” Megatron’s chassis creaked and cracked as he made his way to the Control Room, “at least I’ll get some fun out of this mess.”

The phone rang at the Autobot Base, and Laserbeak had his video camcorder at the ready.

“Autobot Ark,” Red Alert answered the phone cheerfully.

“Just put him on the phone,” Megatron grumbled.

Red Alert immediately knew that vocal.

“This is Optimus Prime,” the Truck came on the phone.

“Okay, I’m not even going to beat around the outhouse with you,” Megatron began, “we’re having a meeting.”

“A meeting?” Prime asked curiously, “Megatron, what—?”

“You and Ironhide,” the Decepticon Leader demanded in tired vocals, “we’re going to have a sit-down.”

“Oh, Ironhide isn’t here,” Optimus looked around, “I’m sorry, Megatron, I just got back from London, and I’m trying to get caught up here.”

“Just call him back,” Megatron was droll, “there’s no death threats, just call him back.”

“Death threats?” Optimus didn’t know anything about this, “Megatron, what are you—”

“Unless you want a pregnant Seeker’s Energon-blood on your hands, get your gears together,” despite the ominous statement, there was a tired and worriedness in Megatron’s vocals, “we got a slagging problem here, Optimus.”

There had to something very wrong, the Autobot Leader knew; any time that Megatron called him by his first name meant that he was speaking to him more as an alley or a friend than an enemy.

“Megatron, you sound frightened,” Optimus was concerned. A terrible memory file crossed his processor now: The phony distress call at the Christmas party,

“I AM NOT!” the former Gladiator barked into the phone, “…Just hate asking you for favors,” he made sure he was alone in the Control Room.

“Has someone been back in your Base?” Prime asked, “Because, I assure you, no Autobots were sent there. They would never be there without my authorization.”
“I know that, Optimus,” Megatron sighed, “this is…someone else.”

“Megatron, does any of this have to do with what happened on Christmas Eve?” the Autobot Leader asked now, “Because Soundwave was—”

“Yes,” Megatron held his helm, “it was a phony distress call.”

“We actually had a similar incident involving Bumblebee,” Optimus admitted, “someone called us pretending to be Bumblebee and falsely reported an accident. When I spoke to him candidly, he told me he had seen something he couldn’t explain.”

Megatron just listened.

“He saw a mech, just…disappear,” Optimus Prime explained, “this was right before the phony distress call.”

“Uh huh…” the Decepticon Leader refused to tip his hand.

“Bumblebee told me, Megatron,” Prime shook his helm, “that he had seen a ghost. The ghost of a blue mech with gargoyle wings and long, red claws.”

Megatron pinched the bridge between his optics. It was the same entity.

“I didn’t tell the other Autobots,” Prime admitted, “But… I told Bumblebee that I believed him. There was no lie in his vocals, Megatron.”

Megatron knew he had to pull himself together to get through this phone call, “Just get Ironhide back and meet with us as soon as possible,” after a beat, he added, “we don’t have a lot of time.”

“Red Alert,” Optimus called out as he was still on the phone, “Where’s Ironhide?”

“He’s still in Tokyo,” the red and white Bot seemed surprised, “you called and said to send him there to protect Doctor Fujiyama, the Famous Scientist, remember?”

“Red Alert, I didn’t make that call!” Optimus Prime was suddenly anxious; what exactly was going on here?

“You’ve been had,” Megatron mumbled, knowing full well what had happened.

“You said there were death threats!” Red Alert insisted, “You think I’m making stuff up? You think I’m crazy or something?”

“Let’s just get a hold of Ironhide,” Optimus told him, going back to the phone, “Megatron, it might be several hours before I can get Skyfire to bring him back here.”

“Call us when you’re ready,” Megatron was drained; not feeling anything.

“Yes, of course,” Optimus nodded, “We will work together on this.”

Soundwave walked into the Control Room now.

The Deception Leader hung up the phone without saying any more.

When there were no words between them, Megatron finally spoke, “It’ll be a few hours.”

“What are we supposed to do in the meantime?” the Tapedeck requested.
“We must stay vigilant,” the former Gladiator finally spoke, “as for Ironhide, all we can do is wait, and continue our investigation.”

Meanwhile, Starscream and Skywarp were both restlessly trying to sleep in the guest berthroom. Thundercracker paced as he fed Darkwing a bottle of sparkling Energon, trying to think how he could protect them. The other two sparklings were drinking out of sippy cups on their own.

Rumble and Frenzy decided to go back to the Control Room.

“Hey Pop?” Rumble began, “Anything we can do? Y’know, with the files and stuff?”

The two Leaders were sitting at the Computer Consul.

“Files,” Soundwave stated out loud, “Megatron, this Thing’s true designation has got to be in these files.”

Megatron was deep in thought, “Let’s call Shockwave again.”

They didn’t know that Gravechaser had overheard the whole conversation, now planning to involve the other Autobots in his game.

Over in Tokyo, Japan, Ironhide walked around the laboratory. It was an easy enough job; just had to stay on guard duty.

Back at the Autobot Ark, Red Alert placed a call, “I’d like to speak to Ironhide, please.”

Laserbeak was sitting above him in the rafters.

The Autobots were going about their daily activities.

No one noticed Gravechaser casually walking through the front door, and in broad daylight.

“Skyfire, I need you over here!” a fake Optimus Prime called over.

“Optimus?” the Shuttle had been on his way to the library to do some research, but immediately noticed the strange-sounding vocals, “Do you have a cold?” He walked towards the direction the vocal came from.

In the center of the main hall, the wicked ghost snapped his digits.

BOOM!

The main power grid blew! Unlike the Decepticon Underwater Base, the Ark’s main power grid was on ground level, on the wall right outside of Optimus Prime’s office. Skyfire had been right in front of it…

Sparks flew everywhere; the force sending the huge mech back several feet! He landed with a window shattering THUD! All of the lights, phones, and the power went dark.

Ironhide picked up the phone, “Yeah, Red?” when there was no response, he asked again, “Red?”
Laserbeak couldn’t believe what he had witnessed, “Holy grandmother of pearl!” The Cheers line was all he could think of.

Optimus Prime felt the blast from inside his office; he had been crouched down on the floor, retrieving his prayer books from a cabinet. “What was that?!?” he raced outside.

Inferno was quick to douse to flames from the now burned-out circuit breakers.

“Nobody panic!” Prowl was trying to take control of the situation, “Remain calm!” Laserbeak watched as Jazz and Sunstreaker rushed to the fallen Shuttle’s side.

“Skyfire, wake up, man!” Jazz shook him, but the Bot was knocked offline, “RATCHET! FIRST AID!”

In the ballyhoo that ensued, Jazz, Wheeljack, Mirage, Brawn, Smokescreen, Blaster, and Optimus Prime all had to work together to turn the massive Shuttle on his back for treatment. Ratchet barked out orders to First Aid and Perceptor, while Prowl, Bumblebee, Sideswipe, and Sunstreaker each positioned their headlights so that the medics could see what they were doing.

“We lost all power, Prime!” Red Alert shouted over everything, “I couldn’t call Ironhide!”

“Primus…” Laserbeak realized what had happened, and who was behind this. He left his video camera and hopped around from vent to vent, looking for the ghost. Finally, he picked up a strange energy, albeit he was too far away to be sure, but it felt similar to what had been in his quarters the other night.

“THAT, is his ex?” Gravechaser sneered as he watched the nice little chaos he had created, “Surprised he wasn’t vivisected.” He was referring to Starscream.

Laserbeak saw the ghost now. Gravechaser looked straight up at him and waved a sarcastic goodbye. The Condor froze in fear. And as the ghost left, he felt continuously humiliated by this entity.

“I-I am the biggest skeptic,” Starscream was going on, “I am a scientist; but I tell you, I saw what I saw!” He couldn’t remember all the things Gravechaser had said; there was something about the sparklings…

Starscream and Skywarp were on the sofa in the Control Room now; the triplets were playing on the floor, while Soundwave was at the Computer Consul.

Megatron, Thundercracker, and the twins brought enough Energon cubes back from the Mass Hall for everyone.

“Figured you two wouldn’t want to eat with those goons,” Megatron tried to joke.

Skywarp kept his optics down on the floor, feeling so ashamed and depressed by the attacks.

“Hey, Warpy?” TC petted his wing, “Feeling okay?”

The pregnant flyer was feeling drained, “Uh-huh,” he had yet to fully recover from his near-drowning, and now he was fidgeting with his hand bandage.
Suddenly, Laserbeak’s vocals came through their Comm.-Links, “Are you all in seated positions?”

“Status report!” Soundwave demanded.

“Our perpetrator has just obliterated the Ark,” Laserbeak stated simply, “and the white Shuttle.”

“W-Wha?” Starscream’s Energon-blood ran cold.

Megatron approached the Computer Consul as the live-feed began streaming in: The Autobots, under the light of headlights, worked over an offline Skyfire.

“AAAUUUUGGGHHHH!!!” Starscream stood and screamed into his hands. Seeing his former Bondmate prone on the ground so soon after his own attack was all too coincidental, “AAAUUUUGGGHHHHHH!!”

“Starscream,” Megatron took him by the shoulders, “they have several highly trained medics.”


“I am sending over the previously recorded footage, Father,” the Condor did so, and they saw what had led up to the current melee.

Soundwave rewound the tape and watched Skyfire closely.

Skyfire: “Optimus? Do you have a cold?”

“Megatron, come look at this,” the Tapedeck told him.

Mega did so, and Soundwave played the tape again.

‘Optimus Prime’: “Skyfire, I need you over here!”

Skyfire: “Optimus? Do you have a cold?”

“That’s not Prime,” Megatron shook his helm.

“No,” Soundwave agreed, “it’s not.”

“I am convinced that the entity knows that I am reporting this,” Laserbeak told them. “However, I believe It has already made an exit from the Ark.”

“Probably headed back here,” Soundwave grumbled.

“Slag,” Megatron banged his hand on the Consul, “I wanna put this Base in a bubble!”

“I-IT’S ALL MY F-FAULT!” Starscream sobbed, “H-He went after Skyfire because I-I confronted this Thing last night!”

“Possibly,” Megatron theorized, “but more likely because he was going to pick up Ironhide. And, when It found out Skyfire was your ex, It not only attacked him because he’s Ironhide’s ride, but also because It wants to make you feel guilty unnecessarily.”

“Killing two birds with one stone,” Ravage hissed.

“Do not give this entity any ideas, brother,” Laserbeak spat back.

And all the while, Skywarp felt sick; he felt as if he was going to purge his tanks.
Thundercracker came over now, “Can you send Astrotrain to get Ironhide?”

“Ordinarily, I would,” Megatron told him, “but unfortunately, I have to get Prime to agree to it first, only because we’re going to need his help on this.”

TC: “Can you ask him?”

“Yes, but I have to wait for them to get their phones back up,” Megatron was becoming frustrated, “we can’t risk exposing Laserbeak’s position. I slagging hate this, but we have to pretend we don’t KNOW what’s going on until they tell us.”

“Well, what are we supposed to do now, huh?” Thundercracker was becoming upset, “Just stand around and wait for this monster to attack Warp or Starscream again?”

“Of course not,” Megatron shook his helm, “and stay calm already! We can’t have any negativity to feed this Thing!” He started for his office, “I’m getting more incense. The protection will be even stronger because we have Starscream on our side now. We can make a united stand!”

As the Decepticon Leader once again covered room to room of the Base with the incense burner, the Seekers stayed in the Control Room with Soundwave.

Starscream was still shaky; he was trying to get his sparklings to eat their breakfast, but they were giggling and playing with their toys, “Why won’t you eat for Mommy, huh? Why aren’t you hungry?”

“Oh, um,” Thundercracker saw this, “I already gave them breakfast.”

Starscream was ready to cry again.

“You were finally asleep,” TC went on, “I just figured—”

“I DIDN’T KNOW THAT!” Starscream was sobbing disproportionately, “I NEVER KNOW WHAT’S GOING ON WITH THEM!”

The triplets stopped and looked at their Creator.

Skywarp was at the Computer Consul with Soundwave. He felt terrible about how hurt Starscream was.

“Come on; you’ll scare them,” Thundercracker took Starscream over to the sofa, “just relax.”

Starscream was just keening and collapsed into his big brother’s arms.

“It’s alright, Star,” TC wrapped his arms around him, “you wanna talk about it?”

“T-This being, just…said a lot of things,” Starscream rasped out, “I-I can’t…”

Skywarp covered his mouth in shame. He hated what this was doing to his brothers.

“Okay,” Rumble came over now, “when we all saw this slagger, he didn’t talk at all.”

“Yeah, he was just really looking at us,” Frenzy added, “and checking his nails like Rav does when Laserbeak’s talking and he’s bored.”
The Cat refused to meet his Sire’s gaze.

“But he definitely spoke to Skyfire,” Rumble was trying to play detective too, “did he talk to you, TC?”

“No,” Thundercracker shook his helm, still holding Starscream, “I only saw him that one time.”

“The one thing we need more than anything is to find out It’s original designation,” Megatron walked in with his incense burner, the smoke nearly burned out, “if we have that, the rest of what we need to know will likely fall into place.”

But Skywarp shook his helm; he just could bear to tell them.

Now that his Bondmate was fully involved in the investigation, Megatron crouched down and asked him, “Starscream, can you think of anyone that could be after your brother?”

“N-No,” Star was shaking his helm, “N-No, I’ve n-never seen anything l-like that THING!”

“What you saw was likely It’s Herald form,” Megatron explained, “but It seems to have a Seeker form, and mimics Thundercracker’s appearance.” He folded his hands, “Can you think of anyone from the Academy, darling?”

“No…” Starscream kept saying, “No…”

“How about mechs that knew your Father?” Megatron asked, “Did anyone go to prison? Even on some false charges, I mean?”

“No…” the red and white Seeker, “Scientists…all…old, elderly scientists by the time I was born.”

“My Father went to prison,” TC interjected, “but, I mean, these two weren’t even born yet.”

Megatron was stone-faceplated, considering this carefully.

“NO!” Skywarp stood up and yelled; he knew he had to put a stop to this before Gravechaser attacked them again, “THIS IS ABOUT ME!!!” he felt he had to throw everyone off the tracks, “DON’T ANY OF YOU GET IT?!! H-HE’S ONLY AFTER ME! HE’S JUST GOING AFTER YOU GUYS WHEN YOU TRY TO HELP ME OR TRY TO STOP HIM FROM HURTING ME AND MY DAUGHTER!”

“Hey, hey,” Soundwave got up and went to him, taking him by the shoulders.

Megatron kept his tone even in the face of hysteria, “Then, do you have an idea who It is?”

The pregnant Seeker refused to answer.

“Don’t protect this entity, Skywarp,” Megatron was firm as he stood.

“I-I’m not,” but Skywarp refused to look at him in the optics.

“This situation isn’t going to go away on its own,” the Decepticon Leader approached now; he was still trying to be sympathetic to the carrying Jet, but now that Starscream had been attacked, it was a lot more personal now, “If you know something, or even have a theory, you need to tell us NOW.”

Skywarp sat back down, keeping his optics on the ground, “I can’t…”

“You can’t,” Megatron repeated back, realizing this.
“I-can’t…” Skywarp kept insisting.

Soundwave realized this as well, “Skywarp, we will protect you. Tell us what you know.”

“Well, we haven’t been able to protect him so far,” Megatron admitted, “have we?” he was not a
dumb mech; he figured out that Skywarp likely knew, or at least thought he knew, who the ghost
truly was. And decided not to push it, “Alright then…”

Megatron walked back towards the other Seekers, with Soundwave following, and whispered,
“Rumble and Frenzy were told not to talk about their attack. This is probably what this Thing told
Skywarp.”

The black and purple Seeker buried his faceplates into his arms on the Computer Consul, sobbing.

“Don’t push him,” Megatron told Thundercracker, “and don’t fight with him. None of us should
fight with him. That will only feed the negativity and make him more vulnerable to attack.
Remember, none of this is his fault.”

Starscream nodded as well, understand.

“AAAaa,” Skywarp let out a loud keen, still hiding his faceplates.

TC went to him now, wrapping his arms around him, letting his helm rest on his shoulder,
“Whatsoever is going on, I swear, Skywarp, I’m not going to be mad. I promise.”

“We have to do something though, Megs,” Soundwave insisted, “when you analyze the activity,
you’ll find it’s been ratcheting up, gradually, over the course of months now.”

“I know what we can do,” Megatron tried to sound upbeat, almost sing-songy, to try to combat the
negativity, “we can get the rest of the records from Shockwave and see what we can find there.” He
turned to his 3ic, “Come on, Soundwave, anything we can do in daylight hours to better.”
Chapter 76: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 76:

By Transformersnewfan

By mid-afternoon, Megatron and Soundwave were on their way to Cybertron. They left Thundercracker and Ravage in charge while they were gone, hoping that the daylight hours were safer. It was better than waiting around for something else to happen.

They approached Shockwave’s Tower now.

“Iacon Correctional Center,” Soundwave noted as they went up the steps, “that’s the one that was built over the old Energon Mines, isn’t it?”

“Oh-huh,” Megatron confirmed, “we still own the land,” meaning the Decepticons, “it’s the only way to make sure no one ever builds there again.”

They were greeting by Shockwave and his Chief of Security, the Vehicon, George.

“I went to the Church this morning and got the Holy Water you requested,” Shockwave explained, “George is so funny. When I go, I always stay for at least the Orthros. George comes in, stays for five minutes, lights a candle, and tells me, ‘Ya ready to go?’” The President found this funny.

Megatron just looked at him with tired, Energon-bloodshot optics.


The Decepticon Leader raised an optic brow, “This isn’t gonna be enough.”

“It’s not?” Shockwave was surprised.

“I need gallons of this stuff,” Megatron told him, “go back and tell the Priest I got a real problem here!”

“Very well,” the President instructed his Chief of Security to return to the Church, hoping he could speak to Megatron candidly. After the Vehicon left, Shockwave asked, “What is going on, exactly?”

“We’ve had several incidents of possible paranormal activity,” Soundwave tried to be vague, “we think it’s a Seeker that was in the prison system.”

Shockwave turned to Megatron for confirmation.

The former Gladiator sat at the kitchen table, fidgeting with the small bottle, “It’s um…It started several months ago, actually. The boys have gotten the worst of it,” he didn’t want to give away about Skywarp being pregnant, “and the Cassettes had an incident as well.”

The Cannon-Former folded his arms as he listened to Megatron continue, “Everything from, pede
steps in the attic, to sightings, to full-blown attacks. Um, phony distress calls, we’ve had incidents of Gregorian chanting, that human guy Poe…”

Shockwave: “Oh my.”

“Skywarp’s been injured on several occasions,” Megatron admitted, “they’re affected. Thundercracker’s been affected. And last night, It attacked Starscream.” He felt unburdened by telling his oldest friend all this, “I’m scared to death It’s going to go after the triplets.”

“Starscream was attacked?!” Shockwave asked. “How can you tell it’s paranormal activity?”

“Because this Thing keeps appearing and disappearing at will,” Megatron told him, “and sometimes, he looks like a blue Seeker, and other times, they’ve seen a tall, hideous-looking mech with a black beard and red claws.”

“Oh dear,” Shockwave took this very seriously, “Megatron, I’ve personally…never witnessed any incidents myself,” he stammered, “but, from what you have been telling me. This is a Herald of Unicron.”

“Surprised to hear that from you,” Soundwave noted, “I thought you were all logical.”

“I am…but, I’m also Tarnian,” the President explained, “But I never bought into the legends as much as my dear friend Darkmount did.”

“Which is why we need any information you have on the federal prisons,” Megatron explained now, “we need to find out who this mech is before we can send It back to the other side.”

“Yes, yes, you asked for those,” Shockwave got up quickly, unnerved by this news, “I have quite a bit.”

The purple mech returned with a number of old datapads, papers, and newspaper clippings, some dating back to the turn of the century.

“This is everything I could find,” Shockwave explained, “there are some things on the Department of Detention of Suspected Criminals, but most are of what we could recover from the Iacon Correctional Center.”

“That’s the one we need,” Soundwave noted, “that’s the one where the Seekers were taken.”

“These are the files detailing the incidents of violence,” the President handed them to Megatron, “Those were the ones the humans were interested in.”

What?
“What?” Megatron’s mouth opened, “what humans?”

“These are the files those humans were most interested in,” Shockwave repeated, thinking nothing of it.

“Wait, wait a minute,” Megatron rubbed his optics, “you’re saying some humans broke into the prison?”

“Well, it wasn’t exactly what I would classify as a break-in, Megatron,” Shockwave insisted, “they called it a lockdown.”

Megatron looked at him.

“It was a film crew,” Shockwave explained.

“A film crew?” Megaron had to better understand this.

“Yes, it was a human film crew.” Shockwave noted, “From Earth, of course. They applied for a visa and a filming permit. Anyone can file for these things, you know.”

“When was this?” Megatron asked.

“Around a year ago,” Shockwave answered.

Soundwave just took it all in.

“So…” the Gunformer felt a processor ache coming on, “What exactly were they filming?”

“Not sure, really,” Shockwave shrugged, “they were shooting their footage at the Iacon Correctional Center.”

“You were with them?” Megatron asked.

“I didn’t personally supervise them, no,” Shockwave shrugged again.

“Let me get this straight,” Megatron felt he was about to blow, “You let a group of humans into the old prison, and you don’t even know what the slag they were doing there?!”

“I can’t personally supervise every tiny thing that happens around Cybertron, Megatron,” Shockwave insisted. “As you are well aware of, I have a multitude of duties to oversee.”

“I mean, what?” Megatron stammered, getting up to walk, “Was your personal trainer charging overtime? What?”

Shockwave stood now, “I had Kevin look after them.”

“Kevin?” Megatron looked at him, “Who’s Kevin?”
“He’s one of my Vehicon interns,” Shockwave insisted.

Megatron rolled his optics.

“So…” Soundwave finally interjected, “what did Kevin say happened?”

“Nothing,” Shockwave shrugged, “they asked to be locked in the prison overnight with their equipment.”

Megatron was appalled, “YOU LET THEM SLEEP IN THE PRISON?!”

“Yes!” Shockwave was getting tough now, “They paid for that.”

“So, lemme get this straight,” Megatron was sarcastic now, “any human Joe can hand you a few credits and have free reign over any building on Cybertron now?!”

Shockwave sighed in frustration.

“What did Kevin say happened?” Soundwave asked again, “Tell us from the beginning: What did they want with the prison?”

“All Kevin said was that they had some equipment,” Shockwave remembered, “they asked for some history on the prison, he locked them in at dusk and picked them up in the morning. He told me they were very satisfied.”

“Did you check if they stole anything?” Megatron asked, “Or did any damage to the building?”

“Kevin said there were no damages,” Shockwave nodded.

“Did YOU check?” Megatron was getting mad again.

“Not personally,” Shockwave shrugged.

“And Kevin’s your intern?!” Megatron was barking now, “I mean, Shockwave, do you even know who these humans were or what they were after with our prison?!”

“I told you already,” Shockwave was getting frustrated, “they were from Earth, and they have a television program.”

“What television program?” Megatron demanded.

“I’m not sure, exactly,” Shockwave admitted, “I know they were from the Travel Channel because that was where their check was from.”

At first, Megatron didn’t realize he mentioned credits, “YOU DON’T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEIR SHOW WAS?”

“It was one of those ghost hunting shows,” Shockwave shrugged, “they all sound alike to me.”

“I mean,” Megatron stammered again, “what…why were they here?!”

“They approached me about doing an episode of their program on some of our historic sites on Cybertron,” Shockwave explained, “they ended up doing a four-part series.”

“Okay,” Soundwave understood so far, “and then what?”
“They were very interested when I explained how the Iacon Correctional Center was built over the old Energon Mines,” Shockwave remembered, “I told them about the eight miners.”

“Oh?” Soundwave asked.

“Yes, Shockwave, the eight miners!” Megatron was furious, “My Father’s mine! Your Father’s mine! Sentinel Prime insisted on those nineteen-hour shifts; he worked them into deactivation! My Father worked his digits down to their wiring! And when that cave-in happened, those eight miners were down there, tipping on the pipes, pleading for help! And he left them down there! Down there to die, Shockwave! And what is that story to you these days, Hmmm? An antidote to your human guests?”

“Absolutely not!” Shockwave was deeply insulted now, “My uncle knew two of those mechs! I would never—”

“Never WHAT?” Megatron demanded.

“I told them everything about that horrible incident, Megatron,” Shockwave was equally angry now, “I was interviewed by them. And then I gave them permission to use my words in their television program. They filmed their segments overnight in the prison, and that was the end of it!”

“They were down in the mines too?” Megatron was exasperated.

“Of course,” Shockwave nodded, “I gave them my authorization.”

“But you didn’t go with them!” Megatron kept going back to, “You don’t care that they were pissing on where those miners, not to mention the prisoners, lost their lives?!”

“I didn’t think they were pissing in the mines!” Shockwave was disgusted, “They seemed very respectful. And their check cleared right away!”

“Look Shockwave,” Megatron was beyond exasperated now, “I know I give you the rights to do what you have to do to keep Cybertron in order, but interns and humans in the prisons?! What’s next? Selling tickets to tour groups?!”

“Look Megatron,” Shockwave bellowed now, “they were paying good Earth currency, and we were in dire need of resources. I still fail to see any harm in it. Do you know, that I was struggling to pay those orange Constructicons from Helix? Do you know what they were going to do? They were threatening, that if they didn’t get paid on THEIR set deadlines, that they were threatening to walk on the Iacon Square Project. Yes, Megatron, the project for the historic memorial shrine in Iacon Square for the Helixian rebel fighters of the Golden Age Battle with the Elite Guard! Do you know what would have happened if they weren’t paid? They would have WALKED OFF the project, taken their tools, and we would have been stuck with a public optic sore in the middle of Iacon Square for the entire galaxy to gape at! Imagine if the Trans-Galaxy media had gotten a hold of that story! We would have been embarrassed right out of Leadership! I did what I had to do in order to finish that project, Megatron. I took any currency, at any exchange rate I could get my hand on! I took Earth dollars; I took Mars Cookies, I got the funds from anyone willing to give me anything! I took every tour guide, ghost hunter, and even the occasional Hollywood upstart in order to finish that memorial, Megatron. So, don’t start with me!”

Megatron stared at him now, “I’m going to need a moment.”

After letting his circuits settle a bit, the Decepticon Leader explained as calmly as he could, “You
“Megatron,” Shockwave gave him a dirty look, “at the last State of the Planet Address, I warned you that I would have to look into alternative fundraising ventures. I doubt you were listening to me because when it was time for your Leader’s Report, you took forty-five minutes to beat your chestplates about how we need to induct Whirl into the Cybertronian Gladiatorial Hall of Fame!”

Soundwave didn’t say anything throughout.

“If you’ll excuse me, I have work to do,” Shockwave left them in his kitchen, going to his office.

After sitting in Shockwave’s living room for more than an hour in silence, Megatron saw the Vehicon, George, returning with more Holy Water.

“All righty fellas,” the boisterous mech announced, “I told the Priest you needed a gallon.” He produced a large bottle, “Planning on Baptizing the new kid yourselves, eh?”

“Possibly,” then the Tapedeck realized, “Wait, how did you know there is a sparkling on the way?”

The Bodyguard gestured at Megatron, “From his Mother.”

“Ma dropped a dime on us,” Megatron slapped his forehelm, “let’s just got out of here, Soundwave.”

“Fine,” Soundwave agreed, before tapping George on the shoulder, “hey, just curious, what did you think of that television crew that investigated the old prison?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t know,” George laughed, “I was vacationing in Thessaloniki, Greece, at the time.”

“Let’s go, Soundwave,” Megatron groaned again.

They left without saying goodbye, and Megatron was miffed at the Shockwave, to say the least.

“Don’t spend it all in one place! AHAHAHAHA!” George laughed. The Bodyguard went to the kitchen and poured himself a cup of Energon-coffee and checked out the news on his phone.

And then, he heard Shockwave talking to someone.

“You never said anything about that,” the President was stern, “…it doesn’t matter. You never said anything about going after Starscream.”

George looked up, wondering who Shockwave was speaking to.

“I don’t care what he did, he’s the Mother of Megatron’s sparklings, and I won’t be any party to that,” Shockwave continued, “just, stay away from all the other Decepticons while you’re there.”

George poured a fresh cup of Energon-coffee and walked towards Shockwave’s office.

“Look, you’re only after Skywarp, so just, take Skywarp and go,” Shockwave was heard saying, “possibly, I’ve never honestly seen Soundwave care so much before.”

George stopped now and drew his firearm. There was someone threatening Shockwave.

“Well, as long as no harm comes to anyone else, fine,” the Cannon-Former was heard saying, “I’ll tell you what I know: He’s originally from Polyhex—”

George opened the door. Shockwave was sitting at his Computer Consul, all alone.
The first thing that caught George’s optics was that the screens were turned off and Shockwave wasn’t on the phone. Also, his chair was turned to the left, not facing the Council. However, he could have been on the phone and just hung up abruptly.

“Thought you’d like some coffee,” George remarked.

“Thank you,” Shockwave told him.

The Vehicon gave him the Energon-coffee, “You okay, boss?”

“I’m fine, George,” he drank from the cup, “just had a fight with Megatron is all.”

“You wanna talk about it, Boss?” George asked.

“No,” Shockwave was curt, “I’ll call you if I need you.”

George knew his cue to leave. As he stepped out and closed the door, he could hear Shockwave talking to someone again.

Chapter End Notes

Well, now we know what happened. And now, we know who the ghost has been working with!
Chapter 77: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

Something cute with Skywarp after all the tension he's had lately. Enjoy!

Chapter 77:

By Transformersnewfan

The Seekers were actually doing much better. Skywarp busied himself with the paperless-society-project, sorting through thirty-four boxes throughout the day, while Rumble and Frenzy crushed the cardboard.

His two brothers were on the floor, playing with the sparklings; everyone staying together; safety in numbers. Starscream buried some of the foggy memories of his encounter with Gravechaser, at least for now.

“You’re working too hard,” Starscream smirked.

“I like this job,” Skywarp seemed happy for once, “and I like it when Soundwave smiles at me the way he does when he sees a stack of work on his desk I leave for him.”

Forgetting momentarily about their ghost problem, Star whispered to TC, “Are they officially dating now?”

“I think it’s still unofficial,” TC rolled his optics, laughing.

“Maaayybeee…” Skywarp grinned; they were all happy to be back together and feeling a little silly.

Rumble and Frenzy wanted in on this.

“Ah, I was wondering what you were doing in his shower stall,” Starscream picked up Darkwing and came over, “his private sanctuary, no less.”

Skywarp blushed a little now. The memory of that shower was rather ruined.

“Hey, we thought he’d like it,” Rumble stuck up for him, “it was the ghost that got in the way!”

“Yeah!” Frenzy thought he was helping, “And we were afraid he was gonna exploded from eating ten Energon cubes!” He realized what he said, “Oops.”

Thundercracker looked up from playing with the triplets, “You did WHAT?”

Skywarp froze, “U-Uh…”

“I told you before,” TC got up with Dawning, “you have to stop eating like that! Are you trying to kill yourself?!”
“Well, it was after you called me a fat slugoid!” Skywarp cried.

“No fighting,” Ravage reminded, looking at the monitors.

Starscream was a bit surprised by this. He was never that hungry when he was carrying and had to be reminded to eat when he had to. But then again, he thought to himself, he had spent the majority of his pregnancy being treated like he was made of glass, and there was no negative entity after him.

“We thought he was gonna blow up,” Buzzsaw added.

“I was upset when you wouldn’t let me go out flying,” Skywarp was pouting now.

“Ravage, what’s the weather report?” Starscream asked.

“Snowing,” the Cat was a lot like Soundwave sometimes.

“Eesh,” the red and white Seeker cringed.

“I already said I was sorry,” Thundercracker was miffed though; he couldn’t believe his youngest brother sometimes.

“Never mind,” Starscream told them, wanting rather to gossip, sitting down at the Consul with Darkwing, “Tell me all about what’s going on between you and Soundwave?”

“Oh, he’s so in love with me,” Skywarp blushed now; he seemed to be feeling much better when the ghost was not on the Base, “he tells me all the time how he’s thinking about me and cares about me and stuff.”

“And…” Starscream glanced behind himself, “You’re fine with his large family?”

“Basically, Pop’s always telling us not to scare Skywarp off,” Rumble proclaimed.

“Ahh, I like them,” Skywarp smiled, then frowned, fidgeting with his bandaged hand, “it’s this Gravechaser that keeps getting in the way.”

“I will say, you’re taking your near-deactivation experiences lightly,” Starscream cringed, rubbing his forehelm, “between last night and Skyfire, I think I’m mentally blocking out the fact that I have to eventually recharge at some point in the distinct future.”

“I think I’m getting used to it by now,” Skywarp admitted, “I’ve got one pede in the grave, right?”

“Don’t say that,” Thundercracker told him seriously.

“We need to forget about this entity for a while,” Starscream tried to change the subject, “I found out the hard way by talking to It, I gave It strength. That’s not going to happen again.”

“Alright, Star,” TC came over with Dawning, “What do you suggest we do instead?”

“Come on,” the red and white Seeker forced Skywarp to stand, “I’m taking you to my quarters.” looking at the Cassettes, “You! Hold down the fort!”

“Yes, lieutenant,” Ravage rolled his optics.

Thundercracker stood and followed with the other two triplets.

“At least I won’t be forced to sparkling sit, for once,” Ravage stated with boredom.
Megatron and Soundwave spoke in the transporter on the way back to the Base, “He’s Tarnian,” Megatron finally opened up, “he KNOWS the slagging dangers of this, but his damn ‘logical’ processor refuses to see it!”

Soundwave just drove.

“I know these types of humans!” Megatron ranted, “They wanna have an adventure of their pathetic lifetimes by encountering a ghost! They come in with their junky audio equipment, going like this,” he made a fake American accent, ‘WHOA! What was that noise?!’ I know the type, I tell ya! They all pay in cash, and none of them give their last names, and worst of all, they eat, drink, and piss all over the place! Mechs DIED there, Soundwave!”

The Tapedeck didn’t say anything.

“WELL?” Megs barked, “Don’t you have any feedback?”

“Just that I’ve watched a few of these programs,” Soundwave told him, “they tend to use provocation to get a reaction out of the spirits.”

“Oh, I know,” Megatron insisted, “they probably even brought an Ouija board and asked for this!”

“They opened a portal,” Soundwave sighed, “he said it was a year ago, so the timeline fits.”

“Yeah,” Megatron was drained by the argument, “these humans have no idea what they’re messing with. They don’t know anything about HUMAN ghosts, and he let them go into a structure where probably HUNDREDS lost their lives, and you’ve got stupid, stupid humans, with cameras, tape recorders, an Ouija board, yelling, hooting, hollering, farting, and asking for Unicron.” He held his helm, “Oh God, Soundwave…”

“Well, at least now we know how It got in,” Soundwave sighed, “the question is, how to send It back.”

“That’s what I have to work out with Optimus,” Megatron sighed, “and how are we going to tell the boys?”

Soundwave let out a big sigh.

Skywarp allowed his two brothers to pamper him for once. They helped him take a nice, warm bubble bath in Starscream’s tub. Then TC changed the bandage on his hand and gave him warm Energon for dinner. Now, the pregnant Seeker was laying down in the guest berthroom, cuddled up in all the blankets. His precious sparkling was nice and calm for once. He felt like she was getting so big these days, it was getting hard for him even to walk.

Starscream and Thundercracker, meanwhile, bathed and fed the triplets, and TC was reading to them in their nursery. The idea was for everyone to at least TRY to get some recharge in before Gravechaser reared his rotting helm again. Starscream, relieved to be back in the family fold, laid down next to Skywarp.

“Hey,” Starscream told him, “now you wanna hear how to seduce Soundwave?”

“Sure,” Skywarp yawned, rubbing his belly.
Both knew that Thundercracker would never go for this with Skywarp being eight months pregnant, but they were both terrible flirts compared to their oldest brother, the only one of their Trine content with being single and playing uncle.

“You go into the Control Room when he’s alone,” Starscream began, “I can distract the Cassettes with sparkling sitting and a movie.”

“What about TC?” Skywarp asked now.

“I’ll distract him, don’t worry,” Starscream smirked. “Now, you go into the Control Room and give him your best flirtations. Sit on his lap if you have to.”

Skywarp’s optics widened.

“It’s more than a little well known that Soundwave kept his wife pregnant through most of their marriage,” Starscream continued, “the gossip from Dirge is that he enjoys pregnant sex.”

“He did say he knows how to do it,” Skywarp whispered, feeling nervous all of a sudden.

“Are you kidding?” Starscream laughed, “He taught Megatron and me!”

“What?” Skywarp had never heard this one before.

“I was losing my CPU not flying regularly,” Starscream remembered, “but Megatron was insisting that I ‘stay safe’ in his berth. So, I told him I would only agree to that if he were to interface until my processor got knocked into recharge mode. So, he went to the expert.”

Skywarp felt himself blushing again.

“H-He had written notes on his hand,” Starscream laughed out loud, “O-Oh, it was too funny!”

The black and purple Seeker was stunned.

“Anyway,” Starscream got back on track, “You, get some sleep. I’ll distract those Cassettes with a movie or a game consul, or whatever. I’ll get TC to have the triplets in here with you because I want to spend the night with Megatron. I tell Megatron I need comforting after what happened. I interface with him, and when I have him distract, you slip out and go to the Control Room. So, that’s how I get the action, and YOU get the action.”

“You’ve really thought this out,” Skywarp was surprised.

“Ugh, I was as horny as a petrorabbit when I was carrying,” Starscream admitted, “that’s when I thought up a lot of stuff. I don’t know HOW you’ve gotten to eight months without just being on TOP of that mech all this time.”

“W-Well, I’m kinda…shy,” Skywarp admitted.

“You have to be honest with yourself,” Starscream told him forcefully, “Yes, you feel awful. Yes, you’re a beached whale. But here’s the truth: Whether you’re with him or not, you’ll still be a beached whale, and you’ll still feel awful. This isn’t going to change so you might as well enjoy yourself.”

“A beached whale?!” the pregnant Seeker felt so hurt, “I knew I was the Goodyear blimp, but now I’m a beached whale?!”

“Calm down, chubby,” Starscream petted and rubbed the other’s big belly, “if TC and I can’t tease
you, who can?”

Skywarp made a pouty expression.

“You’ll be fine,” Starscream told him, “just talk to him and see where it goes.”

They heard their brother coming.

“Come on, guys,” TC came into the doorframe, “Ravage says they’re back.”

By the time the two Leaders arrived back at the Base, it was almost dusk.

“I’d like to take Shockwave’s helm and bounce it off the wall,” Megatron grumbled.

“You know,” Soundwave pointed out, “you’re the one that keeps saying no fighting because it will make negative energy.”

“I know that,” Megs bit his lip components, “I lost my temper.”

“You don’t say,” Soundwave was tired, taking out the hefty pile of datapads and documents they needed to sort through.

They immediately went to the Control Room, finding only the Cassettes playing with their various video game devices.

“Where are they?” Megatron demanded.

“Your quarters,” Ravage gathered his notes, “You have several messages: Optimus Prime called from the Witwickys, he said he wouldn’t be able to meet with you for at least two days.”

Megatron groaned as Ravage continued, “Because of Skyfire’s accident, they will need to bring Ironhide home by ferry.”

“Great,” the Decepticon Leader threw his arms up, “two more nights trying to fight Unicron’s smoke boy.”

“Also, Scrapper stopped by with his estimates,” the Cat handed a datapad to his Sire.

Soundwave read it, “Slag…”

“Oh, you know what you can do, Soundwave?” Megatron was feeling a bit droll, “You should hire the ghost hunters to come in, tape their show, pay you for the story, and use the credits to fix your quarters! HAHAHAHAHA!”

“Don’t give me any ideas,” Soundwave tossed the datapad on the Computer Consul, and called Laserbeak, “Status report.”

“Skyfire is online in the medical bay, Father,” the Condor reported, “it took the Autobots a mere four hours to drag his chassis there.”

Megatron snort laughed.

“They are continuing to work on rebooting their computers fully,” Laserbeak continued, “however, there has not been any paranormal activity since the incident. I am to assume the entity is elsewhere,
possibly the Decepticon Underwater Base.”

“We’ll let you know,” Soundwave closed the connection, “come on, Megs, security sweep.”

“I get the incense burner,” Megatron tried to get his energy up, “it’s only been all day, after all.”

For once, Gravechaser had not followed them home.
Chapter 78: After Megatron and Soundwave checked the Base once again and deemed it safe, they called a meeting in the Control Room.

“I want to do a little experiment,” Megatron brought over a glass of water and handed it to Skywarp, “drink this.”

“What is it?” the youngest Seeker didn’t know what they were going to do to him.

“Just water,” Megatron shrugged.

Skywarp drank the water and afterward seemed completely normal.

The Decepticon Leader stared at him intensely.

“What?” Skywarp asked.

Megatron: “Feel anything?”

“It’s very refreshing,” Skywarp shrugged.

“Good,” Megatron nodded, “it’s Holy Water. So at least we know now that this entity isn’t attached to you or your sparkling.”

“How can you tell?” Thundercracker asked.

“He wouldn’t have been able to take it otherwise,” Megatron confirmed, “and since Soundwave felt this Thing in the woods, that tells us It’s not attached to the Base. So that means, its free-floating.”

“Personally,” Soundwave was at the Computer Consul, “I didn’t feel anything during my security walk tonight.”

Far away on Cybertron, Gravechaser stood in Shockwave’s Control Room as the Cannon-Former set up the live-feed.

“This particular monitor I’m plugging it into is on the highest, left-hand corner,” Shockwave tried to be logical as usual, “the red light is not visible from optic level. They would have to be craned up to see anything, and I doubt they’ll be looking for something they don’t know is there.”

“Very good,” Gravechaser smirked, “very good indeed.”

“Well, I really don’t care what you think,” Shockwave got up and left the Control Room, “and don’t tell me about it either.” As he left, he kept reminding himself, “it’s only Skywarp…”
“Has anybody seen anything or felt anything today?” Megatron asked.

Everyone said their nos one by one.

“It’s been quiet today,” TC confirmed, “did Shockwave find out anything?”

“Unfortunately,” Megatron pitched the bridge between his smell receptors, “we found out more than I wanted to know.”

Starscream looked surprised, “What happened?”

“Shockwave allowed a paranormal group to come in and have free reign to do Primus knows what at the old Iacon Correctional Center,” the Decepticon Leader had to admit, “he said it was over a year ago.”

Skywarp listened now; fear was rising in his fuel tanks.

“I think this…the entity that’s after you,” Megatron continued, “laid in wait until you were in a delicate enough condition for It to come after you. This is what I told you before; they wait to attack pregnant Transformers.”

“So, this guy’s been after me all my life!” Skywarp started shaking, “J-Just…Waiting for me to get pregnant?! S-Stalking me…J-Just, thinking about ME?! Like I’ve been marked all my life?!” He knew Gravechaser was Thundercracker’s Sire, but the realization that he was stalked and wanted dead his entire onlining was still hard for him to take; he nearly revealed Gravechaser’s identity by talking like this.

“I have no idea if it’s been your whole life,” Megatron explained, “for whatever reason, this Thing is after you now, and we’re going to stop it.”

Starscream just listened, trying to understand all this.

“W-Wait, wait a minute,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “why was there a paranormal group at that prison?”

“Cause Shockwave wanted to be paid by their television network,” Megatron was furious just thinking about this, “idiot…”

“No, I mean WHY was a paranormal group interested in the prison in the first place?” the blue Seeker was forceful, “Were there ghosts there already?”

“Highly probable,” Soundwave added now, “thousands of Seekers deactivated there over the years.”

“There were also the miners,” Megatron added, “there were eight miners that lost their lives in a cave-in. When Sentinel Prime heard about it, the slagger left them down there to die. After that, he closed down the mines and had the prison constructed over it.”

“So, so there’s all these ghosts there?” Thundercracker was upset, “My Father died there too. Is his ghost there too? I mean, this isn’t right! Can’t we do something?! Do you know any kind of shaman or should we get a priest to bless the prison or something?”

Skywarp stared at his older brother now, wondering if they would all figure it out.

“I know someone,” Megatron nodded, meaning Optimus Prime, “we can do that. I’ve thought of this already. If those humans opened a spiritual portal, whatever came out is not only hurting your
brother, It or something else there could be torturing the innocent souls still not at rest.”

“What’s a spiritual portal?” Starscream asked.

“Well, Soundwave began, “I would imagine they probably used spirit boards trying to communicate with the prisoners,” he turned back to his Computer Consul, “but dabbling with the occult, they could have opened a doorway into the other side, possibly even to the Pit.”

“Something came up outta hell?!” Thundercracker shouted.

“T-Then…” Starscream interrupted, shrieking, “That Thing in our room isn’t j-just a wizard o-or a…” he got scared, “THEN HOW DID HE KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT ME?!”

“These Things can read processors, Starscream,” Megatron explained, “all they do is exist to hurt others.”

Skywarp keened loudly, now realizing fully that this mech has likely been after him all his life; hating his Mother and Father… Did this Gravechaser have any Transformer left inside him? Or was he just now a manifestation of pure hate?

The ghost moved his claws, and the camera zoomed in on Skywarp.

“Look, one thing I’ve heard about these negative energies,” Megatron tried, “is that positive energies can ward them off. We only have to get through the next two days, and I’ll get us some help on this.”

“Again,” Soundwave remained, “I don’t believe the entity is on the Base currently, and if we can keep up those barriers of protection, we’ll be alright.” He looked at Megatron now, “But we have another problem: Cybertron is nearing bankruptcy.”

“Maybe she needs a new President,” Megatron snorted, “little Rabat would get votes.”

The winged sparkling chirped happily.

“Megatron, this is serious,” the Tapedeck told him, “for Shockwave to do what he did, he was clearly desperate.”

The three Seekers were still too focused on the haunting to add anything here.

“But we send him credits all the time,” Megatron insisted, “didn’t we just send him over one hundred million out of the Ron Tagem account just recently?”

Soundwave went to check, pulling up their bank accounts on his computer. He then gave Megatron the date of their latest transfer of funds, “which was nearly three years ago.”

“Essh,” the Gunformer cringed, “I didn’t realize it had been that long.” He thought back to what they were doing at the time, “Oh that’s right, we were working with that doctor for Starscream…”

The red and white Seeker looked upset.

“Alright, um,” Megatron wiped his mouth, “I authorize another transfer.”

Soundwave did so, typing in the information.
Ravage took the floor now.

“I would like to bring up the fact that, despite that, we are planning to work with Prime,” the Cat told his Leader, “with the Autobots incapacitated, for the time being, we might use the opportunity for another raid, especially in order to stabilize Cybertron.”

“Well,” Megatron shrugged, “if we did it in daylight hours…how do you guys feel about that?”

The blue Seeker looked at his little brother; Skywarp seemed indifferent. He didn’t care anymore.

“I’m in,” TC told them, “as long as you keep the smoke up and they’re safe, I’m up for it.”

Starscream nodded as well.

“I suppose I should try and talk to him,” Megatron wasn’t fond of the idea, “one of the things he really likes are those Swarovski crystals. He said they burn much cleaner for his energy-efficiency effort, or, E.E.E. as he calls it.”

“Austria’s so far though,” Starscream pointed out, “that will take more than a day just to get there.”

“Negative,” Soundwave pointed out, “Swarovski has a distribution center in Cranston, Rhode Island.”

“Oh, we could do that,” Thundercracker nodded, “if we leave really early enough in the morning, we’ll be back before it gets dark here in the west.”

“Alright then,” Megatron agreed, “you guys know the drill. I’ll go talk to Astrotrain.”

“So, the best point of entry will be the east wing,” Starscream worked on his tablet, mapping out the Decepticons’ route of attack on the distribution center using blueprints Soundwave had hacked for him, “and the majority of the dock workers will be in the receiving area at the time, which is located in the south wing.” He tried to show the tablet to his little brother, “You see how I figured this?”

“Hummm?” Skywarp was getting into the berth, too tired and too pregnant to comprehend any tactician lessons.

“Come on, I want you to learn how to do this,” Starscream sat on the berth to show him again, “see, since I know so much about the human survival instinct, I KNOW that these meatbags are going to run right out here, where the trucks park.”

“Okay,” the black and purple Seeker turned over.

“I want you to learn this,” Starscream repeated.

Skywarp: “Why?”

“Because, when you’re on maternity leave, I plan to re-enter the battlefield,” Starscream told him, “I’ll be leaving the triplets with you while you care for your newling, and you might as well make yourself useful.”

“Ugh, I’ve been useful,” Skywarp realized he was going to have to take care of newborn Crystal and sparkling-sit three rambunctious mechlings while still in recovery, “don’t know…what condition, I mean…”
“Because,” Starscream smirked, “you’re going to have Soundwave’s brats at your disposal, remember? He’s not going to let you lift a digit, just work on this while you’re nursing your baby.”

“Um, Star?” Skywarp thought he should ask this, “What if Soundwave’s not over his wife?”

“Listen,” Starscream shrugged, “if he’s still in love with her, tell him his wife will just have to learn to share.” He handed him the tablet, “Here, you’ve got a couple of weeks to practice.”

Skywarp groaned as his brother left the berthroom. He didn’t know if things would go as smoothly as Starscream was planning. That pain in his side was very unnerving; it was coming and going all the time now, sometimes six times in an hour, and he still didn’t know what it meant. Oh, and then there was the haunting. Least he forget the haunting. He was rubbing his belly again, realizing how much he was growing out over his underplating, he was pushing it down as far as he could to make room for his tummy. And now, his burned hand was bothering him again.
Chapter 79: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

A sweet chapter for once.

Chapter 79:

By Transformersnewfan

Starscream and Thundercracker were rocking and feeding the triplets to help get them to sleep. Darkmount pretty much liked to help himself to bed, while TC held Dawning and Starscream held Darkwing.

“So, I told him,” Starscream bragged, “I’m planning on seducing Megatron tonight. So, I need you to take the babies into the guest berthroom and watch over them.”

“No problem,” TC rubbed and petted the sparkling’s back, “you’ve been in good spirits all day. Glad you’re alright.”

Starscream gave a freaky laugh, making Darkwing look up at him, “Oh, TC, I’m so not alright,” he had a frozen smile and spoke a mile a minute, “the only way to hold on to what’s left of my sanity after what I experienced last night and what happened to Skyfire today, is to focus on the positive, focus on the positive, and focus on the positive!”

“O-Kay,” the blue Jet couldn’t help but smile at his little brother’s eccentricities, “you wanna join us on the East Coast tomorrow?”

“Not yet,” Starscream told him, “but as I told Skywarp, I plan to return soon. Once he has his sparkling, I’m going to have him babysit the boys because he can have Soundwave’s Cassettes help him.”

“I don’t know, little brother,” TC kept rocking the sparkling.

Starscream: “Oh?”

“I just don’t know about Soundwave,” the blue Seeker admitted, “he’s hot and cold. I mean, does he love Warp or doesn’t he? Is he over the wife or not? And I just worry about having that many stepsons.”

“Come on, TC,” Starscream almost had Darkwing asleep on his shoulder, “Soundwave’s such an emotional enigma, you can’t tell how he feels. It’s not like he’s going to come share it with US.”

The blue Seeker just shrugged.

“And as for those brats,” Starscream was smug, “they will adore him. You just KNOW he’ll be the ‘fun one’ in that family.”
But the blue Seeker disagreed, “Yeah, and the minute he goes to discipline any of them, it’ll be ‘You’re not my REAL Mother,’” and Soundwave will be, ‘Don’t tell MY son what to do!’”

“Is that how it was for you?” Starscream asked.

“Not at all,” TC shook his helm, “we were all very close.”

“Then where do you come up with that stuff?” Starscream kept pacing back and forth to get Darkwing to fall asleep, “I’d say Ravage is in charge of those brats anyway, so it won’t be a problem.”

Suddenly, Thundercracker had a sad expression on his faceplates, focusing on the sparkling instead.

Starscream: “What’s up?”

“Just…My Father,” TC admitted, “that was hard tonight, hearing that they think the old prison might be haunted.”

Starscream just listened.

“I always wanted to believe that my Father was at rest, y’know?” Thundercracker laid Dawning down in the crib, “I mean, he was a horrible mech when he was drunk, but, I was hoping that when he died, that he wasn’t suffering anymore…that he found peace on the other side.”

“Well, he could have,” Starscream didn’t know what to say.

“What if Megatron’s right?” TC worried, “What if this ghost-thing is holding my Father’s spirit hostage in that place?”

“I don’t know,” the red and white Seeker admitted, “we’ll have a blessing.”

Thundercracker still had that worried look.

“Well, you could look at it this way,” Starscream tried, “this Thing is so focused on Skywarp that It’s probably not bothering the other ghosts.”

TC looked at him.

“Hey, I’m trying here,” Star told him, “try getting your CPU off things like I am.”

Thundercracker nodded, picking up Darkmount to rock him.

“No, Darkmount doesn’t like to be rocked,” Starscream told him.

But just as he said that the bigger sparkling nestled into his uncle’s shoulder and wrapped his little arms around Thundercracker’s neck.

“Oh…” Starscream felt his spark ache, “I see…he just doesn’t like it when I rock him.”

“No, it’s not that,” his older brother told him, “he’s just reacting to having someone other than you rock him. It’s like when they get all excited when Megatron pays attention to them.”

“But I’m the one that cares for them all day!” Starscream was emotional, “And yet, they love their Sire more!”

“I think you’ve got a harder role,” TC told him, “you’re the Air Commander, but you have to be a
mom too. But then again, there’s a LOT of Transformers and humans facing the same dilemma.”

“It’s hard y’know,” Starscream lamented, “I’m still the Air Commander, but I’m responsible for three little sparklings. The only ones I really trust are you and Warp. That’s why I want him to babysit when I go with you on our missions.”

Thundercracker had the little mechling almost asleep as Starscream continued, trying to talk himself into things, “and he’ll be fine with Soundwave and his Cassettes. They’ll all get along; I know they will.”

“Yeah,” TC shrugged, “I suppose so. Guess I just like him to be ours, y’know?”

“You don’t seem to mind sharing ME with Megatron,” Starscream pointed out, “I’m your little brother too.”

“Yeah, but Star,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “Megatron REALLY cares for you. I mean, from day one, the way he looked at you. When you were in…um, y’know, Russia,” he paused to find the words, “he told me, that you were his life. And that without you, he felt he had no reason to function.”

Starscream sighed, listening.

“And I’m just saying,” TC continued, “that I just don’t see that in Soundwave. I don’t think even his Cassettes can read him half the time. I don’t want him treating Warp like a kid with a crush. Like our brother is a silly little youngling he doesn’t know what to do with. I’m telling ya, the minute he lays a hand on our brother—”

“I think you’re being over dramatic,” Starscream told him, “Warp will probably have a blast teaching Rumble and Frenzy all his best pranks. I can just picture it: He’ll have the baby in a front-carrier, while he’s instructing the terrible two how to connect the detonator under Onslaught’s berth! HAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Thundercracker suddenly looked sick; worse than when they were talking about his Father.

“NOW what’s the matter with you!” Starscream was still laughing.

“Just…,” TC was thinking, “I can’t remember the last time Warp was joking around or talking about pranks.”

“That’s because he’s carrying,” Star insisted, “trust me, it’s hard enough to MOVE, let alone come up with anything clever.”

“It’s more than that,” Thundercracker insisted, “all he does is cry, Star. It’s ever since this slag started with the ghost. He’s always sad; he thinks he’s gonna die, it’s like he’s…drained or something. He told me that he just wants to live long enough to have his sparkling…”

“He seems okay to me,” Starscream shook his helm, “I mean, yes, he was upset when Megatron told us about what Shockwave said, but…so were we.”

“He hasn’t done it so much in front of you,” TC insisted, “you haven’t been around until now, so you haven’t seen it.”

“Well, maybe he’ll stop now,” Starscream told their brother. They heard the front door open, “That’s Megatron,” Starscream put Darkwing into the crib, “you can take care of them, I’ve been waiting all day for this.”
“Your welcome,” the blue Seeker rolled his optics. Darkmount watched his Mother leave.

“Wish I could stay online all night and confront this diode,” Megatron spat as he and Soundwave spoke in the doorway. The duo had finally finished locking down the Base for the evening, with no sign of the ghost.

“You need to recharge before the mission,” Soundwave told him, “I’ll stay up all night.”

Thundercracker, meanwhile, waited for Starscream to finish his flirting with Megatron and for the noise to die down before he carefully wheeled the crib with the three sleeping Seekerlings to the guest berthroom. Good thing they were heavy sleepers like their Sire.

When he entered, he found Skywarp curled up in a ball around his stomach at the head of the berth. He had dried coolant tears striking down his faceplates.

“What is it?” Thundercracker asked.

“M-My hand’s killing me, TC,” Skywarp sobbed, “I-I don’t know w-what to do…”

“I’m coming,” TC moved the crib inside and shut the door, and went over to his youngest brother, “here, let me see.” He carefully unwrapped the bandages, and saw that the paint was now peeling, “it’s okay, I’ll get you something to take the sting off,” he told him.

Skywarp was crying but nodded.

Viewfinder Reflector had given them a med-kit with everything they would need to take care of the Seeker’s charred hand. Thundercracker opened it and spread out all the materials out on the berth and figured out what was needed. He began applying the sulfadiazine cream to the burns. Cold water was only good when one was first hurt, so now they had to use the salve to treat the injury.

“Why didn’t you call me?” the blue Seeker asked worriedly, “You were just sitting here suffering?”

“I-I thought you were coming right back.” Skywarp keened, “w-where…?”

“Was waiting for them to go to bed,” Thundercracker rolled his optics, “sorry kiddo.” He wrapped the burned hand in gauze and applied the clean, cloth wraps and taped up the bandages. Unlike Viewfinder Reflector, TC made sure he wrapped the digits individually, so it could feel more normal and less like a flipper. When he finished, he asked, “Is that better?”

The black and purple Seeker nodded and tried to smile a bit, wiping his optics with his good hand. He was exhausted; he had been hurting, and it had made him weak, “T-Thank y-you…”

TC got one of the blankets and wrapped it around the younger Seeker’s wings. He went through the checklist in his processor: Skywarp had already taken a bath, so he was clean; they had blankets, so he was warm; they dinner…several hours ago; he whispered, “I’ll get you some warm Energon.”

Skywarp sighed as his brother got up and left; as tired and hurt and weak as he was, yes, he was hungry again. He felt like a fat pig, always wanting to eat. He hated being this fat. At least he didn’t have to ASK for food; at least he was spared that humiliation. TC always knew what he needed. He started crying again, thinking of how he had never really been what one would consider a sleek, thin Seeker. He had been a chubby sparkling; his older brother had always been tall and thin and so good-looking. And Starscream was so skinny, even now after three sparklings. They had each taken after their respective Sires. Their Sires…Gravechaser was still out there; lurking …he would be back.
That thought brought on even more coolant tears, and he let out some soft whimpers. He realized tonight that this mech, Scourge, had probably hated him for all these years; plotting his doom, both when this mech was online and then deactivated. What horrible fate awaited him and his sparkling?

Thudcracker waited for the microwave now. He heard Starscream and Megatron murmuring something from behind their berthroom door, followed by Starscream letting out a yelp in passion. “Oh slag,” he muttered, not wanting to hear that. When the microwave dinged, he was so glad. He took the two cubes out and headed back; part of himself wished he could just take Warp and go home, but he knew his little brother wouldn’t be safe there. At least in Starscream’s apartment, the pregnant Seeker would at least be well cared for. He wondered to himself if Soundwave would be willing to provide that or not.

When he returned to their guestroom, Darkwing had turned over in the crib, apparently to watch Skywarp. The blue Seeker balanced both cubes on one arm and rubbed the little fella’s helm, turning him back over. Darkmount and Dawning were at least still sleeping.

“I think if we talk, we should use our Trine Bond,” Thudcracker whispered as he brought the two cubes over, :that way, we won’t wake the sparklings.:”

:I’m too fat to eat,: Skywarp protested, :or hasn’t you notice?:

:Well, your baby needs the fuel,: TC tried to explain, :your chassis burns through Energon quicker when you’re eating for two.:”

:I didn’t…: Skywarp looked away, :I didn’t read that…:

:I read it online in the National Herald,: the blue Seeker told him, :it’s a human newspaper based in the East Coast. Ratchet apparently did an Op-Ed about how Cybertronian medical studies will benefit humankind. He’s actually doing consultant work at Northwestern Hospital in Chicago. Dragstrip emailed me the article,: he knew he was rambling; he was trying to get the younger Seeker to focus on his unborn sparkling rather than their paranormal ghost problem.

:Did you read anything what causes pain on one side of the chassis?: Skywarp asked, :Cause it’s like, a lot worse lately.:”

:No, sorry: TC shook his helm.

:Momma!: Crystal stretched her little thrusters out, :Momma, we have fuel now?:

“AAAA—OW!” Skywarp cried out.

“Shhh, shhh,” Thudcracker looked back and forth between his brother and the triplets’ crib. Thankfully, they stayed fast asleep, “don’t wake them up.”

:But she doesn’t know her hands from her thrusters!: Skywarp was in pain, and it was making him upset with his own sparkling, :She pushes her thrusters against me, and it hurts like a glitch!:”

:Come on you,: TC knew the last time he touched the darker flyer’s belly, he threw a fit, but TC figured he would risk it. He felt the little thrusters pushing out from within, then move back, then pushing out again; he whispered to the soon-to-be newling, “It’s okay, Crystal, your mommy loves you…” he rubbed Skywarp’s belly gently, :She’s not doing that to hurt you, y’know, it’s because she can’t reach her hands out that far.:”

The pregnant Seeker looked confused, so TC explained, :See, her thrusters are here,: holding the spot where the tiny pedes were moving, :because she’s facing that way, understand?: Skywarp just
listened, so Thundercracker continued, :Her helm is near your back. She’s looking up at your spark chamber.:

Skywarp got it now, :Okay…: he was trying to picture his child inside him, :when does her helm start…like, facing down to come out?:

:I think that’s right before labor,: Thundercracker told him, :I remember Starscream said it was about a week before with him: he felt the baby’s thrusters again, :You should have your Energon, she’s hungry.:

He gave Skywarp one of the cubes and had the other one. Sighing as he drank it, his thoughts went back to his own Sire, and what it must have been like in that prison in Iacon. He had not thought about this before; he wondered if his Sire would think about him. He had always been frightened of the mech. He supposed Starscream was right; maybe he was just thinking about him more because of the sparkling on the way. Even though she was Skywarp’s baby, he loved her as if she was his own…

Skywarp tried to pick up his cube with just his right hand, but it was too heavy for him. Maybe it was because he was feeling weak still; he tried to balance it with both hands, but his left hand couldn’t grip anything because of the bandages. So, he tried again with just his right hand. Now, he was getting frustrated.

“Here,” Thundercracker put his empty cube on the floor, “I’ll help you,” he held the cube for him, feeding him like a baby. Skywarp had never felt so pathetic. “Don’t worry, Warp,” he told him. When the pregnant Seeker was finished, Skywarp was gasping and exhausted; he felt weak as if he had been up for days.

TC could tell how his little brother was feeling; he put the second empty cube on the ground and pulled the blanket higher up and bundled up his wings.

:Come lay down with me,: Skywarp begged tearfully.

Thundercracker had intended to stay up and read for a bit, but if it was going to help the other settle down, he nodded and climbed into the berth, settling beside his little brother. Neither were ready to sleep fully, so they were both sitting up, leaning on pillows.

:I wish we could go home,: Skywarp keened, :my hand hurts…:

:I know, kiddo,: TC took the younger Seeker’s injured hand and gently laid it on Skywarp’s canopy glass, :hopefully soon. Just try to relax…: he sat up to check on the Seekerlings and put another blanket over them. Then he pulled a comforter that was down by their pedes and laid it over Skywarp before settling back down next to him.

Skywarp wanted to curl up in his big brother’s arms, but his injuries were still forcing him to lay on his back, which wasn’t too comfortable. Still, he felt his little one settling down happily.

Skywarp: :Hey TC?:

TC: :Hmmm?:

:Do you think my baby’s gonna be okay?: he didn’t know sometimes if what he was feeling was normal, :I mean…like, is she online or just sleeping?:

:She’s sleeping,: the blue Seeker yawned, reaching over to rub the other’s belly; when he did that, the little sparkling moved her tiny pedes in response, :See? She’s fine…: he let his little brother’s
helm lay on his shoulder. The warmth and closeness finally lulling them both into an easier recharge.
“You’re always working,” Starscream purred as he curled across the berth like an Earth cat, “come over here.”

Megatron was studying his datapad, trying to find out what he could about the program that showed the footage of the old prison; not ready for bed.

“Megatron,” Starscream had to be more forcefully now, “I said, come to berth.”

“Oh, okay,” the Decepticon Leader was absentminded, “I’ll get the sparklings.”

“No, I have my brothers watching them,” Starscream told him, “I want us to be alone…”

Megatron smirked at his Bondmate, finally understanding, “Now, is that right?” he joked, putting his tablet down and crawling towards his little Seeker. He clasped his hands in his own and began kissing Starscream.

The two were necking; their glossas dancing between their mouths as they mutually broke the kiss to stare at each other lovingly in the optics.

“Come on, let’s go to sleep,” Megatron told him, pulling him down on the berth.

“U-Um,” the thought of sleep filled Starscream with dread, “don’t you wanna stay up and interface?”

“I have to get up at forty-thirty in the morning,” Megatron could tell his Bondmate was still very afraid, “but I will make it up to you later.”

Starscream laid down and pulled the covers up; he looked around nervously, afraid of whatever this entity was going to do next. Megatron saw this and wrapped his arms around his mate, “It’s alright… I’ll keep the bad dreams away.”

But on Cybertron, Gravechaser was still watching the Control Room via the monitor.

Soundwave was having a very rough night. His concentration was going haywire, and he couldn’t figure out why. His evening began simple enough; he had his sons with him, and he was processing the ancient, ratty files they had gotten from Shockwave. But it was after he spread the files out on the Consul, he realized how dirty, and mold-infested they were. They posed a serious health hazard. Yes, he was fine because he wore a mouthplate, but none of the Cassettes did. So, not wishing for them to be too far away, he ordered them into Megatron’s quarters, where they played video games on the Gunformer’s massive gaming system.

He sorted the files as best he could; the older papers were practically turning to rust in his hands. But he realized that the documents did not offer much more than what cursory information they already had — names and dates for prisoners and nothing more. There WERE some files on incidents of violence, but it became quickly apparent to the Tapedeck that the prison officials were only detailing
incidents of prisoner-on-guard violence, and not prisoner-on-prisoner, or guard-on-prisoner violence; this was most likely done for prison officials to justify punishments, Soundwave figured out. It had taken several hours, but he sorted through them as he could, scanned them into the computers, and disposed of them.

But none of the cases matched their suspect; there were designations that could have been any Seeker in Vos or Vosnia and nothing that mentioned how any Seeker would be after Skywarp or anyone connected to the Decepticons.

Now he worried about the mess: He cleaned his Computer Consul with a beached-based chemical that was safe for electronics, followed by vacuuming the floor, he knew Skywarp would be there by morning, and the last thing he would let happen was to expose the Pregnant Seeker to any biohazards.

But, there was more to it than this. Soundwave was constantly reaching his sensors out, and not sensing any of the negative energy he had when Gravechaser was known to be on their Base. As far as he could tell, the negative entity was either dormant or was elsewhere this evening.

Still, he couldn’t shake the feeling he was being watched. It was disturbing; the watcher had become the watched. The hunter had become the hunted. He got up and looked around; going to check on his sons, who at the time were still playing. He didn’t tell any of them, even Ravage, because he didn’t want to make them vulnerable to attack.

He made another security sweep; all the Decepticons were accounted for. He didn’t confide in any of them; he knew they couldn’t feel the senses he felt. They couldn’t help him; he felt very alone. He walked back through the French Doors of the Control Room, and suddenly felt a bad processor-ache. But the energy was normal; he didn’t know what was going on.

The last known sighting was at the Autobot Ark. By now, it was dark outside, so he checked on Laserbeak, “Status report.”

“The Autobots are currently awaiting Ironhide’s impending return sometime tomorrow, Father,” Laserbeak explained, “they have attained the lighting system once again, but are continuing to reboot their computer system known as Teletraan-I.”

“Worthless retches,” Gravechaser commented.

“What?” Soundwave knew he heard that coming through their Comm.-Link, “Laserbeak, did you hear that?”

The Condor hadn’t, “I reported that the Autobots had attained the lighting system once again, but are continuing to reboot their computer system known as Teletraan-I.”

Soundwave realized he was the only one that heard that, “Okay, just be careful,” he didn’t want to frighten his son.

After closing the connection, the Tapedeck paced around, remembering what Megatron had told him, “Alright mech, stand your ground.” He felt like a trapped animal in the zoo; he picked up a rosary and clung to it now. Rubbing his helm, he thought it best to focus on his work; he sat down at the Computer Consul and grabbed the files that Skywarp had sorted for him earlier, trying to calm down.

That THING was watching him; he could feel it. His own Control Room was betraying him. He flipped through the channels of his camera feeds, “Come on, come on, where are you, slagger?”
He found himself dreaming; dreaming while he was fully awake. He saw visions of stabbing Skywarp with a pair of scissors. He saw the Energon-blood on his hands…

“UGH!” he shook it off. What on Earth was going on?

By one in the morning, everyone in the Base was asleep.

Skywarp opened his optics and looked at the clock. Surprised, he had slept much more than he had intended to. He wanted to visit with Soundwave; he had only meant to get some rest and gather his strength; his hand injury had taken a lot out of him. The black and purple Seeker realized that Thundercracker was snoring beside him; arms wrapped protectively around his baby brother, with his hand over the younger Seeker’s pregnant belly. Carefully, he shifted around and out of TC’s grasp; able to slide out from under his arm and sit up on the berth. A hint of guilt crossed his spark; his brother was so loving and protective of them, and here he was, off to try to seduce a widowed Father of six.

The pregnant flyer went to the wash racks and splashed water on his faceplates. Ugh, he could tell that he had gained weight again. Two days of bingeing were already visible on his belly. His thighs and aft looked fatter as well, at least he thought they did. How could he ever believe that Soundwave would even find him attractive? Tomorrow, he would be thirty-two weeks along. Starscream was right; he was a beached whale and a Goodyear blimp. The bulky robe was just a good cover. But, with pregnancy came those overwhelming pheromone levels, making him so aroused for the Tapedeck he wouldn’t have cared if he interfaced with him in front of his Cassettes, or his brothers, or the entire Decepticon army for that matter. And with the absence of the ghost, the Seeker was feeling a lot freer and hornier; and besides, a little exercise wouldn’t hurt.

Skywarp crept out of the wash racks and into the living room, only to run into Soundwave’s brood. They were all half-sparkedly watching a movie, apparently the In the Line of Fire DVD, on the television.

Ratbat, Buzzsaw, and Frenzy had dozed off, with only Ravage and Rumble still awake.

The pregnant Seeker felt embarrassment wash over him now, feeling his faceplates blush. He hoped against hope that they couldn’t detect elevated pheromone levels.

“You’re having trouble sleeping?” Ravage inquired.

“Um, well,” Skywarp felt his faceplates heating up in shame, “I was…just…wondering if your dad was busy.”

Frenzy yawned loudly, not opening his optics, “He’s in the Control Room, Momma.”

Rumble snorted a laugh at that.

Skywarp was mortified now, “I-I’ll go back to bed…”

“Why?” Ravage looked up at him, “I’m sure Father would prefer the company.”

There was a pause. The two Cassette brothers sent their silent nods of encouragement to the carrying Jet.

Skywarp’s confusion lifted when Ravage looked at him in the optics and told him, “Go for it.”
The black and purple Seeker exited the master quarters before he lost his nerve.

The hallways were dark, but the Control Room was second closest to Megatron and Starscream’s quarters, so it wasn’t that bad. Walking was hardest after a big meal anyway. He knocked on the locked French Doors.

Ravage and Rumble watched from the master quarters’ doorway, “Don’t worry, Skywarp,” Rumble whispered, “it’s all clear.” They were on the pretense that they were protecting the Seeker, but in reality, they were hoping to see some action, even though Ravage would only admit to the former.

By now, Soundwave was a mess, barely able to get any work done, he knew he should get out of this oppression environment, but he was determined not to lose the Control Room to the negative entity.

Knock, Knock…

“AH!” Soundwave jumped, practically shaking. It was the ghost. He felt the presence of a living individual on the other side of the French Doors, but, not thinking clearly, compounded by overwork, he immediately thought it was a prowler. He pulled out his Barretta.

“Knock again, Skywarp,” Ravage instructed.

The black and purple Seeker did so, gently knocking again.

The French Doors flew open, and Soundwave grabbed Skywarp by the neck cables and stuck the barrel of the gun in the middle of the carrying flyer’s faceplates.

Skywarp made a low keen in terror, but Soundwave quickly realized who he was pointing the gun at.

“Skywarp, oh my God,” the Tapedeck dropped the gun, literally, dropped it on the floor, and hugged the smaller mech to his chestdeck, “I’m so sorry, I’m so sorry…”

“Pop,” Rumble facepalmed, feeling as if his Sire was completely blowing this. Ravage looked at Soundwave with disapproval.

Realizing that they were escorting Skywarp, Soundwave nodded to them before closing the French Doors, still whispering apologizes to his Seeker as he held him and led him inside.

“WWAAAHHH,” Skywarp was still keening softly; his spark was racing now. He tried staying still, not wanting to wake his sleeping sparkling. He felt her move slightly but he hoped she would fall back asleep. At least his hand wasn’t bothering him at the moment.

Gravechaser sneered, loving this.

“Don’t cry, please don’t cry,” Soundwave whispered; he gently moved Skywarp to the sofa and sat him down, still holding him. Then he wrapped a blanket around the smaller mech, and rubbed his back, “I don’t mean it…I swear, I didn’t mean it…”

It took another few minutes for Skywarp to stop shaking. He felt the other’s large blue digits caressing the back of his helm. He finally looked up at Soundwave with large, hurt optics.

Soundwave felt the Seeker studying him, as if he was looking for recognition, “It’s me,” the Tapedeck realized what Skywarp was thinking; he took off his visor, revealing his yellow, triangular optics, “it’s me, Skywarp.”
The pregnant Jet finally calmed down, moaning and dropping his helm into the crock of Soundwave’s neck, “…J-Just…wanted to see you…”

“I’m so sorry,” Soundwave kept repeating, rocking him now; it was pretty stupid of the Tapedeck, with that many mechs in the Base, he should have known better than to pull a gun in anyone’s faceplates, especially without checking the cameras. He could have shot Megatron, or…one of his own…he couldn’t even process the thought. Seeing Skywarp brought him back to reality now; he could think clearly again.

Skywarp was still hiding against Soundwave’s neck cables as the Tapedeck began to explain, “I was going through all the new information, and,” he checked his watch, “I lost track of the time. I suppose it’s true what they say about not investigating the paranormal alone…”

“Why do they say that?” Skywarp asked.

“You can get affected,” Soundwave clarified, “the negativity can affect someone, and then they’ve talked about, missing time or something,” he wasn’t sure, “I read that somewhere.”

“Well…” Skywarp was feeling well enough to joke now, “that’s what you get for not waiting for your assistant.”

“Oh, I didn’t want you to see those,” Soundwave loosened up a bit, shifting to a more comfortable position while still holding his smaller mate, “they were very old; I believe they were originally kept down in the old mines.” He enjoyed talking to Skywarp, “You see, when it was the Energon mines, their supervisors had offices down there, below the ground, and apparently, when they converted it to a prison, they used those same offices for the wardens.” He rubbed Skywarp’s back under his wings, “I ended up throwing everything out.”

“I could’ve helped you,” Skywarp kept insisted, “I thought going through files was our thing.”

“It is,” Soundwave agreed, “but I even sent my sons away. It was toxic.”

“How can papers be toxic?” Skywarp sat up a little; he was feeling better and enjoyed the conversation.

“Mold, acids,” Soundwave explained, leaning on the sofa, “all causes of cosmic rust. Very dangerous to unborn sparklings.”

Skywarp sat up nervously now; the mention of cosmic rust brought back the memory of what Gravechaser had told him, he didn’t know how to work this into the conversation, “Um…” he tried to bring it up casually, “Aren’t you scared to, um, handle it then?”

“Negative,” Soundwave explained, gesturing at his mouthplate, “this is a ventilator, and then I used a bleach-based cleaning solvent to sterilize the area.”

“Is that what stinks so bad?” Skywarp made a face.

“Oh, sorry,” the Tapedeck realized he had laid the cleaners on heavily; then tried to laugh, “Well, I didn’t expect you a full five hours before your shift was scheduled to begin.”

“It’s like, ever since I found out I was pregnant, it’s like everything smells awful,” Skywarp knew he was changing the subject, “is that gonna go away?”

“Doesn’t always,” Soundwave admitted, “Celene never allowed lead sulfide in the house again after she had Ravage,” he shrugged now, “just as well, it’s an expensive spice.”
There was a long, awkward pause. Soundwave wanted to bring up what he suspected when Megatron was asking if the Seeker knew the identity of his attacker; he needed to broach the subject gently. Skywarp, on the other hand, was thinking about how to seduce the larger mech,

“So, basically,” the Tapedeck began, “we’re looking for what this entity’s designation was while It was in activation.” he turned to face the Seeker, “it’s one of the things that we need to rid the Base, rid YOU of this threat, do you follow me?”

Skywarp bit his lip components, then nodded.

“Well,” Soundwave wrung his hands, “I kept going back to what was said here in the Control Room earlier today…”

Flashback:

Megatron kept his tone even in the face of hysteria, “Then, do you have an idea who It is?”

The pregnant Seeker refused to answer.

“Don’t protect this entity, Skywarp,” Megatron was firm as he stood.

“I-I’m not,” but Skywarp refused to look at him in the optics.

“This situation isn’t going to go away on its own,” the Decepticon Leader approached now; he was still trying to be sympathetic to the carrying Jet, but now that Starscream had been attacked, it was a lot more personal now, “If, you know something, or even have a theory, you need to tell us NOW.”

Skywarp sat back down, keeping his optics on the ground, “I can’t…”

“You can’t,” Megatron repeated back, realizing this.

“I-I can’t…” Skywarp kept insisting.

End of Flashback:

“Megatron asked you if you knew who this entity truly is,” the Tapedeck explained, “he asked if you knew something and you refused to answer.”

As he had done with Megatron, Skywarp averted his optics, a fact that did NOT go unnoticed by Soundwave. After a moment, the pregnant flyer mumbled, “I said I don’t know.”

“Negative,” Soundwave insisted, “what you stated was, you can’t. What can’t you tell us?”

Skywarp turned away, refusing to look at his friend, acting as if insulted but in reality, he was terrified of his secret coming out.

“Skywarp,” Soundwave was becoming frustrated, “look at me.”

The pregnant Seeker tried to mask his fear with a tough exterior now, “Well, you’re the telepath, you should just TAKE what you wanna know.”

The blue mech did not react well to being challenged; he put his visor back on to cover his narrowing optics, “You don’t know what you’re asking for.”

“YOU don’t know what YOU’RE asking for,” Skywarp mocked him; he knew Soundwave didn’t understand the full extent of how much this would not only hurt Thundercracker deeply but that the
ghost had made terrible threats on their lives.

“Now look,” Soundwave was becoming angry, “this slagger went after my sons. They could have been killed. My quarters was destroyed beyond the point of livable. And I’ve had to replace the security equipment a number of times now. And your brothers have both been tormented and everyone in this Base is on edge. This is not only about YOU, Skywarp!”

“And it’ll get worse if I tell you!” Skywarp shot back, not caring who he woke up, “ME AND MY DAUGHTER ARE GETTING THE WORST OF IT, SO Y-YOU, JUST…” he lost his verve, “DO WHATEVER YOU’RE GONNA DO TO ME AND GET IT OVER WITH!”

“I HAVE TOLD YOU BEFORE,” Soundwave stood up now, “I DO NOT USE MY POWERS ON MY FELLOW DECEPTICONS! BUT YOU’RE ATTITUDE IS MAKING ME RECONSIDER!”

“Do it,” Gravechaser sneered with glee.

The feelings came over the Tapedeck like a wash; he suddenly wanted to hurt his Seeker, “Do you have any frigging idea who you are dealing with here? I could melt your processor if I choose to!”

Skywarp became afraid; he didn’t move a click, but his optics gave away his inner terror. Would Soundwave really deactivate him? A carrying flyer no less? He suddenly regretted ever coming to the Control Room…

“Get up!” Soundwave ordered, grabbing the front of Skywarp’s robe and pulling him up to his pedes roughly; his vocals took on an ominous whisper, “I’m giving you one last chance, tell me who we’re dealing with here.”

“O-Okay okay,” Skywarp felt the coolant tears welling in his optics now, “I-I’ll tell you…J-Just don’t hurt my b-baby…” he was terrified; how could he have again trusted this mech.

But then, as suddenly as it had begun, Soundwave’s anger and hate stopped. It was the sound of Skywarp’s frightened vocals in his audials, and he saw those scared, round, sparkling-like optics looking up at him. It was as if a light switch had been turned on in his CPU. What was he doing? What was he doing to his Seeker?!

“I-I’m, I’m sorry,” the Tapedeck pulled his hands away and backed up, “I-I don’t know why I’m…” Skywarp looked at him, still very afraid, but deep in his spark, he knew that it wasn’t Soundwave, “don’t you?”

Was he being influenced? Soundwave’s processor cleared, “What? No…” he looked around; seeing the still-thick incense smoke hovering protectively above them, “it can’t be,” now the Tapedeck was panicked, “It can’t be here! It just can’t be!” he raced around the Control Room, feeling nothing unusual; he raced around the boxes, corner to corner, stretching his sensors out as far as he could, “No,” he shook his helm, “we cleansed the Base again tonight.” He went to the hallway now, still trying to determine if he could feel anything. Walking down the aisle, closer to the Seekers’ empty quarters, he looked and looked around. He hated being so jumpy; this was NOT his nature.

Skywarp wanted to run; he was scared and keening now, knowing Soundwave intended to kill him. It was Gravechaser’s influence on the big mech; despite his telepathic powers, the ghost had somehow taken control of him. The pregnant Seeker moved to run, but he was afraid of running right into Soundwave in the hallway, and maybe the huge mech would begin strangling him, or
worse…melting down his processor just as he had described. He ran the other direction, towards the boxes of papers, and struggled to get around them, trying to hide himself among their shapes. His little sparkling was wide awake now, squirming in fear, as his spark was beating rapidly. Finally, he crouched down as far as he could fit between the stacks of old boxes and pulled his legs up to his belly and hugged himself. He tried to keep quiet, but little whimpers and keens kept escaping his vocalizer. Oh, how badly he wanted to teleport back to their safety of Starscream’s quarters and Thundercracker’s arms…

Realizing he had left Skywarp and the baby by themselves, Soundwave headed back, still trying to get a sense of any negative forces. He reached the French Doors, still looking around.

Skywarp heard the Tapedeck’s heavy pede steps coming now. He hitched his vents, trying not to make a noise.
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“Skywarp?” Soundwave looked around, not seeing him; he felt immense guilt and shame over threatening the pregnant Jet, especially when he trusted him so much, “Skywarp, come on out.”

The black and purple Jet cowered in fear between the boxes, too terrified to come out; he hitched his vents as he heard the pede steps coming closer and closer.

Soundwave sensed the frightened little Seeker deep under the boxes; he moved slowly as not to scare him any worse than he already had, “It’s okay, Skywarp, there’s no one here but us,” he was hoping against hope that his friend wasn’t hiding from him.

Finally, the large mech made his way around the boxes and saw Skywarp on the ground; curled around his carrying belly protectively. It broke Soundwave’s spark in two, knowing he was the cause of this sad scene.

“Come on, Skywarp,” the Tapedeck stated softly, bending down, “let me help you up…”

Skywarp stared at him, making sure he wasn’t angry or intending to hurt them; he tried to stand, but when he leaned his arm against a box to push his frame up, the top of the box crushed down, and he couldn’t get any friction.

“I gotcha,” Soundwave came closer and wrapped his strong arms around the smaller mech, easily lifting him out; Skywarp thought of how Frenzy had told him that Soundwave could easily pick him up; he stared into the mech’s visor to make sure he could see those triangular yellow optics were not blackened. The emotions were finally overtaking him, he wrapped his arms around Soundwave’s neck cables and collapsed on his shoulder; sobbing like a sparkling.

“It’s alright,” Soundwave held his little mate, “I’m so sorry, Skywarp…I didn’t mean anything,” he felt like crying as well, but he knew he needed to stay strong; he rubbed the back of Skywarp’s helm, “I’m so sorry, so sorry,” he carried the pregnant Seeker out of the boxes and to the Computer Consul, setting him down on a swivel chair before crouching down to look at his mate at optic level, “Skywarp, I promise you, I would never have hurt you…I…I don’t know what I was thinking…” he looked around, “It’s been like this all night, I can barely get my thoughts in order.”

“U-Um,” Skywarp wiped his optics, still a little staticky, “t-that’s probably him…”

“I’m not sensing anything the way I have before,” Soundwave sat down, shaking his helm, “I mean, I know you’re right, but…I don’t feel anything near here or in the hallway, and it’s as if this entity’s standing right here. This has been like this all night, Skywarp, I feel as if I’m being watched.”

Gravechaser was frustrated; from the angle, the duo was sitting, it was very difficult to see them from the monitor he was using. They were all the way to the camera’s left, by Skywarp’s side of the Consul; the best the ghost could see was the top of Soundwave’s helm, and it was aggravating him no less. At least he could HEAR them clearly.

“We s-should go then,” Skywarp whispered.
“Negative,” Soundwave shook his helm, “I refuse to lose my Control Room to that frigging Thing,” he pulled some papers closer, “it’s bad enough we’ve let It chase you and Thundercracker out of your quarters. We can’t risk losing the Control Room with an Energon retrieval mission scheduled for the morning.”

Gravechaser leaned in, trying to hear them whispering to each other.

“I’ve been so stonewalled with these old prison files,” Soundwave continued, “I was counting on those for the answers, and…I just…” he sighed now, taking off his visor, “I didn’t mean to… pressure you like that.”

Skywarp slowly began to trust his friend again; he shifted in the swivel chair, rubbing his belly as his little sparkling settled down, “So…w-what do you wanna do now?”

“I have to stay here,” Soundwave told him, “hold down the fort,” he looked at his Seeker, suddenly realizing he had never asked why Skywarp was up at this hour of the night, “you couldn’t sleep again?”

“I came to see you,” Skywarp looked so disappointed.

Soundwave didn’t know it was possible to feel even WORSE than he did already, “I don’t know what you see in a mech like me,” he moved his chair over to whisper, “you really want to part of the Brady Bunch with knives?” referring to his sons.

“I like your kids,” Skywarp smiled back, “how’ve they been?”

“They were worried about you,” Soundwave told him, “and they were upset that you were attacked in the shower…”

“I’m sorry I wrecked your shower,” now the Seeker felt sad again, “everyone says that was your private sanctuary…whatever that means.”

“You weren’t the one that wrecked it,” the Tapedeck shook his helm, “that’s um…” he didn’t want to bring up the entity again.

Maybe it was his hormones, but Skywarp’s attitude kept changing, from nervous to scared to sad to angry; it wasn’t the ghost, “Look, can I make one thing clear here? I’m NOT protecting this ghost. I don’t like what’s been,” he looked away again, “happening to us; I’ve been cut up and drowned… getting sick and stuff,” the coolant tears were back, “…just wanna have my baby.”

Soundwave wheeled his chair over as close as the two chairs would allow and put his arms around his little Seeker. Skywarp leaned against the large blue shoulder; it was nice to held by such a big, powerful mech; he imagined that this is what Starscream felt like when he was in Megatron’s arms.

“I’m sorry,” Soundwave stroked the back of his lover’s helm, “I know this is hard; do you want me to take you back to your brothers?”

Skywarp shook his helm slightly, still preferring to cuddle against him.

So, they held each other for a while, sitting in the dark, not talking, just wanting to feel close to each other. Soundwave thought it was ironic that when they were on the couch together, they were fighting, and he was ready to kill Skywarp. But at his…THEIR Computer Consul, on office swivel chairs, they were lovingly cuddling; he wondered why the environment was so different…

It had to do with Gravechaser not being able to see them and influence the larger mech negatively.
“Are you mad at me?” Skywarp whispered in a sparkling-like tone.

“No…” was all Soundwave told him.

Skywarp: “Frustrated?”

Soundwave: “No…”

Skywarp didn’t want this to come between them, “You can do it now if you want.”

“Do what?” Soundwave’s thoughts were elsewhere.

“Take the information you wanted,” Skywarp tried envisioning the wicked ghost, with It’s true designation in bold letters—Scourge—in front of the being, feeling that he was finally ready, “take it.”

“I’m not going to do that,” Soundwave adjusted his Seeker in his hold, “forget that I asked.”

“I’m thinking it now, just take it,” Skywarp insisted in a sleepy tone, “read my CPU, come on.”

“It doesn’t work that way, Skywarp,” Soundwave sighed, making the Seeker look at him, again feeling like Skywarp didn’t know what he was asking for, “for me to go into your CPU and just… extract data…it’s very painful for the subject,” he turned away again, “I used to do it a lot when the Decepticons were starting out,” his tone became shameful, “it was an easy way to deal with enemy combatants, and…captured palace spies,” he sighed, “I stopped doing it about a year after we came to Earth.”

Skywarp was confused now, “You always say when we’re lying or telling the truth…that doesn’t hurt.”

“That’s not mind-reading,” Soundwave corrected, “that’s vocal analysis.”

“Oh…” Skywarp was realizing he was going to have to come clean on his own, “so…I have to tell you.”

Soundwave DID need to know, “Well, it’s just that we’re going in circles with these files, and Megatron feels that we’ll never be rid of this threat if we don’t know who we’re dealing with, but…” he didn’t want to hurt him, “you’re afraid.”

“I AM afraid,” Skywarp sat up, “I-I’m afraid of him, but…Soundwave, you don’t understand…” he was thinking of Thundercracker now, and what knowing who Gravechaser was would do to him, “he said it would get so much w-worse if I—” he hitched his vents, “he would make it so much worse…”

“But the attacks have gotten progressively worse, Skywarp,” Soundwave insisted, “you could have been killed; your SPARKLING could have been killed in the shower stall. It’s not going to stop.”

Gravechaser leaned in, realizing what they were talking about.

“Y-You’re asking me t-to be h-homeless,” Skywarp was babbling now, sobbing, “you’re asking me to be homeless when I’m e-eight months c-carrying,” he could tell he wasn’t making sense, “I-I’m g-gonna haveta give birth a-alone s-somewhere…a-and I h-haveta be on Earth, cause I can’t fly or teleport…a-and, and…”

“Who said anything about being homeless?” now Soundwave sat back, trying as hard as he could to
understand how Skywarp could have jumped all the way to that conclusion, “You believe any of us would do that to you?” he gestured with his hands, “You believe that whoever this is, is so bad that we…your BROTHERS, would turn against you?”

Coolant tears rolled down Skywarp’s miserable faceplates, “I-I couldn’t stay here…i-if he knew the truth.”

“He?” Soundwave wasn’t clear on who, “You mean Megatron?” he tried to think back; pulling up all the data in his own CPU on where the clues were all leading him to; what the Seeker was truly trying to tell him.

But Skywarp shook his helm.

Still thinking it was about Megatron, Soundwave continued, “If you feel that he would fire you, I can swear on my wife’s grave that both Starscream and Thundercracker would leave WITH you AND take the sparklings. You saw how Megatron reacted to that threat already,” he gestured at the sofa, “right here in the Control Room. So—”

Skywarp kept shaking his helm, “N-Not Megatron…”

“Okay,” Soundwave stopped, “I’m just trying to understand, I don’t want to make you start crying,” he stroked the Seeker’s shoulder, “but I can tell, this secret is eating you alive.”

“And when you know,” Skywarp turned away, “it’ll eat you alive.”

“You underestimate me,” Soundwave smiled beneath his faceplates, “if this Thing comes after me, I can attack it back with telekinetic energy.”

Skywarp stroked his injured hand as Soundwave continued, “You remember the forest? I can defend us; I’m a very strong mech, I can take a hit from the ghost,” he tried to loosen up, “hey, I used to pick up Megatron when he was drunk.”

“But it’s not Megatron we’re talking about here,” Skywarp looked away again, “y-you don’t know…you don’t understand…”

“This entity is actually a coward,” Soundwave stated boldly, not realizing he was challenging the preying ghost, “attacks in the middle of the night, attacking a pregnant Seeker, scaring my sons the way It did. It doesn’t have the diodes to face Megatron or myself. You know what the boys all told me? The moment I came into our quarters, this Thing just disappeared!”

Skywarp knew better the extent of Gravechaser’s strength; he averted his optics again, looking at the floor. He suddenly felt very tired; ready to fall back asleep. This was just due to carrying heavy; he wasn’t being affected.

“Are we on the right track with this investigation, Skywarp?” Soundwave asked now, “You can tell me, please…you don’t have to tell me who it is, but can you point me in the right direction?”

The poor Seeker felt the coolant tears pooling in his optics again; he was scared for his sparkling and what the ghost would do to all three of them once the name was out. Part of his old self wanted to give Soundwave a sly grin and tell him that he had to interface with him if he wanted the information, but this wasn’t a game. This wasn’t a prank. This wasn’t something he could laugh about and teleport away from and go hide behind his brothers over. After tonight, he could never hide behind Thundercracker again, really…

But it was now or never.
“Is the designation of this ghost in our files?” Soundwave asked, gesturing at the boxes.

Skywarp nodded.

“Have we processed the files already?” Soundwave asked again.

Skywarp nodded again.

“Okay, Skywarp, thank you for that,” the Tapedeck was pleasantly surprised that his Seeker was opening up this much; however, he knew he couldn’t push him too hard, “at least I know now where to look. And, we can stop at any time.”

The pregnant flyer looked around, and whispered, “Is he here?”

“Negative,” Soundwave looked upwards, “I don’t feel anything.” If only he knew…

“He’s gonna hate me,” Skywarp was talking about his beloved brother now, “I just know it.”

“We are not going to weigh this entity’s opinion, no matter WHO It is, understand?” Soundwave clearly assumed the Seeker was talking about the ghost, “No matter what, alright?”

Skywarp kept looking away.

Gravechaser was incensed; the little wretch was going to crack!

“Okay, let me think,” Soundwave turned towards the Consul, “now that I know the answer is not still in the boxes, it’s in our processed files, I know where to look now, so I thank you for that.” He made it a point to thank the Seeker repeatedly for any help he was providing, knowing how frightened Skywarp was, “now tell me, is it one of the deactivated prisoners?”

Skywarp nodded.

Soundwave began typing, pulling up the prisoners’ files, “Do you know the specific prison?”

Skywarp nodded again.

Rather than name all four prisons, Soundwave guessed it was the one that the human ghost hunters had investigated, “The Iacon Correctional Center?”

“Yes,” the flyer whispered it so silently, only Soundwave’s hearing could have picked it up.

“Okay, thank you,” Soundwave narrowed his search to only the prisoners housed at that facility; “well, that narrows it down. Only thousands now.” Ironhide’s name came up as a guard, “Tell me, do you feel that Ironhide would know who this is? I ask because I’m going to question him soon.”

“I-I don’t know,” and Skywarp truly didn’t know, “he never mentioned Ironhide…”

“Hmm, interesting,” Soundwave had to consider this, “I’m piecing together what you’re telling me and what Laserbeak has told me repeatedly about Ironhide acting strangely. So, my guess is, this entity doesn’t care about his old guard or any hand he played in his fate?”

Skywarp didn’t know…

“Why would I care about that old rustbucket?” Gravechaser sneered, “I would never have been in there at all if wasn’t for Skywarp.”

“Why would I care about that old rustbucket?” Gravechaser sneered, “I would never have been in there at all if wasn’t for Skywarp.”
“What?” Soundwave thought he heard some of that, “did you whisper something?”

Skywarp shook his helm, whimpering.

Soundwave turned towards the French Doors, “Somebody’s up.”

Gravechaser snarled now.

“Don’t be afraid,” Soundwave told his Seeker, “the entity isn’t on the Base. Let’s keep going,” he looked at his files again, “So I feel it’s safe to just eliminate all of the Autobots as suspects altogether, am I correct?”

“It’s not…them,” Skywarp shook his helm.

Soundwave waved his hands for emphasis, “None of this haunting has anything to do with the Autobots.”

Skywarp: “N-No…”

“That’s interesting,” Soundwave noted, “so, basically, what happened was, these human ghost hunters came, most likely using spirit boards, and this negative entity came through a portal and then waited for you to get pregnant, so It could strike you when you couldn’t teleport.” Megatron was not the ONLY detective in the Decepticon hierarchy.

That made Skywarp sad; he hugged his belly with his arm.

“Is this individual known to the Decepticons?” Soundwave asked now.

Skywarp stopped answering.

The Tapedeck tried to rephrase the question, “If I saw the name on this list, would I recognize it?”

“I don’t know…” Skywarp wasn’t sure if Soundwave knew TC’s biocreator’s designation.

Soundwave thought of the eight minors that perished, “Do you think that Megatron would recognize the name?”

Again, Skywarp wasn’t sure, “I don’t know…”

“Not one of the miners?” Soundwave kept trying, “Do you want to tell me this being’s occupation?”

Skywarp couldn’t remember ever hearing anything about that, “I don’t know it…”

Soundwave was beginning to wonder if that was all the Seeker really knew about his tormentor; he could tell by his vocals that Skywarp was indeed telling the truth, so maybe he really didn’t know anymore. Soundwave scrolled over the names and dates, noting how old some of these mechs were, “Um, Skywarp…these Seekers are rather older than you and your brothers.”

Skywarp refused to meet Soundwave’s gaze, and the Tapedeck realized that Skywarp would have been a sparkling at the time of a lot of the Seekers were incarcerated. Now, only dark thoughts came into Soundwave’s CPU: Was this entity a pedophile? Or did Skywarp and his brothers ever dabble in the occult themselves, conjuring up an already dead Seeker? “Did you know this mech when he was online?”

Skywarp shook his helm no.
“Skywarp,” Soundwave had to know, “I need an honest answer. Did you do anything with witchcraft, or spirit boards, or anything with spells, or—”

“No,” Skywarp looked at him right in the optics.

“If you did something,” Soundwave tried again, “it’s better to tell us the truth if—”

“I said, NO,” Skywarp was very serious.

“Okay,” Soundwave nodded, knowing for sure he was being truthful.

Skywarp began crying in earnest now; the coolant tears falling like rain.

“Hey,” Soundwave stopped and turned to him, “I didn’t mean anything. You didn’t deserve this; no one…deserves this. I’m just trying to understand the connection; what connection you would have to this place; what this entity would want with you…” he looked at those coolant tears, “we can stop for now. It’s very late; I know you’re tired…um, thank you very much for what you’ve told me.”

Gravechaser watched and waited; knowing it wouldn’t be long now until that slagging Megatron would put the clues together.

“Come on,” Soundwave stood and offered his hand to the pregnant flyer, “I’ll walk you back.”

Skywarp took it and had to be helped to his pedes; he almost stumbled as one of his thrusters caught a wheel on the chair and he had to hang on to the Tapedeck’s arms to stay up. He was disappointed with how this visit had gone and felt like Soundwave needed to pay him back for whatever punishment Gravechaser was going to dish out next for this indiscretion. He looked into the larger mech’s visor, “You didn’t kiss me tonight.”

“Well,” Soundwave smiled beneath his facemask, “I wouldn’t have assumed you wanted me to after everything that transpired this evening,” he was still afraid of coming on too strong and frightening the smaller mech.

“Don’t you think you owe me?” Skywarp wiped his optics, pouting a little.

“I owe you,” Soundwave agreed, removing his visor and facemask, before whispering, “but in matters of the spark, I always wait for permission.”

“Really?” the pregnant Seeker, with all his hormonal mood swings, was feeling his pheromone levels raising again, “did Celene always have to lead?”

“I preferred it that way,” Soundwave reached his arms around to rub Skywarp’s back under his wings, “you can see how I tend to come on strong.”

“Not as strong as I can be,” Skywarp teased now; the coolant tears dried, he craned his helm upwards to reach the taller mech, who obliged by leaning down. Their lip components met and pressed together as if they were made for each other. The pregnant Seeker wrapped his arms around Soundwave’s larger frame, while the Tapedeck trailed his digits towards the other’s wing joints playfully.

Skywarp wanted to tell him now. And the way to tell him finally came to him.

“MMMmm…” the Seeker broke the kiss and whispered, “we’ll watch The Bodyguard tomorrow?”

“Whatever you want…” Soundwave kissed him again, wanting, needing to kiss him.
“Christopher was the one that showed it to me,” Skywarp whispered between multiple kisses, “he said…” they kissed again, “her costume looked like a Transformer…”

“It’s actually ‘Metropolis,’ Soundwave noted, kissing him with an open mouth again.

That made Skywarp giggle a bit, his faceplates heating up with passion, “Wouldn’t have expected you to like Rom-Coms, Soundwave…”

“I saw it on an airplane,” the Tapedeck chuckled back, remembering that red-eye showing abroad Air Force One, “I was on a mission at the time…”

“He was her bodyguard…” Skywarp broke the kissing and rested his helm against the larger mech’s shoulder, noting sadly, “like you with me…”

“I can live with that,” Soundwave stoked one of the carrying flyer’s wings.

“Can’t hear a slagging thing,” Gravechaser snarled as he stomped around; he hated the whispering.

“Soundwave?” Skywarp finally felt the time was right, “Why did she need a bodyguard?”

“Someone was after her…” the Tapedeck rested his helm against the other’s, “a stalker…” his CPU began to draw the parallels now: Rachel was the subject of death threats, much like Skywarp, and he must protect him the way Frank always protected her.

“Who was the stalker?” Skywarp closed his optics, hoping his lover understood.

“It was a hitman,” Soundwave had to think back; it had been some time since he had seen the film, and the details were slowly coming to the surface, “she didn’t know who it was…”

“Who hired him?” Skywarp asked the question he already knew the answer to.

“It was Nikki, her—” Soundwave’s optics snapped open, “sibling.” He slowly let go and took several steps back; it all made sense now; why were they discussing this human movie so in depth? He finally got it; the Seeker was leading him to the unseemingly truth: the sibling had unknowingly invoked an order—or in this case, a curse—to destroy the other. All the pieces fit together now; the entity was Thundercracker’s estranged Sire, Scourge; he had been imprisoned and deactivated in the Iacon Correctional Center; the Tapedeck and Megatron had seen the ghost in the form of a blue Seeker, and in fact, countless Decepticons had as well, including Starscream and Dirge, both believing the being to be Thundercracker. Everyone had been erroneously thinking that the ghost was taking on a disguise to look like Starscream and Skywarp’s oldest brother when, in reality, the entity was taking on his—IT’S—own former form. It all fit now. But, Thundercracker clearly didn’t know the truth. Soundwave had witnessed numerous times where the Seeker had begged them to protect his younger brother; his younger brother that he adored with all his spark. He couldn’t have known…If only he knew…

And all the while, Skywarp was looking directly into Soundwave’s unmasked optics. Something he was refusing to do earlier when he didn’t want to be honest. He was being honest now though; and painfully so.
Chapter 82: Part 3:

By Transformersnewfan

“Thundercracker’s…Sire?” Soundwave asked now.

Skywarp nodded, still refusing to vocalize it, but had a look of both relief that his friend finally knew, and fear of what was to come.

Scourge, AKA Gravechaser, silently vowed to make them both pay.

“Oh, Skywarp,” Soundwave hugged him tightly, realizing that this secret had to have been tearing him apart; the smaller Seeker reached his arms up and hugged him back; his emotions swirling in a whirlwind now; the burden of the secret finally lifted or at least shared now, and maybe, just maybe, there was a chance that he and little Crystal would be protected from the wrath of the spurned ghost. But now, they had a new dilemma:

“A-Are you gonna t-tell TC?” Skywarp asked miserably.

“Well, I’m not sure how,” Soundwave admitted, “do you feel it would be easier coming from me or Megatron?”

“All I know is he’ll hate me,” the Seeker leaned against the larger mech’s chestdeck; his sparkling squirmed a little when she sensed how upset he was.

“No Skywarp,” Soundwave tried to reassure him, “in all the time I’ve known your Trine, I know that your brothers love you with all their sparks; I believe they would do anything for you.” He stroked Skywarp’s faceplates, “I don’t know how I know, but I just know, from the depth of my spark all the way down to my metal frame, I know that if anything happened to you…they would die. They would just die, Skywarp.”

“Teecee’s gonna h-hate me,” Skywarp insisted, “a-and, I’ll l-lose my best friend…”

At that point, Soundwave didn’t know what to do or say; he wanted to make it better for his friend. He understood as well that Thundercracker was likely to take the news hard, or possibly not even believe this information. Finally, Soundwave came up with an answer, “Listen, if he abandons you, you can come live with my sons and me.”

“Can I bring my baby?” Skywarp had to make sure.

“Of course you should bring your baby,” Soundwave wanted to tell him that this was a given, but he
understood. They stayed together, holding each other in the dark, for a while before the Tapedeck sat him back on his chair, “you just sit here and relax.”

Skywarp sat back, trying to calm down, rubbing his belly and hoping his hand doesn’t start throbbing again. Soundwave got up and retrieved a blanket from the sofa and wrapped it around the Seeker’s frame.

“Feeling alright?” Soundwave asked as he sat back down.

“Uh-huh,” the Seeker nodded, wiping away his dried tears, “feels like I’ve spilled my biggest secrets.”

“It’s going to be fine,” Soundwave tried to focus on his work, putting his mask and visor back on, “I’ll talk to him.”

Skywarp watched his friend type up documents, “What’s your biggest secret?”

“Hmm?” the big mech looked up.

“I told you a huge secret,” Skywarp didn’t yet feel like sleeping, and wanted some conversation, despite yawning, “don’t you think you owe me your secrets?”

“I don’t really have any,” Soundwave admitted, “I was married; I worked for the telephone company,” he shrugged, “I went on service calls…”

Feeling better now, Skywarp smirked, “Did you ever have an affair?”

“Just one,” Soundwave turned to face his lover, “and I’m looking at him right now.”

Blushing a little, Skywarp smiled, “I’m being serious.”

“So am I,” Soundwave shrugged; he enjoyed their flirtation.

“Seriously, you never got tempted?” Skywarp asked, “Alone in someone’s home?” Like his own Mother and Sire?

“Negative,” Soundwave shook his helm, “my happiness was being at home, with Celene and our sparklings.”

Smiling, the Seeker pulled over a framed photo of his predecessor and studied it, thinking to himself that she wasn’t that hot; he would say she was a six.

“I was on a mission with Blitzwing several years ago,” Soundwave began, “we were waiting for dawn, and he asked me what era I would live in, given a choice. I told him I would go back to our house in Polyhex and relive our time together…” he felt like he was sounding like Megatron now, reminiscing, “so much has happened since then.”

“So, are the rumors true?” Skywarp stopped pulling punches, “Starscream says you know all about pregnant sex.”

Soundwave had told Megatron this in the strictest confidence, but he realized he failed to ask Starscream to keep his secrets. After a few seconds of silence, he stated, “My wife would get questions about it all the time from her patients. So, when she was carrying, she asked me to help her prove or disprove her theories that it was both safe and satisfactory to both partners.”

Skywarp frowned, thinking his friend’s answer sounded so scientific and clinical; he asked again,
“So, what did you two find out?”

“A sparkling is not harmed when a pregnant Transformer and their partner has interfacing,”

Soundwave was clearly uncomfortable with where this conversation was going, “the amniotic sac
and the strong cables of the gestation chamber protect the baby, and the thick ammonic fluids guard
against infection.” He sighed, beginning to hate this conversation, “during interfacing, the spike
doesn’t go beyond the valve, so it doesn’t reach the sparkling.”

Skywarp could tell that Soundwave wasn’t interested, “doesn’t sound like it was as much fun as I
figured it would be…” he wished he had a romantic partner; one that would tell him how beautiful
he was and how happy they were about the sparkling; his brothers couldn’t take the place of a suiter.

“I’ve put a lot of things out of my CPU,” Soundwave explained, “experiences and memories of a
happier time, that I’ve chosen to regulate as eras I will never have again, as it was from another life
of a bygone time.”

Skywarp pulled himself up, planning to head for the doors, when Soundwave stated dryly, “But I
remember every trick and every affectionate stroke of the Transformer chassis that sends the loving
sensations of pleasure that would drive a carrier like yourself into a tornado of ecstasy.”

The Seeker’s optics went wide.

“That is,” Soundwave put the papers down, “only if you are interested.”

“Are you ready to show me your tricks?” Skywarp begged now.

“Come here,” the Tapedeck suddenly felt his own pheromone levels rising, as he finally felt he had
permission to take the pregnant Seeker as his own; he pulled Skywarp into his lap, with the smaller
mech’s legs straddling him. Skywarp felt his faceplates turning red with embarrassment at how large
he was; he tried to lift his belly with both hands.

Soundwave again put his arms around Skywarp and hugged him to his frame; now they were sitting
faceplate-to-faceplate on the Tapedeck’s lap, “it’s called Lotus,” Soundwave explained, “it’s very
sensual, and it’s ideal for clitoral stimulation and intimacy.”

“Y-Yeah,” Skywarp felt himself trembling, “and it’s really hot too.” He wasn’t sure what to do at
first; he really didn’t know how to take the lead, so, he leaned in and put his faceplates to
Soundwave’s, coaxing him to once again remove his mask.

Soundwave did so, again removing his visor and mouthplate. He wasn’t used to showing himself this
much; his wife was not much for kissing. Skywarp steadied himself by holding onto the back of
Soundwave’s chair, belly in the middle of them, and once again began kissing the larger mech.

Soundwave responded by taking the Seeker’s helm in his hands, then trailing his hands down
Skywarp’s neck cables, then down his shoulder vents, and then his sides.

Skywarp began inhaling and exhaling in short bursts, “Mmm-mmm…,” he moaned into the kisses,
he felt Soundwave’s hands on his love handles and then his thick thighs. He felt like a disgusting
slugoid; oh, why did he have to have all those rust sticks…

Soundwave sensed his distress, “Something wrong, Skywarp?” he stopped his hands where they
were, resting on the flyer’s legs.

“J-Just that I’m a fat, Goodyear blimp and I can’t control m-myself,” Skywarp felt the burning of his
coolant tears forming in his optics, “I-I’m so sorry…”
Soundwave put his fears to rest with a single sentence, “You look gorgeous,” and proceeded to lock lip components with him again, and his hands now wandered to the Seeker’s aft, and he gave it a squeeze, making Skywarp moan with pleasure into their kisses again.

Sickened, Gravechaser waited for the right moment to strike…

Skywarp felt his whole chassis heating up, and coolant sweat began secreting from his chassis. Just to be safe, he closed the Trine Bond to his two brothers, not wanting them to know what he was up to.

Soundwave carefully worked his hands up the Seeker’s back, going higher and higher, until his hands gently landed on Skywarp’s wings. His digits’ light touches and caresses were so gentle; he guided them up to the plates of those wings and finally into the flips, just above the Decepticon insignias, and wrapping his digits around the sensitive wiring, sending signals of ecstasy cascading through the pregnant flyer’s entire frame.

“AAHHHHH,” Skywarp felt his pheromone levels surge through his entire chassis; it wasn’t pain, it was all pleasure. He was glad the feelings didn’t wake his sleeping sparkling, or he would have some serious explaining to do. He wanted—NEEDED—more…

Soundwave continued to wiggle his digits deeper into the sensitive wiring; careful to not hurt the pregnant Seeker but move them just enough to evoke a pleasurable response. He reached down and opened his interface panel, “You will make the determination how deep you want to go…”

“MMMMM?” Skywarp tried to sink down into the other’s lap, down closer, but his belly was in the way. He tried adjusting himself by spreading his legs but getting himself lower was a very uncomfortable position for his legs as they were on top of Soundwave’s, and he felt his cables seizing up, “Mmmm…S-Sorry…” he couldn’t get lower; his faceplates were red with embarrassment at how fat he felt he was.

Soundwave realized that this position wasn’t working; he and Celene had been able to do this at thirty-two weeks, but Skywarp was bigger than she was at this stage, “Don’t worry, I have all sorts of moves…” he closed his interface panel, lifted Skywarp up off his lap and stood, “hold that thought.” He placed Skywarp down in the swivel chair and began moving the boxes.

The poor pregnant Seeker was trembling now; a mixture of fired-up sexual heat and sheer embarrassment that his belly had gotten in the way; he pressed his forehelm into the chair, squeezing his optics shuts and keening.

Soundwave, meanwhile, opened the sofa bed and covered it with the blankets, before going back to his Seeker. He then kissed and licked Skywarp’s neck cables as he wrapped his arms around him and helped him up.

It was Skywarp’s turn to not be in the mood now; all he could think of were Starscream’s ‘beached whale’ comment and Laserbeak and Buzzsaw wanting to paint the Goodyear logo on him.

“You just need more foreplay,” Soundwave laid him on the sofa bed, kissing him and caressing his faceplates; Skywarp felt his chassis heating up again, so he peeled off his robe and got under the blankets. The sharp pain came and went, so the flyer quickly turned onto his left side, careful not to lean on his injured hand. He pretended he turned just to look at Soundwave.

The Tapedeck laid on the sofa bed across from him, facing away from the Computer Consul. He wished his berthroom wasn’t wrecked at the moment; then he could be taking his Seeker in a more dignified setting.
“Put your hand down here,” Soundwave instructed the flyer to put his hand between his own legs as Soundwave did; he was going to instruct him in mutual masturbation without touching him too much and scaring him. Skywarp did so, even if it meant using his right hand and balancing himself off his left arm, putting pressure on his injured left hand. Beneath the covers, Soundwave clicked open his interface panel once again; Skywarp did the same.

“Start with your index digit,” Soundwave continued.

Skywarp exhaled heavily, thinking he didn’t need to be instructed on how to do this, “Why?”

“Because,” Soundwave grinned, “you’re going to pretend that’s MY digits down there.”

“Ooooh,” Skywarp got it; he did so now, beginning to feel the arousal creep up his chassis; he vented heavier than before.

Soundwave was matching him move for move, “Now, insert your middle digit.”

Skywarp again did as instructed, now feeling the pressure build in his area underneath his middle. He could feel the transfluid start to gather in his spike now. He squeezed his mouth shut tightly to suppress a moan…

“Enjoying yourself so far?” Soundwave sure knew his stuff.

Sweating, Skywarp gasped out and nodded. He pushed his digits deeper into his valve, hitting a sensitive knood now. He arched his back and whimpered a little, careful not to jerk his gestation chamber and sleeping sparkling inside.

“Easy, easy,” Soundwave told him, “go slowly…”

Skywarp nodded, feeling the transfluid building up now; swelling up his spike.

Soundwave leaned in closer, careful to not come on too strong, “and when you’re ready, you can insert another digit.”

Skywarp didn’t know if he could, “A-Am I supposed t-to—” he hitched his vents and couldn’t finish his sentence.


Another a couple of tries and Skywarp asked again, “Am I supposed to get my w-whole f-fist in there?”

“Well, you’re preparing for when I enter you,” Soundwave leaned in, whispering, “and when I do, you’re going to feel like you’ve got a whole thruster in there…”

The image sent the pregnant Seeker reeling now; he inserted his ring digit to join the first two, expanding his valve while transfluid filled and swelled his spike even more, “OOooohh, Ooohhhh,” before gasping for air, his hormones were raging in passion and pleasure. He ached for release now, longing for Soundwave to satisfy this increasing pressure inside his interface organs. He reached out and grabbed Soundwave’s arm, tugging for him to come over now.

Soundwave moved closer, first kissing his mate open-mouthed on the lip components, followed by getting his arm under Skywarp’s knees and starting to get the Seeker’s legs over his own hips.

“OOOWWW!” Skywarp cried out; he couldn’t bend that high.
“Put a pillow under your back,” Soundwave took the pillow and tried placing it at Skywarp’s lower back, but it didn’t help.

“I-I can’t,” Skywarp was panting, “I can’t get m-my legs like that.”

What Soundwave had been trying to do was get the flyer’s legs over his hips and enter Skywarp without putting any pressure on his abdomen, but the difference in their Alt-Modes made this too uncomfortable for the Seeker.

“Okay,” Soundwave had another idea, “we’ll go with you on top.”

Skywarp’s optics widen; he had never done anything like that before, but his doubts quickly melted away when Soundwave glided the palm of his hand over the flyer’s wing, trailing it slowly up to the wing’s tip, before giving it a little squeeze. Skywarp felt the transfluid rush in now, making his whole chassis heat up, “OOOhhhhh….” his internal fans clicked on as he threw himself backward against the sofa bed.

Soundwave kept up his soft touches, “take your time, darling,” the affectionate name slipping up smoothly through those baritone vocals. He used both hands now, each one on a wing, again going under the flips, and running his digits through all that sensitive wiring, “you just enjoy yourself…”

Reaching his hormonal peak, Skywarp felt his spike was near bursting with the transfluid now; he ached for the relief only interfacing could bring him, “Uuuhhh, oohhhhh,” he was babbling, and his vocals were filled with static, he was glad they were covered by the blankets because his spike was probably purple by now. He had to get Soundwave’s spike inside his valve before something popped…

Soundwave laid back to let his smaller mate climb atop his frame; he kept his optics Skywarp, giving him a seductive look.

Skywarp gathered his strength and sat up; he took a deep air intake and crawled over Soundwave’s frame. He went to lift up his belly with his right hand but then accidentally put the pressure on his injured left hand, when his whole weight was supported by his burned salvo against the sofa bed. He couldn’t help but let out a pained keen…

Not to worry, as Soundwave grasped Skywarp from under his arms and helped him onto his lap. Skywarp was able to get his legs spread enough so that he could sit comfortably and get into position. He was so pent up he was shaking visibly now, “Ugg, ahhh…” Resting his chubby soft belly against Soundwave’s steel-hard abs, he was about to enter his mate…

Perfect timing.

Gravechaser flicked his wrist: A tabletop microphone slide across his Consul, to touch the speaker.

A deafening audio feedback blared through the live connection, “HHUUUUUMMMMM!”

Soundwave stopped cold, “What was that?”

Skywarp had heard it too, but he was so close to overloading that he didn’t care. His only response was to tremble and whimper.

That’s when Soundwave saw something: When Skywarp moved his helm, the Tapedeck saw that ‘monitor seven’ had the red light on, indicating it was activated!

“Skywarp, get up!” Soundwave ordered; he lifted the Seeker off of himself quickly and set him back
on the sofa bed; he jumped to his pedes, quickly closing his interface panel and reattaching his mouthplate and visor. He went to Computer Consul; switching feeds to demand the identity of who was watching them!

But, as he did so, Gravechaser signed off.

“YOU THINK YOU CAN ESCAPE THAT EASILY?!” Soundwave roared, “YOU HAVE GOT ANOTHER THING COMING!”

What happened? Skywarp was panting; his internal fans were whirling on, “U-Um, Soundwave?” his partner had left him just as they were about to interface. When he could get the words out, he begged, “C-Can you come back?” His poor spike had reached its capacity; his partner had left him as he was about to overload.

“I’m sorry, Skywarp, but we have a problem,” Soundwave told him hurriedly, “there’s a possibility that someone was recording us.”

The pregnant Seeker’s already heated faceplates went cherry red now; there was an unauthorized SEX TAPE?! He covered himself with the blanket.

“Megatron: wake up,” Soundwave called through his Comm.-Link, “we have a serious breach in security.”

Starscream had stayed wide awake all night; terrified of dreaming and seeing Gravechaser again. Megatron groaned loudly, turning over and looking at his Comm.-Link: two in the morning, “Oh Primus…I have to be up in three hours.” He switched it on, “Yes, Soundwave?”

“Report to the Control Room,” Soundwave ordered.

The former Gladiator groaned again, throwing his arms down against his sides, “Starscream, you should go to the guestroom with your brothers and the triplets;” he didn’t realize his Bondmate had been awake all night.

“O-Okay,” was Starscream’s shaky answer; he was trembling from lack of recharge.

Thundercracker was awake as well, having woken up at some point and was now seething at his youngest brother…

Chapter End Notes

Comment, please! :)
Chapter 83: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 83:

By Transformersnewfan

“What’s going on, Soundwave?” Megatron had thrown on his robe and entered the Control Room, finding his 3ic frantically typing and pressing buttons. The Decepticon Leader saw Skywarp sitting up on the sofa bed, covering his shoulders and wings with the blanket, so he waved hello.

“I have to trace this signal!” Soundwave was absolutely furious; but despite his tornado of embarrassment, anger, and thirst for revenge, the Tapedeck managed to concoct a believable lie about what he and Skywarp were doing at the time of the discovery.

As Megatron yawned again and sat down, Soundwave continued in a semi-lie, “Skywarp and I were discussing the investigation; the exact context of our conversation was highly sensitive,” well, that part was true, at least, he told himself, “after he decided to sleep here in the Control Room, I heard an unexplained noise that resembled microphone feedback.”

“So,” the Decepticon Leader rubbed at his optics, “did you contact Laserbeak?”

“What?” Soundwave hadn’t thought of that, “I’m still working on a trace,”

“I mean,” Megatron yawned again, “that would rule the Autobots in or out right away.”

Hmmm, the Tapedeck didn’t consider that; his processors were semi-scrambled by his and Skywarp’s dalliances.

Skywarp, meanwhile, felt like he was about to explode. He was so charged up and full to bursting with transfuid, being left on the brink of overload like this. Was Soundwave going to come back and finish their interfacing? It didn’t seem so, not now that he was talking to Megatron. And, now his sparkling was up, moving her little thrusters. Skywarp felt sick; he didn’t know if he wanted to purge his tanks or wet the sofa bed. Something had to give, and soon.

Soundwave called his son now, “Laserbeak: Report Red Alert’s whereabouts.”

“Red Alert is located in his quarters, Father,” Laserbeak answered, “he turned in at his usual eight-forty-five routine.”

“Is there anyone using Teletran-I at the moment?” Soundwave asked now.

“Negative, Father,” the Bird was bored, “I await Ironhide’s return.”

“Okay, thank you,” and the Tapedeck closed the connection.

“H- Hey, S-Soundwave?” Skywarp begged, “Um…”

“Skywarp, I’m sorry.” Soundwave was so upset by this, his tone came out harsh, “you’ll have to go back to your brothers.”

“W-Wha?” the pregnant Seeker was so close to overload, he didn’t care if Soundwave finished him right there in front of Megatron.
The Decepticon Leader, by the way, chose to stay out of the conversation.

“SKYWARP, GO!” Soundwave barked, “NOW!”

The poor Seeker’s optics bugged out; not sure at the moment if the physical pain he was in would soon be matched with the emotional distress he would be in once Soundwave’s harsh words sunk in. He didn’t want to argue with his lover in front of Megatron, so he wrapped himself in the blanket and grabbed his robe and hobbled to the door, barely able to walk.

Megatron wondered for a moment what exactly they were doing together, but he was more so trying to figure out what was going on with their Computer Consul and still get a few more hours of recharge before he had to fly out to the East Coast.

At the same time this was going on, Starscream went to Thundercracker; the red and white Seeker’s optics were Energon-bloodshot as red as his coloring, and he was hugging himself, feeling as if he was holding his chassis together.

The blue Seeker met him in the berthroom doorway.

“I can’t sleep, TC,” Starscream shook his helm, “I’m afraid to close my optics after what I saw last night. I thought I could handle it, but I can’t.” he went to his babies now; Darkwing opened his little optics to look at him, but the other two were still asleep.

“Well, I woke up to the Trine Bond shooting emotions left and right,” Thundercracker complained, “that was before he closed it, but I’d already figured out what was going on.”

That’s when they heard Skywarp come back in and run to the wash racks.

“Come on,” TC jerked his helm at the direction he started walking. Starscream picked Darkwing up and followed.

Everyone was careful not to wake the sleeping Casseticons.

Skywarp jumped into Starscream’s wash racks, forgetting his earlier fear of shower stalls—it helped that it only had a curtain—and turned the water on, “Aaaccchhhh,” his spike ached so bad; he realized he shouldn’t let his bandages get wet, but he was in too much agony to care. He turned on the cold water now, pointing the spout at his open interface panel. It seemed to help, so he turned the freezing cold water on full blast.

:Momma, COLD!: Crystal curled against his backstruct, just as she had done when they nearly drowned in Soundwave’s shower stall; he realized that she probably remembered it.

“I-I’mmm…sorry,” he moaned, “E-Everything’s fine, baby…” Finally, his spike began deflating, eventually returning to normal size; he was shaking, but it was worth it.

“Enjoyed your dalliance?” Thundercracker’s vocals came out of nowhere, making the younger Seeker yelp, almost falling and knocking his wings into the wall. For a minute, Skywarp thought it was Gravechaser again, back to haunt him once again in the shower, and, and…he saw his two brothers on the other side of the shower curtain. Just to make sure, he reopened the Trine Bond, and yes, it was indeed them.
Starscream was rocking Darkwing, trying to keep him calm; he had encouraged Skywarp to make his moves on the Tapedeck, but he wasn’t going to admit that now in front of their ticked-off oldest brother.

“Well?” TC demanded, opening the curtain.

“I-I was just…” Skywarp felt his faceplates heating up again, despite the cold water running over his carrying frame, “y-y’know, I couldn’t sleep…a-and, I thought I’d go talk to S-Soundwave.”

Thundercracker glared at him, “And you didn’t think to tell either of us where you were going? Did you forget about the evil ghost running around here?!”

“I-I’m s-sorry, TC,” Skywarp felt bad enough already, “I-I wasn’t, um…we were j-just talking and stuff.”

“If you’re gonna lie,” Thundercracker crossed his arms, “at least do me the honor of closing your interface panel.”

Skywarp’s faceplates turned beet red now, immediately doing as he was told.

“Of all the irresponsible stunts to pull,” TC was furious, “you go out on an aft call in the middle of the night! Look Warp; this isn’t about just YOU anymore! You have an innocent sparkling inside of you to protect now. You can’t put your child’s life in danger!” He sighed between air intakes, “From now on, you’re not to go anywhere in this Base without telling either Star or me! GOT IT?”

Skywarp nodded, “Y-Yes…”

“Fine,” the blue Seeker turned to leave, “stay up all night if you want. It’s bad enough I can’t even sleep in my own berth anymore because of his slagging ghost, and now we’re arguing in the middle of the shower and I’ve got a five-hour flight ahead of me on three hours sleep!” and slammed the door behind himself, leaving Skywarp to cry to Starscream.

Meanwhile, Soundwave’s tracer finished its search; the live feed was coming from Shockwave’s Tower.

“It’s Cybertron,” the Tapedeck was more than a bit disturbed by this, “Megatron?”

The former Gladiator had nodded off in the chair, letting out a snore.

Soundwave: “MEGATRON!”

“NUGH!” Megatron jolted online, “What?”

“The signal is coming from Shockwave’s Computer Consul!” Soundwave told him, “What the slag is going on?!”

Megatron shook his helm, rubbed his optics and took a deep air intake; he had to consider this carefully. What was Shockwave trying to do here? Was he spying on his own faction? These thoughts disturbed Megatron deeply; despite the argument, Shockwave was his oldest friend and one of his most trusted in his inner circles. And where did their haunting fit in here, if it did at all? Finally, he spoke, “Call his Comm.-Link.”
It was around noon on Cybertron, and President Shockwave was overseeing his Vehicons working on the road construction project.

“And that’s when Derek threw the plates in the air and bowed,” George laughed to his boss.

“He is a character,” Shockwave agreed; it was chilly outside, and he held his Energon-coffee to keep his hand warm. But his demeanor changed completely when his Comm.-Link went off, “slag it.” He knew WHO this was going to be about, “Yes, Megatron.”

Soundwave held out his wrist radio, but Megatron spat back, “I’m not speaking to him.”

“What do you mean you’re not speaking to him?” Soundwave was sarcastic, “I’m trying to figure out what’s going on here!”

“I’m still giving him the silent treatment,” Megatron insisted.

“Oh, for Primus sake,” Soundwave got on the line, “Hello, Shockwave.”

George watched his President intently as Soundwave continued, “There is an unauthorized signal transmission coming from your Tower. Are you aware of this?”

Shockwave was emotionless in his tone, “No.”

Having served as his Chief of Security for more than a decade, George felt that he knew his boss very well, and wondered why Shockwave was being so calm when he was being informed that someone was potentially hacking into their system.

“Are you at your Tower now?” Soundwave asked.

“No, I’m out in the field,” Shockwave was curt, “and I don’t have time for this nonsense, I’m very busy.”

“Well, you had better MAKE time for this,” Soundwave insisted, “this happens to be a serious breach in our security.”

Shockwave covered his tracks, “Well, perhaps I left it on.” He checked to see if George was listening—he was—and turned away, “By the way, what were those credits for?” He was referring to the credits transfer that the Decepticons had sent electronically.

“We realized that we failed to make an electronic transfer in quite a while,” Soundwave didn’t want to get off the subject at hand, “but is there anyone in your Tower currently?”

“Just my staff,” Shockwave just wanted to close the connection.

“Does any of your staff have your password?” Soundwave insisted, “Your intern, Kevin?”

“NO!” Shockwave gestured angrily now, “Just leave him out of this. I told you, I must have left it on, nothing more.”

“Fine,” Soundwave began typing, “but just to be on the safe side, I’m going to remotely access your Computer Consul and erase the past twenty-four hours of footage from your security system.”

“WHY?” now Shockwave was furious.

“It’s a serious breach in security,” Soundwave repeated, getting angry himself, “if any of your personnel were privy to sensitive information, we would be comprised.”
“Well, if you were going to do that anyway, we did you even contact me in the first place?”
Shockwave was shouting uncharacteristically now, drawing the attention of not only George but more than a few of the Vehicon workers, “Look, I have a lot of work to do, so don’t bother me!” and he hung up the connection.

“You alright, boss?” George came over.

“I’m fine, George,” Shockwave sat on the curb, holding his helm, “really, I’m….fine.” He knew he had further alienated himself from the other Decepticons, but he felt if he ignored the problem, it—it would go away.

With Soundwave closing the connection to Shockwave’s computer, Gravechaser opted to return to Earth, needing to find a new way of retaliation. Now, Soundwave was in his sights.

“Come on, you’re shivering.” Starscream helped Skywarp dry off, and put his robe and pede covers back on; the younger Seeker keened in pain as his bandages had gotten wet and were now falling off. Starscream looked at it and adjusted his hold on Darkwing, “TC knows how to fix that.”

They came back to the guest berthroom; Thundercracker was sulking, waiting for them, but he could never resist his baby brother’s begging tone. Little Dawning and Darkmount were awake and standing up in the crib, looking for their brother.

“Oh, my babies,” Starscream went to them now.

“T-TC?” Skywarp keened, “W-Will you fix this for me? Please?”

Thundercracker refused to answer verbally. Instead, he just took off the older bandages, reapplied the sulfadiazine cream, and wrapped it up again.

“T-Thank y-you,” Skywarp tried to smile at him, but the blue Seeker just mumbled that he was “going to bed.”

Starscream picked up Dawning now, “I’m not sleeping in there without Megatron,” and quickly gathered all three of his sparklings and crowded into the small guest berth next to pregnant Skywarp, where they both crowded their oldest brother now. Little Dawning crawled over Thundercracker and hugged him.

“They’re cold,” Starscream insisted, now also holding Darkmount, “they’re going to sleep with us.”

Skywarp cuddled little Darkwing now, each drawing warmth from each other; Thundercracker acted like he wasn’t speaking to his brothers, but he was at least nice to his little nephew. They all stayed together now, huddled in the guest berth on the cold January night.

Soundwave finally finished erasing the footage.

“Can I please go back to bed?” Megatron was holding his helm, “It’s almost two-thirty in the morning, and I haveta lead a mission in the morning,” then he realized, “or AM I going on a mission in the morning?” they were ticked off with Shockwave after all.
“Yes, you’re going in the morning,” Soundwave insisted, “this matter is closed.” He thought about his Seeker now, “I need to apologize to Skywarp.”

The two went into Megatron’s quarters, finding the Casseticons sleeping, and then going to the guest berthroom, and saw the Trine brothers cuddled up together with the triplets. They felt it best to let them sleep.
Chapter 84: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

Get ready for a wild chapter, as Gravechaser now has his sights on Soundwave!

Chapter Notes

Warning! Hot sex scene ahead!

Chapter 84:

By Transformersnewfan

Everyone had a peaceful night, except for Soundwave.

Gravechaser watching him through the monitor for hours was enough to influence his dreams. The ghost now hovered over the Decepticon Base in the night’s air.

It was three in the morning in the Control Room; Soundwave slept on the sofa bed, the very sofa bed that he had all but interfaced with his Seeker; he could still smell his scent on the sheets of their all-too-brief time together. And now, Soundwave began to dream…

Soundwave’s Dreamworld:

It was raining in Iacon when Soundwave had to travel there. He accompanied the delivery of the Swarovski crystals to Shockwave’s Tower. While there, the Cannon-Former invited him into the kitchen for some Energon-tea.

“I haven’t seen much of you lately, Soundwave,” Shockwave sat across from him at the kitchen table, “you went back to Polyhex for a while?”

“Negative,” Soundwave told him, “I’ve stayed on Earth, working.”

“Well, there’s something I wanted to talk to you about,” Shockwave continued, “I’ve recently been informed that there is a couple interested in buying your old two-flat. It’s an engaged mixed-Alt-Mode, pair, expecting a sparkling together.”

“It’s not for sale,” Soundwave stated firmly; he had no intention of selling the home in Polyhex that he had lived with Celene.

“Are you planning to live there?” Shockwave curled his hand around the teacup.

“Maybe someday,” Soundwave wasn’t sure, “either that, or give it to my sons.”
“Such a shame,” Shockwave’s’ vocals were strange, “a mech like yourself, having your wife stolen from you…”

“Affirmative,” that was when Soundwave noticed ‘Shockwave,’ or who he had thought was Shockwave, had red claws. He excused himself now, “I have to be going…” he left, not meeting the other being’s gaze.

Soundwave climbed into the rental hovercraft now, thinking about his deceased wife, Celene once again; not a day had gone by that he didn’t think of her. He sighed, deciding to take a detour through their old hometown.

The Tapedeck drove the familiar road, feeling an immense sadness enveloping him now; his grief for Celene would never entirely be gone, always a dull ache in his spark. As the sun began to set, he approached the city limits now and came upon a construction project on the road.

A Vehicon road worker waved for traffic to stop; the other Vehicon workers were cleaning the underpass with water sprays and bushes. So, Soundwave would just have to wait.

More thoughts of his wife’s passing flooding the Tapedeck’s CPU now, he put his faceplates down on the steering wheel, keening in silence.

A fog came down from the skies, almost as thick as a cloud, and washed over his hovercraft.

Soundwave sighed as he came out of his memory files, and slowly lifted his helm up. But, things were different; the fog was gone; and so were all the Vehicons! Had he fallen into recharge? He looked around; there were no other hovercrafts on the road, and there were no construction barriers. Not knowing what else to do, Soundwave drove on.

That’s when he saw it: Cybertron seemed very different. Buildings that had been destroyed by Sentinel Prime’s army again stood where they once were. The construction jobs that Shockwave was working on were not present, and memorials had disappeared completely.

Stunned, Soundwave stopped the hovercraft and got out, clinging to the door as he looked around in every direction! What was going on?! He looked back at the underpass now; had…had he driven into some alternate universe?! The Tapedeck suddenly felt scared; he had to get back to Earth! He got back in the hovercraft and took a road heading west.

Soundwave had to get back to Shockwave’s Tower to use his Space Bridge to get home; back to Earth, and out of this strange place! He found himself driving faster, panicking if he was being honest with himself. Finally, he made it to the Tower, but that too looked strange.

Jumping out of the hovercraft, he ran up the steps and knocked on the door. At first, no one answered, so he started pounding!

An old femme Vehicon answered the door. Soundwave had never seen this Vehicon before; where was George? He stepped back, unable to hide his surprise.

“Can I help you?” the femme had a Vosian accent.

“I-I’m sorry,” Soundwave apologized, “I have to speak to Shockwave.”

The femme looked him up and down; seeming not to know who he was, “President Shockwave is in a meeting with Megatron, the Great Gladiator of Tarn.”

Megatron was here? Soundwave moved to come in, “I need to see them.”
“No!” she blocked his path, “We do not need any phone service solicitor.”

“What do you mean?” Soundwave felt insulted, “I’m Megatron’s co-founder of the Decepticons and if they’re having a meeting, I need to be there!”

The femme Vehicon narrowed her optics, “What are the Decepticons?” then she slammed the door in his faceplates.

Oh…Oh no. Soundwave knew he was in a parallel universe now, one that the Decepticons did not exist. He tried to call Megatron, and realized he was not wearing his wrist Comm.-Link! Something he was never without!

Where was he? WHO was he? “Where are my sons?” terrified, he ran back to the hovercraft, but, where would he go? There was the main Space Bridge, the one he and Megatron always used. Was it even there now? Maybe…maybe if Shockwave is still President, and Megatron is here, it does.

Soundwave drove as fast as he could through an Iacon he hadn’t seen before: Some buildings were new; others that were once destroyed now stood where they once had. The War. What had happened to the damage done by the War? This world he had somehow stepped into apparently had no such events. The full…Shock…set in when he arrived at the site of the Space Bridge, and instead, found his wife Celene’s Deceptitech Labs.

The laboratory had been destroyed in a fire; burned to the ground in fact, with his wife inside. He stepped out of the hovercraft, rushing on unsteady pedes, he had to touch it. It was real; it was physically present. Soundwave’s emotions were in a whirlwind now; this…this place he was in, this alternate universe, was one where the Decepticons did not exist, so it may be in the past, and yet, Shockwave is President, despite being installed as such by the Decepticons. Megatron was still known as a Gladiator, so that was an argument that this was indeed the past, but then…some of the formerly wrecked buildings were old as if they had weathered with time.

Soundwave saw a scientist exit the lab now; he thought he recognized him from when Celene was alive, except this mech was older now as if it had been a few decades later.

“H-Hey, hey buddy,” the Tapedeck’s vocals were shaky, “what year is this?”

The mech gave him the current year; it was indeed present day. Thinking that Soundwave was a homeless beggar, he gave him a spare credit.

Scared now, Soundwave had nowhere to go. He was indeed a beggar in his new world. But, he wondered, if the lab was here, was his Celene alive?

He decided to take a chance; he drove to her old apartment building. The old doormech was still there.

“Does Celene live here?” Soundwave asked.

“There was a Celene who used to live here,” the old mech answered, “but then she Bonded some loser from the phone company.”

“Right,” Soundwave left now. With nowhere else to go, he got back in the hovercraft. Should he… Should he check his old house?

The Tapedeck drove slowly, carefully, through Polyhex, into the sleepy suburb of his birth, up his old street, and to the home where he had lived with his wife. He turned the corner, driving up the road and, the lights were on. Someone was in his old house! Still not knowing what was going on,
Soundwave pulled into the driveway.

There shouldn’t have been any lights on; wherever he was, someone was squatting on his property. He reached for his Barretta, not surprised any more than he didn’t have it, but he did have his keys. He used them, and indeed, they worked, the door opened.

It was very late now, nearly midnight, but there were lights on in the living room, and he could hear the television on. He approached slowly, carefully, now. The green couch he had taken with them to Earth was back in the living room…and Celene was sitting there, watching television.

“Soundwave?” she turned around, “Is that you?”

Soundwave felt the room spin, and he keeled over in a faint.

The next day, in the dream:

Soundwave woke up in bed, still in this parallel universe. Startled, he jumped up, seeing his berthroom as he had always remembered it. He was back in this old life, but still retained his memories of everything that had happened over the years.

That’s when he saw Celene again. She walked into the berthroom, as if it was a typical morning, “Honey, come on, you are going to be late.”

Soundwave stared at her; he had missed her so much. “Celene…” he whispered.

She began fixing herself in the mirror. He came up behind her and put his arms around her, before removing his facemask and kissing her passionately. He could feel her lip components on his again; he could feel her form in his arms again. It was as if nothing had changed.

When they broke the kiss, she laughed at him, “Why are you looking at me like you have not seen myself in years?”

He couldn’t tell her the truth; she would think her husband had gone completely insane, so he felt he had to pretend as if everything had not happened.

“Soundwave?” she asked again.

“Sorry,” Soundwave told her now, “just came out of the worst nightmare I ever had.”

“Wow,” Celene was surprised, “do you remember any of it?”

“Just…” Soundwave didn’t want to tell her, “Who is the current Leader of Cybertron?”

“Shockwave,” she realized how bad this was.

“Not Sentinel,” Soundwave wanted to make sure.

“Who is Sentinel?” Celene asked.

“And…” Soundwave had to try to understand his new ‘life,’ “you said I was going to be late…” he tried to be nonchalant, shrugged, “what…what would I be late for?”

“Work,” Celene looked up at him, thinking her husband was nuts, “you know, at your job you have been with since forever?”

Soundwave took this to mean the Cybertron Phone Corporation, “Right…” Soundwave knew this
was insane, but he was so happy to have her back.

“Come on,” Celene told him again, “you need to hurry.”

Not knowing what else to do, he followed her out.

Their sons were having breakfast. Buzzsaw and Ratbat were there too! Wait, he had adopted them years AFTER his wife’s deactivation, and yet, here they were, in their old house. A house neither mechling had ever lived in.

“Hi, Daddy!” Buzzsaw looked up from his drawing; he was always doing his art.

“Hey Pop,” Rumble waved.

“You overslept, Pop?” Frenzy asked.

“Apparently,” Soundwave ran his hand over his faceplates.

They all sat down for breakfast together, as the family never had before. All the while, Soundwave kept thinking he had either gone insane, or this parallel universe he was in was all his wishes and dreams come true. He still didn’t understand what was going on, but he was more than thrilled to have his wife back and his entire family under one roof.

Trying to adjust to his ‘new life,’ Soundwave got into his rental hovercraft, which apparently was his vehicle in this universe, and drove to the Cybertron Phone Corporation.

The old workplace looked exactly as he had left it: Same desks, same tired old filing systems. Soundwave sat at his old desk now, trying to reconcile everything he had known to be true, and what was now his reality. There was a family photo on his desk; it showed him with Celene and all six of the Cassettes. Soundwave picked it up and smiled beneath his facemask, realizing that this world was indeed real.

“You were three minutes late clocking in this morning,” Ratbat the Elder came out of his office now, puffing on a Cy-Gar, “that’s gonna cost you on payday, of course.” The big purple mech was just as Soundwave knew him.

“You’re here too, eh?” Soundwave snorted, “and you’re exactly the same, still puffing on that thing.”

Oddly. Ratbat was in the know, “and you were expecting anything less?”

“Well, you know,” Soundwave laughed, leaning back in his chair, “since this seems to be my ultimate fantasy, I just assumed you’d either be dead somewhere or serving a life sentence.”

“And you’re just as dramatic as ever,” Ratbat rolled his optics before putting the Cy-Gar back in his mouth and getting the day’s files. He returned and dropped a stack of files on Soundwave’s desk, “fantasy or not; you’ve got work to do.”

As Soundwave looked over the case files, Ratbat read off the addresses, finally ending with, “and a rental residence in Northern Vos.”

“Northern Vos, huh?” Soundwave thought the address seemed familiar.

“Converted condos from an old motel,” Ratbat explained, “there was some big shootout with the
police out there years ago.”

What?

“Okay,” Soundwave wondered now, but didn’t want to tip his hand, “yes sir, I’ll get right on these cases.”

“You’d better.” Ratbat made a ‘pistol’ with his digits, “bright and early, Soundwave, bright and early. That’s how the credits are made,” and he went into his office.

Soundwave shook his helm, “my whole life has turned on its helm, and HE’s the same.”

It was around three in the afternoon when Soundwave finished all his day’s assignments, all except for one: the job in Northern Vos.

He drove his hovercraft up to Vos, which was more than an hour away, and then took the unpaved dirt road that led to Northern Vos. He turned a sharp left and went into the snowcapped mountains. Soundwave had been here before; the Seeker Trine used to live here.

It was a LONG story: When Thundercracker was four years old, his Creators split up. His Mother became pregnant again and married the new sparkling’s Creator. A short time later, Thundercracker’s Father kidnapped him and took him to a small motel in Northern Vos. It ended with a shoot-out with policemechs, and two of whom were killed, which led to the Father’s imprisonment. Oh, and Skywarp was the new sparkling.

Years later, the brothers made a Trine with Starscream. When Starscream was falsely accused of murdering Skyfire, Thundercracker took his brothers back to the motel in question to evade capture; by that time, the motel had been converted to rental condominiums. This was where the Trine was living when they joined the Decepticons.

Soundwave recognized the respective restaurants that Thundercracker and Skywarp used to work at; Skywarp was a waiter at Acid Storm’s, while TC worked in the back of the house in a short-order dive called the Energon Fly-Thru Diner. Then he passed the power plant, where he knew Starscream worked as an entry-level scientist.

Finally, Soundwave pulled into the driveway of the former ‘Sleepy-Tyme Motel,’ just as he was expecting to. He thought about his Skywarp now; wondering where he had landed in this parallel universe of his.

The Tapedeck went to the owner’s office and met with Sky-Byte, who then led him into several empty units that were in need of rewiring. The last one, he would have to be let in, since one of the residences was usually home.

Soundwave headed for the last unit now; he took the outside staircase—no need for an elevator since Northern Vos was nothing but Seekers in residence—up to the second floor and then the walkway to the last unit on the left. Yes, he knew this to be where they lived.

Soundwave knocked on the door. And Skywarp answered it.

“Hey there,” Skywarp stood before him; a slender cadet fresh out of the Cybertron War Academy, dressed in a French Maid costume. He was wearing knee-high purple tights around his long legs; his skirt was so short, it barely covered his interface panel; an apron in a slightly lighter purple shade that covered his torso and canopy glass; white, lacy cuffs on his sleeves, and the whole look was
completed with a ribbon around his neck, and both wings, tied into cute little bows. Not to mention his cute little purple bonnet that matched his apron. Oh, and he was holding a feather duster.

Soundwave was more than a bit surprised, after all these months, to see the Seeker NOT carrying. This must be how Skywarp looked right after their graduation from the Academy when he was at his thinnest. Soundwave was so used to seeing those chubby, pinkish faceplates and heavily pregnant belly on Skywarp, that this was a drastically different look, and it was HOT.

“You must be the mech from the phone company,” Skywarp grinned seductively, “come on in, big bot.”

Soundwave grinned back at him from beneath his facemask, stepping inside. Their apartment was small but cozy. There was a bookcase with a mix of novels, science journals, and music tapes, but not much furniture. Their various uniforms were everyone, some in wash basins, others air drying on racks. The only other room was their berthroom, where they had two small berths pushed together and covered by blankets, where the three brothers apparently slept together. They had their television in there, along with a closet, one that Soundwave guested was overloaded with their belongings.

Skywarp could see that this servicemech was interested in him; he giggled as he locked the front door, hoping to have some fun without the constant watch of his older brothers. He fluffed his short little skirt and danced around Soundwave, giggling and fluttering his wings in a flirtatious manner, moves that Soundwave interpreted to be some type of Seeker seduction method.

But still, Soundwave had a job to do, “Where’s your fuse box?”

Misunderstanding the question, Skywarp lifted his skirt and showed Soundwave his bare interface panel, confirming he wasn’t wearing any underplating.

“The condominium’s fuse box, Seeker,” Soundwave barely hid his amusement, “I’m here to rewire every unit’s electrical system.”

“Oh, right,” Skywarp blushed now, “it’s in the berthroom.”

“Why wouldn’t it be,” Soundwave told himself. They went there now.

Skywarp turned on the television, while Soundwave set to work rewiring the unit.

“This is my FAVORITE television show!” Skywarp was watching the human program, called Friends, “my favorite’s Joey Tribbiani!”

“Joey, eh?” the irony was not lost on Soundwave, “maybe you’ll meet a Joey of your own someday.”

“Oh, you think so?” Skywarp bounced on the berth, “You think we’ll have a sparkling together?!”

“Of course,” Soundwave was good at what he did, so he was able to let his hands do all the work, while he could focus on the…his Seeker. He couldn’t help but look over the young Skywarp’s figure since he was so used to him being pregnant these days. He kept trying to figure out the timeline of this new parallel universe and decided to ask a few questions.

Skywarp clearly took a liking to the older mech, crawling on the berth alluringly, poking his aft in the air.

“You live here alone?” the Tapedeck asked, knowing he probably didn’t.
“I live with my two older brothers,” Skywarp chirped, “TC’s a short-order cook at a fast-food joint, and Starscream works in a laboratory,” he rolled over on his back now, “and BOTH have got closing shifts tonight! So, we’ve got the place all to ourselves for the next seven hours!”

“So, what about you?” Soundwave tried to stay in a business manner, “Where do you work?”

“I’m a waiter at Acid Storm’s,” Skywarp sat up, and held up his little skirt, “this is my uniform.”

Soundwave recognized these to be their previous occupations, although he had his doubts about the waiter ‘uniform,’ but still, he played along, “Your customers must like it.”

“I pull down more in tips than both my brothers,” Skywarp bragged, “that’s how we got a flat screen TV!” He played with his skirt again, “Do you like it?”

“Uh huh,” because he nowadays liked being with the young Seeker, he flirted back with him, “what’s your name?” as if he didn’t already know.

“Skywarp!” he bounced up and down on the berth.

“They call me Soundwave,” he felt his internal fans spinning faster now.

“You like working at the phone company, Soundwave?” Skywarp hung upside down, draped over the side of the berth.

“Not really,” Soundwave admitted, “but it contributes to the family income.”

“Family?” Skywarp’s faceplates fell, “You’re Bonded and stuff?”

“I’m Bonded, yes,” Soundwave stated proudly, “Celene and our sons are my world.” He finished working and closed the fuse box.

“Celene, huh?” Skywarp was disappointed, but only momentary, “well then, your wife will just have to learn to share.” He fluttered his wings now, almost as if he was doing a mating call.

“Is that right?” Soundwave grinned back at his little Seeker. He knew it was wrong; he was a married mech; he was the Sire of six sons, and he did his best to raise them to have a moral center. But he had lived in a world where his wife was deceased for so long, and now he inexplicably had her back, and he would never want to jeopardize this otherworldly second chance. How ironic that he lived his life as a widower in celibacy without a hint of wanting another, only to be thrown back into his marriage at the same time that this provocative Jet comes into his life. On the other hand, this was an alternative universe, or parallel dimension, or wherever in time and space this was, and maybe he could do whatever he wanted here. After all, it wouldn’t REALLY be cheating on his wife, would it? And besides, Skywarp was driving him crazy.

“What she doesn’t know wouldn’t hurt her,” Soundwave stood, having decided he would not just interface with Skywarp, he would devour Skywarp! He didn’t have to hold back because Skywarp wasn’t carrying in this universe either.

Skywarp yelped when Soundwave took his mask off and captured his Seeker in an open-mouthed kiss; their glossas locked in a passionate dance. Soundwave grabbed at a wing and squeezed hard, nearly bending the metal.

“AAAAHHH!” the young Seeker cried out in both passion and pleasure. He wrapped his arms around the bigger mech, craning his helm up their lip components locked together.
But Soundwave didn’t have to be a gentlemech in his parallel universe; he didn’t have to answer to his wife or Megatron or anyone else! His workplace would never find out and neither would his Cassettes. And he didn’t have to respect this little pleasure drone either. This wasn’t Celene, so he could do whatever the slag he wanted now!

Soundwave pushed Skywarp down on the berths, “I know your type, you’re a pleasure drone,” Soundwave spat with disguised, “worthless, just like your Mother!”

Skywarp whimpered a little, wondering what was in store for him now.

That’s when Soundwave straddled the little Seeker, using all his muscular weight to pin him to the berth. He pulled out zip ties from his subspace—a tool of his trade—and used them to tie Skywarp’s wrists to either side of the helmboard.

“EEhhh!” Skywarp yelped out, slightly afraid.

“Shut up!” Soundwave ordered, “You know you’re enjoying this,” then he got up and spread Skywarp’s legs as far as they would stretch and cuffed his ankles to the bottom of the berths.

“S-Soundwave,” Skywarp begged, “what are you doing?!”

“Fulfilling both our fantasies,” Soundwave climbed on top of him again, pinning the already-immobile Seeker between his legs and arms, his knees had Skywarp’s hips between them; he took Skywarp’s faceplates in both his hands, “don’t worry, you’re going to enjoy yourself,” then he recaptured Warp’s mouth in a passionate kiss.

“MMmmm…” Skywarp closed his optics now, melting under the mech’s soft touches. Soundwave caressed his chestplates and down his canopy glass, touching him all over, every little seam, making Skywarp shiver with passion and anticipation, “Ooohhh…Soundwave…”

The Tapedeck began touching those wings again; reaching behind and digging his digits into the delicate connections to the Seeker’s back, all the while kissing and licking down his neck cables. Enough was enough: He tore Skywarp’s skirt and pulled it up to his canopy, making the smaller mech whimper, but that stopped when he glided his hand over Skywarp’s interface panel. He noticed that the squirming stopped, as Skywarp seemed to submit to his advances now.

Soundwave continued his soft touches over Skywarp’s black thighs, but when the Seeker was too slow to open his panel, Soundwave just tore it open, earning a yelp from the flyer. Much like the way he had instructed the Seeker in mutual masturbation, Soundwave inserted his index digit into Skywarp’s valve, moving deeper at a slow and steady pace.

“Oooooh,” Skywarp moaned now, beginning to enjoy himself.

Adding his middle digit into the mix, Soundwave reached deeper into the Seeker’s tight valve, earning a shiver. He then caressed Skywarp’s faceplates with his free hand before inserting his ring digit inside him.

“Y-You really k-know your t-t-tricks,” Skywarp was feeling too much pleasure to be bothered by the pain, that is until Soundwave shoved his fist inside.

“OWW!” Skywarp cried out, not expecting such pain; he tried to tell himself to take deep air intakes, hoping that would ease the tension.

Soundwave had his mate’s valve open now, making Skywarp whimper and squirm again, “Get ready Seeker,” and quickly opened his own interface panel and plunged his spike so deep into
Skywarp’s valve, he nearly knocked the smaller mech offline! Soundwave didn’t care if he hurt Skywarp or not; instead, he just thrust in and out of him hard, painfully, satisfying his raw, sexual desires. He could FEEL Skywarp’s innards; he could FEEL that tight valve around his spike; he sent powerful vibrations and electricity course through Skywarp’s entire frame. He could feel Skywarp trying to close his legs, but the flyer couldn’t get any friction with his pedes tied to the berth, “you can’t escape me,” Soundwave snarled over him while pumping and thrusting into him again. And again, and again, and again.
Soundwave’s Dreamworld:

Soundwave wasn’t sure how much time had passed, all he knew was that he had overloaded the Seeker’s chassis and he had overloaded twice, at least, he thought it was twice; or was it three times; he wasn’t sure.

The Tapedeck onlined his optics now, he was lying next to Skywarp, who was either sleeping or unconscious, but he was cycling air, so he was online. The Seeker was still tied up; his arm being crushed under Soundwave’s weight. The Tapedeck started to get up, and then…

Oh no.

It was pitch black outside. How long had he slept?! Celene. He had cheated on Celene! He did what he had never thought he would…could ever do; he had an affair. Soundwave looked at the clock; it was nearly 11:00 p.m., long after he should have been home!

Soundwave jumped off the berth, leaving Skywarp there, tied up in his ruined uniform, without even saying goodbye. He tore out the door, down the stairs, and got back into his hovercraft.

“What have I done?!” Soundwave drove as fast as he could; as fast as he safely could drive down a dirt road with no streetlights up in the mountains. There was a faint snowfall on the ground; but all he knew was, that he had to get home to his wife. He must get home to his wife.

The City of Vos was a good five hours from Polyhex, and it was almost four in the morning when he came home.

Celene was waiting for him; she was so livid that she couldn’t even speak.

“Celene!” Soundwave cried, “I’m so sorry!”

Celene knew he had been with another mech; without a word, she stormed off to their berthroom and locked the door.

“No…” Soundwave collapsed on the floor, exhausted from the drive, and devastated by his mistake. He knew he had ruined everything in his ‘new life.’

Soundwave slept all night on the sofa; the same one that he had taken to Earth. He was miserable and alone. In the morning, Celene came down, she was icy and seemed to have come to a devastating conclusion.

“Celene,” Soundwave sat up on the sofa, “darling, I made the worst mistake of my life,” he took her hands in his own, “I’ll never do it again, I promise.”

She refused to look at his at first, “I need to know that the affair is over.”
“It’s over, I swear it,” Soundwave told her, “I’ll never stray again.”

“If I am to forgive you,” Celene looked at him now, “you must make things right between ourselves. You will need to cleanse our marriage of this stain and purge our lives of this Seeker.”

Soundwave listened as she continued, “Prove to me that this will never occur again,” and she handed him a large knife; it looked more like a dagger from Asian cinema, “you need to kill Skywarp.”

“Alright,” Soundwave agreed, “for our marriage, I will.”

A few days past before Soundwave gathered the nerve to return to Northern Vos. Finally, he drove back through the mountains, back to the condo at the Sleepy-Time Motel. He parked behind the structure so that his hovercraft couldn’t be identified. He crept up the stairs and walked down the catwalk. He knocked; but this time, no one was home.

Soundwave sighed, he would have to wait. He took a seat atop an air conditioning unit, before taking out the dagger and looking at it, it’s weight evident in his hands. He thought about everything that had happened; how did he get to this parallel universe in the first place? Where was this parallel universe? But all he knew, he decided, was that he was determined to stay here; he was determined to work things out with Celene and save their marriage. And, if this is what she wanted, then…

He heard someone coming now; he quickly hid the knife in his subspace and got up.

Skywarp looked melancholy, sighing audibly and frowning as he walked to his humble apartment. He was wearing a jacket over his new uniform; he unlocked the front door as Soundwave emerged from behind the corner.

“Hey,” Soundwave gave a fake smile underneath his facemask, “remember me?”

“Soundwave, hi!” Skywarp smiled sadly, “I didn’t think you’d come back,” he motioned for the Tapedeck to come in, despite their previously violent encounter.

Once inside, Skywarp was smiling, but he was sad, wiping his optics, “You tore my uniform, and TC’s mad at me cause we had to buy me a new one.”

“Hmm, well,” Soundwave faked concern, “I’ll let you take it off this time.”

“Oh,” Skywarp smiled from audial to audial now, “I’m so glad you came back. I knew, I just knew you’d come back.”

The tone of the Seeker’s pathetic vocals broke Soundwave’s spark; the innocence, the trust, the infatuation. He realized that poor Skywarp thought he was going to be his lover…

Back in the berthroom, Soundwave removed his mask and let the little flyer kiss him again. They were locked in a passionate kiss when Skywarp wrapped his arms around his neck cables, and he, in turn, raised the knife behind Skywarp’s wings.

“HHUUUAAA!” Skywarp choked out when Soundwave plunged the knife into his back, right under his wings; a look of pure terror was frozen on the Seeker’s faceplates.

Horrified that the Seeker didn’t die immediately, Soundwave pulled the knife out of his back and stabbed him again, this time landing between Skywarp’s upper abdomen and lower chestplates.
Instead, Skywarp cried out, “AAAUUUGGGHHHHH!!!” the Energon-blood flowing out of the two wounds now, soaking his new uniform; he was still standing up though, so Soundwave stabbed him a third time, aiming for his spark, but again he seemed to miss it, since Skywarp keened out again, “AWWAAHHHHH!!!!”

This was not how Soundwave had wanted things to go; he had wanted to simply kill the Seeker with one blow, and it would be over; he had not meant to prolong the young flyer to suffer like this. Feeling like this was now a mercy killing, he stabbed him again a fourth time, and another and another and another…

Skywarp’s cries were becoming garbled as he spit up Energon-blood, apparently from a punctured air intake; he became incoherent, crying for his Trine brothers and his Creators, particularly sobbing for his Momma.

There was Energon-blood all over now; all over the carpet; all over Soundwave; he stabbed him for the eighth time, then the ninth time, and this time, he hit Skywarp’s spark.

“Star…TC…” Skywarp begged weakly, “H-Help me…TC…Star…”

Soundwave couldn’t stand it any longer; he took out a wrench from his subspace and whacked Skywarp in the back of the helm; when he was still crying for his brothers, Soundwave hit him again now, knocking him out cold.

Skywarp lay still on the floor, faceplates down, in a growing, glowing pool of his own Energon-blood; there was no more movement.

Soundwave was finally sure the Seeker was dead. He was shaking now; he had killed Skywarp, and he was covered in his Energon-blood. He took the knife and ran to the shower, hurriedly washing the substance off his chassis, as well as the knife. Shaking, Soundwave ran out of the apartment and down the stairs. He was able to get to his hovercraft when he heard someone coming; now, he hid in the bushes, as still as possible.

“I’m just saying,” Starscream whined, “they don’t understand fusion is also compatible with Narcan.”

“Whatsoever, Star,” Thundercracker told him, “but it’s like I told you, you can never do better than your boss.”

They were heading up the stairs, home from their respective jobs. Soundwave knew that their world would be shattered momentary and he didn’t want to stay around and hear their pained cries. He got into the hovercraft and drove back down the road; back to Polyhex, and back to his Celene. There was still some Energon-blood on his digits, so Soundwave licked it off.

When the Tapedeck returned home, Celene met him at the door.

“I’ve come back,” he told her, shaking.

“You are trembling,” she stated sympathetically.

“Hold me,” he cried, taking her into his arms.

The next day, Soundwave again began to adjust to his ‘new life,’ eating breakfast with his wife and sparklings; he returned to work at the phone company, where he was even nice to Ratbat, the Elder.
But then, on the black and white television that sat atop a hanging stand in an upper corner of the office, the anchormech reported, “A brutal slaying of a waiter in Northern Vos,” and went on to describe the gruesome scene; a video of policemechs carrying a gurney out, with a chassis under a white scene was shown, ending with the anchormech noting, “ironically, the Sleepy-Tyme Motel was the site of a shoot-out with policemechs many years earlier, in which two officers were killed.”

Soundwave froze, wondering if the authorities suspected him; he still had the knife, but he wasn’t sure if anyone saw him there or if he left his digit prints anywhere. Against his better judgment, he decided he would attend the services.

That evening, at the main church in downtown Vos, Soundwave stood with the many flyers that had come to pay their respects. Steps forward were slow, so much of the time, Soundwave stayed in the line, peering around the corners.

Soundwave felt his spark sink; he saw Skywarp’s Creators, his Mother wailed, sobbing into some tissues; his Father was a quiet mech, not taking his optics off his sparkling’s casket; next to him was Starscream, coolant tears running down his faceplates, his grief laid bare, raw, and babbling about losing his baby brother; and finally, Thundercracker sat motionlessly, his faceplates in his hands, unable to grasp the situation.

The Tapedeck approached the casket now and looked down at the Seeker whose life he had taken: Skywarp was gray, completely devoid of any coloring; he was dressed in his cadet uniform from the Cybertron War Academy, and he had a crown made out of flowers on his helm, a Vosian custom when a young mech dies before Bonding.

It truly shocked Soundwave to see his Seeker like this. He touched the casket, and then Skywarp’s shoulder.

The dead Skywarp opened his optics…they were black.

End of Soundwave’s Dreamworld:

“AAAAHHH!” Soundwave woke up on the sofa bed; cycling air rapidly, he realized it was all a dream. He felt something on the berth, “W-What?” he picked it up.

It was the Energon-blood-soaked dagger.

The REAL End of Soundwave’s Dreamworld:

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAUUUUUUUUUUUGGGG GGG GGG GGG GHHHHHHH!!!” poor Soundwave woke up screaming.

“Pop! Pop!” Rumble called as he and his brothers came running, “Pop, what is it?!”

“Father!” Ravage shouted, “What happened?”

“Daddy!” Buzzsaw flew in.

“Pop!” Frenzy cried, fearing the worst.

“WAAAAH!” Ratbat was scared.

Soundwave looked around in every direction, gasping heavily, “WHA, WHERE?!” He was in his
Control Room, on Earth; at first, he didn’t even know what day it was or what time it was. Then he realized…it was all a dream. He was in his own life; his wife had been deactivated for years; the Decepticons were real, and his sons were now surrounding him with concerned all over their faceplates.

“Father, what has happened?” Ravage tried again.

“I saw your Mother again,” Soundwave gasped out, “I-I…” then he remembered, “WHERE IS SKYWARP??!”

“He’s sleeping peacefully,” the Cat insisted, before realizing, “you dreamt of Mother?”

Soundwave was greatly relieved, but that was short-lived, as he saw his and Celene’s sons’ now, “I saw…Oh God, I miss her…” he couldn’t hold back; he didn’t like becoming emotional in front of his sons, but after that dream, he was in so much emotional pain, that he buried his facemask into his hands and sobbed. He felt like he had lost Celene all over again.

“It’s okay, Pop,” Rumble tried, “it’s okay…”

The Cassettes gathered around their Creator and hugged him while he cried.
Chapter 86: By Transformersnewfan

At the same time that Soundwave’s bizarre nightmare was taking place, Laserbeak was watching Optimus Prime.

The Truck was waiting up for Ironhide to return; he sat at Teletraan-1, drinking a small cube of Energon; a worried look on his Faceplates.

Optimus pondered the strange occurrences that were plaguing their race. Bumblebee had seen something, followed by their dangerous—and unnecessary—rescue mission, and then the fluctuations in the weather, and now, the attack on the Ark that left one of his Comrades injured.

Skyfire was still in the Medical Wing but had regained consciousness. And when he did, he claimed that Optimus Prime himself had called him over, which, like the other incidents, was untrue.

A news report played on the screen, another snowstorm was expected.

Laserbeak watched the Autobot Leader with disgust, but it was better than facing whatever that Thing was that attacked his family.

Finally, around four in the morning, Ironhide entered the Ark.

Optimus Prime and Laserbeak both responded to the Van’s entry.

Ironhide actually seemed more relaxed than he had been lately around the Autobot Base; being away in Asia had done him some good, but he knew he would have to mech up now.

“Hey Prime,” he sat down across from his old friend at the Consul, “I heard about what happened with Skyfire, he alright?”

“He is in recovery,” Optimus nodded, “I heard about what happened with Skyfire, he alright?”

“He is in recovery,” Optimus nodded, “he should be released in a few days.” He sighed now, “Did Jazz tell you, that I had never assigned you to watch Doctor Fujiyama, the Famous Scientist?”

“Yeah,” Ironhide drummed his digits on the Consul, “I figured something was up when I got there, and they didn’t know anything about it.”

“We seemed to have had someone impersonate me,” Prime tried to approach the topic gently, not launching right into the idea that a Cybertronian evil being was after all of them, “the Decepticons have had some problems as well.”

“Prime,” Ironhide cut him off, “I think I know what’s going on.”

Optimus Prime just listened now, leaning forward with his digits laced together.

Laserbeak, meanwhile, narrowed his optics and focused his helm camera.

“I did something terrible years ago…” Ironhide rubbed at his optics, “You need to call Megatron. I… I helped kill a mech in prison.”
Laserbeak raised an optic brow.

“I didn’t…care at the time,” Ironhide continued, “I mean, he was a sparkling abuser, a wife beater,” he trailed off, “two policiemechs were killed. They were lawmechs just like me, Prime…but I…”

“Whatever happened,” Optimus told him, “I and your fellow Autobots will stand by you. I know that you’re a good mech, Ironhide, and whatever happened occurred long ago, and I know the mech you are today.” He reached out and squeezed his friend’s hand, “We will get through this.”

“Thanks, Prime,” Ironhide nodded before getting up, “think I need to turn in for a time.”

“All sentimentality aside, Laserbeak finally had the evidence he needed, “Father, I am sending you an important transmission.”

When the Tapedeck failed to respond, the Condor decided he must face his fears and return to the Decepticon Underwater Base. He had to get this tape to Megatron immediately!

In Thundercracker’s Dream:

Thundercracker was in the backyard, doing—what else?—firing Sonic Booms at the clouds. Earlier that day, his Mother had laid down with him for a nap together, but the little Seeker was bored and carefully wiggled away from her recharging form and went outside. Now he was facing the barrel of a blaster in his Father’s hand.

His Father seized the sparkling in a lucky moment: No neighbors around and, Thundercracker would later guess, observed him and his Mother sleeping from the window. His Father told him they were going on a trip, just the two of them. He also told the sparkling that if he refused, or screamed, he’d deactivate his Mother. Thundercracker nodded that he understood completely.

His Father transformed into his Jet Mode and placed the little Seeker in his cockpit. He flew the terrified sparkling deep into the Vosian Mountains.

Thundercracker tried to stifle his sobs as his Father’s vocals boomed on about how much better it was going to be now that they didn’t have his Mother to come between them anymore. He called her every bad word the sparkling had ever heard—or not heard—before and said how much he had hated his Daddy. Thundercracker understood now that he would never see them again. He felt sick inside. Why his Father was being so mean, he wondered.

End of Thundercracker’s Dream:

Thundercracker woke up, rubbing his optics now. It was morning, and he had to get ready for the raid. He got out of the berth without disturbing his younger brothers or the triplets and stepped into the living room.

Now sitting in Megatron’s breakfast alcove, he stared straight ahead, thinking about everything. He had a whirlwind of emotions when it came to his late Father; he had been afraid of the mech for as far back as he could remember. When his Father died in prison, it was almost a relief. Relief that he would never be sparklingnapped again; but also, relief that his Sire, a High-Grade addict serving a life sentence in a prison under the rule of the Elite Guard, would finally find his peace. But now, the notion that his Father was, in fact, NOT at rest, and the possibility that his spirit was being tormented by this horrible Gravechaser, apparently a fellow inmate—if only he knew—was sparkwrenching to
Thundercracker. He needed to find out, most likely from Megatron, what he needed to do to help put his Father to rest properly; not to mention protect his family. He sighed out loud; this was all very troubling.

Starscream had not slept a wink; he was physically in pain from the lack of recharge. He tried so hard, keeping still, with his son Darkmount in his arms, who, was mercifully asleep, but he just couldn’t get the fear and anguish of being attacked by Gravechaser out of his CPU; he thought he was alright at first, but it seemed like the shock and fear had had a delayed reaction, and he was feeling it now. How in the universe did Skywarp deal with all these attacks?

The black and purple Seeker woke up the worst though; he felt groggy and had a terrible processor ache. At least it was warm and comforting to sleep pressed between his Trine brothers’ chassises all night. But the morning sun coming in the window hurt his optics.

:Hi Momma!: the baby was up.

:Hi…: Skywarp rubbed his belly; she was his only source of happiness these days. The ghost had made him feel unloved and worthless, despite the best efforts of his brothers to reassure him. TC was angry with him, he knew, and he had no idea whatsoever on what Soundwave wanted anymore. One minute, they were moments from overloading together, and the next, it was ‘Get Out!’ of his Control Room. He finally got his innards back to normal after being taken to the brink of overload, and decided against taking a chance like that again, unless Soundwave promised to go all the way. But for now, his pheromone levels were pretty low.

But he had a new problem: his helm hurt badly, and his optics were blurry; he felt groggy like he wanted to fall back asleep, but at the same time wanting to purge his fuel tanks. The room began spinning; he was thinking that he had not flown as a high altitude or eaten anything he shouldn’t have. Why was he feeling this bad?

Darkwing fluttered his wings, scared that something was wrong, “Momma?” he called.

“Hmmm?” Starscream tilted his helm, “what’s the matter, baby?”

The little Seekerling pointed to his uncle’s miserable form. Dawning was looking worried now as well.

Starscream wasn’t feeling his best either, but he could at least move his chassis; “Sweetspark?” he asked his little brother, “Are you feeling alright?”

Skywarp groaned miserably before answer, “I’m dizzy, Star, feels like we flew over Denver or something.”

“Your Energon lines aren’t processing enough Energon to your spark,” the red and white Seeker knew this all too well, “it’s common at thirty-two weeks carrying.” He helped Skywarp to sit up, “You just need to eat something.”

“Feels like I got stabbed in the spark last night,” Skywarp clung to his chestplates; his canopy glass ached, “hurts…”

Thinking this was a form of sparkburn, Starscream rubbed the other’s back. Skywarp really didn’t want to consume anything when he was feeling so sick, but he would do it if it made the pain go away.

“Try having a rust stick,” Starscream told him, “you like rust sticks, the sugar will help.”
Skywarp got off the berth slowly, careful not to fall; the pain in his right side was a dull ache now, rather than the shooting stabs. He wondered if this dizziness was more than just a pregnancy symptom; he felt like he had bled out half the Energon in his chassis.

“You think that guy cut me again, Star?” he tried to look himself over.

“No,” Starscream stated flatly, “you…you were under two comforters, in between us all night. And…” he hastened to add, “I was awake all night, I would’ve noticed.”

Skywarp didn’t know his brother couldn’t sleep but was afraid to ask why. Instead, he made his way into the living room.

Thundercracker was still pondering his late Sire’s fate when he heard Skywarp come out of the guest berthroom, “Where do you think you’re going?” he sneered.

Skywarp was noticing that the Cassettes were gone, apparently with their Father, “N-Nowhere, just—”

“I TOLD YOU BEFORE,” Thundercracker roared, “YOU’RE SUPPOSED TO TELL US BEFORE YOU GO ANYWHERE!”

“I-I thought you meant if I leave the quarters,” Skywarp felt his brother’s baritone vocals reverberating through his hurting processor.

“THEN WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!!” Thundercracker bellowed now.

“Just the kitchen,” Skywarp whined back.

“YOU WERE GOING TO SEE HIM AGAIN, WEREN’T YOU?!” TC sounded like something his Father would have sounded like to their Mother, “QUIT ACTING LIKE A SLAGGING PLEASURE DRONE AND TAKE CARE OF YOUR SPARKLING!”

Starscream got up now, shocked at what he was hearing.

“S-STOP IT, TC!” Skywarp shouted back, coolant tears forming in his optics, “I wasn’t going to see Soundwave, and I’m not a pleasure drone, I feel sick,” his vocals began to static as he continued, “I- I’m dizzy, a-and I was j-just t-trying to g-get to the k-kitchen, and I just wanted some candy,” he put his hands over his faceplates.

Thundercracker realized what he was doing now; he was hurting his baby brother. He never used those words; pleasure drone was his Father’s words. He suddenly felt awful, “S-Sorry,” he whispered, “I’ll get it for you…”

Feeling guilty, the blue Seeker brought him two rust sticks.

Skywarp ended up sitting at the table and holding his forehelm. It took a while for the room to stop spinning; the pain in his side went up and down from different levels of severity. Finally, he consumed the two rust sticks and felt a bit more stable. By the time he had his second Energon cube, he was feeling like himself again.

“Hope you’re not getting gestational filter failure,” TC worried, “maybe you shouldn’t be eating so fast.”

Skywarp didn’t know anymore; all he knew was that pain in his side was weakening him.
“No, I don’t think that’s it,” Starscream felt he was the pregnancy expert, “I was borderline gestational filter failure, and I never had those symptoms.” He was busy putting his sparklings in their highchairs for breakfast, albeit he was still a bit shaky from lack of recharge.

“I think I should stay, guys,” TC sighed; with one little brother sick and his other little brother exhausted, Thundercracker worried about leaving for this mission, “Dirge can probably handle things.” He stood and let Skywarp lean against his frame.

But Starscream was not having that, “Come on, TC, if Dirge leads the air force, you KNOW Thrust is going to lord it over us and say we’re no longer capable of leading. Look, I’d go myself if I weren’t so tired.”

Dawning crawled out of his high chair and onto his Mother.

Thundercracker could tell Starscream was ready to fall asleep, so he came over and took the boy off him, “Yeah, I know, but you two aren’t looking so good.”

“I’m FINE,” Starscream shrieked, “I’m not a sparkling!” But it was obvious that this had taken its toll on him.

Skywarp worried about what to do now; on the one hand, he didn’t want to go to Soundwave in the Control Room and be accused of being a ‘pleasure drone’ again, but on the other hand, he didn’t want to be with the Tapedeck if he was going to treat him like a youngling and toy with him and holler at him to get out. The options were making his fuel tanks bubble.

Finally, he whispered, “Where do you want Crystal and me?”

Starscream wanted Skywarp with him, but he knew they were both powerless against the ghost; they needed Soundwave to detect It’s presence. But before he spoke, he wanted to know what their oldest brother had to say. Now, he and Skywarp were staring at him.

“With Soundwave,” Thundercracker finally stated in a sheepish tone; he knew his behavior was confusing to his baby brother, so he tried to explain, “no, I want you to work with Soundwave, and I want him to detach when this slagger is in the building. I just didn’t like you leaving the quarters in the middle of the night when all this is going on, I mean,” he sighed, “I hope we can get back into our quarters, and you can invite Soundwave and his kids over or whatever,” he gave a shrug and a smile, “am I making any sense?”

Skywarp nodded, accepting this answer. Now, he only worried what Soundwave wanted to do. Well, not his ONLY worry; Gravechaser was still a huge factor.

Now Darkmount was clinging onto Starscream, “Ugh,”

“Come on,” Thundercracker put Dawning back in his high chair, “I’ll help you with them.” Only little Darkwing was well behaved.

It was nearly four-thirty in the morning now, and everyone had to get ready for the East Coast mission, and Skywarp had to get ready for work on the paperless-society-project.

While Thundercracker and Starscream fed the triplets their breakfast, the carrying Seeker took his shower. He was still scared of being alone, but Starscream’s quarters (Well, it was Megatron’s quarters originally, but Starscream took it over after they Bonded.) felt safer than his own. The entity had not yet been seen in here, thanks to Megatron’s protection methods with the incense and the
crosses. So, Skywarp was at least able to enjoy their shower stall; Starscream had put a chair in there for him, and the warm waters helping to make his processor ache disappear completely now.

The only thing was that full-length mirror they had in their wash racks. Skywarp sighed now, looking at how big he was. Ugh, he could tell that it wasn’t just his gestation chamber; he gained weight from his eating binges and junk food habit. His faceplates and digits were swollen as well, and he was wondering if this was normal or if he should be worried about this.

But still, when he felt his little daughter-to-be wiggling around inside his belly, all he could think about was holding her in his arms and seeing her tiny faceplates for the first time.

“Love you baby…” he whispered to her.

:Love you, Momma!: Crystal was excited about seeing what he looked like as well, :Crystal love Momma!:

Suddenly, Skywarp heard muffled yelling; it was coming from the wall that faced Megatron’s office. The yelling including what sounded like crying as well, and one vocal was Soundwave’s! The carrying Seeker threw on his robe and pede covers and went to investigate.

Starscream and TC were busy feeding the triplets, so he told them, “I’m going to the Control Room.”

“Oh, okay,” TC answered absentmindedly as he was busy with the little ones; he seemed back to normal now.

But being the eavesdropper that Skywarp was since birth, he waddled over to Megatron’s office and peered through the door frame.

Megatron was dry, “Soundwave…”

“N-No, it was real!” Soundwave insisted, “I swear it was real!” The Tapedeck was sitting opposite his friend on the leather sofa; he was holding his own arms to keep from shaking, and he was stammering his words, displaying none of his signature composure. It was more than a little disturbing to Skywarp to see his lover in such a state.

“Soundwave…” Megatron, decked out in all his gear, ready for the mission, kept trying to reason with his Communications Officer, “I’m telling you, it’s this THING! This Thing made you dream about—”

“Megatron, I was there!” Soundwave kept insisting, “I felt everything, I felt her in my arms!”

“This is what these entities do, Soundwave!” Megatron insisted in a harsh whisper, “They get into your processor and project your worst fears.”

“NO!” Soundwave shot back.

“They take your worst fears and feed off them!” Megatron continued, “It’s the slagging ghost, I tell you! It’s the ghost that’s putting that garbage in your processor!”

“And I am telling you,” Soundwave insisted again, “it’s a warning! It’s a warning…I know my dreams, Megatron. I don’t dream the way other Transformers dream. It was real; it’s telling me to stay away from Skywarp!”

Skywarp’s optics widened; the last time he had seen Soundwave, he was investigating an unauthorized feed at the Computer Consul, and the possibility of a sex tape. What were they talking
about now?

“You’ve dreamt of Celene before,” Megatron held his helm, “you were just thinking about her because you’re considering Re-Bonding, and then that damned ghost perverted your memory files and twisted it into a vivid nightmare!”

“Or Celene did,” Soundwave’s vocals actually seemed scared.

“Oh please!” Megatron got up, “You never told me anything like that about her before!”

“I never cheated on her before,” Soundwave insisted.

“You’re not—” Megatron rolled his optics, refusing to even dignify that with an answer, “Look Soundwave, I didn’t know your wife. But there’s nothing you’ve ever told us about her that resembles anything like what you’re telling me now! She was a doctor, for Primus sake!”

“Well WHOEVER it was,” Soundwave got up now as well, “it’s still a warning to stay away from Skywarp!”

The black and purple Seeker listened in silence as they continued to argue.

Megatron held the back of his own neck cables as Soundwave continued, “I’m telling you, Megatron, I felt EVERYTHING I was doing in that dream!”

“Soundwave…” Megatron was tired of listening now.

“Megatron,” Soundwave pulled his arm to look at him, “Megatron, I tasted his Energon-blood in my mouth!”

The Gunformer was sick of the conversation, “What do you want me to do, Soundwave?”

Soundwave shook his helm, “I need to fire Skywarp from the paperless-society-project.”

Megatron: “WHAT?”

“I’m serious, Megatron,” Soundwave was very nervous, “I can’t risk it! If we continue to work together—”

“If you do that, the project is going to slow to a crawl!” Megatron shot back.

Skywarp bit his lip components at the thought of Soundwave firing him.

Soundwave: “I don’t have a choice!”

“You’re NOT firing Skywarp!” Megatron shot back, “I’m sick of stepping over boxes!”

Soundwave: “I insist!”

Megatron: “I overrule!”

“DO YOU WANT TO GET HIM KILLED?!” Soundwave roared now.

“YOU’RE THE ONLY ONE THAT CAN DETECT THAT SLAGGER!” Megatron approached the door now.

Skywarp backed away from the doorway, picking up his belly and hurrying back to Starscream’s
quarters. He got back inside and closed the door, but just enough that he could still hear and see them.

“I don’t have time to argue with you, Soundwave,” Megatron was frustrated as they walked to the Control Room, “I’m leaving in less than twenty minutes.”

“I can’t do this, Megatron,” Soundwave kept insisting, “how do you expect me to continue working with him?”

“I warned you about this, Soundwave,” Megatron shook his helm, “I warned you not to toy with him!”

“I’m not toying with him!” the Tapedeck shot back, “I was with him, but I didn’t expect to dream about stabbing him nine times, slaggit!”

Skywarp’s optics widened.

“LOOK AT THE CONTROL ROOM!” Megatron barked as he gestured at the boxes, “I forbid you to fire your assistant until all this slag is done!”

“He’s going on maternity leave soon anyway,” Soundwave hollered back, “might as well be sooner than later!”

Skywarp was hugging himself as he listened.

Soundwave was refusing to listen, so the former Gladiator tried to soften his tone, not wishing to fight with his friend, “Listen, Soundwave, we can’t fight like this. We’re feeding this negative entity when we’re fighting. So, let’s just stop now.” He looked at the boxes, “How many of these boxes do you estimate there are still down in the basement?”

“The whole south wing,” Soundwave told him, “I have to bring those up.”

“Oh God,” Megatron held his helm, “you wanna be at this for the next two years? Cause that’s what’s gonna happen if you fire him.”

Soundwave was frustrated, “Well then what do you want me to do?!”

“Alright, let me think,” Megatron wiped his mouth, “the paperless-society-project needs to be as complete as possible before he has his sparkling. What’s his role? He’s the sorter?”

“He sorts the files, yes,” Soundwave nodded, “then I enter the information into the computers.”

“Have him sort the remaining files,” Megatron reasoned, “bring all the remaining boxes up from the basement, have your Cassettes help you, and when his job is completed, you can let him go, but please, Soundwave, for the sake of our alliances with the Seekers here, DO NOT fire him! Just tell him he has to rest up.” He sighed; that was a mouthful, “In the meantime, I have to come up with a plan about what I’m telling Optimus Prime tomorrow morning and oh, did I mention this? WE STILL HAVE A SLAGGING ENTITY OUT THERE!”

“Fine,” Soundwave accepted this answer, “now I just have to figure out how to break up with him.”

“Well,” Megatron didn’t want to boss his friend on issues of the spark, “you can think it over, I suppose. Although I feel you’d make a good pairing.” With that, Megatron returned to his office, leaving Soundwave to ponder the future.
Skywarp suddenly felt his left hand hurting again; the sting of his burns persisting. Again, he had gotten the bandages wet, “OOOWWWW!” he keened miserably.

TC was beside him in a minute, “I gotcha, I gotcha…” he took Skywarp back into the wash racks and began gently removing the sopping wet bandages. All the while, the darker Seeker chose not to tell him what he had overheard; nor did he tell him that he had confided to Soundwave about the ghost’s true identity.

“You shoulda told me to change these, kiddo,” Thundercracker felt even more guilty for yelling now, thinking that Skywarp had been afraid to come to him, “you know I’ll always take care of you.”

Skywarp stayed silent, instead, letting his brother clean and rewrap his hand, before helping him to his pedes. He stayed while Thundercracker took his shower now, afraid to face the situation.

Soundwave, meanwhile, was facing a similar dilemma. He didn’t know how to tell Megatron who the ghost was. To say this complicated things was an understatement.

“Let me know the moment anything changes,” Megatron told him.

A lot had changed, actually.
Chapter 87: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

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Megatron gathered with the Triple Changers, led by Astrotrain, the Coneheads, and Thundercracker in the Control Room for the morning huddle, while Soundwave was at the Computer Consul.

“Alright mechs,” the Decepticon Leader began, “this shouldn’t be too difficult of a mission. We’re going to raid the Swarovski crystals distribution center in Cranston, Rhode Island. I highly doubt that the human workers there will pose any threat. The biggest obstacle is staying on the schedule against the winter weather,” he walked around, “so we need to keep a tight control on our timeline, and for that, I’ve appointed Thundercracker as our timekeeper.”

The blue Seeker nodded in agreement.

“Gather your weapons,” Megatron finished, “we will meet again on the Tarmac at five A.M.”

The troops headed out, all except for the three commanding officers, who stayed behind to discuss the hauntings.

At the same time this was going on, Skywarp watched through the crack in the door. Starscream came over to the door now, holding little Darkwing. Dawning and Darkmount were out of their highchairs and toddling around.

“Warp?” Starscream’s vocals were shaky, “Can you take him?”

Skywarp turned to see little Darkwing reach for him, “Unkle Wop!” The black and purple Seeker was still reeling from what he overheard outside earlier about Soundwave’s dream, but he readily took the boy.

Starscream was finally feeling the effects from not recharging over twenty-four hours, “I almost dropped him…” he was beginning to feel pain just from being awake.

“You okay?” Skywarp was worried now; Darkwing clung to his uncle.

“Just… I can’t handle this,” Starscream was crying now, “I-I mean, I thought I could, b-but… I didn’t sleep all night or the night before neither.”

Skywarp thought his Trine Leader was going to pass out, “TEECEE! MEGATRON!”

“We just have to keep on with our lives,” Megatron was telling Thundercracker and Soundwave at the time, “I’ll burn incense again this evening.” Then they heard Skywarp yell and came running. But Soundwave refused to budge, not yet wanting to face his lover.

Starscream was trembling now, whimpering the way Skywarp usually did after an attack.

The red and white Seeker keened, “Oowww!” his helmache was killing him.

“Ohh…” Megatron dropped his tough act now that the other Decepticons were not around; he took Starscream into his arms and hugged him, “Shh, it’s okay…it’s okay…” he let his smaller mate cry on his shoulder.

“I-haven’t r-recharge i-in o-over t-t-twenty-f-four hours, M-Megatron,” Starscream admitted tearfully, curling into his mate’s board chestplates.

“We can NOT let this Thing destroy us, my Star,” Megatron held him and rubbed his wings, “remember, It has significantly less power in the daylight hours. Just rest now.”

“I had the same thing,” Thundercracker tried to help now, rubbing his little brother’s wings as well, “I spent the night in the Med-Bay, remember? This Thing…when you see It, It’s just…horrid.”

Skywarp felt terrible about what the ghost—the ghost that was really after HIM—had done to Starscream. It made him even more depressed than he already was.

“Stand your ground,” Megatron told his mate, “go to our berthroom, and lay down. I’ll be home in a few hours.” He looked at their sons, “Skywarp and Soundwave can sparklingsit for a while.”

While Megatron and Thundercracker helped him into the berth, Starscream kept babbling about not wanting to see Skyfire again, and, “I-It went a-after him because of ME!” And there was still something else…something about the triplets.

“This is too upsetting to him,” TC whispered to Megatron, before addressing them both, “I’ll stand in for him tomorrow.”

“Alright,” Megatron nodded; Thundercracker would accompany him to their meeting with the Autobots.

Finally, it was five A.M., and they needed to leave.

Soundwave didn’t know what to do now; he was rattled by his nightmare; he had to figure out what to do with Skywarp. How could he continue to work alongside the heavily pregnant Seeker after having that horrible nightmare? On top of that, he was now burdened with the terrible knowledge that the ghost was Thundercracker’s biological Sire. How in the world was he going to tell Megatron and the blue Seeker this information?

Practically on cue, said Gunformer and Seeker walked into the Control Room again, Megatron spoke first, “A couple of changes to note: You and Skywarp are in charge while we’re gone. I want Starscream to rest, so I’m putting Ravage in charge of guarding the triplets,” and headed out.

“And I’m coming with you tomorrow to the meeting with the Autobots,” TC finished.

What?!

“What?!” Soundwave couldn’t have him know, “NO!”

“No, I gotta stand in for Starscream,” Thundercracker explained, “he doesn’t wanna go.”

“You’re not going to the meeting,” Soundwave insisted, trying his best not to give away why.

Thundercracker: “I have to represent my brothers there.”
“I don’t care; you’re not going!” Soundwave could not have this, “that’s final.”

“I’m the acting Air Commander, and I’m going!” TC insisted now.

“I outrank you, and I said no!” Soundwave barked back.

“Megatron said I could go,” Thundercracker was getting annoyed, “so I’m going!”

Megatron had been headed down the hall to the elevator but had to come back now, “What’s the big deal, Soundwave? I told him he could go.”

The Tapedeck had to think fast, “Skywarp shouldn’t be alone.”

“So, your sons will watch him,” Megatron’s tone was firm, “it’s settled. That’s enough.” Megatron headed out now, with TC following him, the sun was coming up!

Furious, Soundwave slammed his fists on the Computer Consul; he was beyond panicked and desperate. Thundercracker was going to find out, and he needed to figure out how to break up with Skywarp; he had to, so he could keep him safe.

“FATHER!” Laserbeak emerged from the elevator, “FATHER! DID YOU NOT RECEIVE MY TRANSMISSION?!” he was excited that he had finally solved the mystery. He called his family through his telepathic link.

“This had better be important, Tweety,” Ravage hissed as he and the younger Cassettes joined their brother in the hallway.

“We were in the mass hall,” Rumble explained, “Pop had one hell of a dream, but he won’t tell us what it was about.”

“Just as well,” Laserbeak told them, “I have made a breakthrough in my investigation.”

Skywarp came into the hallway, keeping Starscream’s door open to hear for the triplets, who were nervously watching over their Mother, and walked slowly to the Control Room. He saw the Cassetticons coming, “Hey guys.”

“Skywarp!” Frenzy ran up to him, “What happened with Pop last night?!”

“Did he propose?” Rumble asked.

“Not exactly,” Skywarp admitted, again feeling like a fat, unattractive slob, “we did a lotta talking, and...it SEEMED like things were going well, but…” he didn’t want to admit they almost interfaced.

“And?” Ravage inquired.

“We got interrupted,” the pregnant Jet shrugged, “he thought somebody was listening in and he told me to leave.”

“Pop,” Rumble facepalmed, thinking his Sire was not going about this well, but then realized, “you know what? It was probably that ghost guy.”

“Daddy probably heard him coming,” Buzzsaw nodded, “cause he can hear weird stuff that we can’t.”
“Think so?” Skywarp was still depressed.

“Regardless,” Laserbeak changed the subject, “I have made a breakthrough in my investigation, and we must inform Father at once.” He took it upon himself pull Skywarp along, “Come now, hurry!”

“Hey, careful with em!” Rumble barked, “Ya wanna hurt the baby?”

“Yeah,” Frenzy added, “he’s too fat ta hurry!”

“Frenzy,” Ravage sighed.

The Cassette all got behind Skywarp and motioned for him to go into the Control Room. It took a lot of courage for him to open the French Doors and look inside, “Hey Soundwave…”

The Tapedeck was sitting alone, feeling lost. Seeing his Seeker alive and standing before him sent a flood of relief to his processor. He knew he had seen Skywarp sleeping, but he had been sent reeling from that nightmare, “Skywarp…” he stood and hugged his Seeker tightly, feeling his lifeforce in his arms.

Skywarp was surprised by this, adjusting his belly not to get crushed between them. But it felt good to be hugged by the big mech. He hugged him back and cuddled against him.

Laserbeak’s sons all smiled and grinned knowingly, with Laserbeak grinning from audial to audial with his proclamation of his breakthrough eminent.

“I’m sorry, Skywarp,” Soundwave began, still not ready to let go, “please accept my apology. I just…I was afraid that,” he could barely speak, “I did come looking for you, but you had gone to bed…” his dream still so real to him, “I was afraid of never seeing you again.”

“Ooohh…” Skywarp thought he meant that he thought the Seeker was angry, “I’m not mad, Soundwave.”

“Father, may I inquire,” Ravage spoke for the group, “what occurred last night?”

“Oh,” Soundwave let Skywarp out of his hold, but kept his hands loosely at the Seeker’s sides, “Skywarp and I were discussing the haunting, and I thought there was someone watching us,” he reached up and stroked Skywarp’s faceplates, “I panicked, and I sent you away.”

“I knew it was that slagger ghost,” Rumble stated proudly.

But Skywarp told him, “No, it was somebody spying on us with a camera,” he didn’t realize Soundwave didn’t want them to know.

The Cassettes looked at their Sire.

“Affirmative,” Soundwave answered rather reluctantly, “I realized there was an unauthorized camera feed.”

“Was it the Autobots, Pop?” Rumble asked.

“Negative,” Laserbeak interrupted, “I myself was stationed at the Ark all night.”

Skywarp was worried too.

“No,” Soundwave confirmed, “it was Shockwave’s computer.” He knew he could just drop a bomb like that without elaborating, “it was nothing. He said he left his computer on,” he walked around, “it
doesn’t matter anyway, I erased all his footage via remote access.”

“O-Okay,” Skywarp nodded, he had been worried.

“Why’d you need to do that, Pop?” Rumble was curious, “If it was Shockwave, Why—”

“BECAUSE!” Soundwave shot back, far too nervous for the conversation, “There was not to be anyone watching or recording us!”

“I don’t understand, Father,” Ravage tilted his helm, “if it was a conversation, why would it matter if Shockwave had witnessed it?”

“Um,” Skywarp blushed now, feeling he needed to come clean, “your dad and I…”

“Skywarp,” Soundwave tried to stop him.

“We aren’t exactly just…talking,” Skywarp admitted, “I-I’m glad there’s no video.”

“Video?” Rumble looked at him; Frenzy snorted loudly as his twin continued, “Your…video? Of you and Pop?”

“ENOUGH!” Soundwave bellowed.

It was too late; all six Cassettes burst out into raucous laughter, hoots, and hollers.

Soundwave would have brutalized them all if not for catching a glimpse of Skywarp grinning under his hands.

“Well,” Laserbeak was still laughing, “that was quite the proverbial roll in the aisle laughing, but I digress. Father, when I did not receive a response to my correspondence, I made the executive decision to put an end to my mission, as I have concluded that I have obtained the proverbial, as the humans say, smoking gun.”

“Anything,” Soundwave was holding his helm, “anything to get off this subject.”

The Condor inserted his flash drive into the computer, “Obverse!”

The monitor flashed on, and the tape played:

Ironhide: “Hey Prime, I heard about what happened with Skyfire, he alright?”

Optimus Prime: “He is in recovery, he should be released in a few days. Did Jazz tell you, that I had never assigned you to watch Doctor Fujiyama, the Famous Scientist?”

Ironhide: “Yeah, I figured something was up when I got there, and they didn’t know anything about it.”

Optimus Prime: “We seemed to have had someone impersonate me; the Decepticons have had some problems as well.”

“Oh wow,” Skywarp whispered, noting how the ghost impersonated others.

Ironhide: “Prime, I think I know what’s going on.”

Soundwave studied the red mech for any lie in his vocals and found none.
Ironhide: “I did something terrible years ago... You need to call Megatron. I... I helped kill a mech in prison.”

Soundwave and Skywarp looked at each other in silence.

Ironhide: “I didn’t... care at the time, I mean, he was a sparkling abuser, a wife beater, two policemechs were killed. They were lawmechs just like me, Prime... but I...”

Optimus Prime: “Whatever happened, I and your fellow Autobots will stand by you. I know that you’re a good mech, Ironhide, and whatever happened occurred long ago, and I know the mech you are today. We will get through this.”

Ironhide: “Thanks, Prime, think I need to turn in for a time.”

Optimus Prime: “Very well, I’ll wait and call Megatron in the morning.”

The tape finished.

When both adults were silent, Laserbeak looked at them, “Well? Are you not astonished?”

Skywarp was scared now; Soundwave addressed everyone, “It lines up with everything Skywarp told me last night.”

Laserbeak raised an optic brow.

When Skywarp didn’t vocalize anything, Soundwave told his sons, “We believe the entity is Thundercracker’s biological Sire. This new evidence, Laserbeak, confirms what you’ve been telling us. Ironhide indeed knows who is haunting us, and the circumstances of the inmate he is describing are identical to the details about Thundercracker’s Sire.”

“TC’s Sire, huh?” Rumble was surprised by this, “He looked like a gargoyle.”

“That’s apparently the form he, well, IT takes,” Soundwave explained.

This was clearly devastating to Skywarp. “W-What am I gonna do? N-Now everybody’s gonna know...” all of the ghost’s threats flooded the young Seeker’s processor now, “everyone’s gonna know...”

Flashback:

“Listen to me you little fool,” Gravechaser’s vocals were filled with hate and malice, “You feel that knife in your belly?! Do you?!! Listen to me; you TELL NO ONE! You hear me?! TELL NO ONE! Or I will make it much worse!”

End of Flashback:

“H-He’s going to kill me...” Skywarp sobbed, clenching his pregnant belly as the fear gripped him, “I-I don’t... I-I can’t...” His sparkling was nervous as well.

“Thundercracker would never hurt you,” Soundwave told him, “you know that.”

“G-Gravechaser’s gonna,” the coolant tears poured from Skywarp’s optics now, “h-he’s been a-after me all this time! He said he’d kill me if... if I ever told anyone.”

“Negative,” Soundwave pulled him closer, “WE won’t let that happen.”
The Cassette gave their collective affirmations.

Ravage thought of something, “Laserbeak, is Ironhide being haunted as well?”

“I was not witness to any evidence of such,” the red and black Condor admitted, “nor did Prime appear to place the attack on Skyfire to any connection to Ironhide’s recent behavioral changes.”

“Just guilt then,” the Cat confirmed.

“Hey, Warp?” Rumble asked, “Why TC’s Father after you anyway?”

“Yeah,” Frenzy asked as well, “do you even know this guy?”

“H-He says I ruined his life,” Skywarp whispered, “I-I don’t know…”

“Remember what Megatron told us,” Soundwave stated, “an entity can lay in wait for decades until the time is right. He waited for Skywarp to become pregnant; this way he couldn’t teleport or get away easily.”

The very thought enraged not only Soundwave but his sons as well.

“Slagging glitch,” Ravage growled.

“And fugly too!” Rumble used a word he had learned from the internet, “Hey wait, if he’s TC’s dad and all, why’s he look like he belongs on a New York building?”

“Yeah,” Frenzy agreed, “he doesn’t look like any Seeker I’ve ever seen!”

Skywarp didn’t know either; but Soundwave spoke, “All reports of his appearance lines up with popular culture’s versions of a herald of Unicron,” he put his arm around Skywarp, “although I have not seen this figure for myself, Megatron and I feel he most likely was a Seeker that sold his soul to Unicron.”

“OH GOD,” Skywarp shrieked, “THAT’S WHAT HE DID?! I-I JUST THOUGHT HE MADE HIMSELF LOOK LIKE—SOUNDWAVE, WHAT AM I GONNA DO?! I CAN’T FIGHT THIS THING!”

“We’re here, alright, we’re here,” Soundwave took hold of him to calm him down, “forgot his threats, Skywarp. He’s just a bully. The truth is the more of us that know about him, the less power his threats’ hold. No one is going to be scared of some High-Grade addicted failure!”

He held the…His Seeker to his chestdeck, ready for anything now.
Gravechaser stood on the Tarmac, right under the security camera, avoiding detection. He had not been able to enter the Decepticon Underwater Base since Megatron was keeping up his protection methods. The daylight hours did not help either; well, no bother, the Decepticons would be returning eventually, and the wicked ghost had a certain mech in mind for his latest plans.

“How we doing on time, TC?” Astrotrain called over his Comm.-Link.

“We’re right on schedule,” the blue Jet replied, “our ETA should be around one ‘o’clock locally.”

The Decepticons all flew in their Alt-Modes across the mountains, heading East.

Starscream couldn’t relax in his berth, so he gathered his triplets and headed for the Control Room.

“Don’t worry, Star,” Skywarp told him, “we’re gonna watch the sparklings for you.”

“Whatever,” Starscream curled onto the sofa under the blanket, “it’s not like they know the difference,” he yawned and was finally able to recharge.

Skywarp tried not to think about Gravechaser now; it was daytime and being reassured by Soundwave was very confronting. Also, he wanted to keep Crystal calm, so, he put his fears in the back of his CPU for now; he had Starscream, his little nephews, the Cassettes, and of course, he had Soundwave. He didn’t want to think about if he would lose Thundercracker’s friendship after he knew the truth about Gravechaser.

But Soundwave, meanwhile, had several different dilemmas: He still was not certain that his nightmare was the influence of the entity—who he was certain wasn’t on the Base last night—or if it was a message from Celene. A message that he needed to stay faithful…or else. He couldn’t tell Skywarp or his sons what that dream was about. It was far too raw; too painful; too soon. And yet, he was all but courting the pregnant Jet now; the Cassettes were practically marrying him off. Why the slag were they so anxious to get him Bonded to Skywarp anyway, he wondered. When did they ever care about a new sparkling?

Like Skywarp, the Tapedeck tried to push his fears and anxieties away and focus on the paperless-society-project. The sooner it was completed, the sooner he could get Skywarp out of his Control Room. Where their relationship, if any, would go after that, he would figure out later.

“Listen up!” Soundwave began his meeting, “We need to get serious about the paperless-society-project. Skywarp will be going on maternity leave soon, and Megatron doesn’t want all these boxes in the Control Room. Our objection: Bring everything up from the basement and finish the processing of the papers. I’ll enter the information into the computers.”
But Skywarp had overheard the conversation Soundwave had with Megatron and knew Soundwave wanted him out, “and then fire me?”

“No…” Soundwave said now, “just that you shouldn’t be working so hard,” he still wanted to be nice, “we will still be together.”

The pregnant Seeker smiled at that, “Okay…”

Everyone got to work. It was a hectic day: Soundwave worked at his Computer Consul, scanning and typing in the information from the files and monitoring the Comm.-Links for any calls from Megatron. The raid team was still four hours away from their destination.

Skywarp worked on sorting through the files, while the Cassettes began bringing the boxes up from the basement. All the while, Starscream was in recharge on the sofa, while the triplets played with their toys on the floor; Skywarp and the Cassettes all keeping an optic on them, especially Dawning, who tended to what to touch everything.

To add to Soundwave’s agenda, the Constructicons began work on repairing his quarters. Their constant drilling, hammering, and buzzing was driving his sensitive hearing through the roof, especially since he had all his senses open to listen for the ghost.

“Aarrh,” the Tapedeck groaned, “could they make any more noise?” he tried to focus on his work. Between the Constructicons, the triplets, the boxes, and the ghost looming, the Control Room was utterly hectic. He hated all this noise.

Skywarp came across something in the files he found interesting, it was a newspaper from Atlanta, Georgia, reporting on the opening of the historic memorial shrine in Iacon Square. He read the whole article, trying to find any clue, maybe a donor list? Anything that could indicate what the ghost hunters had done at the prison; they still needed to know when the portal had been opened. But alas, this article was not about the fundraising angle. He threw the newspaper on the pile; then he turned a bit too fast.

“O-Ow,” his right side felt that familiar stab again; Skywarp gripped his belly and clinched his faceplates.

“Skywarp, no lifting,” Soundwave looked up from his typing, “let the boys do that.”

“Sorry,” Skywarp wasn’t lifting anything, but he let Soundwave think he was.

Little Ratbat crawled under the Computer Consul now, being mischievous. Soundwave had to make sure he didn’t accidentally step on his youngest.

Rumble and Ravage then brought in more boxes from the basement, “There’s more where these came from,” the Cat groaned.

“How many more?” Soundwave looked at them.

“Um,” Rumble shrugged, “enough to fill the Time-Life building, I’d say.”

Soundwave groaned, trying to type as fast as he could. Now, Frenzy dumped the massive pile of files that Skywarp had sorted out next to him, earning another grumble from the Tapedeck.

All the while, Soundwave couldn’t stop thinking about his dream; he couldn’t shake the fear that it was a warning; a warning of things to come.
At least Starscream was finally in recharge, lightly snoring on the sofa.

“Shhh,” Darkmount put his tiny digit to his lip components; his brothers nodded.

“These are done?” Frenzy asked about the pile of papers on the floor.

Skywarp: “Yeah, those are done.”

“Gotcha,” Frenzy gathered the papers and dragged them over to the shredder and began shredding. The grinding gears were now grinding Soundwave’s gears as he worked to type everything out.

“Oooo,” little Dawning toddled over to the shredder, ready to stick his hand in there.

“Hey, hey!” Soundwave scooped the toddler up, “Frenzy, watch it!” he took the baby back to where the other two were playing.

Skywarp, finally getting into his stepmother-mode, ordered his ‘sons,’ “Okay, guys, Rumble and Frenzy, you’re gonna watch the triplets. Buzzsaw, you can do the shredding.”

The yellow Condor made a face but left his painting to go to the shredder.

“Come on, Frenz,” Rumble told his twin, “let’s practice our sparkling-sitting skills on these three.”

The blue Cassetticon picked up Darkmount, but the sparkling squealed angrily, getting out of his hold, began babbling angrily, and pointing at Rumble.

Rumble: “What’s he saying?”

“Um,” Skywarp was better at understanding his eldest nephew, “Well, he basically said he’s going to be the Leader of the Decepticons one day, and that when he is, he’s gonna make you the chief dishwasher.”

“Wow,” Rumble noted, “perfect mixture of the parents there.”

“How about this one, Rumble?” Frenzy pointed at Darkwing, “Maybe the runty one’s easier to handle.”

Darkwing gave an indignant glare as if to say, “Oh yeah?”

Frenzy picked him up, only to be smacked in the faceplates with a toy. Dawning, in turn, pushed Rumble over.

“Don’t worry guys,” Skywarp couldn’t help but laugh now, “Crystal will be much nicer.”

:Crystal nice, Momma,: his little unborn daughter agreed, :Crystal nice!: 

“At least they’re talking again,” Ravage noted, “I have observed that they had regressed in their development since the haunting began.”

“Cause they’re scared is why,” Skywarp admitted, “they hear him and stuff.”

Dawning went towards the shredder again; Frenzy picked him up roughly, “Yeah well, I think we need a cage or something.”

“Oh,” Skywarp remembered how Thundercracker had threatened to put him in a cage, “I don’t know...”
“Hey, Daddy?” Buzzsaw asked, “Can I have some of these newspapers for decoupage?”

“What?” Soundwave couldn’t think of what that was.

“Decoupage!” Buzzsaw chipped, “You get a picture, and you put it on a wooden backing, cover it with sealant, and you make nice pictures for the walls! We need new wall pictures cause the others gots broken.”

“Uh,” Soundwave sighed, “whatever.”

“YAY!” Buzzsaw was happy now.

A jackhammer was heard; Mixmaster was using it in the Tapedeck’s quarters.

“ARAH!” Soundwave was used to working alone; all this noise was maddening, “we’re never going to finish this on time!”

“Well,” Skywarp finally got tired of the Tapedeck’s defeatist’s attitude, “we can if you just have a little organization.”

Soundwave and his sons looked at him.

Skywarp decided it was time to take charge: Without the ghost’s presence, he felt more confident; Starscream had told him he wanted him to act as a tactician; a strategist if you will. Seeker Trines were good on organization and delegation, and he showed it now:

“I can organize this,” the pregnant Seeker began, “Ratbat likes playing with newlings, so Ratbat should keep the triplets together.”

“YAY!” the little Bat flew towards the triplets, all of whom seemed to respond more positively than they had to Rumble and Frenzy.

“Buzzsaw,” Skywarp looked at the yellow Condor, “since you wanna do your deco-whatevers, you’re in charge of the shredding, and as a reward, you can keep whatever you want for your art projects.”

“Oh boy!” Buzzsaw flapped his wings in happiness.

Looking at the stacks of papers he had already sorted that Soundwave had yet to process, Skywarp had another thought, “Hey Ravage? Can you process data?”

“I have several security clearances higher than the average Decepticon,” Ravage grinned, “I can process data into files that are already created, but not to create new files.”

“I think I can remember what we did already,” Skywarp hoped he could anyway, “if I resorted the files from the new stuff and the old stuff, can you enter the old stuff into the files already in the computer?”

“I can,” Ravage nodded proudly.

“Okay, that’s what we’ll do,” the Seeker pulled a pile of the files back towards his side of the Computer Consul, before looking at the twins, “Rumble, Frenzy, you guys are in charge of bringing up the boxes, and garbage runs.”

“Cool!” Rumble answered, “We can use our pile drivers!”
“Pop usually stops us from using ‘em in the Control Room,” Frenzy added.

Soundwave groaned at the thought.

“Okay, um,” Skywarp looked at Laserbeak, “should I think of something for you to do?”

Laserbeak was casually laying atop a stack of boxes, with audial phones and a device that resembled an iPod that was actually a listening device he had hooked up to the Oval Office. He raised an optic brow as he glanced up, “It is my day off.”

“Oh, sorry,” Skywarp realized, “okay everybody, let’s get to work!”

Soundwave was surprised that his sons gave their collective hoots and cheers as they immediately began their tasks. He too got to work.

Meanwhile, the Decepticons reached Brooklyn, New York. They joined with the Stunticons and members of the Human Alliance Division before heading to Rhode Island. Megatron radioed their progress to Soundwave back in the Control Room.

“Affirmative, Megatron,” Soundwave turned on his remote access to one of the satellites nearest to the distribution plant, ready to assist if needed. Still, he couldn’t shake off that nightmare; he kept replaying it in his CPU: Celene, Cybertron…he swore he tasted Skywarp’s Energon-blood in his mouth…

BOOM! Rumble and Frenzy each brought six more boxes into the Control Room.

At least the real Skywarp was having fun playing the role of stepmother to the Cassettes.

Things were a hectic scene: Ravage typing away, Buzzsaw shredding, Rumble and Frenzy using their pile drivers to crush old boxes, Ratbat entertaining the triplets, Laserbeak…being Laserbeak; the Constructicons drilling, hammering, and hanging drywall, Skywarp sorting papers and tossing them in the various directions they were going, and all the while, Soundwave was a fretting mess. He worked on creating the new electronic files, which there seemed to be a LOT of—his work pile was higher than Ravage’s—and the stuff coming up from the basement seemed to be more and more new stuff.

Boom! Frenzy brought five more boxes in.

“What the slag?” Soundwave got up to look at them. He opened the top box, realizing that they had not even begun to work on the Russian crisis of nineteen-eighty-four through nineteen-eighty-six.

“What’s that?” Skywarp asked.

“Starscream’s kidnapping files,” Soundwave groaned.

“Oh man,” the pregnant Seeker looked at his still-sleeping brother, “whatever we do, don’t wake him.”

“I don’t know how he can sleep through all this racket anyway,” Soundwave through his hands up, going back to his Computer Consul.

“It’s not THAT loud,” Skywarp rolled his optics, looking into the top box, “it’s that you’ve got your sensors open,” he sounded like a wife now.
Boom! Now Rumble brought six more boxes in.

“AAGH!” Soundwave roared now, “WHERE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO PUT ALL THIS SLAG?!”

“We’ll do it,” Skywarp came over to the boxes, “we’ll do it, come on,” he grabbed some files out of the second set of boxes, “just do your typing, big bot.”

As Soundwave held his helm looking at the boxes, Skywarp thought about his new nickname, “Big bot,” he giggled, “can I call you by a nickname? What’s the loving, playful nicknames Celene would call you by?”

“Soundwave,” the Tapedeck answered dryly, “she called me Soundwave.”

“Ah,” Skywarp realized, “wanna call me by a nickname? Wanna call me by one of your nicknames for Celene? What were the loving, playful nicknames you used to call her by?”

“Celene,” Soundwave answered, again dryly, “I called her Celene.”

“You two sure sound like fun,” Skywarp sighed.

Soundwave just looked at him as he returned to his Computer Consul, trying to act like he didn’t care for the Seeker.

Another trip to the basement and the twins brought more boxes up. Boom!

“Don’t worry, Soundwave,” Skywarp told him, going over to the newest boxes “these are just receipts for Ron Tagem’s Time magazine subscriptions,” he tossed them to Buzzsaw for shredding.

“I’m going back,” Rumble headed for the basement again.

“Wait,” Soundwave got up, “I’m going to see how many boxes are still down there,” he followed Rumble to the basement, “Ravage: Watch the Comm.-Links.”

Then Mixmaster came in, “Hey, where’s Soundwave?”

Skywarp: “He went to the basement.”

“Scrapper needs ‘em,” the Cement Mixer told them, “he needs to know about the doors.”

Frenzy came over, “Skywarp, maybe you should decide?” He figured that Skywarp would be moving in soon.

“Oh, okay,” the pregnant flyer walked with Frenzy to Soundwave’s quarters, the first time since his near-drowning in the shower stall; he held onto his belly protectively, but it was still early in the day, and the Constructicons were all working on various projects, so it seemed safe.

Scavenger and Bonecrusher were hanging drywall; Hook was painting one of the berthrooms, and Long Hall was removing the mess of glass in the en-suite, while Mixmaster had been reinforcing the floor in the same area.

Scrapper was holding his blueprints, “We need to know if Soundwave wants the doors to swing inwards or outwards,” he explained.

Frenzy looked at Skywarp.
“I think the doors should swing inwards,” the pregnant Seeker told him, “that’s how they are in my quarters,” he looked into Soundwave’s berthroom, “what colors are you using?”

“He asked for earth tones,” the Front-Loader explained.

“Hmmm,” Skywarp frowned, “make it sky-blue; I like sky-blue. And as long as we’re in here, can you install some kinda grab bar in that shower? I thought I was gonna fall in there and he’s got six kids, y’know.”

“It had been his private sanctuary,” Hook told him, “he gave us exact specifications.”

“I’m NOT letting Crystal fall in there!” Skywarp barked back, “Now install the grab bars before you do anything else!” He pointed at Mixmaster, “And be careful when you level that floor!”

He looked around now, “Those are ugly light fixtures.”

“Soundwave requested soft lighting,” Scrapper told him.

“When?” the pregnant flyer cocked his helm, “When we moved or just now?”

“Well, when we moved here,” Scrapper answered.

“Forget that,” Skywarp ordered, “I want one of those lighting things that can make it real bright or real dark when you turn the dials.”

“Dimmers,” the Front-Loader clarified.

“Yeah, that’s it,” Skywarp smiled, “like the one’s Screamer has.”

“That’s gonna cost ya,” Scrapper told him.

“Well, add it to the bill,” Skywarp rolled his optics, “now, I’m going back to the Control Room; call me if you when you need to know about the carpets and the boys’ rooms.” He walked out with Frenzy now.

Hook and Mixmaster looked at each other, then at Scrapper.

“Mrs. Soundwave Junior wants dimmers,” Hook groaned.

Meanwhile, Soundwave looked around the basement, counting the boxes, “Well, only around sixty more boxes, I guess it’s not so bad.”

“We could get this part done today, Pop,” Rumble nodded.

“I hope so,” the Tapedeck grumbled, he needed to end this paperless-society-project if he was ever going to be rid of the Seeker, “let’s hurry up.”

“You’re looking forward to getting ready for the baby, right Pop?” Rumble asked.

“Whatever,” Soundwave was still thinking of his dream. Celene… The Ghost was Thundercracker’s Sire. And, he had tasted Skywarp’s Energon-blood in his mouth.
Chapter 89: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

This chapter went a bit longer than I intended since I didn't intend to have Skywarp and Soundwave still together at this point, but I promise you, the action is still!

Chapter 89:

By Transformersnewfan

And over in the East Coast:

Thundercracker and the Coneheads were flying in their Jet Modes with members of the Human Alliance Division on board.

“YAY MAN!” Damian cheered as he sat in Thundercracker’s cockpit, “just old times when Chris was here!”

“Yeah, we need to do this more often!” the blue Seeker was finally loosening up a bit after weeks of tension at the Underwater Base.

“I’ve got a great idea,” James radioed from Ramjet’s cockpit, “let’s call Skywarp on the Comm.-Links!”

“Hold on,” TC loved the idea, “I’ll hook us up!”

Skywarp sat back at the Computer Consul, still sorting files and handing them to Ravage when the Cat took the incoming call.

“Decepticons Underwater Base,” Ravage answered in all seriousness, then raised an optic brow, “it’s for you,” he turned the monitors on.

“Hey, Warp!” Damian’s face popped up on the monitor, while James’ face appeared on a second monitor as he laughed, “how’s the West Coast?!”

“Hi, guys!” Skywarp got excited to see them, “Where are you calling from?”

“We’re calling from where we’re having a blast without ya!” James laughed.

Skywarp giggled at this.

“We’re twenty minutes west of Rhode Island, kiddo,” Thundercracker answered, “just checking in on ya!”

“We basically wanted to tease ya,” Damian laughed, “we’re up here having a great time, and we’re gonna be in and out, and back home before their crew even punches in.”
Ravage tried to keep in a business manner, “No sign of the Autobots.”

“Oh, is that right?” Skywarp smirked, sitting back to show off his big belly, “Go ahead and make fun of the grounded, pregnant Seeker,” he pretended to be offended, “hope it snows on ya.”

“Watch this, Warp,” Damian told him, “let’s show ‘em, TC!”

The blue Seeker did a barrel roll, with Damian hooting and hollering, “YEAH MAN!”

“What a ham,” Skywarp rolled his optics, “that’s nothing our youngest nephew couldn’t do!”

Little Darkwing watched the monitor curiously, remembering that day, so many months earlier, that Skywarp had taught him how to do a barrel roll. He looked at his sleeping Mother curiously, wondering if Starscream would be interested in seeing him do that.

“Keep playing,” Ratbat instructed the Seekerling, handing him some of the blocks. Dawning and Darkmount had already built castles with their blocks.

That’s when Soundwave and Rumble returned to the Control Room.

“Whoa, gotta go!” Damian shut his monitor.

“Why?” Ramjet asked; then he and James saw Soundwave in the background, making the Human Alliance Member sit up, “Oh, the big guy’s back!” and shut his monitor as well.

“Ravage!” Soundwave bellowed, “You know better than that!”

“It wasn’t my fault, Father,” the Cat flinched, “I thought they were checking in regarding the Autobots.”

Laserbeak couldn’t pass up the opportunity, “And you believed that when they were performing barrel rolls?”

Skywarp snort laughed.

“You’re not helping,” Ravage sneered at his brother.

“The Telecommunication link systems are NOT to be used for hijinks,” Soundwave scolded, “this is a highly-sensitive, intergalactic-wide, communications systems that serve as an early-warning system to our soldiers on the battlefield, and ONLY to be used for the purpose of exchanging information.”

While the Cassetticons all nodded in seriousness, Skywarp just gloated, “Riiiggghhhhttt,” he had figured out that Soundwave had been wanting to play with his wings for a while now, “and you didn’t use it to have phone-wing-play with me that night?”

“Wha-what?!” Soundwave acted insulted, “I DID NOT!”

Now Rumble and Frenzy couldn’t stifle their laughter.

“Get back to work, all of you!” the Tapedeck ordered as he sat back down, still glaring at Skywarp angrily, Skywarp in turn, only giggled.

Throughout the day, the paperless-society-project was getting done: boxes and boxes were getting empty, crushed by Rumble and Frenzy’s pile drivers (much to their Sire’s annoyance), and recycled.
The Constructicons worked hard; everybody ate lunch together, and Starscream had gotten a good seven hours of recharge.

The red and white Seeker woke up slowly, turning over and opening his optics.

Skywarp heard this and came over right away, “Hey Screamer, are you alright now?”

“Think so,” Starscream sat up, still blurry-opticed, and held his helm.

Skywarp: “No nightmares?”

“Not that I remember,” Starscream looked around, “you?”

“Been okay,” then Skywarp picked up Dawning, “they have a gift for you.”

Dawning reached up and wrapped his little arms around his Mother’s neck cables.

“Aww, hey Dawning,” Starscream yawned again, “love you, baby.”

Ratbat came over, “Look Starscream, your babies made castles for you!”

The triplets had each built tall castles with their wooden blocks atop some flattened cardboard boxes, “For you, Mommy!” Darkmount announced; “Ta-Da!” Darkwing exclaimed.

“Oh,” Starscream was thrilled with his babies’ gifts; he had no idea that they were capable of building things, “these are so nice.” He noticed they were on cardboard platforms, “We need to put these in our quarters, so we can show your Sire when he comes home.”

Rumble and Frenzy helped move the castle into Megatron’s quarters, while Starscream and Skywarp gathered the triplets for their lunches.

But Gravechaser stayed in wait on the Tarmac, looming large and would soon have his opportunity for revenge.

And Soundwave could feel something was not right, even though his sensors were telling him otherwise. And he couldn’t stop thinking about Thundercracker, and the knowledge that he would soon be devasted by the truth. Should it come from him? Or from Skywarp?

“Hey Pop?” Rumble came over, “What do ya think about the ghost being TC’s Father?”

“It may cause a rift,” Soundwave admitted before shaking it off, “let’s not talk about it.”

Just how would the blue Seeker react to the news?

The Tapedeck was on edge again, just like he had been the previous night, right before Skywarp joined him in the Control Room, and every few minutes, he would remember that dream, no, that nightmare.

They kept working though, determined to keep making headway.

The East Coast mission was accomplished without a wrinkle: The Stunticons were on time—for once—for the rendezvous; Megatron and the Jets, along with the members of the Human Alliance
Division, entered through the eastside wing of the plant.

There, they were joined by the Triple Changers; Astrotrain rammed through the side of the building in his Train Mode, the debris and dust flew in all directions.

A lone human was there, Fred, a longtime employee, dressed in old jeans, and a faded jean jacket that was as old as his white hair; he stood with his arms crossed by the receiving bay.

“Hey Fred,” Damian approached him now, shaking his hand and passing him a thousand dollars in cash, “thanks for taking care of us.”

Fred had stolen the passcodes from the H.R. Department, and scheduled a day off for all the dock workers in the eastside bay, “just take care of the cameras.”

“No sweat,” Thundercracker used a device Soundwave had given him to dismantle all the security cameras, and instead play a tape of an empty dock area. The plans were perfect!

Now, everyone gathered the Swarovski crystals into sacks and subspaces, respectively.

“We’ve arrived at the destination,” Megatron got on his Comm.-Link, “any signs of trouble, Soundwave?”

“Negative,” the Tapedeck answered, “the Autobots are still unaware; and no sign of the ghost.”

“No sign of the what?” Motormaster questioned.

“It’s nothing,” Megatron insisted, “really, it’s nothing.”

They all kept working hard.

Back at the Decepticon Underwater Base, Soundwave was again becoming frustrated with things; he knew the ghost was going to make It’s move at some point, but he had no way of knowing what or when.

While Ravage kept typing up papers at the Computer Consul, the Tapedeck sent Frenzy on a trash run, taking the flattened boxes to the crusher.

“Let’s clean up around here,” Soundwave ordered his sons, “this place is a mess!” He found a stack of papers that had yet to be processed, “What is this?”

Ravage looked up, “I was saving those to read later.”

“Ravage, I have told you before,” Soundwave barked, “don’t keep holds more than a day.” Now he found some old junk, “And what’s THIS?”

Rumble looked up, “Derek said he would buy it when he comes back in two days,” he was referring to one of their Vehicon informants from Cybertron.

“But we’re not allowed to do that,” Soundwave was mad now, “now get this junk out of the Control Room!”

“Don’t start with me, Pop!” Rumble hollered back, “I just had a guy buy a jacket I had on hold for myself on eBay. I almost told the seller to tell him no, that it's not for sale, but I didn’t. And now, I’m bummed.”
Skywarp had been eating lunch with Starscream and came back into the Control Room.

“I just want all of us to follow the rules!” Soundwave insisted.

Rumble: “Get off my back!”

Soundwave usually dropped things, and Rumble usually didn’t challenge his Father, but today, the Tapedeck was continuing to argue with his sons, “Look, if George finds out and audits us and we fail, our lives are going to be a living hell!”

Skywarp realized this was escalating, “Hey, no fighting!”

“Eh?” Rumble looked at him.

“What?” Ravage wasn’t paying attention either.

“No fighting,” Skywarp reminded them, “the negative energy stuff, remember?”

“I’m not fighting,” Rumble insisted, “it’s Pop fighting with us!”

“I left you guys for ten minutes,” Skywarp sat back down at the Computer Consul.

Frenzy knocked on the French Doors, and Soundwave let him in, “I’m just saying to follow the rules.”

The red Cassette didn’t know what had been going on, so he started to crush more boxes.

Rumble went towards the papers that Ravage had been saving to read, “Is this garbage?”

Soundwave: “Yes.”

“No,” Ravage told him, “I told you, those are my holds.”

“You’re holds expired!” Soundwave insisted.

Skywarp was trying to sort his stack of papers, but he couldn’t help but be distracted by this.

“Father,” Ravage bit back, “leave those alone.”

Soundwave was furious now, “Do your job!”

“YOU do YOUR job!” Ravage roared, “And did you even let Frenzy back inside?!”

“I’m right here!” Frenzy spoke up.

Buzzsaw stopped shredding to watch all this; Ratbat huddled near him.

“Hey, come on,” Skywarp had to stop them, “don’t you see what Gravechaser is doing?! He’s making you guys fight with each other! You sound like TC and Starscream before they made up.”

“The ghost isn’t here,” Soundwave insisted, “I would sense It.”

“But you ARE sensing him, Soundwave,” Skywarp was getting upset, “it’s the way you act when you’re mad and stuff. You got that way with me last night, and now, you’re doing it to your sons. I’m telling ya, this ghost is doing it.”

The Tapedeck and his Cassettes all looked at each other, “My apologies,” he told his sons.
“Apologies as well, Father,” Ravage nodded, “I shall read through my holds at once.”

Gravechaser was indeed, right above them stalking around on the Tarmac, awaiting his planned host.

Another hour later, Rumble and Frenzy again brought more boxes up, and Scrapper came back in.

“Okay Soundwave,” the Front-Loader told him, “you wanna see how things are going?”

“Fine,” the Tapedeck had his optics on the monitors, but got up and went to his quarters.

Skywarp pulled himself up, whimpering a little, and hurried to catch up, holding his belly as he rushed out.

“Well, we reinforced the all the floors,” Scrapper began, “and we finished painting your berthroom.”

“Alright,” Soundwave walked towards his berthroom; he saw Skywarp following him and put his hand up, “stay there, Skywarp, turpentine has a negative effect on unborn sparklings.”

“Sorry,” Skywarp stayed in the living room.

Laserbeak flew by the pregnant Seeker, “I shall make my approvals on your behalf.”

“What the slag?” Soundwave looked at the sky-blue walls in his quarters, “I ordered earth tone!”

“Skywarp asked for sky-blue,” Scrapper told him.

“Skywarp?!” Soundwave was shocked by this, “Skywarp, please tell me, WHY are you picking color palettes for my berthroom?!”

“I like sky-blue,” Skywarp smiled, “how do you expect me to sleep in there if I’m not gonna be comfortable?”

“WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT—?” the Tapedeck had to stop himself before he crushed the emotional, pregnant Jet.

Ravage came in now, passing others to inspect the construction, “Where will the nursery be, Skywarp?”

“Oh, I just want the crib in Soundwave’s and my room,” Skywarp told him, “Starscream says the sparkling is supposed to see the Creators when they’re little.”

“YOUR ROOM?!” Soundwave bellowed, “Who said you’re moving in here?”

Skywarp was silently taken aback, “Um, you did.”

Soundwave: “WHAT?!”

Rumble and Frenzy both came in now, going into the berthroom and the en-suite.

“You said that if TC kicks me out over Gravechaser, that I could move in with you,” Skywarp told him, “don’t you remember? It was last night just before we were going to start interfacing.”

“WHOA OH!” Scrapper walked away, “That was T! M! I!”
“What I said was,” Soundwave was both embarrassed and furious now, “IF he kicked you out, you could stay with us.” He dropped his vocals a bit in case the Constructicons heard anything, “You haven’t even told him yet about the ghost, and you’re ready to move in?!” he didn’t notice Buzzsaw and Ratbat coming in to look around, “And that doesn’t mean you could redecorate!”

“Well, you had to redecorate anyway!” Skywarp shrieked.

“I can hang my decoupage here,” Buzzsaw chirped.

“Only because your damn ghost you brought in wrecked my quarters!” Soundwave barked back.

Skywarp’s optics filled up with coolant tears.

“Father please,” Ravage tried, “what happened was not his fault.”

“I just wanted--,” Soundwave saw all his sons and Skywarp around him, “WHO IS WATCHING THE CONTROL ROOM?!”

Soundwave ran out of his quarters, with Ravage and Laserbeak following as fast as they could. Ratbat was flapping his little wings to catch up.

Skywarp was very hurt by this; it made him feel emotionally low, and thus, vulnerable to spiritual attack.

Rumble came over and took his hand.

“Whatever you do,” Frenzy added, “don’t tell Pop about the dimmers.”
Meanwhile, on the East Coast, Megatron and the Decepticons got away with a sizable amount of the Swarovski crystals, heading out of Rhode Island quickly, and making their way back to the Brooklyn-based Decepticon East Coast Division Base.

Thinking that Soundwave and Skywarp would need some strong mechs as protectors while he was away, Megatron released the Triple Changers from the mission and sent them home.

“Alright, Astro,” the Decepticon Leader touched down in Brooklyn, “you guys are good to go.”

“Alright Megs,” the Space Train did their Gladiator handshake and elbow bump, before he, Blitzwing, and Octane flew back.

Once inside the East Coast Base, the Decepticons divvied up the spoils of their raid, giving the Stunticons and members of the Human Alliance Division a good forty percent of the booty.

While they did so, Thundercracker couldn’t help but worry about Skywarp; like the previous raid, his thoughts kept going back to his little brother and unborn sparkling.

“I didn’t know Skywarp was pregnant,” James shrugged, “Dude, I just thought he was getting fat.”

“Yeah, he’s doing that too,” Ramjet laughed.

Thundercracker was too deep in thought to object to the joke; finally, he decided to confide in Christopher’s life-long best friend.

“Hey, Damian?” TC began, “Have you ever seen a ghost?”

“Can’t say that I have, TC,” the young man shook his helm.

“We, um,” the blue Seeker sat on the floor, dropping his vocals a few notches, “Megatron was telling us about some…I don’t know, Tarnian legends, about evil ghosts that attack pregnant Transformers. We think one’s after Skywarp.”

Damian listened, “That’s fucked up, man.”

James came over now, listening as well.

“I was wondering,” Thundercracker bit his lip components, “did Skywarp tell you guys anything? Like, who this ghost is? Or, anything like that?”

“Skywarp said somebody was bullying him,” Damian remembered, “but I just thought he meant another Decepticon.”

“He was wondering if he should move out here,” James added, “but then he went back.”

TC didn’t know this, “I had a fight with him that day…I didn’t know he wanted to move out here.”
“He didn’t seem mad or anything,” James clarified.

“I told him that Chris wouldn’t have taken any bullying lying down,” Damian remembered, “and that he needed to stand up to whoever was bothering him. Warp didn’t seem like he was mad at you or anything. He just wanted to talk about Chris and visit his kids, like you know, he was missing him.”

Christopher’s kids.

“Damian, James,” Thundercracker had to ask, and these were the only two humans he felt he could ask, “Did Christopher…believe in this stuff? I’m asking because…when his children were born…did anything ever…?”

At first, Damian shook his head, “Nah, man,” but then, he thought of something, “wait a minute, Psalm 27.”

Thundercracker listened carefully now.

“Chris, James, and I got these tattoos on the same day,” Damian rolled up his sleeve, revealing a tattoo on his right inside forearm, “It’s a quotation from Psalm 27, from the King James Bible.”

James, in turn, took off his jacket, showing his own, identical tattoo in the exact same place on his own arm.

Thundercracker read it now, memorizing it.

Damian read it aloud:
“The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the truth of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked, even my enemies and foes, came upon me to bite my flesh, they stumbled and fell . . .”

The blue Seeker took a photo of their tattoos to remember the verses.

“Chris said, ‘This is to reassure myself that whatever goes wrong, no matter how bad things seem, God is right there for you, you know? As long as you believe in Him and His strength—all these jealous people, all these sharks . . . He’ll stop all of that. He’s going to find the road for me to take to avoid all of those obstacles, and take me where I’m going.’”

“That’s beautiful,” Thundercracker sighed, “I remember he used to wear his necklace with Jesus Christ on it.”

The two men each had identical necklaces.

“Chris was proud of his Jesus piece necklace and the tattoo,” Damian was reflective now, “he knew that it was his protection.”

“Psalm 27,” Thundercracker nodded, “I’ll remember that.”

With Megatron and the others back on Decepticon grounds, Soundwave could leave Ravage in charge of the Control Room. He went with Rumble and Frenzy to inspect the basement again, “How many more boxes?” he asked.

“Just these here, Pop,” Frenzy showed him the twenty-five to thirty boxes scattered around.
“Gather these all up and bring them to the Control Room,” Soundwave ordered, “then I’ll assign the Constructicons to clean the basement.”

“Um, Pop?” Rumble attempted to bring up the subject, “Speaking of the Constructicons…Um, do you think you upset Skywarp when you didn’t like his design ideas?”

Soundwave didn’t want to talk about it, “What makes you ask that?”

“He hasn’t come out of Starscream’s quarters since, Pop,” Frenzy interjected.

“He’s having dinner, Frenzy,” the Tapedeck was deliberately ignoring their questions.

The twins were quiet for a moment.

“Pop?” Rumble asked now, “Don’t you love Skywarp anymore?”

“Of course, I do,” Soundwave knew what they were talking about; it was that nightmare he suffered, and Skywarp himself felt that the Tapedeck was being influenced by the ghost, even though he still felt the entity was not on the presences presently. Finally, Soundwave looked at his sons, “Fine; I’ll apologize.”

The three of them headed for the stairs now.

Skywarp was stuffing his faceplates yet again, this time due to his anguish over his fight with Soundwave. Why did he keep giving this mech chances? Soundwave clearly didn’t love him or care for him…

Starscream was getting tired of the Tapedeck’s mixed emotions towards his little brother, “From what you’re telling me, he seems to have more personality changes than Jekyll and Hyde.” The red and white Seeker wasn’t much of a homemaker (Thundercracker was the better chef of the two) and didn’t know what to fix for dinner, so he made them Energon-Hemberger Helper with Energon-tomato sauce. But he figured it must have been good enough since Skywarp was shoving it into his mouth as fast as he could. The triplets, meanwhile, enjoyed their sparkling-Energon in their respective sippy cups.

“I-I’m s-s-sorry, S-Star,” Skywarp sobbed in between swallows, “I-I k-know you w-want me to plan the missions and s-stuff, but…” he paused to chew, “I-I don’t t-think it's gonna work out.”

“No, his sons like you,” Starscream insisted, “so you can still have them help you.”

“I-I’m n-not s-smart like you,” the darker flyer whimpered, “o-only things I ever planned w-were pranks.”

“Come on now,” Starscream sat beside him, “you know I don’t like that when you say you’re not smart. I NEVER let anyone tell you that you weren’t smart at the Academy and I don’t like you saying that now.”

But unbeknownst to the two brothers, Gravechaser flexed his claws, waiting on the Tarmac, and finally seeing the Triple Changers approaching the runway, “Now, Shockwave…”
“You can’t redecorate right away,” Starscream insisted, “do what I did, get Bonded, and then he
can’t argue with your color palate preferences.”

“B-But, you and TC made the nursery,” Skywarp insisted, mouth full of food, “a-and I was h-happy
about it.”

“Well, that’s us,” Starscream told him, “Soundwave’s sort of set in his ways.”

Ravage took the call in the Control Room.

“So, let’s just have our dinner, shall we?” Starscream insisted, pulling his plate in front of himself,
when his Comm.-Link went off, “Yes?”

It was Ravage, “Commander, you have a phone call from Shockwave.”

“Okay,” Starscream rolled his optics, turning to his brother, “watch the sparklings, I’ll be right back,”
he put his napkin down over his food, trying to keep it warm; he was saving it for when he returned.

But as soon as he left, Skywarp reached over and took it, and started eating it; he couldn’t help how
hungry he was; any arguments, whether it was with TC or Soundwave, brought on his voracious
appetite.

“Uh-ohs,” Darkwing was surprised; “No-nos,” Darkmount scolded, and Dawning giggled.

Starscream went into the Control Room just as Soundwave was coming back down the hallway,
“What’s wrong, Starscream?”

“Nothing,” Starscream shrugged, “something about a phone call,” he went to the Consul and picked
up the phone.

Shockwave’s assignment was to distract both Starscream and Soundwave from the cameras; he was
a good actor, never letting on, “Hello, Megatron?” he knew from Gravechaser that Megatron was
away.

“Guess again,” Starscream smirked.

“Will you please tell the Communications Officer to unlock my password?” the President lied, “I still
need access to our databases, you know.”

“Did you?” Starscream didn’t know anything about this; he turned to Soundwave, “Do you lock him
out of the databases?”

“Negative,” Soundwave came over to the Consul, “let me see what’s going on,” he began typing,
seeing who had access to the files.

They weren’t watching the cameras.

Astrotrain was first of the three Triple Changers to land on the runway; flying in his Space Shuttle,
he touched down on the Tarmac, gliding slowly.
Gravechaser rushed him now; floating quickly, just as he had on Christmas Eve when Bumblebee nearly ran off the road to avoid the wicked ghost. Astrotrain had no such luck.

Meanwhile, Soundwave checked the access codes, “Laserbeak, did you change any of the codes?”

“Negative, Father;” the red Condor couldn’t have cared less, “Ravage was the one typing.”

“Ravage, did you go into the codes?” Soundwave asked, “Push any buttons, anything like that?”

Like his younger brother, Ravage did not, “Negative Father; I was only updating the archives.”

“Well?” Shockwave insisted.

“We’re checking; we’re checking,” Starscream told him, “keep your gun on!”

Astrotrain was hit with a blast of energy; the ghost had jumped straight into his chassis; the impact with the unseen, foreign energy sent the Triple Changer tumbling across the Tarmac, half-transforming, and landing in a heap.

“Whoa!” Blitzwing transformed and ran to his friend, with Octane doing the same.

Astrotrain transformed fully into his Robot Mode; he felt a tiredness in his frame that was unfamiliar to him, he almost felt like his chassis wasn’t his own.

“You okay, Astro?” Blitzwing asked, his vocals laced with concern.

“Y-Yeah,” the Space Train struggled to get to his pedes, “kinda wiped out there.”

Octane helped him up, and the three mechs got onto the elevator.

Soundwave rechecked and rechecked the access codes before finally shaking his helm and taking the phone, “Well Shockwave, we checked everything, and as far as we’re concerned, there’s nothing that’s showing me that your password shouldn’t be working properly.”

Shockwave was silent for a moment, “So what should I say?”

“Try it again,” Starscream told him on the other line.

Shockwave signed in, knowing he could, and admitted, “Yes, it seems to be working again.”

Before they could say any more, Shockwave hung up without another word. He stared at his computer now, hoping that it would be the last favor, “It’s only Skywarp…it’s only Skywarp.”

“Now what,” Starscream shrieked, “was that all about?!?”

“Not sure,” Soundwave couldn’t put a digit on it, but he wondered if Shockwave was…not exactly lying…but, “just…not sure. Where’s your brother?”

“Having dinner,” Starscream headed back, “I should go…”

Soundwave forgot about Shockwave momentarily, and knew he should say something, “Hey…”
The red and white Seeker looked back.

“I didn’t mean to yell at him,” Soundwave admitted, “tell him I said hi.”

Starscream nodded and left.

Skywarp couldn’t believe he had done it AGAIN! Once again, he had stuffed himself, and his fuel tanks were aching.

His three little nephews had watched him, their little optics following him around when he was in the kitchen and back and forth from the table.

Now Darkmount announced, “Momma come back!”

“Well, that was bizarre,” Starscream huffed as he walked in. Skywarp could barely look up when he sat back down, continuing on his rant, “Shockwave was demanding that I tell Soundwave to fix his password, which, he could have done himself, but Shockwave’s apparently angry with him, or something. Anyway, it wasn’t even broken.” He looked down at his empty plate, “Did you eat my food?”

“Y-Yes,” Skywarp was mortified by his own behavior.

“Well,” Starscream tried to keep from being one more vocal criticizing the pregnant Jet, “I think there’s some left in the pan.”

He stood to get it for himself, but Skywarp whimpered, “N-Not anymore…”

“You ate that too?” Starscream realized that Thundercracker had been correct when he said that Skywarp had a ravenous appetite lately; something he himself had not experienced when he was carrying the triplets, “Okay…”

“I-I’m s-sorry, Star,” Skywarp was whimpering now, “I-I can’t control myself.”

“It’s alright,” Starscream tried to change the subject, “you wanna lay down for a while?”

The darker Seeker shook his helm.

“You wanna help me put them down for their nap?” Starscream tried again, “I’ve noticed the sparklings sleep better when I lay down with them. Would you like that?”

“N-No,” Skywarp struggled to get up; one hand under his belly, “I-I can’t l-lay down when I s-stuff myself.”

“It’s okay,” Starscream helped him to stand up, “do you wanna do something else?”

Skywarp wanted to know if Soundwave wanted him back, “D-Did Soundwave say anything?”

“Yes,” the red and white Seeker hated to admit it, “he said he was sorry for yelling.”

“R-Really?” Skywarp brightened up, “H-He wants me back?”

“Yes,” Starscream was reluctant to ‘give’ his little brother back to the Tapedeck, especially after he had upset him, “but you can stay here.”
“I need to get back,” the pregnant Seeker was anxious to finish the paperless-society-project as well, “he wants me there, and I wanna finish that stuff.”

“You’re working too hard, and I don’t like that,” Starscream told him, “you’re carrying, and you need to take it easy.”

“But, I wanna finish that,” Skywarp begged, “Please Star?”

Starscream finally nodded, letting him go, but only because it was early in the afternoon, and (he thought) the ghost wasn’t around. He started taking his sparklings to his berthroom to put them down for their naps, hoping and praying Megatron and Thundercracker would get back soon.

Megatron, Thundercracker, and the Coneheads had finished processing the crystals and headed back to the West Coast, hoping they would reach the Decepticon Underwater Base before dusk.

“We’re still okay on time, guys,” TC reported through his Comm.-Link, “our ETA is around five o’clock.”

“It has been getting dark at four,” Megatron noted darkly, “let’s hope we can get there in time.”

Skywarp walked slowly into the Control Room, holding his aching belly and wondering what sort of reception he would receive.

Soundwave and Ravage were facing the Computer Consul, having a conference call with Megatron via their Comm.-Links.

“I’ll play the recording for you when you return,” Soundwave told him about the phone call, “I won’t stand for this insolence, Megatron.”

Skywarp froze; was Soundwave talking about him? About the sky-blue wall color?

“We’ll talk to him when I get back,” Megatron was heard saying, “in the meantime, keep Starscream and Skywarp close, since we might not return before dark.”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave answered before closing the connection.

Skywarp was once again sorry he ever entered the Control Room; what were they going to do to him and his innocent sparkling? He, he…

Soundwave noticed his sons looking at the door silently, so he turned to look, and saw his Seeker standing there.

“Hey,” the Tapedeck’s tone was his softest as he stood and came over, “I apologize for reacting the way I did. It will not occur again,” he took the pregnant Jet into his arms, “I’m glad you came back here.”

Okay, now Skywarp didn’t know what to think; wasn’t Soundwave just calling him insolent? He found his vocals enough to ask, “W—What were you talking to Megatron about?”

“Just that phone call,” Soundwave took a chance and rubbed the other’s back under his wings, hoping his actions wouldn’t be rejected, “come on, sit down.”
Skywarp did so, as Soundwave tried to move past their fight, “Let’s just, continue our project.”

His sons knew their cue, returning to their assigned jobs without further reminding.

Skywarp continued sorting the files, not sure just yet what to make of the larger mech.

Then Soundwave thought of something, “Skywarp, do you want anything to eat?”

“Suuuurre,” eh, why not, he figured.

Meanwhile, in his quarters, Astrotrain struggled to concentrate on his report. Ever since returning to the Decepticon Underwater Base, he was suffering from one of the worst processor aches of his onlining; making him barely able to think. He stood, pacing around; the mission on the East Coast had been a success, and he was free for the rest of the day, with the exception of turning in a report, which was taking longer than he had anticipated.

All Decepticon officers were required to submit a report to Megatron, CC to Soundwave, for records of finished missions, so that the statements could analyze what was done right or what was done wrong, for the improvement of future mission strategies. As a newly minted officer, Astro had written several reports now, and had no issues with them, until now.

“Kill Skywarp.”

“Eh?” Astrotrain felt like he was hearing things; not so much as someone was in his quarters, as he felt like someone was in his CPU, “I need some air,” he left his computer and half-typed up report and took a walk.

Skywarp was busy sorting through the files, while Rumble came in.

“I got great news, guys,” the blue Cassetticon announced, “there’s only fifteen more boxes down there!”

“Bring them all up,” Soundwave told him, “we can fit them all into the Control Room now.”

The pregnant Seeker wasn’t feeling so good; those two Energon cubes he had wolfed down were fighting with the Energon-Hamburger Helper, and Crystal was Karate-chopping both of them.

:Momma!: his little unborn sparkling wanted some attention, :Momma and Crystal sleep!:

Ugh, he couldn’t even think of laying down when he was so full, :I-In a little while…:

Another one of his Bonds came through with a familiar booming vocal, :I can tell, you were pigging out again.:

:I-I’m s-sorry, TC,: Skywarp was ashamed of himself, :I-I’ll be more careful.:  

:Alright., Thundercracker didn’t want to fight with him, :just stay close to Soundwave until I get home.:  

They all continued to work on the paperless-society-project.
In the Rec. Room, Astrotrain struggled to concentrate on the television; Blitzwing was enjoying the human wrestling match they were watching, but the Space Train was restless.

“Kill Skywarp.”

Astrotrain’s optics went black momentarily before he blinked several times and re-onlined his optics. His buddy didn’t notice the change. Poor Astro felt like he was hearing the television from a mile away. He stood up and began pacing around, thinking about having a High-Grade Energon, but he told himself not to. He walked over to the pool table and picked up the eight ball.

Suddenly, he threw the ball against the wall, bouncing it off before catching it again. He threw it again, playing a makeshift game of handball. The BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, was making a considerable racket; even Blitzwing didn’t know what to make of it.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The Constructicons stopped their work on Soundwave’s quarters when they heard the noise.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Skywarp and the younger Cassetticons heard the racket all the way in the Control Room.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

“WAAAAH!” Darkwing keened, frightened by the noise; Starscream picked him up as Dawning and Darkmount began waking up as well.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Soundwave stormed out of the Control Room, furious with his sons, “Rumble! Frenzy! What are you—”

But then, Soundwave saw his twins coming with more boxes from the basement as the same time the racket was going on.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

It wasn’t them; so, Soundwave went to investigate. He went to the Rec. Room and saw Astrotrain playing handball.

“Would you mind moving that to the gymnasium?” the Tapedeck was stern, “Some of us have work to do.”

“Oh, sure,” Astrotrain blinked several times and then looked at the eight ball in his hand, “sure thing, Soundwave, sorry about that.”

Soundwave turned to leave when the Space Train continued, “A-And, I’ll have that report for ya!”

Blitzwing didn’t know what to make of any of it.
Chapter 91: By Transformersnewfan

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As Skywarp and Soundwave and the Cassetticons continued to work, the local news was on the monitor; the weatherman once again announcing a massive snowstorm.

Laserbeak took off his audial phones and listened.

“There’s another big storm headed this way from the west,” the portly weatherman warned, “one that’s expected to bury the region in more than eight inches of snow.”

“Father,” the Condor demanded, “I request permission to make my departure for the Ark immediately to evade the impending inclement weather.”

“You think you need to go back to the Ark?” Soundwave asked, “We have all the evidence we need before seeing Prime tomorrow.” He worried about his son being away during a snowstorm.

“With all due respect, Father,” Laserbeak insisted, “if I am to spend the night in this Base, and that vile creature is to make an appearance yet again, I may become certifiably insane.”

Soundwave would have laughed if the situation was not so serious, “Well, we wouldn’t want that, would we?”

“My sincere wishes of luck with the paperless-society-project,” Laserbeak bowed before leaving the Control Room.

Skywarp giggled at this, “He talks so funny.”

“You’ll tire of it soon enough,” Ravage grumbled, still typing, “I assure you.”

Even though Laserbeak had made it safely to the Autobot Base, the returning Decepticons were still two hours away when the weather turned nasty. They were also carrying the heavy weight of the crystals, which slowed their travel time substantially.

“We’ve got icy rain, Megatron,” Thundercracker radioed, “we need to divert course.”

“We can head north,” Megatron answered, “head ninety degrees to the right, and we can fly around it.”

The Seekers all did so but knew this would make their return late.

Meanwhile, Soundwave continued to type in the reports. It was right around four in the afternoon in the Decepticon Underwater Base when Rumble and Frenzy brought up the last of the boxes.

“The last two boxes!” Frenzy announced happily, “That’s all she wrote!”
“Excellent, Frenzy,” the Tapedeck stood, “we’ll have the project completed by the end of the evening.”

This made Skywarp a bit sad, knowing that this would most likely spell the end of their relationship; Soundwave was going to fire him as soon as his job was done. But still, and despite his carrying chassis screaming for rest, he pressed on, determined to sort through the remaining files.

An hour later, the snows became to fall. Hard.

It was dark now, fully dark outside, even though it was only five in the evening.

Soundwave decided to go check on Starscream, “It’s going to get dark soon; he might not be enough to protect both himself and the triplets.”

And while the red and white Seeker was doing well, trying to busy himself with his tablet, planning future missions, Soundwave pulled Ravage from the files and assigned him to guard duty for Megatron’s family.

The Tapedeck had his sensors tuned, on full alert for any foreign thought patterns.

Ratbat was sleeping on the sofa under a blanket; Buzzsaw had collected what he felt was enough newspapers to make some substantial decoupage projects, and Rumble and Frenzy had the trash compactor loaded to the point that they had to make a pile of crushed boxes outside the machine until the Constructicons had emptied it.

Finally, after almost eight months of work, Skywarp sorted the last of the papers, “Look Soundwave! This is it; this is the last box!” All the files are sorted!”

Rumble, Frenzy, and Buzzsaw cheered.

Rumble: “Alright!”

“This is it, right?” Soundwave asked happily, “This is great, we’re almost done,” in the moment of spontaneous happiness, he stood and hugged his pregnant Seeker, “you don’t know how happy this makes me.”

Skywarp hugged back, but looked up at his lover sadly, “Does this mean you’re going to fire me now?”

Rumble and Frenzy looked at their Sire now, hoping it wasn’t so.

Soundwave sighed; he didn’t know what to say; he looked into Skywarp’s big, round optics, so full of hope; so full of promise. And yet, that nightmare, Soundwave was convinced, had been a warning. He laughed nervously, trying to joke, “A-Are you…thinking of returning to the battlefield assignments now?” gesturing at the Seeker’s very pregnant belly.

“N-No,” Skywarp shook his helm, “but I heard you talking to Megatron this morning about firing me.”

“I’m not going to fire you, Skywarp,” Soundwave knew he was speaking without thinking, “you’re still my assistant, but now, you need to take it easy.”

Skywarp leaned into the hug now, “O-Okay,” he knew he needed to know more; more about what future they would have together, but for now, he just wanted to be hugged; held in his strong mech’s arms.
There was something seriously wrong with Astrotrain. The large mech stood in the gymnasium, stock straight, with his arms at his sides, not moving a cable. For four hours.

“Kill Skywarp.”

“Astro?” Blitzwing came looking for his friend, “Are you alright?”

“B-Blitz?” Astrotrain felt like he was waking up from recharge, except he was standing up, and not in his berth, “W-What?”

“Megatron’s gonna be back soon,” the Tank-Jet reminded, “do you need my help finishing your report?”

“Um,” Astrotrain wiped his mouth, “I’ll let you know…gonna go look at it again.” He laughed nervously as he walked by his friend, “N-Never had so much trouble writing anything.”

With the files all sorted, the now empty boxes all disposed of, and any unimportant papers having been shredded, the only work that remained on the paperless-society-project was for Soundwave to finish typing up the remaining paperwork and mark all the electronic folders as complete.

The Tapedeck sat at his Computer Consul now, determined to finish up before Megatron and Thundercracker returned; the not-so-large stack of papers in front of him.

Rumble sat next to him, playing his hand-held game; while Frenzy watched a human movie on one of the monitors.

Skywarp was exhausted, finally letting his tired chassis relax, he laid across the sofa, under one of the blankets with little Ratbat curled up next to him. He sighed heavily; the subject he struggled not to think about all day was coming to the surface again: Thundercracker.

What could he…HOW could he tell TC the truth about Gravechaser? How could he tell him; just, spit it out? Would his brother even believe him?

The blue Seeker had told him through their Trine Bond earlier that they were running late, and on the one hand, he couldn’t wait for TC to come home, and they could watch a movie or go to sleep in the guestroom, but on the other hand, his brother and Megatron were scheduled to meet with the Autobots tomorrow, and, from what Laserbeak had said, Ironhide would likely be spilling the beans. Should he really let TC find out through Ironhide and not from him? And how would TC feel towards his little brother after that?

“Everything alright, Skywarp?” Soundwave asked, not pausing in his work.

“Uh-huh,” Skywarp yawned now; he turned on his left side and closing his optics.

“I sent some of the Constructicons to work on the basement,” Soundwave tried to make conservation, “since the boxes are all done.”

Said Constructicons—Bonecrusher, and Hook—were swapping up the dirt and dust in the basement. Bonecrusher noticed the moldy, creepy jail cells, and how dirty they had become.
“Does he want us to clean those too?” the Bulldozer asked.

“Maybe tomorrow,” Hook was equally unnerved by it, “let’s go back to Scrapper.” They dropped their brooms and went back upstairs, neither understanding why they were so scared.

Astrotrain walked down the hallway now; his typed-up report in hand; he still had that nagging processor ache, and he was blinking a lot. He stopped in front of the French Doors now. His optics rolled back and turned black.

“Kill Skywarp.”

‘Astrotrain’ opened the door now, and stared hatefully at the overweight, disgusting Seeker that lay across the sofa. He felt an almost uncontrollable urge to hurt him. He wanted to rush in and strangle him, choke the very life force out of him. Pregnant or not, Skywarp didn’t deserve to live…

Skywarp’s optics were shuttered, but his optics could see the glow of the monitors being overshadowed by a dark shadow. He opened his optics now, and realized someone was standing in the doorway, he craned his helm up and saw ‘Astrotrain’ staring at him. Because the hallway was dark, the larger mech’s faceplates were in the shadows. For a moment, he wasn’t sure what to do, not understanding why the Triple Changer wasn’t coming in, and why he was staring at him.

Soundwave sensed someone there and turned around, seeing this, “Astrotrain?”

There was no response from the big fellow.

Projective of his Seeker, Soundwave stood and walked over, getting in the mech’s faceplates, “Can I help you, Astrotrain?” he folded his arms over his chestdeck in a challenging manner.

Astrotrain blinked several times, onlining his optics, “Ah, sorry Soundwave…” he held his helm and squinted his optics like he was in pain, “Sorry, just a slag of a processor ache. I brought my report.”

“Thank you,” Soundwave took it, “do you require anything else this evening?”

“N-No,” the Space Train shook his helm, “just gonna turn in for the night.”

“Very well,” Soundwave saluted and watched the large mech leave.

Something seemed to be amiss, but the Tapedeck couldn’t pin down what it was. The Consul buzzed.

Soundwave’s thoughts were cut off with the noise; it was an incoming message.

Skywarp looked up as well, listening.

Soundwave took the call and put it on speaker, “Yes, Megatron?”

“Calling to check in,” the Decepticon Leader’s vocals were coming through a static-filled connection, “Thundercracker says our ETA’s around two hours, I want you to bring Starscream and the sparklings into the Control Room, Skywarp as well if he isn’t with you.”

“He’s with me,” Soundwave answered.

“Also, for this inclement weather,” Megatron continued, “we need you to do a helm count, and lockdown the Base, except for the Tower until our return. The last time we had a snowstorm like
this, that THING used it as a cover to get back in, and you can be sure It’ll try to do it again, especially with us away!”

“Affirmative, Megatron,” Soundwave told him, “consider it done.”

If only they knew…

“Decepticons: Move away from the windows,” Soundwave announced over his Comm.-Link.

The Tapedeck locked down the Decepticon Underwater Base, first deploying the steel panels over any windows, followed by a helm count, locking all doors, and turning on the heat, all the while, he stretched his sensors out and looked for any foreign thought patterns, and finding none. Still, he couldn’t shake the feeling that something was amiss.

He didn’t have time to look at Astrotrain’s report, as he had more pressing matters to attend to.

With everything done, Starscream and Skywarp, along with the sparklings, sat in the Control Room, hearing the Base creak and whine with the rushing waters around them. When he was finished with his security rounds, Soundwave joined them.

“Have you told Starscream who the ghost is?” Soundwave whispered.

Skywarp shook his helm.

“Just myself and my sons?” Soundwave asked again.

Skywarp nodded.

“Very well,” the Tapedeck would not let on to the Trine Leader.

Just as well, as Starscream was worried enough about the darkness of the night, “Wish they’d hurry up and get back.” He was fidgety, “I can’t relax, and if I’m not relaxed, THEY don’t relax.”

The triplets were indeed anxious, watching their Mother.

“I should ask Megatron how to use his incense burner,” Soundwave continued his typing, “I regret not asking him, but I didn’t foresee this delay in their return.”

“You think this entity is back?” Starscream asked.

“Negative,” Soundwave kept working, “I didn’t detach It’s presence. However, I suspect It will try to breach our security once more.”

Scrappier poked his helm inside, “Don’t go in there yet,” referring to Soundwave’s quarters, “it’s not safe.”

“Very well,” Soundwave told him, “you and your team may turn in for the evening,” he could see Hook and Bonecrusher standing behind their boss nervously.

And as for Skywarp, he did what he always did when he was scared; he stuffed his faceplates; this time it was with two more Energon cubes besides what he had for dinner, and now, the Flux (a Vosian pastry) that Frenzy had brought him. At least little Crystal was calm at the moment.

Starscream didn’t particularly like his little brother’s eating binges, so he decided to distract him with
the best way he knew how: Talk about Soundwave.

:Has he said anything?: the red and white Seeker asked through their Trine Bond.

:Who?: Skywarp was still eating.

:Soundwave,: Starscream rolled his optics, :has he said anything about what’s he’s planning to do. Is he going to keep you on in the Control Room now that this project is done? Are you and he dating? What?:

:Um,: Skywarp shrugged, :he said I can still be his assistant, but…he didn’t say anything else.:

:Wanna seduce him again?: Starscream smirked now; getting a bright idea, :It’s a good time since TC’s away. Do you want my help?: he also figured it would distract Skywarp from eating so much.

Skywarp smiled and nodded.

:Just follow my lead,: Starscream told him before switching tones to speak to Soundwave, like a true actor, “Soundwave, how much longer do I have to stay here? My sparklings can’t rest with so much going on!”

“Well,” Soundwave shrugged, “it was Megatron’s idea to stay together though.”

“I’m just worried about my sparklings,” Starscream faked innocence, “Ravage can come with me, and besides, It’s never come into Megatron’s and my quarters,” then he figured to eliminate the other Cassettes, “they can come too if you’re worried.”

Rumble turned and smiled, “Can we play on Megatron’s gaming system?”

Starscream: “Absolutely.”

The twins looked at their Sire hopefully.

“Well,” Soundwave nodded; he had been reluctant to leave his sons in the Stunticons’ quarters since it was so far away from the Control Room, and he himself could not leave the Control Room until all Decepticons were accounted for, but Megatron’s quarters was across the hall, so that was fine, “just remember to mind Starscream.”

“You bet, Pop!” Rumble jumped down from the chair and ran out; Frenzy close behind; they loved their video games.

:Now, ask if you can stay,: Starscream told his little brother.

“Um,” Skywarp nodded to him while talking to Soundwave, “you mind if I stay here, Soundwave?”

“Not at all,” Soundwave stood and helped Starscream take the triplets back to the quarters.

Once everyone was situated, the Casseticons were playing video games, Ravage stood on guard between the berthroom and the living room, and Starscream took his little sons to his berthroom.

“Here,” told his sons tenderly, “you can sleep on the big berth with me while we wait for your Sire,” he got each of them under the covers and climbed onto his side.

All three sparklings crawled all over him, hugging and kissing him, “Love Momma,” Darkwing told him.
It made Starscream kind of sad, thinking about how they won’t feel the same about him once they knew the truth.
Chapter 92: By Transformersnewfan

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“So, Soundwave,” the pregnant Seeker glided into the Tapedeck’s lap as the other continued to do data entry, “wanna pick up where we left off last night?” he tried to give a smirk to pretend he was confident.

Soundwave stopped what he was doing and wrapped his arms around his Seeker, “I’m surprised you’re even speaking to me after everything that’s happened.”

Yes, Skywarp thought to himself, Soundwave had left him hanging, then yelled at him, then yelled at him again over his decorating preferences, but sometimes, a carrying Seeker’s elevated pheromone levels made forgiveness a bit easier, “Don’t make me regret it again, big bot,” he turned in Soundwave’s lap and pressed his faceplates to his lover’s, nudging him to remove his mouthplate.

Soundwave obliged, removing his mask and capturing the smaller mech in a passionate kiss.

“Mmm…” Skywarp closed his optics and caressed Soundwave’s faceplates, “I love your kisses…”

But as much as Soundwave wanted his Seeker now, he knew he couldn’t continue to toy with his emotions; that dream had not been forgotten; not at all. Soundwave broke the kiss before it could get any deeper, “Skywarp, we can’t do this now.”

“W-Why?” Skywarp’s faceplates curled in sadness; his coolant tears ready to burst from his optics.

“It’s because…” but seeing the pregnant Jet look so hurt stopped Soundwave from his intended breakup and he immediately reversed course, pretending it was not what Skywarp thought it was, “it’s because…you’re sitting on my bad leg.”

“Oh!” poor Skywarp’s faceplates flushed now, embarrassed by his weight gain; he jumped off his lover and backed up.

“Let’s go sit on the sofa,” Soundwave got up, putting his mask back on; he had to process in his CPU what he wanted, and fast; did he really want to send Skywarp away? Did he want to continue with their personal relationship now that the paperless-society-project was complete? And if he did, then what? What if his nightmare became a reality? What if he—?

“Soundwave?” Skywarp wondered what his lover was thinking; what was it the Tapedeck truly wanted?

“Come on,” Soundwave led him over to the couch, he grabbed the blankets and wrapped one of them around the Seeker’s wings, and tried to make conversation, “So, how are you feeling?”

“I’m tired,” Skywarp moaned as he laid back.

“Understandable,” Soundwave sat down next to him.

“I’m tired,” Skywarp repeated as he held his helm, “or maybe, maybe I’m just using my innocent child as an excuse for my apathy and laziness towards life,” he held onto his belly under the blankets,
while his precious sparkling slept blissfully.

Soundwave couldn’t help but smile beneath his facemask; having his Seeker in his life was such a breath of fresh air; was he ready to end it now?

“You’re gonna fire me, right?” Skywarp felt so sad, “Feels like, you don’t care for me anymore…”

“No, Skywarp,” Soundwave shook his helm, “that’s not true at all,” he sat back and draped his arm over the sofa, trying to find the words, “about last night, I want to apologize for leaving you.”

Skywarp smirked back, “For leaving me hanging and ready to cum,” he scooted closer, “I was suffering,” he wasn’t serious though.

“I’m sorry,” Soundwave told him, “I did look for you, but you were asleep, and I chose not to disturb you.”

“You STILL coulda finished with me,” Skywarp joked playfully, “just wake me up and climb into the berth with me and try not to wake my brothers.”

“I don’t think so,” Soundwave rolled his optics, “although, I probably should have,” thinking about the nightmare he suffered through instead.

“REALLY?” Skywarp loved the idea.

“What I MEAN is,” Soundwave was glad his sons were preoccupied with Megatron’s gaming system and not laughing hysterically at the moment, “I just…I wish I had kept you with me. It was…not a peaceful night.”

Skywarp just listened now, waiting for his lover to sort through his feelings.

“Skywarp,” Soundwave finally decided to come clean, “I had the most horrible dream of my onlineing. I woke up screaming so bad that my sons rushed in here, and I did something I hate to do, I broke down in front of them.”

“Awww, I have a lotta those,” Skywarp sighed, “it’s the ghost that makes me dream like that. Sometimes, they’re so bad that I make TC hold onto me all night, and he says I cry in my sleep and stuff. Was it like that?”

“Megatron said the same thing,” Soundwave admitted, “when I told him, the first thing he said was that it was the ghost; it’s just that it was so real.”

“Wanna talk about it?” Skywarp offered, scooting closer and leaning his helm against Soundwave’s arm.

“I was on Cybertron,” Soundwave still wasn’t sure how much he should go into detail, “I was with Shockwave, and then, I was…driving, and then, I went into an alternate dimension,” he looked at Skywarp in the optics, “and my wife was alive.”

Skywarp sighed in a depressing manner, knowing that his lover would probably always compare him unfavorably to his sainted wife, but he also thought of something Starscream had told him…she would just have to learn to share.

“I knew everything that had happened over the years,” Soundwave continued, “I knew she had deactivated, but…we were living in our old home as if nothing had happened.”
“You miss her,” Skywarp understood, “but, you’ve still got us…”

“Well, that’s the weirdest part,” Soundwave let the words slip out without thinking, “you and I were having an affair…”

“Really…” Skywarp’s optics brightened, “maybe your spark is telling your dreams something then?” he suddenly felt hope.

“Um,” Soundwave fidgeted with his digits, “that’s what I’m worried about.”

“Tell me all about your dreams,” the Seeker smiled now, “I wanna hear about it.”

“I told you,” Soundwave groaned, “I was married to Celene again, as if she had never died, and all six of our sons were there too, and I was working for the phone company…” he trailed off, thinking of how to sugarcoat this, “and…you and I were having an affair.”

“I LOVE it!” Skywarp giggled now, “why’s this a nightmare again?!”

Soundwave looked straight ahead, unable to face his lover, “You died at the end of the dream.”

Wow.

“I did?” Skywarp realized now why Soundwave had been so stressed all day, “What happened to my baby?”

“You didn’t have her in the dream,” Soundwave clarified, “this was, some sort of alternate timeline.”

Shaken, Skywarp thought back to early that morning, and how sick he felt when he had woken up, “How did I die in your dream?”

“Someone…someone hurt you,” it was all Soundwave would admit to.

They were both silent for a few moments.

“Were my brothers there too?” Skywarp asked now.

“Yes,” Soundwave admitted, “I saw your funeral; I saw you laying in the coffin in your uniform from your academy.”

“Oh, don’t worry, Soundwave,” Skywarp tried to joke now, “we know it’s not gonna happen then; I’d never be able to fit into my academy uniform.”

“I’m sorry,” Soundwave stood now and paced, “I should never have told you…”

“No,” Skywarp sat up, “tell me more, what did I die of? I wanna know!”

“You were stabbed,” Soundwave knew he shouldn’t tell him all this, but he was asked, “several times…”

“I woke up, like, hurting,” Skywarp whispered, “like I was wounded, and my processor was killing me…isn’t that weird? Is that the ghost, you think?”

“It…could be,” Soundwave wasn’t sure of anything at that point, “so when I dreamt this, and you… felt it?”

The Seeker looked scared now.
But Soundwave felt a new resolve, “Well I’m not going to let it happen,” he sat down and took the pregnant Jet into his hold, “Megatron was right; this entity is trying to drive us apart,” he pulled Skywarp into a tight hug, “and I almost let it.”

The winds outside howled loudly, and Astrotrain, his optics black and unseeing, emerged from his quarters, as silent as the grave.

Skywarp was shaking in Soundwave’s arms, fearing what the ghost was coming for him and his unborn daughter now.

“Don’t be scared,” Soundwave told him, rocking him a bit, “it was the ghost; it was that slagging ghost that hurt you in the dream, and not—” he didn’t want to tell him it was he that killed his Seeker in the dream, “it wasn’t Celene either. It was my fantasies, and that damned thing perverted it into a twisted nightmare.”

“Y-Your fantasy?” Skywarp tried to distract himself from his fear, wiping the coolant tears from his optics, “W-What was the fantasy? That she’s alive?”

“Hmmm,” Soundwave tried now to find some levity in his dream, “a fantasy world that my wife is alive, and that all our sons are there, and you and I are having an affair,” he couldn’t believe he admitted that.

“W-Was I in your h-house?” Skywarp was curious, wiping his optics.

“No…” Soundwave admitted, letting his Seeker up, “I was on a service call to your old apartment building, and, um, you were home alone.”

‘Astrotrain’ made his way to the Control Room now, moving with an unnatural shuffle.

“May I ask you,” Soundwave began, “what was it like when you worked as a host at that restaurant?”

“At Acid Storm’s?” Skywarp giggled now, thinking of how long ago it was when he was a teenage waiter, “that was when we lived at our old apartment, where that motel was, y’know?” he shrugged, “just a job, I guess, I liked coming home and being with my brothers. They were both working at different places and I hardly ever saw them.”

Soundwave fidgeted now, “You wore a uniform?”

Skywarp shook his helm, “you wear an apron and walk around with a datapad to take the orders.”

Now ‘Astrotrain’ was close enough to listen in.

Soundwave didn’t know what to say.

“Why?” Skywarp smiled.

“Well, I…” Soundwave rubbed the back of his own neck cables; the embarrassment was palpable,
“dreamed you were wearing a uniform, and I tore it off you, and we interfaced,” once that was out, he stood up, unable to look at his Seeker.

“W-WHAT?” Skywarp laughed so hard, “AHAHAAHAHAHAHA!”

“Don’t laugh, I was not nice,” Soundwave admitted, mortified, “and I would never behave in such a manner.”

“Did you use your dentra?” Skywarp was still laughing.

“Negative,” Soundwave still couldn’t look at him.

“Come on,” Skywarp pulled his arm for him to sit back down, “tell me more! What did my uniform look like?”

Soundwave mumbled it.

Skywarp: “What?”

“A French maid,” Soundwave admitted.

The pregnant Seeker sat there, with his mouth open and his optics wide for more than ten seconds before bursting into nervous laughter and his faceplates were flushing, “A WHAT???”

“It’s as I told you,” Soundwave leaned against the French Doors, “I was very disturbed by how this dream took a turn. Things were the way I had known them to be, and the way I remembered them, and then the second half of my dream was a twisted vision,” he paced around, “my wife wouldn’t have—” he trailed off.

“Okay, um,” Skywarp was still laughing, finding a dark humor in his fate, “so you’re saying Gravemchaser wants me to die dressed as a French maid?!” he was laughing again, “I-I didn’t think he was t-that creative!”

Outside, ‘Astrotrain’ narrowed his blackened optics.

“Negative,” Soundwave decided to admit it, “that part was MY fantasy,” he couldn’t believe he had just admitted that.

“Oh, WOW!” Skywarp was loving this; he stood and pressed himself against Soundwave in a tight hug, “so you DO love me!”

“Of course I do,” Soundwave groaned and hugged back, telling him dryly, “if anything, you’re driving me crazy, I’ve been wrestling with emotions and doubts, wondering if I’m leading you on, or if I should just follow my spark; if I should remain faithful to my Bonding or if I should move on now that I have the chance,” it came from his spark more than anything.

“Well,” Skywarp looked up into his visor, “she will just have to learn to share.”

On the one hand, Soundwave hated the fact that this was said in his dream; worry filled his spark that the ugliest part of his nightmare was becoming reality; he wanted to panic, smack the Seeker for disrespecting his late wife’s memory, and tell him he never wanted to see him again, sending him crying into the hallway and…No. That was not what he wanted at all. He loved his Skywarp; he never wanted to hurt him, and yet, if they stayed together like this, would they end the way his nightmare had ended? He held the pregnant flyer tightly to his frame.
‘Astrotrain’ curled his fists, realizing his plans to break them apart was failing.

“That’s what Starscream says,” Skywarp leaned against his chestdeck. “I asked him about this stuff.”

“I see,” now Soundwave understood better; it actually made it better; he realized now that it was likely that Gravechaser had overheard the two brothers’ conversation and perverted the information by implanting it negatively in his dream, to make him angry with his Seeker now, which, of course, he was not going to do. Instead, he removed his facemask and began kissing his Seeker again.

‘Astrotrain’ fumed; he began walking backward (not something a normal mech does) at a fast pace before Soundwave could detect him. He was going to KILL SKYWARP now!

“Mmmm…” Skywarp melted into the kisses, wrapping his arms around the larger mech’s neck cables.

“I’m sorry, I’ve been so…” Soundwave broke the kisses to speak, before kissing him again, “inconsistent with my behavior,” he hugged Skywarp and rubbed his wings, letting the Seeker lay his helm on his shoulder, “I ask for your patience now; as these are uncharted waters for me.”

“You got em,” Skywarp whispered back, “you too, with my emotions.”

“We’ll take it slow,” Soundwave promised him, “but just know that I will be good to you…”

The Tapedeck’s Comm.-Link rang; he hated the idea of letting Skywarp go, letting it ring a second time; something he never did. When it rang a third time, he reattached his facemask and reluctantly released Skywarp to answer it.

“Yes?” and somehow, Soundwave knew this would not be good.

“There’s something in the basement,” ‘Astrotrain told him.

“Elaborate,” Soundwave kept his tone even; Skywarp just looked at him, not understanding the meaning of the call either.

“You need to see this,” ‘Astrotrain again demanded, and closed the connection.

“I should see what’s going on,” Soundwave groaned, taking Skywarp’s hand, “come on.”

He was NOT going to leave his Seeker alone and vulnerable after dark.

Skywarp held onto Soundwave’s arm as they walked down the hallway; the Base once again seemed ominous, despite the brake lights being lit.

“Not really sure what’s going on,” Soundwave whispered, suspecting as well, that the ghost was afoot; he tried to pick up any foreign thought patterns as they walked.

Finally, they were at the basement door; it was locked, so Soundwave used his key to open it; now he knew something was wrong. “I locked this door earlier,” he whispered to Skywarp, “so how did he see something down there?”

Skywarp was too scared to speak; his spark was beating fast now; he peered down the rickety wooden staircase leading to the pitch-black lower level.

Soundwave called on his Comm.-Link, “‘Astrotrain: What was your request?’”

There was no response.
Getting annoyed, Soundwave called the Constructicons, “Scrapper: Report on your team’s cleaning of the basement.”

Soundwave moved away from the basement doorway, towards the Constructicons’ shared quarters, “Scrapper: Report!”

Finally, Scrapper responded with a confused, “Wha?”

Skywarp suddenly felt like someone was standing behind him.

Gravechaser, using Astrotrain’s chassis, was infuriated by Skywarp’s romance with the widowed Tapedeck; all his efforts to break them apart had failed, and the wicked ghost’s frustrations had finally boiled over.

In the split second that Soundwave had moved to address Scrapper, Skywarp turned around to see who he knew to be Astrotrain but saw Gravechaser’s black optics looking down at him.

And then, he heard Gravechaser’s vocals coming out of Astrotrain’s mouth, “You’re nothing but a pleasure drone, just like your mother!” and he shoved Skywarp down the basement stairs with both hands.

“AAAAUUUUUGGGHHH!” Skywarp was pushed with such force that his pedes slid down the wooden surface before he could stop himself. And when they reached the edge of the top step, he fell pedes over the helm with such force that his pedes hit the top of the doorframe as he fell.

It felt like it was all happening in slow motion. For a moment, he was airborne…

His sparkling. Not his sparkling.

CRASH!

Skywarp’s upper chassis and wings hit the stairs; the impact snapping his left wing in half, and he tumbled down the rest of the way. But against all the odds, he somehow found a way to protect his belly all the way down and grabbed for one of the pillars that held the railing, and in doing so, slowed his speed and changed his position, so that he landed on his legs instead of his stomach; however, he still landed hard enough onto the cement floor and onto his twisted left leg that he broke it in two places.

Over Meza, Arizona, Thundercracker nearly fell out of the skies as he felt everything through their Trine Bond.

It all happened so fast.

“SKYWARP!” Soundwave turned and ran back; he had only let go momentarily, but it was long enough for something so terrible to happen.

Gravechaser watched his prey’s descent down the stairs, and then in an instant, exited Astrotrain’s chassis, shooting up through the ceiling. The big mech’s optics onlined immediately, and he remembered nothing.

“S-Skywarp?” Astrotrain awoke as himself; horrified to see the pregnant Seeker at the bottom of the
Starscream felt his little brother’s cries for help, agony, and terror through their Trine Bond. “SKYWARP!” he shot up in his berth and ran out, leaving his triplets in Ravage’s care; he came running down the hallway as fast as he could, arriving there in seconds and now, all three of them were staring at broken Seeker, laying in a heap at the bottom of the darkened basement staircase.

Skywarp’s systems recalibrated, and he was in excruciating pain; at first, he was in total shock, he felt his unborn sparkling squirming, and he felt she was terrified by what had happened to them. She had been asleep and was jolted awake; if it was possible for her to understand that they fell, he didn’t know; but he could feel in his spark that she was very upset, ‘WAAAAHHHH!!!’ she was crying now. And that made him sob and keen in agony, more so than the horrific pain his broken leg and broken wing was giving him.

“N-No…” Starscream’s vents hitched as he looked down at the hurt, broken form of his little brother and his unborn sparkling. And, in an instant, after years of fights, brought on by their argument amidst his spark-merging with Megatron; any reminding anger; every hostility, was purged from his systems and disappeared from his spark, like smoke, and he saw his beloved baby brother crying for him.

“S-Skywarp…” Starscream ran down the stairs and took hold of him in a comforting manner, “d-don’t move, we’ll get you to the Med-Bay.”

As for Soundwave, when the initial shock wore off, he was livid with Astrotrain, “YOU’RE UNDER ARREST!” he bellowed, loud enough for the entire Base to hear; he grabbed the shell-shocked Space Train by the arms and pulled them behind his back and slapped the handcuffs on him, “YOU ARE IN VIOLATION OF THE DECEPTICON CODE NUMBER TWENTY-THREE!”

“B-But I—” Astrotrain didn’t even know how he had gotten there, “I-I didn’t push him…”

It didn’t matter to Soundwave WHAT the Space Train said at that moment, he shoved Astrotrain at Onslaught, who had come to see what was going on, and hurried down the stairs.

“AAAUUUGGGHHHH!!!!” Skywarp cried out again; he was delirious with pain and fear for his unborn daughter.

“Don’t move, Skywarp,” Soundwave whispered gently, “everything will be fine…”
Chapter 93: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 93:

By Transformersnewfan

The winter snowstorm raged on outside as the Decepticon Underwater Base was in total chaos.

Skywarp had been rushed to the Med-Bay; Soundwave had retrieved a backboard and called the Reflectors, who then brought a stretcher, and they, along with Starscream, carefully lifted the injured Seeker off the cement floor and up the stairs to the main floor.

Astrotrain had been placed under arrest for the assault of a fellow Decepticon, a serious violation of the faction’s Code of Ethics. Skywarp being an officer, and carrying an unborn sparkling made the charges even more serious. All the while, the Triple Changer insisted that he had no memory of what had happened.

Onslaught assisted the Reflectors when they took Astrotrain away in handcuffs; they felt that the dirty, decaying brig was only for Autobot combatants; despite the grotesque nature of the assault, they felt they could not place Astrotrain, a newly-minted officer and longtime member of the Decepticons down there, so instead, they confined him to Conference Room A, now cuffed to the table, until Megatron arrived back. With the large Combaticon guarding the door, the Reflectors then left to assist Soundwave with the repairs.

Now Skywarp lay on the medical table, keening silently beneath the oxygen mask, hooked up to two Energon lines, stripped of all his armor and wearing only a hospital gown, terrified for the life of his precious sparkling. He was thirty-two weeks, or just entering the eighth month of his pregnancy, and he fell; he fell so hard. Was she damaged now?

“Hold still, Skywarp,” Soundwave kept his emotions firmly in check, putting aside his personal affections for his Seeker and focused on treating them as his two patients.

Starscream never left his brother’s side, squeezing his hand, but doing a much worse job than Soundwave at staying calm, “it’s gonna be okay, it’s gonna be okay,” he kept repeating, but his shaking vocals and an equally shaking frame was belaying his words.

The medical team checked on the sparkling first, strapping a monitor to the Seeker’s belly and doing an ultrasound. Skywarp hysterically wondered in his processor why he even bothered to schedule regular ultrasound appointments if he kept having emergency ones.

But miraculously, the monitors and tests picked up the unborn femme’s strong sparkbeat right away, and the images on the ultrasound monitor showed that she was undamaged; they could see that Skywarp had several deep-running cracks to his backstruct, but they did not reach his gestation chamber.

“The cracks stopped four-point-three inches into his backstruct,” Soundwave spoke matter-of-factly,
“and while this is still a serious hairline fracture to his frame, it did not damage any internal mechanisms, including his gestation chamber.”

Skywarp was still terrified for his sparkling; fearing that they would let her die, what if she was hurt and they didn’t know it?! He started thrashing, and Starscream tried to keep him from injuring himself further by holding down his arms. At the same time, Spectro Reflector was working to set his broken leg, while Viewfinder set, or at least was trying to set his fractured wing.

Despite being a scientist, Starscream felt he didn’t know much about being a medic to assist the way he would have liked to. He starred at the monitors, the data, the numbers, and finally, asked Soundwave, “What’s the best options for their survival?”

The Tapedeck himself suddenly felt ill-equipped for the situation, wishing more than ever that he possessed the knowledge his late wife Celene had when it came to sparklings. He searched his CPU for the answers.

“The sparkling’s readings are stable,” Soundwave finally answered, “so we need to focus on Skywarp’s injuries.”

The poor carrying Seeker was in so much pain that he couldn’t comprehend what was even going on around him; he was incoherent from the physical and emotional agony. His optics rolled back in his helm.

“We’ve got two breaks here,” Spectro told his supervisor, “upper and lower; gonna need surgery.”

“Well, we cannot at this time,” Soundwave explained, “for two fractures, surgery would require a minimum of nine hours in statis-lock,” meaning Skywarp would have his systems completely shut down, “we cannot do that while he’s carrying. Same for his wing.”

“How about a caesarian section?” Starscream asked, “It’s not too early, is it?” his own triplets were born three weeks ahead of schedule.

“He’s nearly thirty-three weeks,” Soundwave sighed, mentally calculating the odds, “it would be two months earlier, but we may have to.”

“Or is that too early…” Starscream frowned now; two months was a lot, “many of the components of the central nervous system develops,” remembering reading all the datapads.

“She’s also very small still,” Soundwave admitted; the sparkling was the human baby equivalent of three pounds, “Truthfully, I fear the separation could prove too traumatic for both of their systems so soon after the assault. I recommend, that, unless we detect that the sparkling is in distress, the pregnancy should continue for the time being.”

“I want the sparkling to have the best chances for a survival,” Starscream felt his vents hitching; after all these months, he felt he had grown attached to the little one already; very different from how he spoke after Skywarp’s concussion; he whispered, almost to himself, “we picked out things for her, I made a blanket, we can’t lose…”

“Again, the sparkling is stable,” Soundwave assured them, “and we have other options for repairing Skywarp,” he picked up some more tools, “Spectro, we’re going to set his leg with a rod; he’s still going to need surgery, but he will be able to function.”

From there, the Tapedeck and his team straightened the Seeker’s broken leg out, making him cry out in pain through the oxygen mask, “AAAAAAAAUUUUUGGGGGHHHHHHH!”
“Shhh, sshhhh,” Starscream tried to help by pinning his shoulders to the medical table; Soundwave did not believe in strapping a patient down, particularly if that patient was a Seeker, who had the potential of going into a panic just from the idea of being restrained. Having a Trine Leader or member of the Trine hold a Seeker down was considered much less traumatic.

“Got it,” Soundwave got the leg straight and taped the rod to it; he and Spectro then wrapped it in gauze and taped it up in bandages, “he won’t be able to bend his leg, but his chassis’ natural nanites should do some repairs in the meantime.” He had to keep his emotions in check; his lover needed him now, “How’s his wing coming?”

Viewfinder and Spyglass had managed to straighten out Skywarp’s cracked wing, but there was damaged wiring internally that would require delicate surgery, and his plating on the back of the wing had separated entirely and would need to be welded back together; again, something they could not yet do.

“He needs to be in statis-lock for this as well,” Soundwave examined the delicate appendage, “these four wires are frayed, in addition to several that had been completely severed.”

“What’s the answer then?” Starscream whispered.

“Well,” Soundwave thought about this, “one option is to again allow his natural nanites to repair the frayed ones, as well as any damage we cannot see without an MRI; but with surgery and welding out of the question, I recommend we dampen his sensory nodes, meaning to numb Skywarp’s broken wing as much as safely possible without injecting anything into his Energon lines that could affect his sparkling.”

“Um,” Starscream knew a little bit about this from his biology classes, “anytime you do that, you need to give a consistent amount to both wings, or it will cause equilibrium issues,” it hurt him to talk about Skywarp like this.

“Very well,” Soundwave nodded, “then you verbally agree to this course of treatment?”

Starscream bit his lip components, weighing the severity of the consequences in his processor, “Can you calculate the dosage close enough to be effective without the possibility of an overdose?” The red and white Seeker knew that if Skywarp was given too much of the chemical, one or both of his wings may not come back online and would be dead to the rest of his frame, and, in a worst-case scenario, Skywarp would need to have his wings amputated, “We can’t risk a permanent shutdown of his sensory nodes.”

Skywarp was only semi-coherent, hearing the words; hearing his brother and doctor discussing his chassis and his life. Everything was hanging in the balance: his sparkling, his ability to fly, his life… he wanted to escape; he didn’t want to be in his chassis anymore.

“I will work with you to determine what you consider a safe amount,” Soundwave told him, knowing full well of Starscream’s scientific background, “we’re not going to do anything that would harm either of them.”

The Tapedeck had Spectro mix several different medications in small doses; one of the medicines, Benzocaine, had been approved by the Cybertronian Gladiatorial Commission for use by participants during matches, and not considered a narcotic. It took several tries before Starscream was satisfied that the dosage was safe. All the while, the red and white Seeker was in constant communication with Thundercracker through their Trine Bond. TC agreed with everything Starscream was doing, but with one proviso: That Starscream is the one to administer the medicine so that they could tell through the Bond if they need to stop immediately.
“Alright, go ahead,” Soundwave lifted Skywarp into a sitting position to give them the best angle to treat the black and purple Seeker’s wings. All the while Skywarp kept his optics averting anyone and everyone’s gaze, looking at their pedes and the Med-Bay floor.

Spectro held the left wing’s tiny Energon line in a pair of tweezers while Starscream injected the cocktail of drugs. Starscream was struggling to keep his hand from shaking while pushing the plunger in; he simultaneously reached through their Trine Bond to try to feel if his little brother’s spark or systems were being slowed down too fast. Even though the spark monitor would detect changes in his sparkbeat, Starscream felt that their Trine Bond would warn them earlier if there were a complication, preventing a problem rather than reacting to it. He got the entire amount of the substance in and pulled the syringe out.

Next, they had to give the same dose to the right wing; Spectro opened the flap and had a bit more difficulty finding the Energon line this time, but finally, he had a hold of it, and Starscream used the second syringe to administer the same amount of the medication. He felt less anxiety this time, knowing that the dosage wasn’t harmful. This procedure would be repeated as needed.

Skywarp felt woozy as the excruciating pain began to morph into a dull ache. Both his wings were numb now; he could still feel them, but it didn’t hurt now — the equivalent of nonvaccine during a dental exam.

All the while, baby Crystal was unaffected by the drugs as they were not considered harmful to unborn sparklings.

“How’s the sparkling?” Starscream whispered to the Tapedeck.

“Still stable,” Soundwave answered, “here, let’s switch,” he gently let go of Skywarp, while Starscream held him up now so that the medics could continue working on his injuries wing. Soundwave and the Reflectors doused the wounds with saline and placed gauze over the massive tear before taping it shut.

“You should change the bandages on his hand,” Starscream told them, “it’s been a while.”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave answered, refusing to look into Skywarp’s optics; it would break the resolve he needed to continue the repairs. He then retreated and rebandaged Skywarp’s left hand.

As they laid Skywarp back down, Starscream looked at his sibling’s injuries, “Wonder why they’re all on his left side like that? He got them at different times.”

Skywarp knew the answer but didn’t vocalize it: To make him lay on his right side and cause that pain again.

There were other damages to his frame as well: The cracks to his backstruct; dents and bruises from where he hit the steps; cuts to his mental skin; all the pain and screaming had taken a lot out of the darker Seeker, and he was exhausted. He didn’t want to speak, by either vocalizer or Trine Bond; he wanted to leave; leave his chassis; leave his situation; he didn’t even feel like reassuring his sparkling. He shuttered his optics and hoped unconsciousness would take him away.

“We have to watch for infections now,” Soundwave told them, “anything like fever spikes, convulsions…”

“Alright…” Starscream nodded, understanding how dangerous the situation was.
Little Crystal was frightened by everything that had happened, but she was not hurt and unlike her Mother, found comfort in hearing Starscream and Soundwave’s vocals; she now awaited her other uncle’s return as well.

“We have done all we can, for now, Skywarp,” Soundwave told him as he took his gloves off and threw them in the trash, “all we can do now is to monitor the situation for any changes.”

Skywarp didn’t acknowledge them; he kept his optics shuttered, even as he felt Soundwave and the Reflectors lift his chassis onto the gurney and wheel his hurting frame down the hallway. All the while, Starscream held his hand.

Once in a private room, they carefully hooked up the monitors to the injured Seeker and his sparkling, placed pillows under his wings and his left leg in a sling to keep it elevated and hooked his mask up to the oxygen tank. Under the oxygen mask, Skywarp still refused to open his optics or speak; he was hoping they would think he was asleep. He didn’t want to be there.

Soundwave stared at his Seeker now, wounded in the medical berth; everything had been fine until…

“Please, don’t leave…” Starscream whispered.

The Tapedeck nodded silently; finding a chair and began studying the monitors.

Starscream went to the cabinet and pulled out a blanket; he didn’t want to leave his brother even for a moment to retrieve their blankets, so this one would have to do. He covered Skywarp’s shivering form and petting his helm. He looked at the sparkling’s vital signs on the second monitor, and whispered, “Hey little one…”

Crystal had been very upset by the fall but had calmed back down once her Momma was ‘rescued,’ as she called it. Hearing the one she called ‘Second Uncle,’ the unborn sparkling perked her tiny helm up, :Uncle!: 

“You’re doing okay now,” the red and white Seeker whispered as he caressed Skywarp’s belly, “hope so…”

:Yes, Uncle,: she answered as if he could hear her.

He watched the monitor now, worried but hopeful, “You just relax now, okay? I’m here; I’ll protect you…”

:Thank you, Uncle,: she was so cute.

Some chirping caught the Seeker’s attention, and he looked up; his triplets were in the waiting room. He got up and opened the door, “Hey guys…”

Rumble and Frenzy had retrieved the little ones, who were squirming and tired, as well as Buzzsaw and Ratbat, and were waiting for word outside.

“Rav’s watching the Control Room,” the blue Cassette told him, “he told us what happened.”

Frenzy was blunter, “Did Skywarp have the baby?”

“Not yet,” Starscream kept his vocals low, “he’s resting now…” he tilled his helm towards the medical berth, “come on,” he took Darkwing as the twins brought in the other two.
There was nothing to do now but wait. Wait and see if the sparkling’s vital signs stayed normal; wait for Thundercracker to return; wait for Skywarp to recover…

Soundwave sat at a table studying the data that kept printing out, looking for any changes and writing his notes. Rumble stood next to him, watching his Sire work. The other three Cassettes sat on some chairs, lost in their thoughts. The triplets were all sleeping under some blankets in a rocking chair; and Starscream lay on the medical berth, his helm propped up on his elbow, and using his other hand to stroke Skywarp’s badly injured wing. He knew his little brother couldn’t feel it, but he was hoping his proximity was at least providing some comfort. The idea of a Seeker suffering a devastating injury to his wings was a mortal fear they all shared; the dread of losing their contact with the skies, it was a nightmare.

“Hey, I almost lost my wings once,” Starscream broke the silent now, stating in an almost cheerful tone, despite the seriousness of the statement, “so…even if you think I don’t know what you’re feeling, I do understand,” he stroked Skywarp’s faceplates now.

The darker Seeker was still refusing to acknowledge the world around him, not sleeping, but not moving or opening his optics. Just curled towards his injured left side under the too-thin blanket.

Starscream shifted closer and wrapped an arm around him, going back to the story, “I was in East Berlin with Megatron; just the two of us. We were tracking some…artifact or whatever. I can’t remember now. It was out in the middle of nowhere…” he knew he was rambling, “And there was this, creature or whatever it was, a Sasquatch, I think. I don’t know, it ran on all fours…I’m not up on my cryptozoology,” he shrugged, then turned serious, “it happened very quickly. And the next thing I remember, I woke up in the worst pain I ever felt in my onlining…” he trailed off, then continued, “and Megatron was leaning over me, and that Sasquatch, or whatever, was dead, and the body had a smoking hole in the center…” he sighed now, “and Megatron wasn’t talking and I wasn’t talking…and the next thing I remember was Soundwave and he putting me in the transporter. That was a long flight…very long flight…Hey, remember that, Soundwave?”

“Affirmative,” the Tapedeck refused to add anything else.

“Well, I just remember the pain,” Starscream continued, whispering again, and running his thumb over Skywarp’s faceplates, “and Megatron came to the back of the transporter…” he chuckled now, “don’t bother asking him about this, because he always denies it, but anyway, he came to the back of the transporter, and said to me, ‘Hey you, you can’t be Leader of the Decepticons one day if you give up,’ and he stayed with me the rest of the way, singing this…old fight song from his Arena…” He looked at his hurting little brother and began singing the same song to him.

Starscream’s singing:

- ♪ “Lost touch with my soul,” ♫ “I had nowhere to turn,” ♪ “I had nowhere to go.” ♫ “Lost sight of my dream,” ♪ “Thought it would be the end of me.” ♫

Frenzy watched in silence.

Starscream’s singing: ♪ “I thought I’d never make it through,” ♫ “I had no hope to hold on to,” ♪ “I, I thought I would break.” ♫

Darkmount opened his optics and listened.

Starscream’s singing: ♪ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♫ “And I crashed down, and I tumbled, but I did not crumble.” ♫ “I got through all the pain,” ♪ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♫

Rumble watched his Father for a reaction, then turned and watched Starscream.
Starscream’s singing: ♪ “Survived my darkest hour,” ♫ “My faith kept me alive,” ♪ “I picked myself back up,” ♫ “Hold my head up high,” ♪ “I was not built to break,” ♫ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♪

Soundwave was listening but didn’t want to turn around.

Starscream’s singing: ♪ “Found hope in my heart,” ♫ “I found the light to life,” ♪ “My way out of the dark.” ♫ “Found all that I need,” ♪ “Here inside of me.” ♫ “I thought I’d never find my way,” ♪ “I thought I’d never lift that weight,” ♫ “I thought I would break…” ♪

Everyone was quiet; the only sound was the monitors beeping.

Starscream’s singing: ♪ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♫ “And I crashed down, and I tumbled, but I did not crumble.” ♪ “I got through all the pain,” ♫ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♪

Starscream’s singing: ♪ “Survived my darkest hour,” ♫ “My faith kept me alive,” ♪ “I picked myself back up,” ♫ “Hold my head up high,” ♪ “I was not built to break,” ♫ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♪

He squeezed Skywarp’s hand tightly.

Starscream’s singing: ♪ “There were so many times, I…” ♫ “Wondered how I’d get through the night, I…” ♪ “Thought I took all I could take.” ♫ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♪ “And I crashed down, and I tumbled, but I did not crumble.” ♫ “I got through all the pain,” ♪ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♫ “Survived my darkest hour,” ♪ “My faith kept me alive,” ♫ “I picked myself back up,” ♪ “Hold my head up high,” ♫ “I was not built to break,” ♪ “I didn’t know my own strength.” ♫

And he finished the song softly…

Starscream’s singing: ♪ “I was not built to break, no, no…” ♫ “I got to know my own strength.” ♪

Chapter End Notes

(Credit to songwriter Diane Warren for the song, I Didn’t Know My Own Strength.)
Chapter 94: By Transformersnewfan

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The snows came down in huge flakes on the howling winds; a good few feet of snow already on the ground.

Megatron, Thundercracker, and the Coneheaded Seekers finally returned to the Decepticon Underwater Base, after eight in the evening, over three hours after their original estimated time of arrival.

Ravage let them in and processed to secure the Tower and finished locking the Base down for the evening before monitoring the weather via the cameras.

The Decepticon Leader ran into the hallway, “WHAT THE SLAG IS GOING ON?!”

“Megatron,” Onslaught met him with Astrotrain, who now had his handcuffed in front of himself, “big trouble…” the Truck was waving his arms.

The Coneheads were held back from dragging the sacks of Swarovski crystals.

“Megatron, you gotta believe me—” Astrotrain began pleading, but as soon as he got the words out, Megatron felt something push him to the side.

Thundercracker came tearing through the hallway, running up and punching Astrotrain (who was twice the Seeker’s size) hard enough to send him back a good few feet, all the while bellowing, “YOU SON OF A GLITCH!!!” he lunged at the Space Train, murder in his optics, “I’LL KILL YOU!!! I’M GONNA TEAR YOU APART!!!”

And he would have too; if Megatron hadn’t grabbed him around his waist in the nick of time; the three Coneheads joined in, and it seriously took all four of them struggling to hold the enraged Seeker back.

“LET ME GO! LET ME GO!” Thundercracker demanded, “I’M GONNA KILL THE SLAGGARD!”

“Stop it, Thundercracker!” Megatron barked back, “We still have to find out what happened here!” He pulled the Seeker to force him to face them, “We have to talk to Soundwave now!”

Onslaught dragged Astrotrain back into the Conference Room before the crazed flyer could break the hold they had on him.

Thundercracker was cycling his vents heavily and allowed his Leader to pull him along; he would murder Astrotrain later.

Starscream was deep in thought, staring at Skywarp’s offline form. The pregnant Seeker was in a
deep recharge now, letting his systems finally begin the heal.

Thundercracker was considerably calmer walking into the Med-Bay, almost afraid of what he would see, and fearful of what the news would be. He wanted to run in the other direction, but he took a deep air intake and opened the door.

Starscream didn’t see him come in; then he heard the familiar deep vocals, “Star?” he looked up and saw their oldest brother walking towards the foot of the berth.

“O-Oh, Th-Thundercracker,” the red and white Seeker could finally stop having to be the strong one; he stood, only to collapsed into Thundercracker’s arms and hold onto him tightly.

Megatron followed close behind but stayed in the doorway and took in the scene. He knew very well who was behind this, and snarled, “That damned bastard…”

Holding onto Starscream, Thundercracker fought against the urge to grab his baby brother and scoop him up into his hold and never let anyone hurt him ever again. But now, he was terrified of injuring him further.

:It’s okay, TC: Starscream whispered through their Trine Bond, :h-he’s gonna be o-okay…he’s gonna be okay…:

Thundercracker let go slowly and leaned over his sleeping little brother, gently wrapped his arms around him, whispering, “I-I’m here, Warp…I-I’m here now…” he stroked his injured left wing and kissed his faceplates.

The triplets all woke up when their Father came and sat beside them in a tired heap, dying to get off his pedes, “Okay, Soundwave,” his vocals were as dry as a bone, “get on with it, tell me all about how this catastrophe happened.”

“Skywarp has a fractured wing that requires extensive surgery,” the Tapedeck was matter-of-fact in speaking about his lover, “this is in addition to his left leg, that was fractured in two places, which will also require several surgeries, but not before he gives birth. So, no more flying for now.”

“And his sparkling?” Megatron was afraid to ask.

“We’re continuing to monitor the situation,” Soundwave was still holding it together, “but for now, we believe the sparkling was completely unharmed.”

“And how, may I ask,” Megatron repeated, “did this happen?”

“I received a call in the Control Room,” Soundwave began, “we were wrapping up the paperless-society-project.”

Thundercracker carefully leaned beside Skywarp now, stroking his helm as he listened to the Tapedeck speak; he had heard all about his fragile medical conditions from Starscream, but neither brother had heard what had led up to the assault.

“Astrotrain asked me to come to the basement,” Soundwave groaned, “and when we got there, I was looking for Scrapper or Astrotrain—”

Megatron cut him off, “You had Skywarp with you?”
“Affirmative,” Soundwave nodded, “I thought it best to not leave him by himself; a decision I now regret.”

Megatron couldn’t criticize him though; it seemed like the right idea. He nodded for the Tapedeck to continue.

“When I went to look for Scrapper,” Soundwave sighed now, “I turned around, and that’s when Astrotrain pushed him down the stairs. And, he fell all the way down to the bottom.”

“You saw Astrotrain push him?” Megatron asked.

“Negative,” Soundwave admitted, “but we have the cameras.”

“Does Skywarp need further treatment tonight?” Megatron asked now; he could tell Soundwave was holding back in front of the Seekers.

“Negative,” Soundwave told him, “just recharge.”

“Alright,” Megatron stood; groaning again, “let’s go look at the cameras,” he picked up Darkmount, “come on, help me put them to bed.”

The two Leaders left the room with the triplets. The Cassettes crept after them to listen in.

Finally, alone, Thundercracker keened openly over Skywarp’s offline, battered chassis, “Oh my God, Star, look at him…Look at our brother,” he caressed the youngest Seeker’s wane faceplates under the oxygen mask; “he looks so beat up,” he had bruises and dents everywhere from his fall.

Starscream was crying too, he got up and got another blanket from another room and brought it back inside. Skywarp only had the hospital gown on so he was cold. They wrapped him up in the blankets laid down on either side of him, trying to warm him up. TC hoped that he could somehow make up for being away when all this had happened; at least now he could physically comfort his baby brother and niece. Unlike when Skywarp was hospitalized after the shower stall imprisonment, he didn’t stir when TC held him.

:His wing is broken, TC,: Starscream spoke through the Trine Bond so as not to disturb Skywarp, :and we haveta keep…giving him this stuff…W-What if he can’t—:

:I’m sorry you had to make those decisions by yourself,: Thundercracker told him, :the weather…the weather just got so bad; we had to fly around it, and…that’s why we were late….:

:N-No,: Starscream keened, :I-It’s my fault; I went to bed, I-I didn’t…:

Thundercracker just took Starscream’s hand and squeezed it, just to comfort both his brothers now.

Gravechaser sauntered around his attic lair with pride now. That was the best one yet; worth all the planning, the patience, and even the physically draining experience of inhabiting that Space Train’s chassis had all been worth it. Possessing Astrotrain had taken a lot more out of him than the first time he had done it; jumping and leaving Thrust was nothing; this experience drained the wicked ghost for hours. It seemed that the longer he stayed inside a living mech, he needed the same amount of time to recover. Gravechaser made a note of this.
He stood over the hallway now, careful to keep his distance from Soundwave, but close enough to listen in, admiring the mess he had created.

Megatron and Soundwave took the triplets back to the Decepticon Leader’s quarters and put them in their crib.

“Okay, Soundwave, lemme guess,” Megatron rolled his optics, “you broke up with him, he ran into the hallway, and the ghost pushed him down the stairs, using Astrotrain as a cover. How right am I?”

“Negative,” Soundwave walked away, “I did not break up with him,” he saw Rumble and Frenzy in the hallway, “guard the triplets please.”

He entered the Control Room now, seemingly calm, on the outside anyway.

“The Tower was secured, Father,” Ravage saluted, “I await your next instructions.”

“Guard the triplets,” he repeated, going to his Computer Consul.

The Cat was worried, “Father, may I inquire, how is Skywarp and the sparkling?”

“Stable,” Soundwave was curt, and shot his eldest son a dirty glare he usually reserved for Rumble, “you are dismissed.”

Ravage nodded and left. Now Soundwave only waited for Megatron to enter.

“So, what exactly—” Megatron came in, and before he could even get his sentence out, Soundwave had an emotional outburst.

“WHO ARE WE SLAGGING KIDDING, MEGATRON!” Soundwave roared as soon as the French Doors were closed, “IT WAS MY FAULT, IT WAS ONLY MY FAULT, IT WAS ONE HUNDRED PERCENT MY FAULT AND NO ONE ELSE’S! EVERYTHING I TOUCH GETS RUINED!”

Okay, Megs wasn’t expecting that.

It was clear that the Tapedeck had been holding back his emotions and was waiting for the only mech he could ever confide in to be alone with him so that he could open the floodgates.

“IT WAS THAT NIGHTMARE, MEGATRON!” Soundwave continued yelling, “I told you! I dreamed that Celene was telling me to end the affair I was having! And I dreamed that I WAS THE ONE that killed him, Megatron, ME! NO ONE ELSE! But I ignored the warnings, I ignored Celene’s warnings, AND LOOK WHAT HAPPENED!”

Megatron had enough, “WILL YOU PLEASE MAKE SOME SENSE?!” he bellowed back, “Forget that dream and just tell me what happened!”

“Fine,” Soundwave huffed his vents as he began pacing around, “I told you, we were working, and then we finished around the time you called and said you were delayed.”

Megatron nodded a little, urging the other to continue.

“I was going to break up with him,” Soundwave admitted, “I knew I had to. But I just…” he sighed now.
“Why do you say you had to?” the Decepticon Leader asked.

“Well,” Soundwave looked at him, “look what happened because I didn’t.”

“That’s not on you,” Megatron shook his helm, “I told you already if you HAD broken up with him, he would have run into the hallway, and everything that happened would have still happened. Don’t you see it, Soundwave? It would have happened one way or the other because IT planned it that way. YOU KNOW WHO I’M TALKING ABOUT!”

There was a pause, and finally, Soundwave sat down heavily on his swivel chair, “He told me who the ghost is.”

“Oh, he did, did he?” Megatron had not expected this, “And?”

Gravechaser narrowed his black optics and shook his helm; he had already punished Skywarp for this but wished he could turn back time and DO IT AGAIN now, for Skywarp ever telling that Tapedeck.

“It’s Thundercracker’s Father, Megatron,” Soundwave sighed, “the mech that had kidnapped Thundercracker when he was four years old,” he leaned against the Consul, “no wonder he didn’t want to tell anyone.”

“Wow,” Megatron exhaled heavily through his vents now, “I had…suspected so, but…I didn’t say anything.”

“You did?” Soundwave was surprised by this.

“Well…” Megatron took a chair beside his friend, “things were…starting to add up once you put all the clues together,” he showed his detective prowess now, “we knew it had to be a former prisoner, with the Gregorian chanting, and the Edgar Allen Poe quotes and all; the fact that we saw that it was showing us Itself as a blue Seeker…we saw it, Starscream saw it, Dirge saw it, and we thought this Thing was mimicking Thundercracker, either that or, It looked like him,” he held his helm, “tonight was the clincher though, with the weather…”

“What do you mean?” Soundwave didn’t understand.

“Well, you know how TC has these powers that can affect the weather,” Megatron began, referring to the blue Seeker’s ability to shoot the clouds and make it rain or snow, “when you consider that Skywarp doesn’t have these powers; that points away from the assumption that he inherited this from his Mother, and you have to figure it came from his Father. And tonight, we were like,” he rolled his optics, “about twenty minutes away when this snowstorm came out of nowhere, and it delays us for over three hours.” He considered something now, “Come to think of it, we’ve had a LOT of snow this winter…” He didn’t feel like gloating that he had solved the mystery, “kinda sad, isn’t it?”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave sighed, “what do you think this is going to do to him?” referring to Thundercracker.

“Not sure yet,” Megatron bit his upper lip components, “when did Skywarp tell you this?”

“Last night,” Soundwave told him, “this is the first chance I’ve had to tell you.”

“And you had that nightmare,” Megatron noted, “and now, he fell down the stairs. You know what this means, don’t you? The ghost has gone on a rampage,” he stood now, “we need to burn incense
at once!” he got up now and went for the French Doors.

“Well, what do you want us to do with Astrotrain?” Soundwave called out.

“Find the tapes,” Megatron called back, “by the time you find the place where it happened, I’ll have half the Base covered!”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave got to work.

Megatron: “Who’s watching Skywarp?!”

Soundwave: “Reflector!”

Rather than hide, Gravechaser was far too obsessed with Skywarp now to even be concerned with anything else. He walked over the Med-Bay now; he wasn’t done beating up the pregnant flyer this evening.

Now, he poisoned his dreams.

Skywarp was still in a deep recharge, cycling air through the oxygen mask as he lay on his back. On his left, Thundercracker was sitting up, watching the monitors beeping while he stroked Skywarp’s helm; on his other side, Starscream lay next to him, rubbing his belly. They were both hoping their loving touches were helping their youngest brother recharge peacefully. His little unborn daughter was doing well; sleeping tranquility.

But Skywarp had sunk into a deep depression with this latest attack; the irony, the sheer irony of being pushed down a flight of stairs. This was HIS joke; HIS running gag. He liked pushing others down the stairs, even when he was a tiny sparkling. His first victim was Thundercracker: At the time, the blue Seeker was seven years old, and Skywarp was three years old. They were playing tag, running around on the second floor, and the darker flyer used his teleportation powers to win the game by ‘tagging’ his big brother while he was at the top of the stairs; but in doing so, TC yelped in surprise and tumbled down the stairs. To his little brother, this was the funniest thing he had ever seen! Their Creators were his next victims: he was craftier when it came to the adults though: he left TC’s books on the stairs and giggled when his Mother tripped over them and fell down the stairs; and giggled again, even more, when the femme blamed TC for leaving his books on the stairs! His Dad suspected him though, so the sparkling had to get creative. One morning, Skywarp turned off his Sire’s alarm clock and left another one of TC’s books on the stairs. So, when the big mech woke up late for work, he ran out without looking where he was going and proceeded to barrel down said stairs when he tried to rush off to work. Yes, that was funny! Skywarp was a bit kinder to Starscream, since, at the time, he wore glasses; it was shortly after they became a Trine, and the black and purple Seeker offered to clean said glasses. When Starscream handed them over, Skywarp flung him down the stairs. From there, the M.O. was usually the same: Teleport in, push the target down the stairs, and teleport out. There were their classmates at the Academy; they all got the treatment, including all three of the Coneheads. Then there were his co-workers at Acid Storm’s (it helped that the Energon stockroom was on the lower level), and then there was their landlord, Sky-Byte (TC objected to this one because of the mech’s advanced age), and from there, pretty much every Decepticon in the faction: Soundwave, Blitzwing, Shockwave, Shockwave’s bodyguard, George (Shockwave blamed that one on High-Grade), Astrotrain...Yeah, Astrotrain; even Megatron got shoved down the stairs, but Skywarp wasn’t stupid! He didn’t push Megatron down the stairs until AFTER the Gunformer had Bonded with Starscream so that Megs couldn’t do a slagging thing about it.
“Kickin’ brothers down the steps, just for rep,” his friend Christopher had written a verse about this, among many verses he had written about Skywarp.

Yes, this was Skywarp’s thing. When he said that Gravechaser needed new material, he didn’t mean the ghost could steal HIS material! Plagiarist.

But…Nobody had ever gotten hurt like he had when he pushed others down the stairs. He certainly didn’t push Starscream down the stairs when he was pregnant! He had waited until a week AFTER Starscream had given birth to start playing his pranks on his Trine Leader again, sheesh! None of the Seekers ever broke a wing either; the closest anyone ever came to an injury was that mechling…Kyle? No, Kevin. Kevin was his name, and he was one of Shockwave’s interns now, but he was a teenager at the time, and Skywarp was staying in Shockwave’s Tower, and the punk kid vowed revenge or something or other. Never mind him; no one ever broke anything; no one ever ended up in the Med-Bay; maybe, Skywarp wondered now, maybe it was because he never did it with any real malice; it was just a joke to him. Astro-no, GRAVECHASER had intended to KILL him.

Skywarp drifted into a strange dream now…

In Skywarp’s dream:

Thundercracker was sitting on the couch in his quarters, chatting it up with his Father, Gravechaser.

“That was great, Father,” TC laughed, “you sure beat him at his own game!”

“It took a lot of planning,” Gravechaser proclaimed proudly as he sat in the couch’s matching chair, holding court, “planning, patience, practice, it all equals payoff.”

His son was loving this, “I just wish I could’ve seen the look on Warp’s faceplates when he tumbled down the stairs!”

“Ask the big tape guy if his precious cameras caught the moment,” Gravechaser cackled, “I would like to have it for posterity.”

“I sure will, Father,” TC nodded, “I’m just glad I could help.”

“Yes,” Gravechaser concurred, “if you had not distracted your boss with that phony storm and rerouted your team, I wouldn’t have been able to do what I did.”

End of Skywarp’s dream:

It was completely lost on Skywarp that his dream sounded like a badly written sitcom—complete with the couch and chair setting—he was emotionally shattered by the ‘realization’ that Thundercracker…HIS Thundercracker…his beloved brother, his hero…how could TC betray him like this? “Eeeeeeuuuuuuuaaa…”

The real Thundercracker noticed immediately when Skywarp began keening in his sleep; he tried shushing him and brushing his faceplates with the back of his hand.

Starscream had dozed off but awoke when their little brother’s miserable cries continued. Now, he jumped up suddenly, “TC, what’s wrong with him?!”

“Probably a nightmare,” Thundercracker whispered, “he gets those a lot,” he shook their youngest lightly, “come on, Warpy, wake up…”

“Eeeeeeuuuuuuuuu…” Skywarp kept his optics shuttered tightly; he started thrashing now, trying to
protect himself and his child from the ghost.

Starscream grabbed his arms and held him. Thundercracker felt his forehelm, “he’s warm…”

“Oh, God,” Starscream immediately panicked, “he has a fever, Soundwave to look for signs of infection!” He called out, “REFLECTOR!”

“No, no, Star,” TC hushed, “he doesn’t have a fever,” he got up, “just needs a cold towel.”

Thundercracker went to another room to retrieve a washcloth, and run it under the cold water, while Starscream kept trying to comfort their crying baby brother.

The words Starscream whispered at the very moment Skywarp being semi-coherent would prove very unfortunate, “Oh, TC, where are you? Please hurry…” before Skywarp lapsed back into recharge.

“I’m here…” Thundercracker came back quickly enough, and began washing Skywarp’s faceplates, “here we go…” he saw Skywarp calming down now, “that’s it, you’re okay now…”

They bundled the pregnant Seeker back up and placed the washcloth on his forehelm and let him sleep a bit more. They figured he would be waking up soon.

Once again, Gravechaser was completely perplexed by his son’s devotion to the object of his hate.

Thundercracker saw the Reflectors in an adjoining room, whispering, “Is Soundwave coming back?”

“I’m not sure,” Starscream shrugged.

“Ravage?” TC looked around.

“He’s watching the sparklings,” Starscream told him.

“Well, these guys aren’t gonna be enough,” TC noted; the Reflector triplets, while resourceful in both the espionage and medical fields, possessed none of Soundwave’s telepathic abilities for ghost-detecting, “they didn’t even budge when you called them.”

“I don’t know,” Starscream whispered back, “I think they got busy trying to figure out what to do about Astrotrain now.”

“Yeah well,” TC stood and walked around, “at least he’ll be eating through a straw for a week after that punch I give ‘em. Degusting sluggard…”

At that point, Starscream couldn’t be sure of anything after his horrible encounter with Gravechaser; he didn’t know nearly as much about the paranormal as Megatron did, and this was still all new to him. Did the ghost influence Astrotrain? Could the ghost influence one of them? “What do you think happened, TC?” he finally asked.

“I don’t know,” the blue flyer sighed; it was in the back of his processor that it was the ghost, but, “he thought he was settling an old score?” then shook his helm, “I don’t know…I just…no more missions; I’m not leaving him again.” He rubbed his tired optics now, “And I don’t know how we’re gonna keep each other and the kids all safe.”

“My quarters seems to be safe,” Starscream seemed hopeful, “I mean, nothing’s happened in there, right? Because Megatron’s constantly burning incense and, um, with the crosses and the garlic… That keeps this ghost out, right?”
Thundercracker agreed with this; they could get their poor, injured brother into the warm berth in the guestroom...this Med-Bay seemed to be getting colder by the minute, “We’ll tell Soundwave that either he has to stay here on guard duty or release him tonight, so we can protect him.”

Starscream nodded; it sounded like a plan.

Gravechaser tried, but tonight was unable to influence them. He cursed that they were withstanding his control; failing to understand why their love for each other was so powerful. Well, no matter, Skywarp would be waking up soon and remembering that dream...

“Is he sedated?” TC asked, walking around.

“No,” Starscream shook his helm, “Just...really warm out. He’s been asleep for a few hours now,” it was nearly nine at night, “probably be hungry when he wakes up...”

It just struck TC as funny, “He’s ALWAYS hungry, Star...” it was the first time he grinned since this happened.

“You’re telling me,” Starscream couldn’t stifle his laughter, “can he pack it away or what?”

That’s when Skywarp began to wake up in earnest, and neither brother noticed at first.

“O-Oh, God,” TC was laughing now, rubbing his optics, “you’d think there was six in there.”

“Hey, I had three, and I wasn’t like this!” Starscream laughed, “Did you know he ate my dinner today?”

“Oh, he does that to me all the time!” TC laughed back, “he’ll be like, ‘Are you gonna finish that?’ and I’m like, ‘I guess not!’”

They were both laughing when Skywarp opened his optics and started to sit up; he was hurt and embarrassed; the emotional pain as severe as the physical at the moment.
Chapter 95: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter 95:

By Transformersnewfan

“O-Oh,” Starscream and Thundercracker realized he was awake; they rushed over and hugged him and helped him sit up; the cracks in Skywarp’s backstrut sent waves of shooting pains through his chassis, and he keened in agony through the oxygen mask, “AAAAUUUGGGHHH!”

“It’s okay, Warp,” TC pulled the mask off and wrapped his arms around him, careful not aggravate any of his various injuries, “it’s okay…Oh, I was so worried about you…”

But Skywarp didn’t feel the same way. His dream featuring his brother and Gravechaser in a father-and-son sitcom setting still fresh in his CPU; he felt so groggy from the medicine; his optics were cloudy, and his faceplates were looking sick; his broken leg was stiff, and his wings were numbed, and, oh yeah, he was nearly eight months pregnant. He refused to hug back.

Thundercracker didn’t realize this was done in malice at first; he just assumed the other was hurting, so he sat back and rubbed his brother’s shoulders.

“Ttook you long enough,” Skywarp narrowed his cloudy optics at his formerly-beloved oldest brother, “finally decided to show up, huh?”

“I’m so sorry,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “we had to fly around the snowstorm,” he kept rubbing the other’s shoulders.

“Get away,” Skywarp sneered and pushed his brother back, “don’t pretend.”

Starscream was surprised by this.

Thundercracker didn’t understand, “Skywarp—”

“I SAID DON’T PRETEND!” Skywarp shrieked now, “YOU DON’T CARE! IF YOU CARED, YOU WOULDA COME AND S-SAW ME HERE!”

“Skywarp,” Thundercracker tried to explain, “I came here as soon as I got home.”

“NO, YOU DIDN’T!” Skywarp began sobbing bitterly.

Thundercracker: “I did—”

“NO!” Skywarp cried out, “Y-YOU WERE WITH HIM!”

Neither Thundercracker nor Starscream knew who Skywarp was referring to.

“Warpy, I came right here,” TC whispered, trying to calm his little brother down, “I-I’ve been here for hours now…you were asleep…”

“It’s true,” Starscream tried now, “you’ve been sleeping, but TC’S been here all this time.”

“JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!” Skywarp cried out before he started keening, feeling the pain again;
he covered his faceplates with his hands, the left one all bandaged.

Thundercracker couldn’t help himself; he went to hug his crying little brother, whispering, “Don’t cry…please don’t cry…Starscream and I are gonna make it better.”

Skywarp sighed heavily; he wanted to believe that now, more than ever. He hugged back this time; leaning on TC’s shoulder. Hi, Uncle!: His little unborn sparkling calmed down hearing his vocals as well.

Gravechaser snarled at their togetherness; he stood right above them now, watching them through the floor.

Noticing how cold the room was becoming, Thundercracker pulled the blanket over his still-armorless little brother, who only had the hospital gown on, “Star, where’s his pedes coverings?”

“Uh,” Starscream had to think, “Spectro put everything in the closet.”

The blue Seeker got up to get them.

They were quiet for a moment, then Skywarp whispered miserably, “I’m never going to fly again, guys.” It was the most sparkbreaking statement any Seeker could make. He had coolant tears streaming down his faceplates.

They both rushed to comfort him now.

“No, no, darling,” Starscream tried, taking the other’s hands in his own, “that’s not what happened. I know you can’t feel your wings now, but that doesn’t mean the worst has happened.”

“Star and I are gonna take you home,” TC whispered, “Just lemme get Soundwave.”

“NO!” Skywarp screamed, again shoving Thundercracker back, “I DON’T WANNA GO HOME, I DON’T WANNA GO TO OUR QUARTERS OR STAR’S QUARTERS OR ANYWHERE WITH YOU EVER AGAIN!!!”

Thundercracker was stunned; his little brother’s ire seemed to be reserved only for him and not the ghost; also, Skywarp didn’t react like this when Starscream said anything or tried to hold him, “W-What?”

“Hey, hey,” Starscream told him, trying desperately to calm him down, “that’s our brother there; he didn’t do this to you.”

Skywarp’s faceplates crumpled, and more coolant tears burst from his optics, “WAAAHHHH…” he let sick, “S-Star…it hurts…”

“Oh,” Starscream hugged his little brother tightly, letting him cry now, “I know it does, Warp…I know you don’t feel good, baby…”

“I-I love you, Warp,” TC begged, “I love you with all my spark; I would do anything for you, buddy…” apparently a glutton for punishment, he again opened his arms and went to his brother.

Starscream was holding Skywarp, and Skywarp was facing Thundercracker; but as the blue Seeker stepped forward, Gravechaser became visible behind him! The wicked spirit grinned and flexed his claws.

“AAAAUUUUGGGGGHHHHH!!!!” Skywarp scooted back in fear, then immediately howled in pain,
“OOOOWWWW!” the cracks in his backstruct felt as if they shifted and caused horrible pain. He looked again, and the ghost had disappeared; neither of his brothers seemed to have seen or felt his presence.

Thundercracker’s optics widen, whispering inaudibly, “He thinks I’m him…” it was a good guess, even though it was not quite correct. He felt like crying himself now, reaching out to his dear, sweet brother, “Skywarp, it’s me, I swear to God, it’s me, brother…Look at me…”

Skywarp was gasping and keening; his spark ached, he felt so betrayed, so hurt, he realized that this ghost was after him because of Thundercracker; Thundercracker was this mech’s son, and he felt that he, Skywarp, had come between them, and now, he was going to torture the pregnant Seeker until he…he…they…

“W-Why, Teecee?” Skywarp’s vocals were a painful whine, “why did…WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?! IF YOU L-LOVED M-ME, THEN WHY?! HUH?!”

“What am I doing?” Thundercracker whispered, begging to know, “What is it, Skywarp?”

Starscream was at a loss for what to do; he just waited for their youngest brother to speak.

Skywarp felt like he was going to start hyperventilating now.

:Momma, calm! Momma calm!: his unborn daughter told him, :Momma no yell at uncle!:

The black and purple Seeker felt like purging his tanks; he was scared, but tired of getting hurt; he realized that he could have lost his baby; that fall could have killed his baby; For the past few months, he tried avoiding the ghost on his own; he had tried staying close to his brothers; he had tried staying close to Soundwave; Megatron had tried the incense; everyone had tried so hard to protect him, and Crystal and the ghost had breached their efforts at every turn. There was only one thing left to do; he had to gather his strength and tell his brothers the truth.

“T-Teecee…Star…” Skywarp began; his poor vocals hurt from screaming so much, “I-I can’t do this anymore…Crystal c-could have been k-killed today…” he looked so hurt as he turned to his eldest brother, and spit it out as fast as a could and as clearly as he could before he lost the nerve, “The ghost that’s after me is your Father, TC, he’s the ghost of your Father.”

“Oh,” Gravechaser shook his helm in disgust, “so unwise.”

Thundercracker paused, not believing the accusation at all, “Now come on,” he told his little brother softly, “you know that’s not true.”

Starscream didn’t know how to react.

“It is true, TC,” Skywarp was keeping himself calm, trying his best to be taken seriously, “he told me several times that he’s your Father.”

“Well,” Thundercracker shook his helm, “you can’t believe anything this Thing has to say.”

“You don’t believe me,” Skywarp’s faceplates broke again with the realization, “I’m telling you the truth…” then he started yelling again, “IT’S THE TRUTH, TC!”

“Look,” Thundercracker kept his tone even, “I don’t want you believing anything this slagger is putting into your CPU, you understand?!” he was talking to Skywarp like he was a sparkling.

Skywarp felt his resolve shatter; if it was possible to feel even more betrayed, he felt that way, “No,
Thundercracker, I AM the one telling you this! He looks like you! Doesn’t it occur to you that he’s from the same prison your Father died in?! HUH?!” he pounded his fists against the medical berth, “IT’S THE TRUTH!!! I SWEAR IT’S THE TRUTH!!”

“Not true,” Thundercracker shook his helm, continuing to deny this, “not true…”

“Is it, TC?” Starscream finally spoke, “you think that’s why he’s here?”

“It’s probably impersonating my Father,” Thundercracker folded his arms, “It’s impersonated me; It does this, mimicking or whatever.”

“N-No,” Skywarp started crying again, “IT IS YOUR FATHER, TEECEE!” he turned to Starscream now, “Y-You believe me, d-don’t y-you, Star?!”

“I don’t know what to think,” Starscream admitted, “I-I was so sure for so long that it was Mirage, t-that when I saw…” he felt the same fear he had experienced just thinking about his encounter with Gravechaser, “I…” he remembered how it had begun…

Flashback:

The berthroom door was open now, and the outline of a blue Seeker in the darkness was visible.

“TC?” Star asked groggily, “W-Wha?”

Something was very wrong. The first thing Starscream realized was how deathly cold the berthroom had become; a whiff of his breath was seen as if he were outside in the snowstorm. The second was that the shadowy figure before him was definitely NOT Thundercracker. He reached out for his Trine brother through their Bond and found the blue Seeker was sleeping. They had been cutting each other off for weeks, but they had only reopened their Bond the previous night, at TC’s insistence; an act that would probably save Starscream’s life now.

The strange blue Seeker stood before him in the darkness, a faint sneer on his…It’s faceplates.

All Starscream kept thinking over and over again was that this was not Thundercracker. This was not Thundercracker. This was who he had seen in the hallway that day. This was who Dirge must have seen on the Tarmac last night. This was who was hurting Skywarp. This…

“Who are you?” the red and white Seeker gasped as he sat up slowly; he was suddenly terrified.

Gravechaser approached now, and as he did, he started to change, growing and morphing into his evil form: black beard, upturned pointed wings, red, insanely long claws, and those cold, black, unlit optics.

Starscream was petrified; he now had a full view of the entity that was stalking his younger brother. It was not a mech; It actually had a more transparent essence, almost like pure electricity, and It was there, but not there. The very existence of this being shattered everything Starscream had ever been taught about science and the universe around him. He felt his sanity crumbling in his processor.

Gravechaser began laughing in a mocking way, “Muhahahahahahahaha….”

And that was when it hit the Trine Leader: THIS was Gravechaser. THIS was what poor Skywarp was seeing. This is what poor Skywarp was being attacked by. THIS was who Thundercracker had seen in their living room that made him run away from their home screaming. THIS was who had hit Skywarp with the sonogram tape. THIS was who had started the fire in the Base on Christmas Eve. THIS was who burned Skywarp’s hand and nearly froze him to death in a deadly water tank made
from Soundwave’s shower stall. THIS was who the Cassettes had seen and begun firing on wildly. THIS was who Darkmount and his brothers were terrified of. THIS WAS GRAVECHASER!

“AAAAUUUUUGGGGHHHH!!!!!” Starscream shrieked like he never had before.

End of Flashback:

“Nugh,” Starscream snapped back into reality; he realized something, “TC, have you?” he shook his helm, “Have you seen this entity as a Seeker?”

“No,” Thundercracker bit his lower lip complements, “I only saw that heinous Thing once,” Gravechaser had seen himself in the Herald form in their living room, “and I haven’t been in my home since.” He still stubbornly refused to believe the accusation about the ghost’s true identity though.

“I’ve seen what Skywarp has seen,” Starscream could admit that to himself, “and he…It could be your Father; I saw a blue Seeker that looked like you, but…not…”

“So, what are you thinking?!?” Thundercracker was enraged now, “So me and my Father were the only blue Seekers to ever come outta Vos or Vosnia or Cybertron now? HUH? Thought you were smarter than that!”

“So, HE’S SMART AND I’M NOT?!?” Skywarp keened, “IS THAT WHAT YOU THINK, TEECEE?!?”

“JUST LEAVE MY FATHER OUTTA THIS!” Thundercracker roared now, “YOU KNOW I DON’T LIKE TO THINK ABOUT HIM, AND NOW YOU’RE THROWING HIM IN MY FACEPLATES AND BLAMING ME FOR YOUR PROBLEMS!”

“IT IS YOUR FATHER!” Skywarp shouted back, “IT IS YOUR FATHER, AND YOU DON’T BELIEVE ME, TEECEE!!! I’M YOUR BROTHER AND YOU DON’T BELIEVE ME!!!”

“You need to shut your mouth!” the blue Seeker was furious now, “YOU’LL SAY ANYTHING TO PROTECT WHOEVER THIS GHOST REALLY IS, INCLUDING ACCUSING MY DEAD FATHER!!! JUST LEAVE HIM OUTTA THIS!!!”

“YOUR FATHER IS TRYING TO KILL ME!” Skywarp continued insisting, “HE TRIED TO KILL ME!!! HE TRIED TO KILL MY BABY!!! WHY CAN’T YOU BELIEVE ME???!?”

Thundercracker slapped him in the faceplates hard.

Starscream gasped and covered his mouth.

“If you don’t take every word of this back,” Thundercracker pointed his digit and snarled in his little brother’s faceplates, “then I want NOTHING to do with you anymore. I want you OUT of my apartment; out of my stuff, and out of my LIFE! DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!”

Skywarp searched the blue Seeker’s optics, not seeing the ghost, but seeing his brother; his brother hated him now, and there was no going back. The left side of his faceplates were red now, where he was struck by his brother’s fist; yet another injury to the left side of his chassis to add to the already long list, “Thundercracker…the ghost is your Father.”

“We’re done,” TC shook his helm and backed up, “WE’RE DONE! YOU HEAR ME WE ARE DONE!!! I DON’T EVER WANNA SEE YOU AGAIN! DON’T EVER TALK TO ME EVER AGAIN!!! WE’RE THROUGH!!!!”
Thundercracker stormed out of the room, bursting through the Med-Bay doors in a fit of rage.

Gravechaser had watched the entire scene.

As soon as he was gone, Skywarp let out a howl in agony; his spark truly felt a stab when Thundercracker shut the Trine Bond between them tightly; Starscream too, felt the sensation of being cut off. The pregnant flyer sobbed now, crying as he had never cried before, “WWWAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

Starscream wrapped his arms around Skywarp in a tight hug; the little unborn sparkling quivering from all the yelling; the three of them held onto each other and cried now.
Chapter 96:

By Transformersnewfan

“The LORD is my shepherd,” Megatron said the prayer, “I shall not want.” He heated up the charcoal, and placed it in the incense burner, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.” Then he placed the incense rocks on the charcoal, “He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.”

Once the incense began its indirect burning, the white smoke rose up, Megatron picked up the burner and walked with it, going room to room in his quarters; his triplets listening and the Cassettes looking on as well, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.”

Megatron continued into the hallway, “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” He went from room to room, “Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.”

He made his way down to the basement, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

From there, he went to each quarters, taking the time to stop in front of every mech and femme, who waved the smoke towards themselves with an open hand.

As he walked through the halls, he continued to pray, “Dear Lord, please help us, save us, and protect us. Please watch over and protect Skywarp and his unborn child; my beloved Starscream, Darkmount, Dawning, and Darkwing; Ma, Thundercracker, Soundwave and his sons, and all the soldiers that praise Your name.”

At the same time, Soundwave worked at the Computer Consul; he found the moments leading up to Skywarp’s assault, almost surprised that the cameras WORKED for once, but unfortunately, Astrotrain’s back was to the camera, and he couldn’t see what was being said if anything.

The Tapedeck took off his visor and rubbed his optics, feeling his spark ached for his Seeker now; he wished he could turn back the very time the way he could rewind a tape, and he could stop Skywarp’s fall from happening. Why, oh why did he take Skywarp with him there? “Why didn’t I take you to Starscream first? Then you wouldn’t—” he found himself crying.

“ARAH!” Thundercracker ripped out of the Med-Bay, storming through the hallways, punching several walls as he went; the force knocking his frame backward. Finally, his emotions overtook him, “AAAARRRRRAAAAAHHHHH!” the hurt, the pain, the hate, the anger, everything was swirling inside his chassis like a tornado.

“W-Warp…What happened?” he was asking his brother as if he could hear him, despite the closed Bond; in reality, he was asking himself, “What happened to all of us? T-This…”
Their family had been a happy one. Sure, the three Seeker had their occasional tussles, but never like this. What happened to their plans? They were going to raise Skywarp’s sparkling together; with Starscream’s little triplets coming to visit them. He and their middle brother had decorated the nursery…and now, he had just kicked his carrying little brother out of his life forever. He realized he had kicked the sparkling out with him. What was he going to do now? Live the rest of his life in aloneness? He couldn’t even think straight the times that Skywarp flew to New York. How was he going to live alone without his little brother?

“Why did I?” Thundercracker realized it now; it was about his Father. His Father. The Father that he had hoped had been put to rest so long ago. This ghost…this entity…was now pretending to be his Father. To pose as a pathetic High-Grade addict felt like a final cruelty towards the mech that had died in prison at a murderer’s hands. TC had feared his Father in life, but he had never hated him. He felt pity for his Father; especially since becoming an adult, he understood better than it was the substance abuse that was at the spark of the mech’s problems. And, he believed, that when his Father died, that the mech would find the peace that had alluded him in life.

The revelation that Gravechaser had been an inmate of the Iacon Correctional Center, and Megatron’s theory that this entity had come through a portal, a gateway, and was preventing the dead prisoners from their eternal rest, had broken Thundercracker’s spark in two. He couldn’t stand the idea that his Father, a sad drunk in life, was now unable to rest properly because of the same mech that was after Skywarp, was all too much. It was all too much.

If only he knew…

Gravechaser watched his son’s violent reaction; he found it endlessly fascinating how Thundercracker refused even to entertain the notion that he was behind the haunting. The ghost felt he didn’t know his son well enough to understand why, although, such a development was pleasing. An extra bonus being that his son had severed ties with Skywarp; something he himself had been unable to achieve. He relished how he had finally gotten them apart. He would have to keep Thundercracker in the dark about his identity at all costs now. He still needed to punish Skywarp; but for now, he needed to follow Thundercracker in order to understand him better.

“This is not good…” Soundwave was reading Astrotrain’s report on the mission when he heard yelling in the hallway; he got up to look.

“I’VE HAD IT WITH THIS SLAG!” Thundercracker was bellowing through the halls, furious at the whole situation, “WHERE ARE YA?! COME ON! WHERE ARE YA?!”

The Cassettes were watching the triplets in Megatron’s quarters; Rumble went to the door to look, but Ravage put out a paw and stopped him, “Do not involve yourself.”

“YOU’VE DONE EVERYTHING TO DESTROY US!” the blue Seeker roared, “AND NOW, YOU HIDE IN THE SHADOWS?! WHAT KIND OF SLAG IS THIS?!”

Megatron had just finished smoking the Coneheads’ quarters, “Peace be with you,” when they heard TC’s not-so-little tantrum. He stepped back into the hallway now.

Thundercracker was at the front door of his quarters now; he was too angry to be scared anymore; he tried the knob, but it was locked from the inside. “ENOUGH!” he barked as he kicked the door in, breaking it open.
“Thundercracker!” Megatron called as he ran over, “Don’t go in there by yourself!”

But Thundercracker wasn’t listening; he ran inside, fully expecting to find someone living there, but nothing had changed since he and Skywarp had left screaming that night. Of the living, only Starscream had been in there ever since.

“Thundercracker!” Megatron came in right behind him, incense burning still smoking, “What are you doing?”

“WHERE ARE YA?!” the blue Seeker hollered at the ceiling, “SHOW YOURSELF!!!”

“Be careful,” Megatron warned; he had to be ready for anything now.

“YOU SON OF A GLITCH!!!” TC continued, yelling at the ceiling, “ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?!”

Gravechaser jumped down to the first floor now, through that wretch’s closet in his son’s quarters. It was Thundercracker AND Skywarp’s quarters, but Gravechaser didn’t acknowledge that. He waited for his son to come in now; he readied his claws…

But instead of falling into the trip, TC stayed where he was standing in the living room. He looked around in every direction, “WELL?!” Another thought crossed his processor: Mirage. “MIRAGE, THIS HAD BETTER NOT BE YOU!!!” but his tone was different; his vocals were cracking, “YOU AND HOUND ARE MAKING THOSE IMAGES WE’RE SEEING?! HUH?!” he was grasping at straws now, “IS THIS ALL A GAME TO YOU TWO?! WHAT IS THIS, A GAME?!?” He felt his spark beating fast, and he was cycling air heavily, “MIRAGE?! HOUND?! C-Come on, guys…” now he started to cry; he was crying like Sky—oh, God…Emotionally spent, he looked back at Megatron, looking like a frightened sparkling.

The Decepticon Leader didn’t have to take a wild guess; Skywarp had told Thundercracker who the ghost was. He didn’t know what to do other than to step forward and place a supportive hand on TC’s shoulder.

Soundwave entered as well now, looking around with his sensors, “Someone’s in the berthroom.”

They both looked up.

The Tapedeck approached the door; he turned the knob and went inside.

As usual, there was no one there, but the closet door was open.

Soundwave stepped inside the berthroom, closed the closet door, and looked around, “No one is here,” he called back, “but the level of negative energy tells me It just left.”

“Well, as long as we’re inside,” Megatron tried to sound positive, “let’s try cleansing the place.”

TC watched, feeling horribly depressed and guilty, as Megatron took the incense burner from corner to corner, room to room, as he recited prayers; including Psalm 109. “God, I praise You. Do not be silent.” He went to their kitchenette, “Wicked people and liars have spoken against me; they have
told lies about me.”

The blue Seeker kept looking around, hoping Mirage’s generator would run out of juice and the blue Autobot would appear suddenly, a look of shock on his faceplates that he was discovered. But TC knew that probably wasn’t going to happen.

“They have said hateful things about me and attack me for no reason,” Megatron stepped into their wash racks, making sure the incense smoke was in their shower stall, “They attacked me, even though I loved them and prayed for them.”

TC followed Megatron as he entered their berthroom, “I was good to them, but they repay me with evil. I loved them, but they hate me in return.” Soundwave came in as well. Megatron waved his hand over the smoke to waft it over each of their berths, “They say about me, ‘Have an evil person work against him, and let an accuser stand against him.’”

He passed over Skywarp’s berth now, where Starscream had fled in terror, “‘When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let even his prayers show his guilt.’”

He stepped forward, into the planned nursery for the already-loved femme, “‘Let his life be cut short, and let another man replace him as leader.’” Megatron stepped forward, into the planned nursery for the already-loved femme, “‘Let his children become orphans and his wife a widow.’” He stopped at the crib, “‘Make his children wander around, begging for food. Let them be forced out of the ruins in which they live. Let the people to whom he owes money take everything he owns and let strangers steal everything he has worked for.’”

He waved the incense burner over the sparkling’s toys that TC and Starscream had bought for her, “‘Let no one show him love or have mercy on his orphaned children. Let all his descendants die and be forgotten by those who live after him.’” He walked around the small space that was Starscream’s side of the berthroom for many years before the red and white Seeker Bonded with him, happily helping construct the nursery now, “‘LORD, remember how wicked his ancestors were, and don’t let the sins of his mother be wiped out.’”

He took a deep air intake, and continued, “‘LORD, always remember their sins. Then make people forget about them completely.’”

TC stepped into the space as Megatron continued, “‘He did not remember to be loving. He hurt the poor, the needy, and those who were sad until they were nearly dead. He loved to put curses on others, so let those same curses fall on him. He did not like to bless others, so do not let good things happen to him.’” He opened the sparkling’s closet; they realized that Starscream had folded all the baby’s new clothes and blankets, organizing everything perfectly, “‘He cursed others as often as he wore clothes. Cursing others filled his body and his life, like drinking water and using olive oil.’”

He walked around, stopping at each of the corners, “‘So let the curses cover him like clothes and wrap around him like a belt.’” He finished now, “‘May the LORD do these things to those who accuse me, to those who speak evil against me.’”

Megatron walked around the nursery once more, making sure he had covered every inch of the place, “‘But you, LORD GOD, be kind to me, so others will know You are good. Because Your love is good, save me. I am poor and helpless and very sad.’” He walked back through the berthroom now, “‘I am dying like an evening shadow; I am shaken off like a locust. My knees are weak from fasting, and I have grown thin.’”

His optics locked on Skywarp’s closet now, “‘My enemies insult me; they look at me and shake their heads.’”

Soundwave stepped aside so that Megatron could stand in front of the closet, “‘LORD my God, help me; because You are loving, save me.’” He opened the closet door now, “‘Then they will know that Your power has done this; they will know that You have done it, LORD.’”

Megatron held the incense burner all around the closet, making sure the smoke traveled up to the trap
door, “They may curse me, but You bless me. They may attack me, but they will be disgraced. Then I, Your servant, will be glad. Let those who accuse me be disgraced and covered with shame like a coat. I will thank the LORD very much; I will praise Him in front of many people. He defends the helpless and saves them from those who accuse them. Amen.”

The three mechs exited the Seekers’ quarters now. None of them was uttering a word further.

Soundwave stopped suddenly, “You hear that?”

“No,” Megatron listened; TC shook his helm.

“That’s the trap door on the garage shoot,” Soundwave could hear tiny noises like this, even floors above, “I think It’s gone.”

Back in the Med-Bay, Starscream doted over his little brother, letting him keen his spark out over Thundercracker before the younger Seeker was finally so extremely tired, and worn out from his injuries, that Starscream laid him back on the berth.

Now, Skywarp was laying on the pillows, his wings dead to him thanks to the medicine that had numbed them, and his left leg elevated by a slang; he longed to lay on his left side and face Starscream, but he couldn’t move his chassis at all. It was only when his unborn sparkling wiggled around inside his belly that he remembered he was still alive.

“Try to relax,” Starscream curled up next to him, so that the two Seekers’ faceplates were only inches apart, “I promise you, he’ll cool off and apologize,” he stroked the darker flyer’s faceplates.

“He’s never been this mad at me, Star,” Skywarp sniffed, the coolant tears coming back, “I d-don’t know w-what I-I’m gonna do n-now…I-I’m homeless.”

“Shhh,” Starscream continued to brush the other’s helm vents in a calming manner, trying to get him back to sleep, “you know that’s not true. But if you don’t want to see him right now, you know my quarters is your quarters. You knew I love you, and Soundwave likes you too.”

Skywarp just sighed, still worried.

“Just focus on something else,” Starscream whispered, “pick something, anything that has a calming factor,” he pulled the covers up to their chins and wrapped his arm around him.

Skywarp tried to snuggle as best he could, “My sparkling…” he was scared, holding his belly.

“You have any questions for me?” Starscream asked.

“Is my baby okay, Star?” the darker Seeker’s vocals were a whine, “What do they say?”

“She seems to be alright,” Starscream nodded, “every time I asked, Soundwave said she’s stable; and I’ve been watching her sparkbeat on this monitor, and it’s been steady.” He rubbed his belly, “Isn’t that right, my little niece…”

:That is right, uncle!: Crystal didn’t really understand what he was saying, but she liked to answer when things were phrased as a question. :Crystal say, now YOU First Uncle!:

“Whoa,” Skywarp rasped out; he realized his little sparkling understood what had happened between their Trine, “she um…She’s glad you’re here.”
“Oh yeah?” Starscream smirked, “Wanna name her after me?”

“Her name’s Crystal,” Skywar rolled his optics, “come on, Star, she already knows her name; I couldn’t change it even if I WANTED to now.”

The tiny unborn sparkling wiggled playfully.

But then, a sad, wanting look crossed Starscream’s faceplates despite his smile, “Tell me how she knows her name.”

“She’s like,” Skywar paused to think, “answers what I say and calls herself Crystal. Like she says, ‘Crystal love you,’ through our Bond.”

“Oh,” Starscream sighed, smiling sadly.

“What?” Skywar was getting sleepy again, but he was curious, “Don’t your mechlings do that at all?”

Starscream looked away, “I wouldn’t know…”

There was a pause; Skywar waited for his brother to speak.

“I’m not their biological Mother,” Starscream bit his lip components, “I have no Bond with them.”

“W-Wha?” Skywar couldn’t understand; he had seen Starscream through his nine months of pregnancy every day; he was in the delivery room when Starscream gave birth to them, “But how?”

Starscream decided to come clean, “I wanted a sparkling for a long time; but no matter what we did, we weren’t conceiving. I would have these, just, HUGE fights with Megatron. He never acted like it bothered him either way. He would say, ‘Oh, well, you’re my family, Starscream,’ and whatever slag. But I knew something was wrong that we weren’t getting anywhere.” He looked away, at the wall, “I wanted to get us both tested medically; I wanted answers. I was so SURE it was Megatron’s fault. I was absolutely convinced that one of his opponents must have punched him in the diodes and that was the problem. He denied it, of course, and when he refused to get tested, I told him that if he DIDN’T get tested, I would divorce him. I told him I did it once before him and I would do it again!”

Skywar just listened now; he had no idea.

“So…” Starscream continued, “He got tested. It wasn’t Soundwave. If Megatron ever told him, I don’t know; but I’m pretty certain he knows anyway. I picked the specialist; someone that Cascade had known for thirty years. And um,” he paused, “Megatron wasn’t the problem.” Star looked off into space, “He was perfectly healthy; with a 0-numbered cell count of thirty-one million, to be exact. Like a youngling more than half his age.”

Skywar remembered that day so many months ago when Starscream explained all about new sparkling coding to him.

“So…it was me,” Starscream looked back at his brother, “it was because of me we couldn’t have sparklings. I couldn’t…I didn’t want to give up yet. Where there’s life, there’s hope,” coolant tears began to form on his optics, “I got another specialist, a femme this time; Cascade told me this femme’s family was from the planet Caminus; that they were all scientists. So, um, I closed the Bond to Megatron; closed the Trine Bond, and I…stayed at her spa for a week.”

Skywar remembered that; he remembered worrying about him.
“I had so many tests,” Starscream shook his helm as he looked off into space again, “painful tests. And finally, she figured out what was wrong. I tested positive for an enzyme that was blocking my binary coding.” The shame washing over him a new, “She said…she said Seekers don’t have this enzyme. And that…only Shuttles carried it.”

Skywarp’s optics widened; he realized what Starscream was saying: He suffered from an interfacing disease he had caught from Skyfire.

“She recommended surgery,” Starscream continued, “of course I said yes. So, I had surgery a few days later, right there in her spa.” He swallowed, taking a breath, “She felt that she, um, cleaned it all out. And she asked me if I wanted to see it. It was like…black slime.”

Skywarp cringed inwardly, but he didn’t want to interrupt.

“And the following day,” Starscream went on, “I had a follow-up procedure; she injected me with this serum that’s supposed to prevent the enzyme from ever re-growing again. And that’s also the anti-rejection medications I take.” He felt drained, “I never told anyone that story…Not even Thundercracker.”

“Oh, Star…” Skywarp finally spoke, “W-Why didn’t you come to us? W-Wha…”

“I was going to,” Starscream cringed, “I just couldn’t…bring myself to talk about it; talking about it makes things real.” He wiped his optics, determined not to cry, “Um, the final day I was there, she performed the final procedure. I told her I wanted to have sparklings with my Bondmate, and she said…” his vents hitched, “she said this would be our best chance.”

Skywarp was covering his mouth, listening.

“She had to put me under,” Starscream explained, “she did a procedure called ‘Retrieval,’” meaning she had to go into my gestation chamber and extract 1-numbered cells from there. When I woke up, she told me she was able to extract three 1-numbered cells.”

Skywarp didn’t want to interrupt.

“And I was awake for the last part,” Starscream finished, “she did the ‘Transfer,’ that was where she put the three 1-numbered cells back into my gestation chamber through a catheter. That hurt too, but by that time I was indifferent to the pain. She said this was to put the cells closer where my mate’s 0-numbered cells would enter my gestation chamber. And then there were more shots, and finally, she instructed me that the following next twelve hours would be the best time to conceive with Megatron.” He sighed, tired from reliving the experience, “And, you guys picked me up, and I was home four hours later. And Megatron said he was happy that I was back, and I was like, ‘Just hurry,’” he smiled, “it worked, all three of the 1-numbered cells worked…nine months later, we had our family.”

Skywarp smiled at the memory, but then frowned again, “Then why did you say you’re not their Mother?”

“Uh, well…” Starscream looked at his brother, “I can’t remember when, but…I was pregnant, and I would talk to them, and I never felt them answer,” he laughed nervously now, “T-There was this one time, I can laugh about it now because everything’s okay, but there was that one night where Megatron and you and TC were all away on a mission together, and I was home with Soundwave. That was the only time all of you left me alone at once, but I digress. I woke up in the middle of the night; they weren’t kicking me, and I tried to talk to them in my spark, and nothing…” he sighed, “I panicked and ran crying to Soundwave; I was sobbing, ‘Soundwave, they’re dead! They’re dead!’
and of course, he’s all calm, and he scans me with his optics, and he goes,” Star made his vocals like Soundwave’s, “‘Negative, I detect all three of the sparks,’ but at that point, I was insane and demanding an ultrasound; and he said he would walk me to the Med-Bay, and I was hysterical, and I told him to get me a wheelchair; and he acted like I was keeping him from his slagging work.”

Skywarp was surprised, “I didn’t know…”

“Well,” Starscream took a deep air intake, “I didn’t tell anyone; he did the ultrasound and they were all alive…he told me they were most likely sleeping. And by then, they were moving again; I never felt so embarrassed as a scientist; I swore him to secrecy.”

“Is that why he didn’t tell me?” Skywarp wondered about his lover.

“I never told you guys or Megatron,” Starscream nodded before continuing, “because that was when I realized that I have no connection to them. I-I was…their carrier and nothing more. She…that specialist, she must have mixed up my 1-numbered cells with someone else’s,” he started to tear up, and looked away, “there were other patients there when I was there, or maybe, the cells were hers.”

He looked at Skywarp, “She has the same colors as I do.”

The black and purple Seeker didn’t know what to think now; he wanted to comfort his older brother, but he wasn’t the best with words, “Oh, Star…M-Maybe there’s some other reason they don’t, um…” he thought of something, “Maybe because they’re always together, they talk to each other or something? I mean, Crystal’s only got me to talk to, so that’s why she talks to me, but they talk to each other?”

Starscream just sighed, “But I never know what’s going on with them; I don’t even know how they are right now,” he shook his helm, “Ravage had better be watching them.”

Skywarp didn’t know what to tell him; he reached over as best he could and hugged him, “D-Don’t worry, Star…I know they think you’re their Mommy and they love you…” he thought of something, “Y-You know, I got scared and woke Soundwave up in the middle of the night too. M-Maybe it’s normal.”

“Oh yeah?” Starscream tried to grin, “I didn’t know that.”

“Yeah, uh,” Skywarp thought back, “that was when I first got pregnant, and I was having nightmares, and I thought I’d lost her, so I woke him up in the middle of the night. Turned out that she was fine, and I had just wet the berth.”

“And that was because of the ghost?” Starscream asked.

“That was Gravechaser, yeah,” Skywarp nodded; his thoughts going back to Thundercracker now, “Star, TC hates me now…B-But I swear, I know it’s his Father…Y-You saw him too, Star…You believe me, don’t cha?”

After a long pause, Starscream looked at him sadly, “Yes.”

Skywarp felt a bit of relief at this; at least Starscream believed him.

“I’ll tell you why,” Starscream whispered, “when I frat saw him, I thought it was TC, but that night that I saw him in your berthroom, I-I mean, I’m not Soundwave, but I could tell his…essence was like TC’s. And he looked a LOT like TC, but up close…” he shivered at the memory file, “It wasn’t him.”

Flashback:
The strange blue Seeker stood before him in the darkness, a faint sneer on his faceplates.

End of Flashback:

“Warp?” Starscream asked, “Remember how Megatron said that TC has never seen this mech’s Seeker form?”

Skywarp nodded.

“TC hasn’t seen this ghost when he’s a Seeker,” Starscream whispered, “if he sees him, he’ll realize you’re telling the truth.” He sighed now, thinking about his encounter with Gravechaser, “Not that I would wish that on our brother, by the way. This…monster, said a lot of hateful things…”

Flashback:

“This IS your fault, you know,” Gravechaser had such a belittling tone to his wicked vocal, “If you hadn’t yelled at Skywarp that day, I wouldn’t be here.”

“W-What?” Starscream didn’t understand, “I-I didn’t yell—”

“If you hadn’t yelled at Skywarp the way you did,” Gravechaser teased, “Skywarp wouldn’t have gotten himself knocked up without a physical, and he wouldn’t be dying now…”

“D-Dying?” Starscream’s processor couldn’t understand, “M-My brother’s dying?”

“And I wouldn’t be here, terrorizing him…” Gravechaser then snapped his digits, and Starscream heard his own vocals now, as if on a playback loop.

“WHERE THE SLAG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH MY SON?!”

“I did NOT give you permission to take my son off the Base, Skywarp!”

“You had NO BUSINESS teaching my sparkling how to fly! I’M their Creator and I and their Sire alone will decide how they learn to fly! You have NO RIGHT to do that! Do you hear me???”

“You had no business teaching MY son anything! You’re not his Creator!”

“Listen to me, you little fool, NEVER, EVER teach MY sparklings anything! DO YOU HEAR ME?!”

Starscream wanted to curl into a ball, shaking and whimpering like a sparkling now. Did he really sound like this?

End of Flashback:

“Hey, Warp?” Starscream whispered now.

“Yeah?” Skywarp looked at him.

“Was he telling me the truth?” Starscream asked sadly, “Did you really get pregnant because you were mad at me? He said I hurt your feelings…and that it’s my fault he was here.”

“N-No, Star,” Skywarp shook his helm, “don’t think that way, okay? I-I…I’ll tell you the truth; from the minute you let me hold your babies, I’ve been in love with them and taking care of them, feeding them, and changing them and stuff. A-And, when you would take them home, cause, I know, they’re your babies, I would miss holding them and cuddling them, especially Darkwing. H-He always lets me cuddle him; the other two don’t like cuddling as much.”

Starscream smiled at that, “I-I know they don’t.”
“And, I wanted to show Darkwing how to fly, y’know?” Skywarp was finally addressing their original fight eight months earlier, “I-I didn’t mean to make you mad at me. I didn’t think it was a big deal; he was having a lotta fun, and you knew he was okay, um…”

That’s when it hit Skywarp. Starscream DIDN’T know his sparkling was okay.

The red and white Seeker looked at him now, knowing he understood now, “Well, no, I didn’t know.”

“Oh man,” Skywarp was sorry now, “now I get it,” he started crying again, “I-I’m s-s-so s-sorry, Star, I didn’t… You hadn’t told me you didn’t know when your babies were okay.”

“Yes, I realized that I didn’t,” Starscream nodded, “and, I apologize for yelling at you that day. I know you would never let anything happen to them,” he squeezed his hand, “and I’m glad you decided to have your own sparkling. You’re gonna love being a Mommy…”

“Um, I just, y’know,” Skywarp smiled, “I wanted my own little sparkling; I mean, maybe at first, I was like, well, I’ll get my own baby, but as soon as I went to that fertility clinic, I knew I REALLY wanted this more than anything in the whole world.”

“Awww…” Starscream wrapped his arms around his little brother and held him tightly now, “it’ll be okay, Warp, your baby’s will be okay, so let’s try and get some rest.”
Chapter 97: By Transformersnewfan

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By the late evening, the frigid snowstorm was in full swing, raging on outside; making the waters crash against the surfaces, and made the Decepticon Underwater Base creek and crack loudly.

And while things were finally on an upswing, with Gravechaser vacating the Base thanks to Megatron’s incense burning, and Skywarp and Starscream finally patching up their relationship, there was still the matter with Thundercracker, who was now sitting vertically in the rocking chair in the triplets’ nursery. He had his faceplates against the armrest, feeling destroyed by his fight with Skywarp.

Dawning pushed himself up to look at his uncle. Darkmount was hoping his Sire would return soon and fix this; in the sparkling’s little processor, his Sire could fix anything.

“It’s not my Father,” TC whispered to himself, “I-It’s not…” he hitched his vents, and the coolant tears began to fall.

Megatron came back in with Darkwing, whom he had just changed the diaper on, and saw the sorry sight of his younger brother-in-law, “I have to deal with Astrotrain now,” he put Darkwing back in the crib with his brothers, “are you going to be alright?”

“I-I just…” Thundercracker was acting like Skywarp, “I-I feel like I did something that I’m gonna regret for the rest of my life…”

“You want me to talk to them?” Megatron offered.

“N-No…” Thundercracker shook his helm, “I can’t…I’m so tired, I can’t keep my optics open.”

“Allright,” the Decepticon Leader covered his triplets with their blankets, before helping the Seeker up and walking him to the guest berthroom, “you need anything, just call us or tell Ravage.”

The blue Seeker felt sick; he was crying openly now; his very spark was hurting over Skywarp.

“Look, um, TC,” Megatron tried to be sympathetic, “it was a long day; we were flying all day, and then we come back to this cluster-slag and your brother’s hurt, but I promise you, we all WILL get through this. Now, get some rest, we’re going to see Prime tomorrow.”

“U-Uh-huh,” TC knew Megatron was right; he just felt so bad, “H-Hey? Y-You got anything to h-help me sleep?”

“Well, let’s see,” Megatron thought was a moment, “I know Starscream has something,” he left and came back with some low-dose Energon-sleeping supplements, “I assume these are safe since Star takes these with his medications.”

“T-Thank you,” Thundercracker waited for Megatron to leave before swallowing six of the pills and hiding under the covers; he pulled his knees up to this canopy glass and cried, sobbing his optics out; it was the worst fight he had ever had with his baby brother.
Soundwave was waiting in the Control Room for Megatron. He knew he should check up on Skywarp and his sparkling soon, so he wanted to get this over with.

“Alright, Soundwave,” Megatron came in now, sitting down beside his friend at the Computer Consul, “show me the surveillance footage.”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave played the tape; it showed himself and Skywarp at the basement door, with the Tapedeck stepping away and ‘Astrotrain’ coming out of nowhere and pushing the pregnant Seeker down the flight of stairs.

Megatron narrowed his optics, searching for clues. He noticed ‘Astrotrain’ was stock straight for a few moments as Skywarp fell before the mech seemed to react in surprise as Soundwave came over.

“He had called me on his Comm.-Link,” Soundwave explained, “he said I needed to check something in the basement, but as you can see here,” he backed up the tape, “he wasn’t anywhere near the basement when he made that call. In fact, I had locked the door after you had ordered the Base locked down. What I DON’T understand is why Astrotrain did this. For a prank? For revenge for one of Skywarp’s pranks? Or what?”

“I just…I can’t believe that,” Megatron shook his helm, “Astro never assaulted a pregnant Transformer in all the years I’ve known him. He was a hero of the Arena like me, Soundwave, once a Gladiator, ALWAYS a Gladiator. And there was nothing that occurred on the mission that makes me think he’d pull something like this.”

“Speaking of the mission,” Soundwave handed him Astrotrain’s report, “check this out.”

Megatron opened the report: Every other sentence was permeated by the phrase, ‘Kill Skywarp,’ such as “Members of Triple Changers Division Kill Skywarp arrived on time of ETA,” and “Approximately Kill Skywarp 2.5 million U.S. dollars Kill Skywarp worth of Swarovski crystals Kill Skywarp were obtained in total.”

“Well, this is obvious,” Megatron waved his hands, “the Thing was in control of him. He’s not gonna put this in writing and go throw him down the stairs. I mean, come on, this is like a confession.”

“You feel he was influenced?” Soundwave asked.

“I’m thinking he was possessed,” Megatron told him.

“Possessed?” this unnerved Soundwave, “you think this entity is capable of something that powerful?”

“Unfortunately,” Megatron leaned back in his swivel chair, “the longer It’s in our Base, the stronger It’s going to get. It’s feeding off Skywarp’s fears and agony.” Soundwave listened as Megatron continued, “I didn’t tell you this, but there was an incident with Thrust. He told me he was on the Tarmac, and the next thing he knew, he was back in the hallway, and he had no memory of coming back down,” he bit his lip components, “that was the night Skywarp almost drowned in your shower stall.”

“My God,” Soundwave had not realized this, “did you notice anything strange on the mission?”

“Not at all,” Megatron shook his helm, “how about when he returned?”
“Let me check,” the Tapedeck backed up the footage to earlier in the day, “this is when they came in.”

The footage showed Astrotrain holding his helm, but that did not prove anything.

“Wait, I just remembered,” Soundwave typed in his request, “he was in the Rec. Room playing handball.”

“Handball?” Megatron recoiled, “He doesn’t play handball!”

“He was throwing a ball from the pool table against the wall,” Soundwave explained, “I told him to go to the gym.”

“You have footage of this?” Megatron asked.

“Affirmative,” Soundwave typed more and brought up the footage.

Unfortunately, the tape only showed Astrotrain in the upper left-hand corner of the screen throwing the eight-ball against the wall; it proved nothing.

“When did he hand in this report?” Megatron asked.

“Not long before the assault,” Soundwave told him, “come to think of it, he was staring at Skywarp when he came in.” a shiver went down his back.

“Can you show me the footage?” Megatron felt sure of his theory.

“Affirmative,” Soundwave switched to the cameras in the Control Room; the footage showed Astrotrain standing in the doorway, staring at Skywarp while the pregnant Seeker lay on the sofa with Ratbat.

Megatron leaned forward; he drummed his digits on the Computer Consul, he couldn’t figure out how to prove or disprove his theory.

Soundwave was still skeptical, “He could have been thinking of when Skywarp pulled a prank on him and decided to take his revenge.”

But Megatron couldn’t believe that, “Show me the footage of the hallway camera.”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave did so, pulling up the tape.

The footage showed Astrotrain returning to his quarters, holding his helm.

“Rewind it,” Megatron instructed, “I want to see what he looked like before he came in.”

Soundwave rewound the tape and then hit play.

The footage showed ‘Astrotrain’ walking towards the Control Room; his report in one hand. He glanced up the camera and continued walking.

“GO BACK!” Megatron shouted.

Soundwave rewound the tape and again hit play.

The tape played again and showed ‘Astrotrain’ looking up at the camera.
“Freeze it,” Megatron told him.

Soundwave did so.

“Right there,” Megatron pointed at the screen.

They both stared at the image on the screen: ‘Astrotrain’ had black optics when he had looked into the camera.

“My God,” Megatron whispered as he and Soundwave looked at each other now.

Far away on Cybertron, in Shockwave’s Tower, Gravechaser entered the President’s berthroom. Now, the wicked ghost materialized by the curtains in the darkened space.

Shockwave had been in a deep recharge, snoring loudly. But as soon as the ghost had entered the room, the Cannon-former felt it. Deep in his spark, he was terrified, but he knew he had to put up a strong front.

“Shockwave,” Gravechaser demanded, “Shockwave, I came to talk.”

“Oh, crumb,” Shockwave turned over onto his back, “you’re coming into my berthroom now? Do you not realize, Gravechaser, that I have a schedule to keep?”

“When I was inside Astrotrain tonight,” Gravechaser got right to the point, “I couldn’t turn off the security cameras.”

“I see,” Shockwave sat up and rubbed at his optic, “no, you can’t be in two places at once when you’re in a chassis.”

“But I can do more damage when I use a chassis,” Gravechaser insisted, “while I can throw things and scratch on my own, with a chassis I was able to push him down the stairs.”

“How ironic,” Shockwave groaned, “someone finally gave him a taste of his own medicine.”

“But it’s not enough,” Gravechaser insisted, “I will not stop until I have his worthless spark.”

“Yes, I can see that,” Shockwave admitted, “but now, you’ve left Astrotrain to pay the price. You know how that makes me feel?” He felt he was betraying the Arena.

“He doesn’t matter,” Gravechaser flexed his claws.

“He matters to ME,” Shockwave insisted, “I told you before, Gravechaser, DO NOT harm the other Decepticons!”

Gravechaser scoffed at this, ignoring the comment, “I need to know how to get back inside the Base.”

“You never had trouble before,” Shockwave tried to act tough, “why are you asking me now? And at this late hour of all times of the night?”

“Megatron blocked me out with the incense,” Gravechaser told him.

“It’ll clear out in a few days,” Shockwave shrugged, “wait it out like the last time.”
“You don’t understand,” the ghost insisted, “I need to get to Skywarp tonight! He told Thundercracker who I am, and that was never to happen, and he needs to pay for that!”

“I’ll think of something later,” Shockwave turned away, “in the meantime, I have a full schedule tomorrow, so if you don’t mind showing yourself out.”

“I will not wait until later,” Gravechaser insisted, “I need your help!”

“I’m not helping you anymore,” Shockwave was angry.

“Why not?” Gravechaser leaned against the dresser, “This had better be good.”

“You refuse to stick to the terms of our agreement!” Shockwave spat back, “You were not to hurt the other Deceptions! Only Skywarp!”

Gravechaser was indifferent.

“I’m calling Megatron in the morning,” Shockwave laid back down, “I’ve had enough of your family dysfunctions.”

The berthroom was silent. Shockwave hoped that Gravechaser had taken the hint and left.

The Cannon-Former was about to reinitiate his recharge cycle; when suddenly, an invisible fist punched him right in the faceplates!

“AUGH!” Shockwave was jolted awake. Then he was hit in the faceplates again, harder than the first time. His chassis flung in the other direction; “STOP THAT!” he shouted at the invisible force, only to be coldcocked for the third time. The ghost dragged Shockwave out of the berth, and he crashed into the wooden dresser, injuring his shoulder. Another blow to the back sent him to the floor, where he was punched again, over and over!

The beating of the old mech went on for nearly three hours before he finally rasped out, “O-Okay, o-okay…W-What d-do y-you w-want f-from m-me?”

“I need to know how to get back into the Base tonight,” Gravechaser folded his arms.

“T-There’s another way in,” Shockwave finally admitted, gasping for air, “t-they…they have a way to get from their transporter through the Med-Bay….i-it was added to allow quick entry in case they were bringing in an injured Decepticon from a b-battle.” He took a few more deep air intakes, “M-Megatron may not have remembered to seal it.”

“That’s perfect,” Gravechaser sheered, “Skywarp is in the Med-Bay at this very moment. I’ll get to him before they even know I’m there.”

“W-Whatever…” Shockwave didn’t care anymore.

“Thank you for your assistance, Shockwave,” Gravechaser grinned wickedly, “I couldn’t have done it without you.” And with that, the ghost vanished into thin air.

When he was finally sure he was alone, Shockwave pulled his knees up to his chest and burden his helm into his arms and cried.

At the same time Gravechaser was shaking down Shockwave on Cybertron, Astrotrain was sitting in Conference Room A; he was in handcuffs and covering his faceplates with his hands. Onslaught was
standing in front of the door, guarding him, while Blitzwing and Octane had come to talk to him, or rather, chew him out.

“How could you be so slagging stupid, Astro!” Blitzwing hollered as he paced around, “What were you thinking??”

“Blitz, you gotta believe me,” Astrotrain took his hands away from his faceplates and pleaded, “I swear, I didn’t push him!”

“Well what happened then, he jumped?!” the Tank Jet was not only angry, he felt hurt, “Tell me!” All the while, Octane refused to look at either of them.

“I don’t remember, Blitz,” Astrotrain kept insisting, “I went to bed, and I woke up standing there! I-I must’ve been sleepwalking!”

“You think anybody’s gonna buy that?!” Blitzwing shot back, “They think you attacked a pregnant Seeker, Astro! You’re ruined! We finally got our own division, and you go and pull a stunt like this?!”

Megatron and Soundwave walked to the Conference Room now, “You wanna be Good Cop or Bad Cop?” Megatron asked.

“Well, Skywarp is my consort now,” Soundwave shrugged, “I’ll take Bad Cop.”

“You think I was getting even with him?!” Astro barked back.

“You finally got to be an officer, and you go and screw it up!” Blitzwing got in his faceplates, “You think those slagging Seekers are gonna let this go?!”

Onslaught pointed to himself, “My rank means more to me than any petty scores to settle!”

“I DID NOT PUSH HIM!” Astrotrain stood and bellowed back at them, “YOU SLAGGERS ARE ALREADY CONVICTING ME!”

“Then what were ya doing? HUH?!” Blitzwing shouted back.

Megatron and Soundwave entered now; everyone went silent.

“We’ll you guys excuse us?” the Decepticon Leader told the other three mechs.

“Ya blew it, Astro,” Blitzwing spat in disgust as he walked out with Octane and Onslaught.

Megatron and Soundwave each pulled up chairs and sat down.

“Megs,” Astrotrain was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, “you gotta believe me, Megs. I didn’t push him down the stairs!”

“I’m not accusing you,” Megatron kept his optics on the table, “I just want you to tell me what happened.”

“I-I don’t know what happened,” the Space Train was emotional, “all I know is, I had a really bad processor ache, so I turned in, y’know? But the next thing I remember, I was standing up in front of the basement door, and Skywarp was laying at the bottom.”

“You called me on the Comm.-Link,” Soundwave played Bad Cop, “I have the record of the transmission as proof.”
“I don’t remember,” Astrotrain shook his helm sadly.

“You also turned in this report,” Soundwave passed it over, “your intentions were clearly at the forefront of your thoughts.”

Astro looked at Megatron, who nodded for him to look at the report, so he opened it, reading the numerous “Kill Skywarp” lines that peppered his statement.

“Oh, hey, no,” Astrotrain get even more agitated, “I-I didn’t write that!”

“It’s what you turned in!” Soundwave barked, “I’d like to remind you, soldier, the Decepticons adhere to a strict code of conduct against violence towards our comrades in arms! It is clearly stated in Article Twenty-Three of our Charter, that any infraction of this nature is punishable by court-martial!”

“But I didn’t do it!” Astrotrain slammed his cuffed fists on the table, “Don’t talk to me like I’m some dumb Vehicon recruit, Soundwave! I’ve been a Decepticon practically from the beginning!”

“Okay, okay,” Megatron put his hands up, silencing both his officers; he sighed through his smell receptors; he had to be the Leader now and play both the role of the strong military general and that of a friend in the Arena of many years, simultaneously.

“Soundwave,” Megatron began, “I need you to read his words for any lies. Don’t extract data; just listen.”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave narrowed his optics at the Space Train.

“I’m going to ask you a few questions, Astro,” Megatron finally looked at his friend, “and I need to you be completely honest with me.”

“Absolutely, Megs,” Astrotrain nodded.

Megatron: “Have you ever experienced processor blackouts?”

Astrotrain: “No.”

Megatron: “Recharge walking?”

Astrotrain: “No.”

Megatron: “Did you injure yourself in any way heading for our mission this morning.”

Astrotrain: “No.”

“How about during the mission?” Megatron folded his hands, “Bang your helm on the ceiling in that factory?”

“No,” Astrotrain shook his helm, “nothing like that happened.”

Megatron: “What was the flight back here like?”

“It was nothing,” Astrotrain gestured a shrug with his hands, “Blitz and Octane and I were all good.”

“Okay,” Megatron nodded a little, needing to note these things, “and when you returned to Base?”

“I did mess up my landing,” Astrotrain realized now, “but…it wasn’t enough to crack my CPU or
“How did you mess up your landing?” Megatron listened carefully.

“I don’t know, really, um,” Astro struggled to describe it, “felt like I ran into another mech, but… nobody was on the runway.”

That’s when Megatron pinched the bridge between his optics, putting the pieces together: the ghost was waiting on the Tarmac for Astrotrain to come back so that It could use him for a chassis.

“Megs?” Astrotrain looked at his friend, “I-I mean, I had some kinda processor ache afterward, but I didn’t think I was injured. You think I blacked out or something?”

Megatron didn’t want to tell him that he was most likely possessed by Gravechaser; he couldn’t just spit that out; it would be devastating to the Space Train.

Finally, Megatron looked at him, “Astro, I need you to swear to me that you didn’t do this assault on purpose.”

“Megatron, I swear,” Astrotrain was looking at him dead in the optics, “I swear on my record in the Arena, that I did not push Skywarp down the stairs.”

The Decepticon Leader’s optics widened; no Gladiator of their proud order would ever take his own Gladiatorial combat record lightly; every fighter held this as dear as his or her own life. There was a long pause before Megatron turned to Soundwave and spoke again, “Well, Soundwave? Anything?”

The big Tapedeck was angry with what had happened to Skywarp and his unborn sparkling, but he begrudgingly admitted, “Astrotrain speaks the truth.”

Astrotrain turned to Megatron now.

“Look, Astro,” Megatron rested his helm on his fist, “I want you to know that I believe you; we go a long way back, but because of the seriousness of the allegations against you, I need to make a thorough examination of the facts of the case.”

Astrotrain nodded as the Gunformer continued, “I’m placing you on a suspension of all duties until Soundwave and I have time to complete our investigation. That being said, you have been a member of the Decepticons for many years, and you have no previous incidents such as this one; you don’t deserve to be placed in the brig. So, my recommendation will be that you be placed on home confinement in your quarters until further notice.”

“I understand,” Astrotrain nodded, sad, but accepting this compromise, “if there’s anything I can do to help you guys with your investigation, I’ll do it.”

“Thank you,” Megatron looked down at the table again.

Soundwave didn’t say a word; he just stood and unlocked Astrotrain’s handcuffs. The Space Train stood now and exited the Conference Room, a very somber slight.

As soon as they were alone, Soundwave put a supportive hand on his friend’s shoulder.

“Oh God, Soundwave,” Megatron gasped out, “that was hard. Look at us; look what we’ve ALLOWED this monster to do to the Decepticons!”

“I need to check on Skywarp now,” Soundwave told him, “he and Starscream are alone.”
Chapter 98: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

Due to the serious subject matter addressed in this chapter, I would like to remind everyone that, if you ever feel alone, there is help for you. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Call 1-800-273-8255 Available 24 hours every day.

Chapter 98:

By Transformersnewfan

In the Med-Bay, the machines continued to monitor the sparkbeats of both Skywarp and his unborn sparkling. The injured Seeker listened to them now, hoping and praying that his little daughter would be born healthy.

Starscream had not gotten the best recharge over the past forty-eight hours, so now, he was asleep purely out of exhaustion; his chassis draped protectively over his little brother.

Soundwave entered the room now, hoping he wouldn’t disturb them. He had checkered with the Reflectors, who reported that Skywarp and the baby were still doing well, and now, he leaned over the berth and grasped Skywarp’s hand.

The pregnant flyer’s optics were open enough to look at his lover; a sad, scared look on his faceplates.

“I know this hurts,” Soundwave whispered sympathetically, “but everything will be fine. I just wanted to see you.”

“W-Where’s TC?” Skywarp whispered back, “I-I worried about—” he had a coughing fit.

“Shhh…” Soundwave gently strapped the oxygen mask back on the Seeker, “as far as I know, he’s recharging, but I’ll keep on optic on things. You should get some rest, darling,” he removed his facemask and kissed his Seeker on the checkplate.

Megatron waited for Soundwave in the Control Room; he rocked back and forth in the swivel chair, deep in thought.

“They were fine,” the Tapedeck entered now, “Skywarp is still stable. The Reflectors are guarding them.

“We should guard them in shifts,” Megatron was thinking out loud, “it’s not like I can recharge anyway; I’m thinking about what we need to say tomorrow.” He was thinking of the meeting with the Autobots.
“You should rest though,” Soundwave told him, “you flew to the East Coast and back; I can stay up.”

Megatron wasn’t ready to turn in, “I can’t stop thinking about Astrotrain…”

“Despite that we knew that the ghost is behind the attack,” Soundwave told him, “we must at least give the appearance of doing a thorough investigation; otherwise, it could cause a rift with Starscream and Thundercracker.”

“I know, I know,” Megatron sighed, “So, do you wanna check in with Laserbeak?”

Soundwave did so, “Status report.”

“They are all in recharge, Father,” Laserbeak informed him, “there is nothing substantial to report.”

“We’re going to have you do a live feed tomorrow,” Soundwave told his son, “I’ll see you tomorrow; good job, son.” He closed the connection and was quiet for a moment.

“You know, you’re a good Creator,” Megatron noted, “thought you should hear that.”

“You as well,” Soundwave nodded.

They were both thinking of Thundercracker, and how this was truly sad for him to have been told the ghost was his Sire, even though the Seeker had refused to believe it.

“How is he?” Soundwave asked, not needing to say his name for his friend to understand.

“He was pretty broken up,” Megatron admitted, “he’s in Ma’s room crying his optics out.”

“What are we going to do, Megs?” Soundwave groaned.

“We need to plan things out for this meeting with Prime,” Megatron told him, “go over our game plan,” he drummed his digits on the Computer Consul, “first off, I think we shouldn’t show all our cards. Don’t tell them the ghost’s real name or that the ghost is Thundercracker’s Father; we’ll let Ironhide tell his story, and we’ll discuss it amongst ourselves here if things match up.”

“Agreed,” Soundwave noted.

“And I don’t expect this to come up, but,” Megatron pointed at him, “Prime doesn’t have to know our business. If they ask, YOU’RE the Sire of Skywarp’s sparkling.”

Soundwave nodded again.

“Laserbeak will record the proceedings and give a live feed,” Megatron was going over the plans in his CPU, “we need Prime to use the Matrix in order to close this portal and send this Thing back to where It came from,” he sighed, “I just have to come up with how to word our request.”

“What are the four things we need to know again?” Soundwave asked.

“We need to know how it got in our world,” Megatron began, “and we know now that It came through a portal at the Iacon Correctional Center; we need the approximate date of when this all started; we need to have It’s true designation, and, we know that now,” he didn’t want to risk saying Scourge’s name out loud, “the connection to Skywarp, well, It’s his Mother’s ex-husband, so we got that.”

“We have all three except for when it began,” Soundwave noted, “we need this before the meeting.”
“Well,” Megatron sighed, “I’m thinking that we can believe that this started when Skywarp was conceived; this Thing blames him for all It’s problems; before Skywarp was even BORN!”

“But I wonder,” Soundwave questioned, “When you say that it’s crucial to know when this all started, would that mean when his Creators conceived Skywarp, or when the ghost hunters opened the portal?”

“Good point,” Megs nodded, “we need both, just in case.”

“Unfortunately, it’s going to harder than we think,” Soundwave held his helm, “the easiest thing to do would be to call Shockwave and just ask him when the ghost hunters were there, but after today’s phone call,” he shook his helm, “I doubt he’s in any mood to help us.”

“Just as well,” Megatron scoffed, “I’m in no mood to deal with him either.”

“You got the Swarovski crystals for him, remember?” Soundwave told him.

“Yeah,” the Decepticon Leader rolled his optics, “but now I regret it.”

“Come on, Megs,” Soundwave sat up, “it’s not like we can exactly cut off Shockwave. The three of us need to work this out; basically, it sounds as if he needed the credits for that shrine in Iacon Square, and he got Earth money by selling access to the old prison. He did what he thought he had to do. How was he supposed to know this would happen?!”

But Megatron shot back, “When we put him in charge of the Cybertronian government, I expected him to oversee the day-to-day operations, and any petty decisions. But anything like involving a human television network, Soundwave, we should have had to approve that before that deal went through!”

“Shockwave has never done a restructure of any Cybertronian property that had a cost overrun before,” Soundwave argued, “except this one. That’s why he probably panicked. He had to balance the books and have the funds ready for those orange thugs from Helix, the very mechs that caused the cost overruns in the first place. He had no one to turn to; we pretty much leave him alone with no one to talk to except his bodyguard, George, most of the time, and when this crisis with the Helixian shrine happened, he didn’t even have George because he was out of the planet at the time!” he huffed his vents, “This was even all the way back when we started the new government, Megs; Shockwave had to familiarize himself through trial and error, plus learn who all the personalities were in Polyhex, Vos, Tam, and everywhere else. And besides all that, he gets pushed around by the Trans-Galaxy Media, YOU, and probably even those ghost hunters were taking advantage of him to make good television. You cannot, with straight faceplates, say that this is his fault.” He shook his helm now, having said his peace.

“Are you through?” Megatron was droll.

“Pretty much,” Soundwave grumbled back.

“Well, since you’re such a fan of his,” the Gunformer was tired, “how about you take the Swarovski crystals to Cybertron and while you’re there, ask him when he had those meatbags slag around at the prison and turn Skywarp into a poster for domestic violence awareness.”

The Tapedeck was visibly upset now.

“I’m sorry,” Megatron sighed, “I shouldn’t have said that last part; I realize you have strong feelings for Skywarp. I never should have left you guys in the first place; that’s why I don’t want to go to Cybertron. I’ll guard the Base tomorrow after our meeting with Prime.”
“I’d just rather not,” Soundwave sighed now, “it’s not just Skywarp and his sparkling; it’s that nightmare I had, Megs.”

“Again with the nightmare?” Megatron was tired of hearing about it.

“It’s how the nightmare BEGAN, Megs,” Soundwave insisted, “that’s what I was doing in the dream, I was delivering the crystals and talking to Shockwave and all of a sudden, I was in an alternate timeline that ended with me stabbing Skywarp to death!” He leaned back in his chair, “I just…would rather not get trapped in a parallel universe.”

“Are you slagging me?” Megatron looked at him, “Do you know how ridiculous you’re sounding?”

Soundwave looked at him; he was scared; he was very scared.

“Fine, I’ll go myself,” the Gunformer agreed begrudgingly, “I need to pick up more incense anyway.”

“Is there any other way we could answer this question without asking Shockwave?” the Tapedeck wondered aloud, “I’m willing to do the research.”

“Um, maybe,” Megatron had to think like a detective now, “When we talked about those human ghost hunters, he said their check cleared quickly. Can you find the date on that?”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave began typing, “Skywarp sorted all the bank statements, and I scanned everything in,” he pulled up the files, “I just have to look through the statements for their canceled check.”

“And that will give us the date for when they were on Cybertron,” Megatron slammed his hands on the Consul in triumph, “this is great! We’ll have everything we need to drag this slagging ghost back to the Pit where It belongs!”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave agreed; he loved Skywarp dearly and would work on this all night if he had to; he would do anything for his Seeker.

Later that night…

Megatron had managed to catch a few hours of recharge sitting in a chair in the Med-Bay, while his mate slept in the medical berth with Skywarp and his unborn sparkling, who were both, thankfully, getting some much-needed rest.

Their triplets were sleeping in their nursery, with Ravage snoring beneath their crib; the four younger Cassettes all sleeping on the sofa bed in Megatron’s living room; and Thundcracker was in a deep, Energon-sleeping supplement recharge in the guest berthroom. Only Astrotrain and Soundwave were awake at the moment. The former was worrying how he could prove his innocence.

The Tapedeck was still working at his Computer Consul; he had been pulling up every bank statement of the accounts of the Cybertronian government, working backward from the most recent date, searching for the canceled check image that would give them the answers. He was very tired, but he knew he had to plow through.

Finally, at nearly two in the morning, he found what he was looking for! The check from the Travel Channel cleared around nineteen months earlier, putting the date right around the time that Starscream was six months pregnant with the triplets; the Tapedeck thought back now to what they
were doing at the time: This would have been when Shockwave had made his State of the Planet Address, and he was in desperate need of funds to finish the shrine to the Helixian rebels in Iacon Square; the timeline fit perfectly.

With this new information, the Decepticons had what they needed for the meeting with the Autobots, and Soundwave decided to get some sleep.

A cloud of black mist entered the Decepticon Underwater Base through the Med-Bay entrance, and the mist transformed into Gravechaser’s familiar form. He floated past the Reflector triplets, all of whom were recharging in their dorm room.

The ghost cast a tall, black shadow over Skywarp as he and his baby slept; oh, how he longed to attack him, but first, he needed to remove Megatron, Starscream and the others from the scene.

And so, Gravechaser floated to the Control Room with ease. Shockwave had been correct about Megatron burning incense at the OTHER end of the Base where the sleeping quarters were located but neglected the other side of the hallway. The charcoal only lasted so long, and he didn’t light a second one. Poor Megatron would definitely have to do that from now on.

Soundwave was asleep when Gravechaser entered, “You worthless nobody,” he scoffed at the Tapedeck, “name a concept or invention or anything else you’ve ever done other than conceiving Cassettes! Without that Gladiator, you probably would have ended up homeless, or have ten more Cassettes with that idiot Skywarp!” It was fun to tell Soundwave off when he didn’t fight back, “Well, no matter, I have my work to do.” He went to the Computer Consul, using the codes that Shockwave had given him, and opened the Tower and runway.

Avoiding the main hallway, the ghost went back to the Med-Bay and exited the way he had come in; it was a roundabout way to operate, but it would pay off soon enough.

Megatron jolted awake, “W-Wha?” he felt that an icy chill had come over the room; was the ghost back? He quickly checked on the two (three, really) Seekers and tucked the blanket around one of Starscream’s wings before looking around. His Gladiatorial instincts were on high alert; “Oh my God,” he realized that he had neglected to seal the back door!

The Gunformer quickly headed back to his quarters; he gathered his incense burner and supplies; he had precious little incense rocks left, and he was out of charcoal, the rest in the package was only crumbs; but he thought fast, “Kitchen,” he took his supplies and headed there now.

Meanwhile, Soundwave was still asleep when his Comm.-Link went off. “Auuugh,” he woke up groggily, “Who’s calling at this hour,” before answering, “Yes?”

“Soundwave, this is Thundercracker,” the vocal seemed very flat and despondent.

“What’s up?” Soundwave sat up on an elbow.

“I don’t want to live anymore, Soundwave,” the vocal stated, “after that fight with Skywarp, I’ve decided to self-terminate.”

“Come on, Thundercracker,” Soundwave sighed, “what can I do to help?”

There was no response.

“Thundercracker,” the Tapedeck took this threat very seriously, “talk to me.”
“I have a gun,” was what was stated, “and I’m on the Tarmac.”

“What?” Soundwave rushed to his Computer Consul; the Tower was indeed raised, and there, on the camera feed on the Tarmac, was the image of a blue Seeker with his back to the camera.

“Thundercracker, talk to me!” Soundwave demanded through the Comm.-Link, but he wasn’t entirely sure if this was indeed Thundercracker or if the ghost was again trying to manipulate them.

“I’m going to end it all tonight,” whoever it was stated, “goodbye, Soundwave.”

“Hey!” Soundwave shouted back, “No! Don’t do it!”

At the same time this was going on, Megatron was in the kitchen. He found a half-full bag of charcoal from last summer when the Constructicons had that barbecue, and he used some now for his incense burner.

He overheard vocals; it seemed that Blitzwing and Astrotrain were continuing their fight from earlier.

Megatron decided to knock on their door; the Tank Jet answered, “Hey,”

“You guys doing alright?” the Deception Leader asked; he peered in and saw Astrotrain sitting at his computer, holding his helm; the big mech was a sorry sight, and it made Megatron feel so sorry for his old friend.

Blitzwing stepped aside to let him in.

“Hey Megs,” Astrotrain looked up, “I was just…looking up legal defenses.”

“Isn’t that rather heady stuff for this hour of the night?” Megatron made an attempt to lighten the mood.

“It’s not like I can think about anything else,” the Space Train sighed miserably.

“Listen, Astro,” Megatron sat down, “for what it’s worth, I don’t think you did it.”

“Thanks, Megs,” the big guy was emotional, “means a lot.”

“We just have to go through the process of the investigation,” the Decepticon Leader explained, before pausing to come clean, “I don’t know if you want to know this, but I think you were being controlled.”

Blitzwing was surprised by this.

“I think so,” Astrotrain knew what he meant by that, “by this Thing that’s been after ‘em,” meaning Skywarp, “before this happened, Blitz found me in the gym, just standing there, spacing out.”

Megatron had not heard about this, “When was that?” he turned to the Tank Jet.

“…Was earlier tonight,” was all Blitzwing had to offer.

“I tell you guys,” Megatron sighed deeply through his smell receptors, “I’m scared; I never usually say this; I’m scared. But I cannot show this Thing any fear. If I were to show it fear, we could lose Skywarp or his sparkling.”
The two Triple Changers listened as Megatron continued, “This is not something we can write off as being exhaustion. You can’t shoot it; you can’t stab it; you can’t blow it up.”

“What can I do to help?” Astrotrain asked now, “Come on, Megs, let me prove my innocence.”

“I need to smoke the basement again,” Megatron thought about it; he was scared of the basement at night, “come with me; I don’t want to go alone.”

“THUNDERCRACKER!” Soundwave tried his Comm.-Link again, “COME ON, ANSWER ME!” he looked at the monitor and saw the figure of a blue Seeker walking slowly towards the end of the runway, “THUNDERCRACKER! NO!”

The Tapedeck knew there was a chance that it was again the ghost mimicking Thundercracker’s image, but with Skywarp’s revelation that Gravechaser was indeed his Father, and the subsequent messy quarrel between the two brothers, Soundwave couldn’t be sure if TC might be distraught enough to harm himself.

“It’s too late,” whoever it was answered, “I am going to self-terminate.”

Panicking, Soundwave switched the Comm.-Link to call Starscream now, “Starscream, where is Thundercracker?”

Starscream woke up slowly, making sure Skywarp was still sleeping peacefully, “Hmmm…Wha?”

“Starscream!” Soundwave demanded, “I need to know Thundercracker’s current location! This is an emergency! Can you locate him through your Trine Bond?!”

“N-No,” Starscream didn’t fully understand what was happening, “he has us both cut off.”

“Look for him around the Base,” Soundwave instructed, “he may or may not be on the runway threatening to jump,” but as soon as he said that, the Comm.-Link went dead; their usually fail-safe system was again down, “SLAG IT!” he couldn’t risk it; he couldn’t risk if that were indeed Thundercracker on the runway…

Soundwave raced down the hallway, his heavy pedes reverberating through the entire structure; he got on the elevator and went up to the runway.

Starscream didn’t know what to think; he got out of the medical berth, careful not to disturb Skywarp, and went to the Reflectors’ dorm.

The medics were sleeping when Starscream knocked; Spectro got up to answer, “Yeah?”

“Watch over Skywarp,” Starscream whispered, “I’ll be back.”

Starscream made his way down the hallway now.

At the same time, Megatron and Astrotrain were standing at the basement door with the incense burner, both oblivious to the situation with Thundercracker.

“I was standing right here when I woke up,” Astro explained, “and he was on the bottom. I didn’t bump into him; I didn’t shove him; I didn’t do anything.”
“I know that Astro,” Megatron didn’t need any further convincing, “let’s just go down there,’’ he waved the incense burner out in front of them as they descended the staircase; the same one that Skywarp had tumbled down hours earlier.

Soundwave got to the Tarmac, “THUNDERCRACKER!”

But there was no one there.

Soundwave saw nothing; no pede steps; no evidence that Thundercracker was ever there.

The Tapedeck wasn’t sure if the Seeker had already jumped or if it had been a trick, but he got the answer quickly…

WHAM!

The basement door slammed shut, tripping Megatron and Astrotrain!

And then, all power shut off in the Base. No Comm.-Links; no elevator; no lights.

And Skywarp opened his optics to see Gravechaser grinning, standing over the medical berth.
Chapter 99: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

Chapter Summary

My apologies for taking this long to upload a new chapter. Thank you for sticking with this story!

Chapter 99:

By Transformersnewfan

Well, this was bad.

All power was out in the entire Decepticon Underwater Base.

Megatron and Astrotrain were locked in the basement, banging against the locked door; Soundwave was locked out on the runway, with no elevator service to get back inside; Starscream was alone in the pitch-black hallway, and their Comm.-Links, the communication network the Decepticons had grown so accustomed to depending on over the decades, was down.

And all the while, Gravechaser flexed his claws, “It’s so easy…”

Skywarp was very groggy; he couldn’t tell if this was another nightmare or if he was awake or not; he shuttered and unshuttered his optics several times, not fully awake.

“HELP!” Megatron banged on the door, “HELP! OPEN THE DOOR!”

“BLITZWING!” Astrotrain tried his Comm.-Links, only to realize it was dark, so he too banged on the door, calling for his friend, “BLITZ! BLITZWING!”

When Skywarp finally realized that Gravechaser was indeed in his Med-Bay room, he whimpered and reached for Starscream, only to realize that he and his unborn daughter were alone.

Starscream meanwhile, felt trapped; he was halfway between his quarters and the Med-Bay; it was so dark, he couldn’t see his own hand in front of his faceplates; he was so scared, he pressed his forehelm into the wall, debating which way to go.

And similarly, Soundwave was having trouble seeing through the blinding snowstorm, still unsure of Thundercracker’s whereabouts, and trapped by the powerless elevator, but he had one thing Gravechaser couldn’t take away: His ability to contact his Cassettes telepathically.

But Skywarp was trapped in the medical berth; he couldn’t get up because of his broken leg; he was hooked up to monitors and IVs, as well as being so groggy he would probably fall. His hands went protectively to his belly.

:Ravage,: Soundwave called through their Bond, :Rumble, Frenzy, wake up; we have a situation.: The Cat had been sleeping under the triplets’ crib; when he received the call, his helm immediately
shot up. :What is it, Father?:

Rumble, Frenzy, and the younger Cassettes all awoke as well.

“Oh man,” Rumble trembled when he realized all the lights were out.

:Where is Megatron?: Soundwave asked them.

:Not sure,: Ravage surveyed the quarters, :I will look for him.:  
:Negative,: Soundwave ordered, :this is most likely a trap from the ghost. I need you to guard the triplets. Rumble, I need you to locate Thundercracker, and Frenzy, I need you to turn the power back on.:  

The Cat was nervous about this but nevertheless obeyed his Sire.

“Isn’t this nice?” Gravechaser taunted, “Alone, just you and me?”

Skywarp was hitching his vents in fear; he could feel his sparkling trembling now, :Momma! Crystal scared!:  

“SOUNDWAVE!” Megatron yelled at the top of his air intakes, thinking that the Tapedeck was still in the Control Room and whose sensitive hearing could pick it up, “SOUNDWAVE! WAKE UP!”

“BLITZWING!” Astrotrain continued to call out, “OPEN THE DOOR!”

The Tank Jet finally heard his friend’s vocals, but then found himself locked in their own quarters, “THE DOOR’S STUCK!”

With that, both mechs, former Gladiators, looked at each other and tried chassis slamming the huge door, attempting to break it open.

Skywarp’s spark was racing now; he felt completely trapped; trapped in the medical berth, besieged by his injuries, :T-Teecee…Star…:

Starscream was cycling air in short bursts; he could feel Skywarp’s terror through their Trine Bond, but he knew he couldn’t fight off this evil spirit alone; not after his own encounter with It. He knew he had to find the others, so he edged forward, hugging the wall with his chassis, towards his quarters.

The Cassette twins headed in different directions: Rumble went to the guest berthroom, while Frenzy reluctantly opened the front door.

“Teecee,” Rumble knocked on the door, “Teecee, you still in there?” he tried the knob, but it was locked, “Come on, mech, open the door!”

“You’re so pathetic,” Gravechaser quickly switched his tone from taunting to growling, “you’re such a coward!”

:H-Help me…: Skywarp begged through their Trine Bond now.

:I can’t get in there, Pop,: Rumble reported telepathically, :I don’t know if he’s in there or not,: there had been no answer.

So Soundwave couldn’t be sure now if he should look for the blue Seeker out on the Tarmac or get himself back down to the Base; he knew he had to get to Skywarp, but he needed to find
Thundercracker one way or the other. Finally, he told his son, "Look for Megatron, tell him he needs to guard Skywarp!"

"Okay," Rumble went to Frenzy now to accompany him to the hallway.

"You told my son who I am," Gravechaser snarled angrily, "I told you before; you were NEVER to do that!"

Skywarp felt the coolant tears pooling in his optics now.

"Mega," Astrotrain told him, "this door’s not budging!"

"We need to find something to break it down," Megatron told him as he ran down the stairs, "come on!"

The two former Gladiators searched in the darkness before finding a large wooden plank; and together, they carried it back up the stairs.

"Do you even know what you’ve done?!" Gravechaser snarled.

"P-Please, G-Gravechaser…" Skywarp begged, "D-Don’t h-hurt u-us…"

"One, two, three," Megatron shouted, "HEAVE!" he and Astrotrain rammed the plank into the door, but it still refused to budge. They hit it again, and again, and again!

Buzzsaw and Ratbat were terrified, huddled together in the darkness, whimpering.

"Over here," Ravage instructed them to come closer.

They did so, hiding under the triplets’ crib.

But now, the triplets were starting to wake up, sensing the fear and tension the younger Cassettes were giving off.

"Go ahead and beg," Gravechaser’s vocals were a growl now, "you can beg all you want, but it won’t save your pathetic life."

Skywarp’s vents hitched again; he could barely get any words out.

Soundwave stalked around the icy Tarmac, his Barretta drawn, despite knowing it had no effect on the ghost, "THUNDERCRACKER!" he continued to call out; the snow causing a white-out condition as equal to the blackness inside the Base.

"HEAVE!" Megatron shouted as he and Astrotrain again the door again and again.

"WWWAAHH," Darkwing was crying, and the other two were whimpering.

Ravage just groaned, "I am a bodyguard, not a babysitter," also, he was completely blind in the dark, "where are Megatron and Starscream?!"

"You worthless piece of slag!" Gravechaser’s anger only seemed to be growing, "You’re going to PAY for what you’ve done."

"N-No…" Skywarp curled into himself around his belly, "P-Please…"

Starscream rushed to his quarters; his spark racing as bad as Skywarp’s.
Rumble and Frenzy dashed to the Control Room; they got under the Computer Consul and found all the outlets.

“Which one is for the elevator, Rumble?” Frenzy whined.

“Pull ‘em all out,” Rumble told him.

But when they pulled all the plugs out and plugged them back in, it was still dark, and there was still no power.

“Hit the knob, hit the knob!” Astrotrain told Megatron as they continued to ram the door with the battering ram; “Okay!” Megatron answered as they aimed for the lock itself, “WHAM!”

“I WAS through with you for the night,” Gravechaser spat with disgust, “but after what you’ve done to my son, oh, how you’re going to be punished now…”

“AAAAUUGGGHHHH!” Skywarp cried out, “HELP US!!!”

Meanwhile, Spectro, Spyglass, and Viewfinder Reflector were in their dorm in the Med-Bay; they could hear Skywarp crying for help.

“We have to do something,” Spectro whispered, “we have to get out there.”

:Pop!: Rumble called to his Sire, :we plugged everything back in, but nothing happened!: :Then you need to reboot the systems at the main power grid,: Soundwave told them, :and that’s in the basement:.

The twins each gulped hard.

“O-Okay,” Rumble told his terrified twin, “I think, if we run fast enough, the ghost can’t catch us, right?”

Frenzy was scared but nodded.

Gravechaser waved his hand, and suddenly, Skywarp felt an invisible force grab both of his wrists and pin them both to each side of the medical berth, “AAAAUUGGGHHHH!”

“THUNDERCRACKER!” Soundwave called for the blue Seeker, running around in the slippery snow on the massive Tarmac, not knowing if he was looking for a live Seeker or a dead one.

Starscream’s spark was racing; he could feel Skywarp’s panic rising in their Trine Bond, but his continued attempts to reach Thundercracker through the closed end of his Bond was like hitting a stone wall. The two contrasting sensations threatened to tear the red and white Seeker apart.

The Cassette twins raced down the hallway towards the basement, both suppressing their urges to scream in fear.

“Come on, heave!” Megatron ordered as he and Astrotrain continued to ram the door, “Keep hitting it!”

“Shut up!” Gravechaser rushed him now, grabbing the poor Seeker’s faceplates with his gruesome clawed hand.

“MMMMmmmm!” Skywarp’s mouth and smell receptors were being pushed down on by the ghost’s sharp, cutting digits, “MMMMmmmm!”
Finally, Rumble and Frenzy reached the basement door; it was locked, but then they heard the “WHAM!” of the battering ram from the inside and jumped back in fear.

“AAUGH!” “AAUGH!” they grabbed each other, thinking it was the ghost trying to get out.

“THUNDERCRACKER!!” Soundwave was on the edge of the runway, looking down into the darkness of the icy waters beneath.

It felt like forever before Starscream finally reached his quarters. And mercifully, because the Cassettes had previously opened the door, it wasn’t sealed shut like the other ones.

“MMMmmmmm!” Skywarp thrashed around, barely able to breath; he felt the ghost was so strong; it felt like Devastator was holding him down, “MMMmmmm!” And his sparkling was squirming in fear!

The Reflectors came into the Med-Bay hallway now, “I can’t see anything!” Viewfinder told them, “It’s too dark!”

Megatron and Astrotrain were ready to ram the basement door again when the Decepticon Leader suddenly heard the boys’ screams on the other side, “WAIT!” he told Astrotrain, before going up against the door, “IS ANYONE OUT THERE?!”

“YEAH!” Rumble shouted back, “IT’S US!” Frenzy was too scared to speak.

“Astrotrain and I are locked in!” Megatron shouted back, “Open the door!”

But the twins were both scared; “Wait, Rumble,” Frenzy whispered, “what if it’s the ghost pretending to be Megatron?”

Starscream rushed inside as he heard his babies calling for him, “M-Momma, M-Momma, M-Momma!”

“O-Oh!” the red and white Seeker got to his precious babies, wrapping his arms around them. Ravage had successfully guarded them against harm.

Soundwave couldn’t be sure of anything at the moment; he didn’t know what to do!

“MMMmmmmm!” Skywarp couldn’t move; he had already been weakened severely by his broken left leg and wing; he felt completely helpless; his plating had still not been reattached from earlier, and he only had the hospital gown on; he felt so exposed…

“We couldn’t find your brother,” the Cat told Starscream, “the door is locked, and there is no answer.”

“Alright,” Starscream felt the worry raising in his fuel tanks, wondering if his brother was dead or online; and he knew he had to get back to Skywarp, so when he felt the triplets were calm enough, he put them back down and crept to the guest berthroom.

Rumble knew what they had to do; he called Soundwave, :Pop, there’s someone locked in the basement claiming to be Megatron.: 

:Have either of you seen Megatron since the blackout?: Soundwave asked.

:N-No,: Rumble told him.

Soundwave couldn’t be sure either, and he was helpless to protect his sons from outside, :Tell him
the door is locked and that the power needs to be rebooted at the grid. If it truly is Megatron, he will help you.

Skywarp was absolutely terrified; he looked into Gravechaser’s black optics, his own as round as saucers with terror. And now, he felt his chassis levitating…
Chapter 100: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 100:

By Transformersnewfan

“MMMmmmm!” Skywarp’s screams of terror were muffled by Gravechaser’s massive, clawed hand over his mouth.

The ghost had forced the poor pregnant Seeker’s wrists down by invisible bonds, with his arms stretched out, and now, he was being levitated into the air, higher and higher, while still unable to move his chassis on his own.

“THUNDERCRACKER!” Soundwave continued to call out on the Tarmac.

“Thundercracker?” Starscream whispered through the door, “Thundercracker, are you in there?” he tried the knob and confirmed it was indeed locked, so he rushed to his berthroom and fumbled around in a drawer for the keys.

All the while, Ravage stayed with a paw on one of the bars of the crib. The triplets watched as well. Ratbat and Buzzsaw were too scared to make a sound.

“WHERE’S YOUR FATHER?” Megatron shouted to the twins.

“CAN YOU OPEN THE DOOR FROM YOUR SIDE?!” Astrotrain yelled as well.

Rumble and Frenzy checked the door, and it was locked.

“The door’s locked!” Rumble told them, “And Pop’s locked outside!”

“He says power grid’s in the basement!” Frenzy added finally, “Can you turn it on?”

“Come on,” Megatron told Astrotrain, “help me find it in this darkness.”

But in the panic of the moment, he made the mistake of not telling the twins they were doing that.

“You might as well stop struggling,” Gravechaser spat, “you’re getting what you deserve!”

Coolant tears began to stream from Skywarp’s optics; he was so scared; his spark was pounding in his chestplates!

At the same time, the three Reflectors came into Skywarp’s room; they were stunned into silence at the sight of Soundwave’s patient being suspended high in the air by an invisible force. For a moment, they couldn’t say or do a thing.

Starscream went back to the guest berthroom now, afraid of what he was going to find. He used the key and opened the door.

The snowstorm only seemed to be growing as Soundwave struggled to stay on his pedes on the
Meanwhile, Megatron and Astrotrain searched the blackened basement for the power grid; “Slag it!” Megatron hated that basement; he hated being in that basement; he hated that basement in the DAYLIGHT. They stumbled around, first into the Constructicons’ cleaning supplies, then an area that had seepage issues, “Ah, man,” Astro accidentally knocked over a bucket of old, dirty water.

“Nobody can save you now!” Gravechaser flecked his wrist, and suddenly, the door slammed behind the Reflectors, making them jump; the monitors began crashing to the ground on their own! And one flew by their helms!

Poor Skywarp could hear the crashing even though he couldn’t move…

All the while, Megatron and Astrotrain took a few more wrong turns in the basement on the way to the power grid.

“T-Thundercracker?” Starscream whispered again; it was pitch black darkness; he couldn’t even see the berth from a distance, “Teecee?” Starscream felt coolant tears welling up in his optics, still afraid of what he was going to find.

:Rumble,: Soundwave asked his son now, :Did Megatron answer you?:

:N-No,: was the frightened Cassette’s response.

“Slag it,” Soundwave felt it must have been another trick; he didn’t have any way of getting to the power grid from up there, and he had no idea where Megatron was. Skywarp and probably his Cassettes were in mortal danger now; he knew he had to get back inside at once!

Now there were medical supplies flying around in a dangerous tornado—syringes, chemicals, and even datapads and paperwork—in the darkness. The three Reflectors ducked under the desk just to get out of the way!

A large table lifted off the ground and crashed against the door, barricading anyone from getting inside.

“Now then,” satisfied with his efforts, Gravechaser turned his twisted attention back to the pregnant Seeker, “where were we?”

“MMMMmmmm!” Skywarp screamed hysterically through the gagging hand over his mouth.

“T-Teecee?” Starscream got to the berth and felt around the blankets, and thankfully, there was a Seeker-shaped form under the covers, “TEECEE!” he found his older brother’s shoulders and shook him hard.

The two former Gladiators rushed down into the basement. Megatron had to muster the courage to fight the fear of the basement; Astro wanted to fight to prove his innocence.

Since Soundwave could not be sure that it was Megatron or not that the twins spoke to, he decided not to wait any longer for the power to come back on; he needed to find Thundercracker, and he needed to find him now!

“I doubt that you realize this,” Gravechaser told his victim, “but losing my son was the worst day of my life!”

Skywarp hitched his vents, terrified of what was to come…
“Ugh,” Thundercracker shifted and turned over.

“O-Oh,” Starscream felt an overwhelming relief in his spark that his brother was alive. He felt Thundercracker reach back as he woke up, “W-Wha…Star?”

Finally, Astrotrain realized, “Megs, I think it’s this way,” he grabbed his friend and pulled him along, “I remember Blitz and I had to check it once.”

“Let’s hurry!” Megatron told him.

Soundwave was fighting the blinding snowstorm now; he felt the snow pelting his armor like enemy gunfire, “THUNDERCRACKER!!!”

“AND IT WAS ALL YOUR FAULT!” Gravchaser’s vocals were booming and coming from beyond the grave, “They took him away from me because of you!”

Skywarp felt his sanity slipping away now; the only thing keeping him from going unconscious was his squirming, unborn sparking.

The blue Seeker was still groggy from the sleeping supplements, “W-What’s going on?” he sat up now, trying to adjust his optics in the darkness.

“I-I didn’t know where you were,” Starscream was still shaking, “W-Why didn’t you answer us?!”

Astrotrain ran his digits over the wall and found a metal handle, “I GOT IT!” he pulled the handle, and the panel swung open, revealing all the switches and buttons.

“Slag it!” Soundwave fell to his knees, trying to see in the whiteout weather conditions.

Using his free hand, Gravechaser slowly, painfully, scratched the glass on Skywarp’s canopy, sending waves of pain through his entire chassis, “MMMMmmmm!”

“I-I can’t see,” Viewfinder told the others.

“We need a light!” Spectro whispered.

“I was sleeping,” TC groaned, but then, reality set back in, “Where’s Skywarp?!”

“Med-Bay,” Starscream felt the fear coming back, “W-We were looking for you! S-Soundwave is outside—”

“SKYWARP IS ALONE?!” Thundercracker finally woke up fully, jumping out of the berth and rushing out, pulling Starscream with him.

“It’s not this one,” Megatron, along with Astrotrain, feverishly threw the switches and punched every button on the grid, not knowing in the darkness which one was the main power switch.

“No,” Astro pushed more buttons, “maybe this one.”

Rumble and Frenzy didn’t know what to do, “M-Megatron?” Rumble asked through the door.

Soundwave: “THUNDERCRACKER!!!”

Gravchaser slowly, painfully, right his claw down Skywarp’s right arm; the poor Seeker had coolant tears running down his faceplates now; he was in such pain, “NNNNAAAHHH!”
“We need to see!” Spectro told his brothers. Not knowing what else to do, the three Reflectors transformed into their Camera Alt-Mode in order to take a series of flashes, just to light up the room. They flashed away, CLICK! CLICK! CLICK!

“We have to get them somewhere safe,” Thundercracker insisted as he lifted Darkmount and Dawning from the crib, “we gotta protect them and get Warp!”

Starscream picked up Darkwing, who was whimpering now and pulled Ratbat closer.

“Control room,” Ravage told them, and simultaneously called to Soundwave, :Father, we have located Thundercracker; he is safe.:

Soundwave realized he had been tricked by the ghost; he had run around that Tarmac like a goose with no head; all for nothing! “Skywarp,” he realized he needed to get to his lover and NOW!

“Come, on!” Astrotrain pressed more buttons.

“SLAG IT!” Megatron tried another switch; all of which were dead without the main grid switch.

Gravechaser slashed into Skywarp’s left arm now, ripping a few tendons as he did so.

“MMMmmmm!” Skywarp cried into the gagging hand; felt like he was being ripped apart!

The Reflectors continued taking pictures, trying to see through the flashes; that’s when they saw the monster with their own optics!

Thundercracker and Starscream hurried the triplets into the Control Room, putting them on the sofa bed that Soundwave had been sleeping on, “You watch them!” TC ordered Ravage, “We gotta get to Warp!”

Starscream was in a total panic, cycling air rapidly and just kept following his older brother’s lead.

“Wait, wait,” Megatron felt a large switch, “it’s this one!”

The elevator car was on the top floor where he was, and dead with no power. “SLAG IT!” Soundwave slammed his fists into the metal doors. Then he remembered that there was a ladder in the elevator shaft in case of an emergency, “I have to get down there!” he would have to climb down the elevator shaft.

“NAH!” Gravechaser saw the camera flashes and took his hand off of Skywarp’s mouth to point his claw in the Camera Bots’ direction. And Soundwave’s desk, which was heavy enough that it needed two mechs to lift, FLEW at the three Reflectors and knocked them clean back into their Robot Modes!

At the same time, Skywarp let out a window-shattering scream, “AAAAAUUUUUUGGGGGGHAAAAHHH!”

“OH NO, SKYWARP!” Thundercracker heard his baby brother’s cries for help and took off running down the hallway.

“SKYWARP!” Starscream was right behind him.

Soundwave would have to use the trap door that led to the shaft beneath the elevator car. He began to dig in the accumulating snows and finally, he found the hatch lock!

The switch was heavy and seemed to be stuck. “Astro,” Megatron told his friend, “you gotta help me
“O-Kay,” the big mech told him.

“SHUT UP!” Gravechaser snarled at the young Seeker, “DON’T YOU DARE SCREAM WHEN THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!” he smacked Skywarp across the faceplates, then twice more, leaving long scratches and cuts.

As they ran down the hallway, Thundercracker reopened his side of the Trine Bond, :Skywarp; we’re coming!:

Ravage nervously paced around the Control Room, :Father, we have the sparklings in the Control Room:.

Little Buzzsaw and Ratbat were scared.

After getting his large frame through the hatch door with some difficulty, Soundwave found the metal pit ladder that ran alongside the car in the elevator’s shaft. He hurriedly began to climb down.

Together, Megatron and Astrotrain pulled the switch down into the ‘off’ position.

“YOUR ACTIONS HAVE HURT MY SON!” Gravechaser grabbed Skywarp’s bloodied cheekplates in his grasp, “As his true and rightful Sire, it is my duty to avenge him!” it was completely lost on the ghost that he himself was the cause of Thundercracker’s pain, but in his own ‘warped’ processor, he truly believed the hateful untruths he spewed to Skywarp, “You’re going to pay for him to did to my son!”

Coolant tears steamed from Skywarp’s optics as Gravechaser continued to slash and scratch his armorless chassis, “N-NOOOO! S-S-STOP! PLEASE STOP!”

Starscream and Thundercracker charged down the hallway at full speed, “SKYWARP!”

Soundwave continued to climb down as fast as he could!

“Okay,” Megatron told his friend, “on the count of three. One…two…three!” they pulled as hard as they could on the heavy switch and finally, lifted it into the ‘on’ position!

“S-STOP IT! P-PLEASE!” Skywarp sobbed brokenly as Gravechaser continued to slash him as those long, sharp claws. They felt like knives, and they were slicing into his arms and legs and chestplates, “S-STOP!!!”

Thundercracker and Starscream kept running, “SKYWARP!” “SKYWARP!”

The power hummed and the lights came back on; the Computer Consul restarted, and the elevator began moving…

“WE DID IT, MEGS!” Astrotrain high-fived his friend.

“Huagh?!” Soundwave was halfway down the elevator shaft when he heard it vibrate and come to life! The car began descending on him, on its way to the ground floor!

“AAAHHH!!!” Skywarp cried out; he was unable to free himself!

Thundercracker was running as fast as he could, “SKYWARP!”

“SKYWARP!” Starscream was in near hysterics, “SKYWARP!”
Spectro left his helm up finally; they had been knocked out by the table hitting them.

“UGH!” Soundwave threw himself across the elevator shaft and repelled down as fast as he could as the elevator dropped closer and closer to him! He repelled again, “AUGH!” but on the third time, he lost his footing and fell down the rest of the way, “AAAUUUGGGHHH!” he fell all the way from approximately four flights up the elevator shaft all the way down to the basement.

“Was there any doubt?!” Megatron laughed back as the two former Gladiator did their old victory routine—a high-five, a fist-bump, and a double elbow bump—before they heard Soundwave howling all the way down, “AAAUUUGGGHHH!” and landing with a wall-shaking THUD!

“Listen to me, you little piece of scrap,” Gravechaser demanded, “the only reason I haven’t offlined your worthless spawn is because my son wants to raise it!”

Skywarp was trembling like a leaf, “Y-Yes?”

Thundercracker and Starscream finally reached the Med-Bay, but found the doors were locked!

“SKYWARP!” Thundercracker banged on the locked door, “SKYWARP! WHERE ARE YOU?!”

“SOUNDWAVE!” they both yelled in unison; they forced the elevator doors open and found the big blue mech laying in a twisted heap at the bottom of the elevator shaft; the car itself had stopped above him on the main floor.

“Ugh,” poor Soundwave lifted his helm; the pain shot up his backstruct, he had suffered serious injuries to his back and pelvic structure, “AAUUGGHH!”

With the power back on, Ravage tried checking the cameras now. He could see the two Seekers banging on the Med-Bay doors.

“You agree to sign over custody to my son,” Gravechaser finally outlined his plans, “And I will spare her life.”

“O-Okay,” Skywarp could barely give the words out; he was in terrible pain, “I-I-I w-w-will.”

Thundercracker tried breaking the door down, “SKYWARP!”

“SKYWARP! REFLECTOR!” Starscream cried, “OPEN THE DOOR!”

But Spectro, Spyglass, and Viewfinder were too afraid to move.

“Come on, Soundwave,” Astrotrain got him under one of Soundwave’s arms and hefted him up, “we gotta get outta here!” Megatron got on his other side, “Come on, stand up.”

“AUGH,” Soundwave was in terrible pain, but the adrenaline was going, so he couldn’t be bothered with it, “We…We have to get to Skywarp!”

“We’ll help you up the stairs,” Megatron told him; together walked carefully back through the basement.

:Father, we are in the Control room,: Ravage reported, :the cameras are working again.: With the power restored, Blitzwing was finally able to open the door and get out of his quarters, “I’m out!” he ran to the basement door, where Rumble and Frenzy were still waiting nervously.

“Now you will know the pain I have felt for all these years,” Gravechaser made a sickening smile,
“to know that your own child will be raised by someone else and see that someone else as their parent.” He cut the Seeker again, and again, and again…

“J-Just…l-let h-her l-live,” Skywarp begged, “P-Please…” he felt like his chassis was on fire with pain; his hospital gown was soaked with his Energon-blood, “AAAAUUUGGGGHHHH!”

“SKYWARP!” Thundercracker and Starscream were throwing themselves against the door, unable to break it down, “SKYWARP!”

“We can’t open the door!” Spyglass yelled to them, “the desk is there!”

“Stand back,” Blitzwing instructed the twins as he pulled out his gun. He fired once on the lock and then flung the basement door open, “ASTRO!” he called down, “MEGATRON!”

“BLITZWING!” Astrotrain yelled back, “Mecs, he got the door open!”

“Take him,” Megatron handed off the injured Soundwave and ran to the basement staircase, “I have to get there!”

“AAAAUUUGGGGHHHH!” Skywarp keened in agony as the ghost’s claws continued to rip into his tendons, “HELP ME!!”

Gravechaser knew he best escape now, knowing the lights were on and the others were coming, but it was absolutely intoxicating—like High-Grade Energon—to cut and tear at the pregnant Seeker and hear his scream of pain, “You deserve this…” he whispered with delight.

“HANG ON, SKYWARP!” Thundercracker couldn’t bear the pain of hearing his little brother’s keens for help; he and Starscream continued to slam at the door.

“S-SKYWARP!” Starscream was crying now, “SKYWARP, WE’RE COMING!”

Megatron ran to his quarters and grabbed his Fusion Cannon.

Ravage spotted him, “SIR!”

“Hold your ground!” Megatron told him, “I’ll be back!”

Blitzwing helped Astrotrain carrying Soundwave out of the basement.

“POP!” Frenzy screamed, seeing his Father injured.

“POP! WHAT HAPPENED?!” Rumble cried.

“It’s nothing,” Soundwave brushed them off, “let’s get to the Med-Bay and save him!” The large Triple Changers helped the Tapedeck hobble at a fast clip.

“AAAAUUUGGGGHHH…” Skywarp felt himself getting weak; he couldn’t last much longer, “OOWWW!”

“N-NO!” Thundercracker held back his coolant tears and smashed his fists into the door in frustration, “SKYWARP!”

Suddenly, Starscream felt Megatron’s powerful hand pull him backward by the arm, “HUH?!”

Megatron then grabbed Thundercracker by his shoulders and shoved him aside, “IF ANYONE IS BY THE DOOR, GET AWAY FROM IT NOW!”
Viewfinder Reflector mustered enough courage to pull his frightened brothers to safety.

Gravechaser gave Skywarp one last hard smack to the faceplates as he released his hold on the Seeker at the same moment that Megatron fired his Fusion Cannon in the closed space.

BOOOOM!!!

The door and most of the walls exploded on impact. The ghost disappeared, and Skywarp fell from the ceiling; the impact knocking him offline.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter was rough on Skywarp; so I promise you, the following chapters will give him and his sparkling a ton of familial love.
My sincerest apologies for taking so long to finish this chapter. I hope those that had been enjoying this story won't abandon it! More chapters will be coming this week, which will include the Autobots and Gravechaser's tragic backstory.

Chapter 101:

By Transformersnewfan

“S-Skywarp,” Thundercracker cried brokenly as he raced to his baby brother’s side.

Poor Skywarp was lying motionless on his right side; it would have been worse if he hadn’t landed on the mattress of the Med-Bay berth, which had collapsed to the ground when he crashed into it. But still, he had been knocked offline.

“SKYWARP!” Starscream was hysterical; he unthinkingly grabbed Skywarp and shook him hard, trying to wake him up.

“WHERE IS THAT SLAGGER?!” Megatron roared as he ran into the Med-Bay, “Where’s that glitching ghost?!” he charged into the stockroom, “Where are you, ya coward? Don’t you DARE hide from me after this attack on the Decepticons!” he charged around like a wild rhino, “How dare you!”

The three Reflectors were absolutely petrified from what they had just witnessed; still afraid to move.

Finally, after being shaken by his brothers, Skywarp came back online with a terrified screech, “AAAAAUUUUGGGHHHH!!!”

“No, no, it’s okay,” Thundercracker whispered, holding and rubbing the hurt Seeker’s canopy glass, “it’s okay, little brother…”

“Oh, Skywarp…” Starscream was crying now; their youngest Trine Brother was all cut up, bleeding Energon, and in a catatonic state.

The Comm.-Links were abuzz now, with many Decepticons calling and asking what caused the blackout, “Megatron, what’s going on?!” “What happened?!” and “Are we under attack?!”

“Everyone stay calm,” Megatron radioed back, “we’re checking things out,” he approached the Seekers now to check on Skywarp, but no sooner he came back into the broken room…

Gravechaser slammed the back door, just to taunt them, WHAM!

“AUGH!” Starscream yelped in fear, and Skywarp continued to keen in pain, “AAAAAUUUUGGGHHHH!!!”
“It’s not safe here,” Megatron realized, “come on, we have to get him to the Control Room.” He radioed everyone now, “Decepticons! Our security has been breached; everyone is to report to the Control Room for a helm count!”

As he did so, Thundercracker hurriedly pulled the sheet off the broken berth and wrapped it around Skywarp before wrapping the blankets around him, “Get his armor,” he told Starscream.

The red and white Seeker was scared, but he had the clarity of the processor to go to the closet and get the pieces together in a sack, as well as his robe and pede covers.

“Come on, Warpy,” Thundercracker lifted his carrying little brother into his arms, all wrapped up in the blankets and headed out the door.

Skywarp was traumatized by the attack, whimpering, and keening; he clung to his brother like a frightened sparkling.

“Come on, hurry!” Megatron led the three Reflectors out and closed the door behind them as another door slam was heard by the back door, WHAM!

Having done his business for the night, Gravechaser returned to Cybertron and the Iacon Correctional Center for now.

“I have to get to Skywarp!” Soundwave insisted between groans and pants.

“Megatron says we haveta get to the Control Room,” Astrotrain insisted; he and Blitzwing led the injured mech there instead.

“FATHER!” Ravage was stunned to see his Sire injured, “What happened?!”

“I-It’s nothing,” Soundwave tried to shake it off, going to his swivel chair, “Ugh…”

Rumble and Frenzy went to Buzzsaw and Ratbat; all four were still shaking.

All the Decepticons hurried into the Control Room now; the Combaticons, Coneheads, and the Constructicons, among them. The space inside had been freed up by emptying the boxes just hours earlier; good thing, so everyone could fit! The triplets looked at all the faceplates coming in.

“Come on. Hurry up!” Megatron barked.

Thundercracker rushed in with his hurt, pregnant Skywarp in his arms. The others moved aside, and he got Skywarp to the sofa bed and sat down, still clinging to him; Starscream was at his side in an instant, scooping up his triplets and holding them close.

With the Reflectors, Megatron was the last one inside, “Come on, block these doors!”

The larger mechs quickly locked the French Doors and moved tables in front of them.

Megatron stood on a chair now, “Alright! Everyone remain calm! Ravage, pull up the Roll Call!”

The Cat did so, handing Megatron the datapad.

A lot of the Decepticons were looking at their Comm.-Links and datapads, trying to figure out what had happened.
“Alright guys,” Megatron had to stay calm, “this is important, so all of you need to hold off on looking at your devices; when I call your designations, you need to answer or acknowledge it somehow, alright?”


All the while, Skywarp was shaking hard, clinging to Thundercracker like a sparkling; he was hurt and cold, burying his faceplates into his older brother’s neck cables. Thundercracker tried holding him tightly and rubbed his back under the wings.

“Ravage,” Megatron instructed, “close the Tower and lockdown the entire Base.”

The Cat did exactly that, first retracting the Tower, that entering all the codes to deploy the steel panels over all the windows; several Decepticons moved away from the Control Room’s windows when the panels slowly moved into place.

Skywarp tried to control his air intakes, but it was hard; he was traumatized this time, because now, Gravechaser was forcing him to give up custody of his sparkling, which felt like the worst thing that could happen to them, even if it was to Thundercracker. His unborn daughter was still squirming.

“Okay,” confident that his troops were all accounted for and safe, Megatron felt no need to sugar coat the situation, “I don’t think its any secret around here that we’re dealing with an entity; tonight, It locked Astrotrain and myself in the basement before attacking Skywarp and his unborn sparkling.”

He looked at Astrotrain now, “First off, I want to make it clear: In light of this latest evidence, I am publicly apologizing to Astrotrain for the misunderstanding this evening, and I hereby reinstate him as an officer, with all accompanying rights and privileges.”

The Decepticons were all listening very seriously.

“My Leader, I will NOT tolerate these continued attacks on our faction! I will be meeting with Optimus Prime in the morning about ridding our lives of this ghost. What It’s done tonight has not only injured a pregnant Seeker and our Communications Officer, it has embarrassed myself and our leader of the Triple Changers Division, and by doing that, It embarrassed the Arena!”

The Space Train nodded.

“Secondly,” Megatron continued, “our Communications Officer was injured tonight while trying to protect us all. As your Leader, I will NOT tolerate these continued attacks on our faction! I will be meeting with Optimus Prime in the morning about ridding our lives of this ghost. What It’s done tonight has not only injured a pregnant Seeker and our Communications Officer, it has embarrassed myself and our leader of the Triple Changers Division, and by doing that, It embarrassed the Arena!”

The Decepticons were all listening very seriously.

“As of right now,” Megatron finished, “I believe we have enough barriers of protection in place throughout the Base with the incense; so, you’re free to return to your respective quarters. We will update you when we have any new information.”

Most of the Decepticons were satisfied with this explanation; “Let’s see what’s going on,” Blitzwing
moved the furniture and opened the French Doors and peered into the hallway, seeing nothing, “looks good.”

“Well, my team feels safer in our quarters,” Scraper told Megatron as he and the other Constructions moved to leave. But many just seemed uncomfortable and shook up; “Think I’ll go watch a human movie,” Onslaught mumbled; “I’ll go with ya,” Blast Off followed. Others walked out of the Control Room but milled around in the hallway, themselves still looking around for the offending entity.

Skywarp was still shaking in his brother’s arms, and now he was keening lowly. Finally, Thundercracker couldn’t take it anymore, “Guys, he’s really hurt.”

“Let me see,” Soundwave insisted, despite his painful injuries, “lay him on the berth,” the Tapedeck groaned again as he stood and hobbled over, “Viewfinder, I need your assistance.”

But the Reflecter was still frozen in the image of fear, not responding.

“Viewfinder,” Soundwave was more forceful more, “come over here!”

At the same time, Thundercracker reluctantly loosened his hold on Skywarp; he tried to lay him down as instructed, but Skywarp silently refused; he didn’t want to be flat on his back again like he had been during the attack, instead pushing himself up by his uninjured wrist. So, TC kept his arms around him to try and comfort him.

“Um, Megatron,” Spectro held some photographs in his shaking hands, “w-we took some pictures, just to light up the room with the flashes…a-and…”

Megatron looked at him to continue.

The Reflecter laid the photographs on the Computer Consul.

Horrible, gruesome images of the evil entity was finally captured on film: Gravechaser: An almost all blue mech, with a black beard, and lifeless black optics, and yet those lifeless optics conveyed pure hatred; his form wasn’t just transparent, it was that of pure energy; lighting up like an electrical charge; the faceplates…the faceplates were terrifying. And Skywarp was helpless in It’s grip.

“AUGGGHHHH!” there were screams of terror in unison from hardened members of the Decepticons; “WHAT IS THAT?!” Blast Off shouted; “My God,” Soundwave had no idea Gravechaser was this bad; and Megatron just stared at the images with an unreadable expression.

Hook bolted from the Control Room, running to his quarters; Swindle grabbed onto Brawn like a scared sparkling; and most of the mechs were collectively panicking, “WHAT’S THAT THING?! WHAT IS THAT?!” Everyone was shocked by the true horror of how Gravechaser looked.

Thundercracker was still clinging to Skywarp and couldn’t see the images from where he was on the sofa bed but hearing the others’ reactions only made him hold his little brother tighter to his frame.

Skywarp was cationic from the attack, but he could hear everyone’s vocals.

Megatron looked at Starscream, realizing his mate had seen this being and had been attacked by this being; then he looked at Skywarp, then back at Soundwave, saying lowly, “What is this Thing in our Base…What is this…monster that’s tearing our Base apart from the inside?”

Soundwave stared at the appalling photographs, “I’ve been trying for months to get It’s images on film and haven’t been able to.” He looked at his assistants, “My only guess is that it is only because
the Reflectors are sentient Transformers that they were able to photograph this entity, while regular cameras could not."

Thrust freaked out, “I’M GETTING OUTTA HERE!” he bumped into the larger mechs, trying to get to the hallway, “I GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE! I’M FLYING OUT!”

“Stop it, Thrust!” Dirge grabbed him and shook him, “You’ll never get far in that storm!”

Starscream was clinging to his triplets for dear life; Thundercracker looked at him; he had to see these pictures; he rubbed Skywarp’s back once more before leaving him to get up.

“YOU KEEP TELLING US THAT THIS IS A GHOST!” Blitzwing hollered at Megatron, “THIS ISN’T A GHOST, MEGATRON! THIS IS A FREAKIN’ PIT-SPAWN!”

“I’M DOING THE BEST I CAN!” Megatron bellowed back over the panicked chattering all around them.

“THAT CREATURE POSSESSED ASTROTRAIN!” Blitzwing Shakily pointed at the photos.

“Blitz, calm down,” Astrotrain tried, putting his hands up, “calm down!”

“YOU DIDN’T SEE IT, MEGS!” Blitzwing continued, “YOU DIDN’T SEE THE LOOK IN ASTRO’S OPTICS WHEN HE WAS IN IT’S CONTROL!”

“I’M FIGURING THIS OUT!” Megatron barked back, “YOU GOT ANY BETTER IDEAS?! CAUSE I SURE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR THEM!”

At the same time, Thundercracker stared at the photographs. He had his hand over his mouth, seeing Gravechaser in all his horrid essence; the entity was actually worse looking than when he had briefly glimpsed it in their quarters; was it’s diabolical nature and image actually WORSENING? The attacks were definitely upping in severity, and Gravechaser’s appearance seemed to be changing to reflect that.

“That’s not my Father,” TC whispered, shaking his helm, “Skywarp said it was my Father…But, you guys can see that’s not my Father…” he truly believed what he was saying, “that’s not a Seeker…”

But Soundwave, especially in his injured state, was not having any of it, “Why didn’t you answer me on the Comm.-Links?!”

“What are you talking about?” Thundercracker was stunned, “I was sleeping!”

“I WAS CALLING YOU ASKING WHERE YOU WERE!” Soundwave shouted back as he tried to lean against the chair, “WHAT THE SLAG IS WRONG WITH YOU?!”

Before TC could answer, Starscream started yelling, albeit more upset than accusatory, “I went looking for you, and I left him!”

Then Ramjet got involved, “What the slag were you doin’ sleeping in there when he’s in the Medbay?”

“I was…” TC tried.

“WHY DID YOU CLOSE THE TRINE BOND?” Starscream shrieked.

“WAHHH!” Dawning started crying; Darkwing was whimpering, and Darkmount was getting
upset.

“OF ALL THE STUPID, SLAG-PROCESSORED THINGS TO DO!” Soundwave bellowed, “YOU ALMOST GOT US ALL KILLED!”

Rumble and Frenzy couldn’t remember the last time they had seen their Sire so angry.

“What would my casсетtes do if I was killed?!” Soundwave was furious, “What is the matter with you?!”

Before Thundercracker could answer, bigger mechs—Onslaught and Vortex—were in his faceplates, with the Combaticon Leader grabbing his arm.

Finally, Skywarp had had enough; he ignored the painful stinging that coursed through his chassis from his wounds; he could hear his unborn daughter telling him she was scared, :Momma! They yelling!: Skywarp shook the blanket off his helm, revealing the painful lacerations to his faceplates, “STOP IT!” his vocals were hoarse from screaming, “STOP IT! IT’S NOT TEECEE’S FAULT!”

Everyone stopped and looked at him.

“I-IT’S NOT T-TEECEE’S FAULT!” Skywarp repeated before leaning forward on his wrists and collapsing into pained keens.

The Control Room was silenced by the pregnant Seeker’s anguished words; Thundercracker felt like dirt; he had yelled at his younger brother…his precious younger brother; he yelled at him and said he was throwing him out of their home; he had hit him…and worst of all, he had left them alone, and the ghost used this to It’s advantage.

Thundercracker ran over and wrapped his arms around Skywarp in a tight hug, letting the pregnant Seeker sob into his neck cables.

Soundwave had to calm down; he was furious with Thundercracker, but he didn’t want to add to any of Skywarp’s stress; he was way too in love with him now for that.

Everyone else was in uncomfortable silence now.

“He’s right, you know,” Megatron’s vocals were strong as he owned up to his failure, “it’s my fault. I was the one that was supposed to protect them; instead, I got up and went to the kitchen. I was going to burn more incense to set up more barriers of protection, but what I should have done first was alert Soundwave to take my place before leaving.” he sighed before continuing, “I don’t know what I’m more embarrassed about; letting this ghost make a fiasco out of our faction, or letting myself and Astrotrain get locked in the basement! We’re the Decepticons, not the Keystone Cops!”

“WWWAAAAHHH!!!” Dawning was still crying, putting his little digits in his mouth; he was still scared, despite Starscream trying to bounce him. Darkmount was staring at his Sire, while Darkwing was staring at Skywarp.

“Well, that’s going to stop NOW,” Megatron finished, “starting now, I’m implementing new rules in order to straighten our guard against this evil entity. This will include a curfew; pairing-up assignments; and rotating guard duties. First off, none of you are allowed to be alone for the rest of the night, so pick your teammates. Again, this is for your own safety.”

The Decepticons all gave their collective nods and okays to the plan; many picked their teammates and began filing out; some returned to their respective quarters, while others were too keyed-up and went to watch television in the Rec. Room.
“I need to treat his wounds,” Soundwave insisted, “might we have a LITTLE privacy please?!”

Megatron signaled for the majority of the Cons to leave the Control Room.

“We’re family,” Starscream insisted, not budging.

By now, Skywarp seemed to be going in and out of reality in order to deal with the pain, ignoring his brothers and lover, reliving the attack in his processor.

Flashback:

“SHUT UP!” Gravechaser snarled at the young Seeker, “DON’T YOU DARE SCREAM WHEN THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT!” he smacked Skywarp across the faceplates, then twice more, leaving long scratches and cuts.

End of Flashback:

Skywarp was vaguely aware of Thundercracker holding him as Soundwave pulled the blankets off, revealing the Energon-bloodied sheet and Skywarp’s armorless, cut-up chassis underneath.

“Viewfinder,” Soundwave ordered, “go to the Med-Bay and retrieve the supplies.”

But all three Reflectors began insisting that everything in the Med-Bay was destroyed in the attack. So the Tapedeck turned to Ravage, “Get the portable med-kit in the closet.”

“Right away, Father,” the Cat knew where Soundwave kept this in their quarters in case the Cassettes were ever injured.

Once he returned with it, they began douching the deeper cuts with saline.

“It’s okay, it’s okay,” Starscream tried to reassure his little brother, taking a cloth and wiping off the dried Energon-blood.

“Both are stable; it’s only superficial injuries,” Soundwave checked the unborn sparkling’s vital signs using the sensors in his hands, “the sparkling is stable,” he told them, “I just need something to monitor her sparkbeat overnight for any problems.”

“We still have our portable,” Megatron told him.

“Megatron, that thing’s so tight,” Starscream whined back.

“It will have to do,” Soundwave stated to them.

As Soundwave and Starscream began to repair Skywarp’s wounds, the Seeker still wasn’t communicating with any of them, either verbally or through the Trine Bond; and Starscream wasn’t kidding about that belly monitor being tight!

Thundercracker was holding him from behind and hugged him, trying to offer whatever comfort he could, :Thank you for standing up for me, brother,: he whispered through the Trine Bond; but again, there was no response.

“Waaahh,” Dawning was still crying, so Megatron picked him up, “Hey there, you wanna help Daddy?” he took the boy with him to go burn more incense, “You wanna watch Daddy keep the monster away?”

As they continued to bandage up the hurt, pregnant Seeker, Megatron went into the hallway and set up his incense burner, eventually using the last of his incense supply to smoke the entrance of the
Control Room and most of the corridor.

“This should last the rest of the night,” Megatron told his troops, “we’ll be rid of this Thing soon.”

Overwhelmed by the feeling that Skywarp’s life was at stake, the Decepticon Leader told Astrotrain and the Coneheads, “I refuse to spend another minute away from this Base; no more missions until Prime and I sent this creature back to wherever It came from!”

“Megatron, are we all in danger?” Ramjet asked.

“We’re dealing with something here that can do whatever It damn well wants,” Megatron admitted, “and I don’t know how to stop it.” He adjusted Dawning in his arms, “It can open doors; It’s a madmech; It can take any weakness you have and exploit it.” Thinking of how he had been locked in the basement, this was the first time he was truly afraid of It.

“I’m staying in the Control Room,” Dirge told them, “we’re Seekers, and nobody breaks a Seeker’s wing like that! You fight with one of us; you fight with ALL of us!”

Finally, Soundwave and Starscream had all the injuries washed and wrapped in bandages, including the cuts to Skywarp’s faceplates; Soundwave also rebandaged his broken left leg around the rod in order to keep it straight; they wouldn’t be able to reattach his platting yet because the wounds were still so deep and some were swollen, so they wrapped him up in his robe, four blankets and put the pede covers on. All the while, poor Skywarp was depressed and out of it.

Starscream got more Holy Water, “Here, drink this,” Skywarp did so, as the two brothers waited for a reaction. When there wasn’t any negative reaction, they gave him another glass.

“How much are we supposed to give him?” Thundercracker asked.

“Not sure,” Starscream admitted.

“No, he doesn’t need anymore,” Megatron came over, “I told you guys before, this ghost isn’t attached to him or his sparkling. It’s clearly free-floating.”

It was not lost any of them that the only part of Skywarp that was uninjured was his abdomen; “Why do you think that is?” TC asked.

“Most likely to send a message,” Megatron whispered darkly, “It’s telling us that It’s not interested in the sparkling; that It’s only after Skywarp.”

“But…why?” Thundercracker couldn’t understand this, “Why would…why would anyone be after him like this?” he shook his helm, still not believing what had been told to him earlier, “It just…it can’t be my Father. He never met Warp.”

“I have no idea, Thundercracker,” Megatron bit his lip components; while he did believe Scourge was the ghost, he understood that this was too much for his young brother-in-law to accept just yet, “we just have to keep our guard up,” he dropped his vocals a bit, “now, let’s just all settle down and get some rest. We’ve got to meet with Prime in the morning.”

“That ought to be interesting,” Soundwave was droll as he lay on the floor; his knees and helm elevated by pillows to ease the pain of his injuries.

Starscream didn’t know what to think; he had never met Scourge either, so he couldn’t form an
opinion either way. Instead, he just plopped down on the sofa bed next to Skywarp and gathered
Darkwing and Darkmount close.

Dawning reached for them, unable to figure out how to fly up on top of the sofa bed.

“He wants his Mommy,” Megatron said softly as he lifted the boy into Starscream’s arms.

“Who’s his Mommy?” Starscream grumbled to himself; Megatron didn’t notice the remark.

So, for the rest of the night, Megatron and Astrotrain sat at the Computer Consul, watching the
cameras for anything suspicious; the three Coneheaded Seekers sat on the sofa on guard duty of the
youngest member of their squadron; the three Reflectors slept on the floor by the steel-shuttered
window, refusing to be alone; the Constructicons returned to their quarters, while the Combaticons
and Blitzwing opted to watch a human movie in the Rec. Room, with Octane asleep on the floor; the
Insecticons staying up to play cards; Ravage and the Cassette twins worried sick over their injured
Sire, who was still refusing any sympathy as he lay on the Control Room floor trying to relieve the
pain of his injuries; Thundercracker and Starscream sitting up on the sofa bed, along with Ratbat and
Buzzsaw curled up in recharge on the edge of the sofa bed, and Skywarp…well, Skywarp was still
too shaken to lay down; he didn’t want to be helpless on his back again.

Instead, Skywarp was sitting up in the middle of the sofa bed, with his left leg extended outward,
deep in thought. He replayed the events of the past few hours in his processor, with Thundercracker
yelling at him and vowing never to speak to him again, kicking him out of their still-vacated quarters,
and only reuniting with him because of the attack from the very ghost in question. Was he homeless
now, he wondered? Was his sparkling alright?

:We better now, Momma,: he heard Crystal’s tiny vocals in his spark, but he still didn’t know what to
think.
“I still can’t believe we got locked in the basement,” Megatron groaned to Astrotrain as four o’clock in the morning neared, “I’ve never been more humiliated in my onlining.”

“Try getting possessed,” the Space Train sighed.

Starscream had dozed off; his triplets nestled around him.

Thundercracker opened his optics and saw that Skywarp was still sitting up and shaking in fear, traumatized by the attack.

“Come on, Warp,” TC whispered, “don’t you wanna lay down?”

The black and purple Jet’s chassis hurt from lack of recharge; he was too tired and too drained to fight with his brother anymore, but he still didn’t know if he could trust him, or if TC would snap at him again over his accusation of the ghost’s identity.

“It’s okay, Warpy,” TC gently pulled his little brother to lay against the pillows and put another pillow under the younger Seeker’s injured leg; finally, he wrapped his arms around him and hugged him tightly, “it’s okay…”

Skywarp buried his still-bandaged faceplates into the crock of TC’s neck cables started keening and whimpering; the stress breaking him in two. His numbed wings were hanging lifelessly off his back, so TC wrapped another blanket around them.

“Shhh, shhh…” Thundercracker rubbed his back, trying to calm him, “it’s gonna be okay…”

Megatron opened his Comm.-Link, “Laserbeak, where’s Prime?”

“He is still in recharge, Sir,” the Condor answered.

Ravage huffed, “Tell him to get his metal tailfeathers back here and suffer with his family.”

“Stand by,” Megatron told him, “I’m going to call him now.”

Optimus Prime was indeed asleep in his humble quarters when his private phone extension rang, jolting him awake, “H-Huh?”

“You know his direct line?” Astrotrain commented, “Smooth.”

“Are you surprised?” Megatron chuckled.

Prime picked up the phone, “Hello?”

Megatron: “Prime.”
Optimus Prime: “Megatron,” he checked his clock—4:15A.M.—is this about our meeting?”

Megatron: “Seven A.M. You and Ironhide.” and hung up abruptly. “Not going to show our cards until we get there.”

“Well, if that’s the case,” Soundwave was still very stiff; he sat up on his elbow, “we need to leave as soon as possible if we’re going to make it there on time.” He groaned again before continuing, “that storm last night buried the terrain over the previous snows.”

The normally twenty-minute trip in their Transporter would take at least two hours now.

“I’m not leaving Skywarp,” Thundercracker told them.

“I’m not sure if I should go neither,” Soundwave admitted, “I’m the only one that can detect that Thing.”

“Well, I need my officers there,” Megatron was worried about this, “Astro?”

“I’ll go ta back ya up,” the Triple Changer was nervous though, “but how are ya gonna know if Ironhide’s lyin’ or not?”

Soundwave groaned.

“I can help ya walk in there,” Astrotrain offered.

“Well, Thundercracker?” Megatron asked.

The blue Seeker didn’t know what to do, “I… I wanna know what Ironhide has to say, especially if he knew about my Father. But…”

Skywarp was still awake, only pretending to sleep, hearing again how his brother refused to understand what a monster his Sire had become; it made him more depressed than ever.

“Hey, Ravage?” Megatron turned towards the Cat, “Do you think you can protect Skywarp and Starscream with the others?”

“Unfortunately, Sir,” Ravage admitted, “I couldn’t even protect my brothers in our own home. The ghost advanced on us despite my best efforts.”

Thrust answered before Megatron even asked the question, “That ghost already used my chassis to get into the Base; what if he gets me again and I woke up strangling them?”

“Well, how do ya think I feel?” Astro told him, “It used me to throw him down the freakin’ stairs!”

Starscream woke up now, “W-Wha… What are you talking about?”

“We’re trying to figure out how to meet with Prime,” Megatron told him, “even though it's going to be daylight soon, we can’t risk another attack like last night.”

Starscream was almost as traumatized as Skywarp, “I-I can’t…I can’t see that Thing again, Megatron.”

And Soundwave was very sore from the previous night, “Not even sure if I could fight this Thing either.”

The Decepticon Leader knew he had to get creative in their defenses, “Soundwave, can Skywarp
They were all wondering what Megatron was thinking before Soundwave answered, “Skywarp’s and his sparkling’s readings are stable. Why?”

“What if…” Megatron bit his lip components, “What if we took Skywarp with us in the Transporter?”

Skywarp wondered what they were thinking; were they going to leave him with the Autobots? He didn’t want that at all…

“Hear me out,” Megatron argued, “none of us want to repeat our mistakes of last night. This creature attacks him when he’s alone. So, we bundle him up and take him with us there; Starscream, you come with and stay with him in the Transporter while we meet with the Autobots. And if this ghost attacks again, we’ll all run out of the meeting and save you guys. It’s better than being three hours away trying to dig through snow to get back here.”

Thundercracker considered this, “That could work…”

Megatron turned towards the Coneheads, “And I doubt you guys are going to be in any danger here if we’re all away.”

Starscream was worried though, “But what if the Comm.-Links fail again?”

“I know; we can’t trust if this Thing shuts them down,” Megatron got up and looked at Ravage, “I need you guys to be able to contact Soundwave.”

Ravage looked at Soundwave, “Father?”

“I can communicate with my sons telepathically,” Soundwave explained, “Ravage: You’re in charge of the Control Room; Rumble and Frenzy: You will stay in the Transporter.”

“We can, Pop,” Rumble nodded, “we wanna help.”

Thundercracker looked over Skywarp once more before deciding, “I’m in. We’re taking them with us.”

Skywarp’s optics widened in fear; he had not spoken since defending TC the night before, nor had he communicated with his brothers through their Trine Bond at all. He didn’t even know WHY he was refusing to speak; he just continued to feel the fear he had felt during Gravechaser’s attack on him; he wasn’t ready to accept that he and Crystal were now safe with his brothers and the other Decepticons.

“I’m taking the triplets,” Starscream insisted.

“Thank goodness,” Ravage said to himself, “finally, an assignment that doesn’t include babysitting.”

Astrotrain helped Soundwave stand as the Tapedeck instructed the Cat, “You’re watching Buzzsaw and Ratbat.”

Ravage just sighed.

And so, the Decepticons all worked quickly to set their plans in place:
They would be leaving by five o’clock in the morning; Megatron gave out the assignments as to who was paired up with whom for their safety; he also gathered their evidence to present to Optimus Prime. Ravage was put in charge of the Control Room, while Blitzwing was in charge of security; the Constructicons were tasked with checking the entire Base for any damage caused by the attack, and when they were done, to continue work on the repairs to Soundwave’s quarters, while the Reflectors were ordered by Soundwave to clean up the Med-Bay.

Skywarp’s injuries were still too severe to reattach his platting, so his brothers bundled the pregnant Seeker up in blankets and the pede covers. He felt himself getting lost in his thoughts, going in and out of reality, ignoring his unborn sparkling’s little movements as she was trying to reassure him that she was alive. She meant everything to him, and he would do anything to protect her and keep her with him; he kept thinking about Gravechaser though; he closed his optics, and when he opened them, it seemed like some time had passed, but he wasn’t sure if he had fallen asleep or was unconscious or feeling the effects of the numbing agents.

One moment, Skywarp was curling into himself, closing his optics; when he opened them again, they had him lying on his back, and Soundwave was standing over him and seemed to be checking his vital signs. “He’s stable, Thundercracker,” he could hear his lover’s vocals saying. Starscream had not been kidding about that portable sparkling monitor being tight; he felt like it was about two sizes too small for his belly and it was making it hard to even get any air into his intakes. He closed his optics again and felt his older brother holding him and stroke his faceplates. Then he heard his little nephew running and playfully yell, “NO!” followed by the sound of Starscream’s pedefalls running after the boy, “Darkmount, I said put this on!” Then Starscream begging Thundercracker to help him put the snowsuit on Darkmount.

The next time Skywarp woke up, he was sitting up in a wheelchair, in all the blankets, being pushed down the hallway. He tried to focus his thoughts, but then his helm lolled to the side, and he was out again.

When he woke up, he was lying on his back in the second row of seats in their Transporter, with his brothers fussing over him. They had brought the pillows from Starscream’s quarters and had one under the injured Seeker’s helm and another under his broken wing and another under his knees. At least the four blankets they had wrapped him in were nice and warm. Starscream put another pillow on his lap and gently got Skywarp’s legs on the pillow. Ugh, what were these straps? Oh, they had scrapped the seatbelts on him.

Starscream, with Thundercracker’s help, had managed to get the triplets into their snowsuits and blankets, and secured in their car seats, which were located in the row behind them and the car seats faced the back of the Transporter.

“Momma!” Darkwing wailed, prompting Starscream to reach over the seat and comfort the toddler.

“Ach, I HATE these rear-facing car seats,” the red and white Seeker spat, “it’s bad enough it’s still dark outside, but why do we have to follow these stupid human laws?”

“Cause Shockwave made those Cybertronian laws too,” TC told him before he noticed that Skywarp’s optics were half-open, “Hey buddy, you awake?”

Skywarp didn’t care to answer him.

:Momma!: Crystal was excited, :We going on an adventure!:

How ironic, Skywarp thought to himself; the very words he had told his brother when their Creators took them on vacation to hid from the Seeker that would become Gravechaser.
Flashback:

Again, the couple hurried their sons into their awaiting vehicle with their suitcases.

“Teecee! We’re going on an adventure!” little Skywarp chirped.

“In the middle of winter?” the blue sparkling wondered to himself.

End of Flashback:

They heard Astrotrain tell Soundwave, “I should drive.”

“Negative,” Soundwave’s vocals were a bit weakened by his injuries, “I want to do this,” but this was immediately followed by pained groans as Astrotrain helped him walked. They were heard stopping at the rear of the Transporter; it seemed that Soundwave had to stop and rest, “Oh, God, this hurts…”

“Your leg?” Astro wondered.

“It’s my backstruct,” Soundwave almost seemed like he was crying from the pain, “something’s broken, I know it…I just…know it.” Then they started walking again, “You can’t tell my boys.”

What was wrong with Soundwave? Skywarp wondered; in his own severe injuries, he had barely been able to think; he had seen that his lover was hurting, but he had not been told what had happened.

Astrotrain helped Soundwave into the driver’s seat before walking around the other side of the Transporter and climbing into the fourth and last row seat. Lastly, Megatron came with the twins, who joined Astro in the back. The Decepticon Leader got into the front passenger seat, “Let’s get this over with before we lose the nerve.”

It was the twilight time period between astronomical dawn and sunrise. The winter storm had dumped several feet of new snows over the already bumpy, dirty snow and patches of ice that coated the rocky terrain. But their heavy Transporter was able to crunch through the thick, murky debris.

Everyone was quiet, trying to listen or feel if the ghost was following them, but so far, It seemed to have left them.

Skywarp kept his optics shuttered and the blanket over most of his faceplates; he didn’t want anyone to see all the bandages, all the wounds; he was humiliated by what Gravechaser was doing to him, and he could hardly grasp why the Decepticons were standing by him and not kicking his pregnant chassis out into the dirty, cold snows, completely oblivious to their devoted efforts to protect him and his sparkling.

:Is he asleep?: Starscream whispered through the Trine Bond.

:Think so,: TC answered, tucking one of the blankets around his broken wing, :he didn’t sleep at all last night,: then he let Starscream lean on his shoulder and relax as well.

After the first hour of their journey, the sun began to rise, illuminating the fluffy clouds.

Skywarp peaked out just enough to get an upside-down view of the blue skies above as they trudged on. The skies called to Seekers like a loving embrace; he had not flown in weeks due to his
pregnancy, but now…now with this broken wing, coupled with Gravechaser’s numerous promises
to end his life, he knew he would never fly again. Never again feel the air caress his wings; never
again fly with his brothers. He loved to fly with his brothers; he even loved to fly with the
Coneheads. He wanted to triplets to learn to fly…but now…

“Beautiful Earth sunrise,” Megatron signaled the end to the silence as he marveled at the sight,
“should be a nice day…”

“Mmm…” Soundwave was concentrating on driving.

“Maybe once this is taken care of,” Megatron turned towards the backseats, “we can have a day out,
you know? Have a winter festival, where we just have a day to appreciate our good fortune, take the
triplets out to play in the snow, I mean. Think about it; the humans won’t drive out here for weeks.
What’s that spot you know about, Soundwave?”

“The trail on the mountaintop,” Soundwave shuttered now at the memory of nearly killing Skywarp
there on Christmas day, “I suppose so.”

“It’s something to look forward to, right guys?” the Decepticon Leader tried to lighten the mood.

“I’m in!” Rumble shouted. “Me too!” Frenzy followed his twin’s lead.

“That’d be nice,” Astrotrain nodded in agreement.

Starscream was half-asleep on Thundercracker’s shoulder, with one of the blankets pulled up to his
chestplates, and not really listening.

They were quiet again, driving along, with only the sounds of the triplets’ cooing at the scenery.

Soundwave broke the silence this time, looking into the rear-view mirror, “How is Skywarp?”

“Okay,” Thundercracker nodded, thinking their youngest was sleeping.

“I’m trying to be careful,” Soundwave told them as he drove slowly over the rough patterns of ice
and stone-hard snow that had developed in the winter, “just don’t want him to be car sick.”

“That only happened that one time,” the blue Seeker chuckled, “and that was Megatron’s fault.”

Megatron rolled his optics, “Hey, I was in a bad place emotionally.”

“You were in a bad PLANET emotionally,” Soundwave was dry in his humor.

“Like you guys weren’t,” Megatron smirked, “I had the right to me, being the Chief Mourner of
course, but you guys, well, ugh, fighting with your Creators, causing that scene.”

“Oh please,” Soundwave told him, “you carried on with all those old Gladiators like for hours.”

Megatron huffed his vents, “And the only reason you didn’t blow YOUR stack was because your
old boss was breathing down your backstruct.”

“And me with those guestbooks, right?” Rumble added, “Frenz didn’t do anything!”

“Hey!” Frenzy shot back.

“All I know is,” Astrotrain laughed, “is that I made a ton of credits that night.”
“The whole thing was horrible,” Thundercracker groaned, “I still can’t believe that night actually happened. But it’s all on Laserbeak’s tapes.”

Starscream knew he was tired, but for the life of him, he had NO IDEA what they were talking about.

“Okay,” the red and white Seeker sat up, “I can’t follow this story at all. When the slag was this?!”

Megatron just sighed, looking out the window.

“Star, you weren’t here for this,” TC explained, “this was when we thought you had been killed aboard that Russian Submarine. We had a wake for you and Megatron was absolutely out of his processor. He carried on all night with every guest. Shockwave was going nuts we weren’t sticking to his ‘sched-dule’ as he called it,” he could laugh about it now, “Mom and I were at each other’s throats, Astro and Blitzwing were placing bets on how long Megatron was crying with each guest, and finally, Warp was so sick, and all of us just wanted to get outta there, and Megatron refused to get in the Transporter for over three hours!” he was laughing by now.

“Yeah, Teecee,” Skywarp thought bitterly, “laugh at me; laugh all you want. And I wasn’t sick; I was DYING. So, I guess you’ll laugh with your old mech when I really die this time, right?”

“W-Wha?” Starscream started laughing now, “Oh my God, I need to see those videos again. B-But there’s so much going on in them that I miss half the slag.”

“I couldn’t leave,” Megatron grinned a bit, “I just…thought I had just lost the love of my onlining, and I couldn’t leave.”

“We were waiting all night in the rain,” TC continued, “Soundwave was running back and forth, TRYING to get him to move; Shockwave was furious, Esmeralda was ready to kill him, and by the time he finally got in the Transporter, we had to pull over TWICE on the side of the road,” he was laughing hard, “for Warp to purse his fuel tanks!”

Skywarp was furious now.

“Don’t blame me for that,” Soundwave reminded everyone, “George was driving.”

“Well, I’m glad all of you had such a wonderful time,” Starscream oozed sarcasm, rolling his optics, “MUFH! At least you all had each other; I was terrified; I thought you guys abandoned me!”

“Well, whatever!” Starscream sat back, “At least you all had the decency to mourn my greatness when you erroneously thought you would no longer benefit from my intellect.”

There were more chuckles from the group, except for Megatron. After a beat, the former Gladiator reach his hand over his shoulder, “Starscream…”

“What?!” Star was tired.

“Give me your hand,” Megatron whispered.

“Why?” Starscream was sick of everyone.

“Just,” Megatron sighed, “give me your hand.”

Starscream rolled his optics before giving him his hand.
Megatron squeezed his Bondmate’s hand lovingly in his larger one; it was all he could do to not order Soundwave to stop the Transporter so that he could get out and hug his Seeker on the side of the terrain for thirty minutes or so, just to make the awful memory files recess into the back of his processor once again. Even now, so many years later, the Decepticon Leader would flash on what he considered one of the worst, if not THE worst, time in his onlining, and he would have to wrap his arms around his mate, just to feel his spark beating against his own; it didn’t matter if they were sleeping or watching television or on a surveillance mission or traveling to a meeting with Optimus Prime. Sometimes, he just had to remind himself that he had Starscream with him again, and that was all he needed.

For his part, Starscream smiled when he figured out what was going on.

They had been driving for ninety minutes, as supposed to the usual twenty it took to travel to the Ark, when Soundwave again broke the silence, “Our E.T.A. is now twenty minutes, so this is when they would assume, we would be leaving our Base.”

Skywarp had still not said a word, either by vocalizer or Trine Bond, since last night, and it was beginning to worry his older brothers. His unborn daughter was taking a nap in his gestation chamber.

Megatron opened his Comm.-Link, “Laserbeak, what’s going on?”

“Several of the Autobots are circulating, Sir,” the Condor reported.

“Patch us in,” Soundwave ordered his son.

Laserbeak did so, and the small monitor on the Transporter’s dashboard turned on, giving them a bird’s-optic-view from the rafters of the Ark. At the moment, Bumblebee was talking to Jazz.

“Ravage,” Soundwave called on his Comm.-Link, “status report.”

“Everything is as you have left it, Father,” the Cat reported, “the Decepticons are adhering to their assigned duties. There has been no paranormal activity as of yet.”

“I’m patching in your brother’s live feed,” Soundwave pressed some buttons.

Back at the Control Room, one of the larger monitors turned on, once again focused on Bumblebee and Jazz. The Cat watched in stone-cold silence, while Blitzwing leaned over the swivel chairs.

“So, everybody’s on the same page,” Megatron noted, “let’s rock and roll.”

It would be another fifteen before anything of value came over the view on the monitor. When Prowl’s vocals were heard, Megatron sat up straight, so did Thundercracker; everyone else listened carefully.

“I’m just saying, Optimus,” Prowl entered the camera’s frame, a mug of Energon-coffee in one hand, and an Energon-pastry in the order, “this could all be a trip; trying to trick us, you never knew.”

“I understand your concerns, Prowl,” Optimus Prime held a spray bottle of clean in one hand and a
rag in the other, “but there have been several bizarre occurrences in the past several weeks, and hopefully, this meeting will shed some light on them. The Autobot Leader processed to clean the rectangular table in their conference room.

“What the slag’s he doing?” Megatron spat, “he’s the damn Leader; tell Prowl to clean the table.”

“There was a big theft at the Swarovski plant up in Rhoda Island yesterday,” Prowl sat on one of the chairs and up his pedes up, “you plan on asking him about that?”

“Was it the Decepticons?” Prime asked.

“Sure had their calling card on it.” Prowl shrugged between bites.

“We’ll play it by audial,” Prime nodded, “right now, I need to find out what’s going on. It’s our own safety I’m concerned about as well.”

“You still hold out hope for an alliance?” Prowl shrugged sarcastically as he took a big bite of his Energon-pastry, talking with his mouth full, “You still think we could do a peace treaty with those rusted barbarians?”

Megatron narrowed his optics.

“A lot of things have changed over the years, Prowl,” Optimus finished his cleaning, “we have worked together on several occasions; Shockwave has made more than a token effort to include us in matters regarding Cybertron, so of course I will, and always will, hope that the Autobots and the Decepticons may one day co-exist in peace.”

“What a dipstick,” Megatron grumbled, “and remind me to fire Shockwave.”

“Megatron…” Soundwave groaned.

“Can I at least post some Bots on guard duty?” Prowl finished his Energon-pastry, “You’re making me feel like a pile of cogs here.”

“You are a pile of cogs,” Thundercracker mumbled.

“Of course you may,” Prime told him, “but allow me to speak to Megatron first, so that I may assess the atmosphere.”

“I’ll give you atmosphere,” Megatron spat, “with my fists.”

Bumblebee came in, “Hi Optimus!”

“Hello there, Bumblebee,” Optimus was glad to see him, “good morning.”

“Can I play with the triplets?” Bumblebee chirped.

“NO!” Starscream shrieked.

“I’m not sure if Megatron and Starscream are bringing them, Bumblebee,” Optimus explained, “but we can ask them.”

“Absolutely NOT!” Starscream was furious, screaming as if the Autobots could hear him.

“We’re approaching the perimeter,” Soundwave warned, “after we pass this curve, their surveillance will detect our presence.”
On cue, Red Alert was heard calling Prime on his radio, “Decepticon Transporter is coming down here, Prime.”

“Thank you, Red Alert,” they watched Optimus Prime move towards the front of the Ark, anticipating their arrival.

“Park in the clearing,” Megatron ordered, referring to the forest out of range of the Ark, “we’ll walk the rest of the way.”

“Affirmative,” Soundwave drove past the entrance—and the Autobot Leader outside—and parked fifty yards north, in the clearing in the woods. The same place he and the Cassettes had waited for Laserbeak on Christmas Eve when they had been tricked by Gravechaser into thinking the Condor had been captured.

Once parked, they exited the vehicle; Thundercracker briefly considered staying behind with his brothers, not wanting to what Ironhide had to say, but he knew ignoring it would not change anything, so he gave Starscream and Skywarp one more look before joining the others.

“Rumble, Frenzy,” Soundwave instructed, “call me at the first sign of trouble.”

The twins nodded, understanding.

Astrotrain got the big blue mech to walk slowly but steadily, “Gotcha.”

“Just don’t hold onto me in front of them,” Soundwave told him; he did not want to look weak in front of the Autobots.” He gave the keys to Starscream.

“If they try anything, you three run,” Megatron instructed, “and I’ll hold Prime hostage until I can join you.” He glanced at his young brother-in-law, “You sure you’re alright, Thundercracker?”

The blue Seeker had mixed feelings about what he was going to learn from this meeting, but he sighed and answered, “I have to figure out how to save my brother.”
Chapter 103: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by transformersnewfan

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By Transformersnewfan

Optimus Prime and Prowl were still staring north, trying to figure out what the Decepticons were doing, when the Autobot Leader looked at his watch.

At seven in the morning on the dot, he heard Megatron’s vocal over his shoulder, “Optimus Prime.”

Prime spun around; the four Decepticons had snuck up behind them, “M-Megatron! Oh, hello there,” he immediately put his hand out for a shake.

Megatron, ever the poker-faceplated, only extended two digits for Prime to shake. Thundercracker was narrowing his optics; Soundwave was staring them down, and Astrotrain slapped his fist into his open hand in a punching manner. They were a tough crowd.

The two Leaders made their gentlemech agreement: “You agree that none of my Decepticons will be harmed while on the premises?” Megatron seethed.

“Agreed,” Optimus Prime nodded, “and you agree that none of my Autobots will be harmed as well?”

“Agreed,” Megatron told him.

“Then, please come inside,” Optimus took his hand back only to make a waving gesture for the group to enter.

Starscream clung to the keys in case they had to make a hasty escape.

Skywarp was in and out of reality again; he heard their vocals, and then when he didn’t hear them for a few minutes, and he realized they weren’t moving, he figured out they must be there. He secretly hoped that Thundercracker would be detained in the Autobot brig and that he would rot there forever.

:You don’t mean that, Warp, and you know it!: Starscream scolded, :You’re more hormonal than I was!: He reached backward and began to unstrap the triplets’ car seats.

“You’re takin’ ‘em out?” Frenzy asked; Rumble kept looking around for the ghost.

“Of course,” Starscream told him, “the engine’s off, so they don’t have to stay in these harnesses.”

The three mechlings were more than happy to flutter around and crawl all over their Mommy.

In the Ark’s hallway, Bumblebee, Mirage, Hound, Sideswipe, Sunsteaker, and Bluestreak watched in silence through the slightly ajar door. Jazz and Prowl stood in front of the door on guard duty, and to keep their Comrades from interrupting the delicate balance of temporary peace between their
factions.

And from the rafters, Laserbeak watched with both the camcorder in his helm and another camcorder on a tripod; he flipped back and forth between feeds, feeling like a Hollywood director.

Optimus Prime sat at the head of the table; Megatron sat to his immediate left; next to him was Thundercracker, Soundwave, and Astrotrain. Only Prime was in any kind of social mood, “Did you have any trouble getting here, Mega—”

The Decepticon Leader cut him off, “We’re not here on a social visit, Prime. Where’s Ironhide?!”

“He should be here shortly,” Optimus apologized.

There was an awkward silence.

“I suppose I show you some kindness,” Megatron admitted, “since, of course, we are guests here. Well, how is your son?”

“He’s doing very well, thank you,” Optimus nodded, “he’s a sophomore now; in fact, he’s going to be studying—”

Again, Megatron cut him off, “I’m not asking for an autobiography!”

“Understood,” Optimus agreed, still trying to keep the conversation civil, “and, may I ask, how are your triplets?”

“Fine,” was all Megatron offered.

“Do you have a recent picture?” Prime asked.

“What is this, a college reunion?!” Megatron growled in frustration, “WHERE IS IRONHIDE?!”

Optimus Prime looked at Jazz and Prowl; the Porsche pulled up his radio and whispered into it. A gruff vocal answered back, and Jazz reported, “He’s coming out; just finishing his cigarette.”

“Thank you,” Prime nodded. Now, he had nothing to do but sit there and endure the hot stares of the four Decepticon officers.

Megatron gave a long sigh, remembering that this meeting was their only hope of saving Skywarp from the ghost; he pulled a photograph from his subspace, “This was taken at Ma’s house at Christmas,” he handed it to Optimus, smiling slightly, “my life in one photo.”

Optimus Prime smiled beneath his facemask as he looked at the picture: Esmeralda and Starscream were sitting on the sofa with Darkmount, Darkwing, and Dawning giggling and playing for the camera.

“They look just like you, Megatron,” Optimus complimented, “and, your Mother looks well.”

Megatron nodded.

“I didn’t know he carries that around,” Starscream watched the monitor.
“Anyone else with any news?” Prime tried to make conversation.

“Just the new baby,” TC thought to himself, but he didn’t care to speak.

Prime knew Astrotrain from back in the day, so he tried him, “Congratulations on your new title, Astrotrain.”

“Thanks,” the Space Train nodded.

“You still own Maccadam’s Old Oil House?” Prime inquired, referring to the popular bar/nightclub in downtown Kaon that they all used to frequent in their younger days.

“Uh huh,” Astro nodded, “me and Blitzwing and some other fellas.”

“And, Firefox is still the manager?” Optimus asked, referring to Astrotrain’s younger sister.

“Yeah,” Astro nodded again, “she and her husband. They got two kids.”

Skywarp sighed; he had such a crush on Firefox, but she didn’t like him; he wished that they had ended up together, and maybe they could have had sparklings together, instead of going to that sperm bank in Vosnia, and set for execution by Thundercracker’s biological Sire. Oh, his processor was wandering now…

Darkwing was reaching for Skywarp now, “Baby! Baby!”

“Do you want him?” Starscream asked.

Skywarp didn’t answer, but in spite of that, he felt Starscream place the Seekerling on top of him. The little guy curled on his belly and poked him, “Baby? Where baby?” Crystal heard him and pushed her tiny thrusters against the wall of the gestation here, :Here!: Darkwing was squeezing Skywarp’s upper abdomen, “Where baby?” While the gestation chamber and unborn sparkling were located lower, :Crystal here, stupid!:

Skywarp sighed, gently taking Darkwing’s hand and placing it where Crystal’s thruster was poking out of.

“THERE THE BABY!” Darkwing told him.

“S-Sorry,” Starscream was laughing, “he’s fascinating with your belly.”

“Mmm…” was Skywarp’s only response.

Finally, Ironhide emerged from the hallway, “H-Hey all…”

“About time,” Megatron folded his arms.

“Sorry ‘bout that,” Ironhide was nervous, “I had to, y’know, gather my thoughts.”

“And a drink?” Soundwave could tell.

“Um,” the older mech sat down, next to Prime and across from Megatron, who wore an expression as cold as ice.
Yet another awkward silent fall upon the Autobot conference room.

“Who would like to start?” Prime asked.

“Well, it’s your conference room,” Megatron pointed out, “start the roll call.”

“Oh, we don’t usually do roll calls,” Prime admitted, “we prefer an informal setting.”

“Why am I not surprised,” Megatron groaned; something his counterpart boggled his processor, “Fine; since I asked for this meeting, I get right to the point.”

The Autobots in the hallway, Red Alert in the security center, Laserbeak in the rafters, Ravage, and Blitzwing in the Decepticon Control Room, and Starscream and the sparklings in the Transporter were all at attention now. Skywarp wasn’t feeling well, but he had to pay attention to this.

“As you may or may not know,” Megatron began, “Our Decepticon Air Force 2nd Lieutenant Skywarp, and Communications Officer Soundwave have decided to start a family together.”

Prime turned to Soundwave, “Congratulations.”

“That’s not why we’re here!” Megatron cut him off for the third time, and just spit it out, “We’ve been experiencing some violent paranormal activity for the past several months. And I’ve only recently become aware that this paranormal activity actually began when Skywarp conceived his sparkling. So, for reasons unknown, an evil entity has taken up residence in my Base.”

“Entity?” Optimus Prime’s optics widened as he listened. Ironhide listened as well but was much less surprised.

“I can understand why Skywarp didn’t tell us at first,” Megatron continued, “especially since he had no idea why this was happening to him now. But more recently, this entity has become much more violent.”

“I see,” Optimus was very troubled by this news; he knew that Megatron would never come to the Autobots for an alliance if this were not a serious threat.

“Now, we have attempted to protect him and his unborn sparkling,” Megatron continued, “but he has continued to suffer attacks. At first, it was just break-ins, we suspected your espionage agent, Mirage, because he told us his attacker was blue.”

Hound place his hand on Mirage’s back for support as they heard Megatron say, “He was actually our only suspect for quite a while.”

“I can assure you, Megatron,” Prime stated with conviction, “Mirage was on your Base in an espionage mission. Also, I can provide proof of Mirage’s whereabouts on the dates in question, as well as sworn statements from witnesses who will vouch for his innocence.”

“That won’t be necessary, Prime,” Megatron bit his lip components, “we’re long past blaming Mirage.”

From the Control Room, Ravage, the Coneheads, and Blitzwing watched the largest monitor in silence.
“What sort of attacks have been happening?” Prime asked.

“You want the laundry list?” Megatron sighed, “Skywarp has been scratched, pushed, nightmares,” he sighed again, trying to remember everything, “something happened that he was locked in the shower, with the water running, he burned his hand badly, and, last night, he fell down the stairs and broke his leg and a wing.”

“My God…” Optimus Prime couldn’t believe what he was listening to, “Is Skywarp with you? Do you feel our medics could assist you in some way?”

Megatron wasn’t comfortable with the idea of LEAVING Skywarp with the Autobot medics, especially since he knew that, even though Prime was making a sincere offer to help, the other Autobots may not be nearly as charitable. But at the same time, he knew that this was not entirely his decision; yes, he was Leader of the Deceptions, but Skywarp’s brothers and doctor were his next of kin.

But then, almost simultaneously, Starscream told him through their Bond, :No!: and Thundercracker verbally answered, “No.” Megatron was grateful that the answers came quickly.

“Was the sparkling harmed?” Optimus persisted; he was genuinely worried because of the past atrocities committed against Seekers, that any pregnancy was to be treated very delicately and not something to take for granted.

“We believe the sparkling is doing well,” Soundwave answered, “for now.”

“Very well,” Optimus Prime was struggling now with how he could help, “um, please continue.”

“This… ‘being,’ whatever you will call it,” Megatron spoke in his most serious tone, “has been relentless in It’s efforts to destroy Skywarp. And because we have all been trying to prevent this, It has physically assaulted us as well. This entity has attacked Starscream; many of the Decepticons are recharge deprived, and Soundwave has had some pretty bad attacks as well.”

“Soundwave?” Optimus Prime asked.

“My quarters was destroyed,” the Tapedeck answered, “my sons were attacked; and last night, I was locked out on the Tarmac, so I was climbing down the elevator shaft, and I fell approximately four flights, all the way down to the basement.”

From the Transporter, Rumble and Frenzy gasped. “POP FELL DOWN THE ELEVATOR SHAFT?!” Rumble shouted.

And in the Control Room, Ravage was stunned silent; his Sire had not told him or his brothers how he had been injured. Terrible thoughts raced through the Cat’s processor as he contemplated just how close he and his siblings had come to losing their sole surviving Creator just hours earlier.

“Oh, my God,” Prime was shocked.
“Affirmative,” Soundwave nodded, “I was fortunate not to have broken my pelvic structure.”

“You’re lucky you didn’t break your neck!” Prime had to sit back now; this was very bad indeed.

All the while, Ironhide only sighed and stared down at the table.

“Wait, wait a minute,” Jazz had to come over now, “what was that thing at the Christmas party when you came here looking for your son?”

Megatron looked to his Communications Officer to continue.

Careful not to tip his hand about their ongoing spy missions, Soundwave explained matter-of-factly, “I received a distress call from Laserbeak, saying the Autobots had captured him. Naturally, I came to rescue him.”

“And we had a similar call,” Optimus Prime interjected, “but from Bumblebee; only Bumblebee swore to me that he never made that call.”

“Affirmative, that was the entity,” Soundwave told him, “we’ve come to believe that It faked your yellow scout’s call as a trial run, and also to delay the end of your holiday event.”

“But…why?” Prime asked.

“In order to lure myself and my other sons here,” Soundwave explained, but ending it there.

“That’s when It set fire to our Base,” Megatron continued the story, “I was on Cybertron; the Base was nearly destroyed on Christmas Eve, with Skywarp and his unborn sparkling inside.”

“WHAT?!” Prime couldn’t contain his complete surprise, “Megatron, that’s horrifying!”

“Yep,” Megatron bit his lip components.

“Why didn’t? How?” Prime was flabbergasted, “Megatron, why didn’t you come here sooner?! Why didn’t you come here a month ago?”

“You think this is easy, Prime?” Megatron got tough, having his authority challenged was unsettling, “You think it’s easy for any of us to admit that this is paranormal, supernatural or whatever name you wanna call it?! It took us a LONG TIME to realize that Mirage or your Lambo twins weren’t behind all this slag on either an elaborate hoax, pranks, or the ultimate espionage mission!”

Thundercracker didn’t want to add anything, instead preferring to look down at his hands; listening to the two Leaders thrash out their frustrations.

“Lambo twins?” Jazz looked at Megatron, “You mean Sideswipe and Sunstreaker? You thought this was a prank?!”

Megatron sat up straight in the chair, yelling back, “Well, remember when those two hippity-pippities were meeting with the Stunticons for those secret drag-racing matches off Corona Bay?”

Hound looked at the twins for that one.

Prowl rolled his optics, “I doubt that they could come up with such a clever scheme.”

“Let’s get back on track here,” Optimus Prime put his hands out to stop the fighting, “Megatron, I understand that you’ve only realized recently that this is an external problem. So, what have you down SINCE learning this?”
“What HAVEN’T I done is a better question!” Megatron snapped back, “I’ve blessed the Base with Holy Water; I’ve burned incense almost every night; we’ve stepped up security; implemented curfews and curtailed our activities. And every slagging time; every slagging time, Prime, that slagger has separated us; found It’s way through loopholes, and even possessed some of my crew to order to get to him! I felt like this slagger is killing him slowly; cause we kept falling into every trip It laid!”

The Autobot Leader felt a deep sadness for not only Skywarp and his unborn sparkling, but for Megatron as well; he knew how terrible he himself would feel if this were happening to one of his Autobots and if he were helpless to stop it.

“You gotta understand,” Astrotrain spoke up, “none of us ever had anything like this before. I’M the one this Thing used to push him down the stairs! You know how that makes me feel? My best friends thought I did it! I haven’t slept in over twenty-three hours!”

“You feel as though you never knew what’s next,” Soundwave continued, “one day, things will be fine, and the next, the sirens are going off; the computers are shut down; you don’t know where your family is.”

Laserbeak watched the scene and, like his brothers, realized how bad things had become at home.

“Ghosts like this were just legends,” Megatron waved his hands to his Autobot counterpart, almost forgetting about the War between their factions; and speaking to his former friend as if they were younglings on Cybertron again, “these were stories we grew up with, Optimus,” he never called Prime by his first name only unless he was speaking to him as a friend, “these were berthtime nursery rhymes our Creators taught us, like the monsters in the woods. That there were dead Bots that came back as Heralds of Unicron just because a Seeker got pregnant and that Seeker was vulnerable.”

“Actually, I heard it a bit differently,” Optimus explained, “my understanding of the legend is: These entities tend to strike when we are at our most happiest.”

Megatron shrugged, “Six of one, half a dozen of the other.”

There was silence between all sides again.

“So, I suppose I should ask,” Megatron decided to let Optimus in on this, “how is my predecessor fairing?”

“Skyfire is out of the Med-Bay now,” Prime knew who Megatron was referring to.

“That wasn’t an accident, you know,” Megatron folded his arms over his chestplates, “if you think for a moment, that that was some fluke electrical problem, you’d be wrong.”

“I’m sorry?” Prime was at a loss now.

“That was the entity,” Megatron explained, “let me explain: Skyfire was probably, I assume, you were asking him to bring Ironhide here back to your Base?”

“I was, actually,” Prime nodded, trying to figure out where his counterpart was going with this.

“And, as you assigned him this,” Megatron was careful not to tip his hand regarding Laserbeak’s
surveillance missions, instead pretending to piece the evidence together through what the Autobot Leader had told them, “there was some sort of accident and an electrical problem?”

“The fuse box exploded,” Prime told him, thinking he was telling him this first hand, “and Skyfire was standing in front of it when it happened. We had to tend to him, and had no power throughout the Ark.”

“Which was all to delay our meeting,” Megatron told him as he rocked back on the chair, “tell me, Optimus, did anyone see or hear anything unusual immediately prior to the incident?”

“No,” Optimus Prime shook his helm, “I have not experienced anything myself; I was in my office at the time.” He turned to his troops, “Anyone?”

Bluestreak piped up, “He said you called him.”

“What?” Optimus had no idea, “Bluestreak, what did you say?”

“Skyfire said you called him to your office,” the blue Datson admitted sheepishly, “only…he said you sounded strange. And that’s all he remembers.”

“My God,” that was when Prime realized it; not only were the Decepticons in grave danger but so were the Autobots!

“Uh huh,” Megatron knew all of this from Laserbeak, but he had to play dumb, “you wanna bet that was our ghost pretending to be you?”

“But why?” Prime was again at a loss, “because of Starscream?”

“To delay Ironhide’s return,” Megatron told him, “It’s what this entity DOES, Optimus, It was buying Itself more time. Anything to delay our meeting.” He raised his vocals an octave as he addressed Ironhide, “And where exactly were you, anyway?!”

The Red Van didn’t answer, wholly mortified. Thundercracker was staring him dead in the optics.

“I’m embarrassed to admit to this, Megatron,” Prime covered his mouthplate in shame, “Red Alert claims that I ordered Ironhide Tokyo, Japan, to guard Doctor Fujiyama, the Famous Scientist.”

“Did you?” Megatron was sitting back in the chair with his arms folded, already knowing the answer.

“No,” Prime admitted.

“Uh huh,” Megatron nodded, “I feel like a broken record, going on repeat here, Optimus, this was the entity, again buying time! An hour here, a day there, two days; anything for even an ounce of opportunity to wreak havoc; and in the time that this was going on with you bumbling clowns, we’ve all been trying to keep from getting offlined!”

Another long pause. Thundercracker didn’t want to speak at all; just let Megatron handle the Autobots; he wished deeply to get out of this conference room. Astrotrain and Soundwave occasionally glanced at each other and back at Ironhide.

This time, it was Prime that broke the silence, “I had no idea this was going on.”

“Have you noticed any paranormal activity?” Megatron finally spoke again.

“No,” Optimus Prime shook his helm, “I did not feel I had experienced anything myself; only now I
see that the fake distress calls…”

“You’ve spoken to It, you know,” Megatron told him.

“I have?” that’s when it dawned on Prime, “With…Bumblebee.”

“Yes…” Megatron rocked again on the chair, “And It got you out of your Base.”

“We have to stop this entity,” Prime realized, “it’s not just Skywarp; neither one of our sides is safe with this entity out there.”

And with those words, Megatron sighed with relief, knowing they had secured the Autobots’ help with solving this paranormal travesty. They would work together now to defeat this common enemy.

But back in the Transporter, Skywarp had much less hope for his own survival. He knew that Gravechaser was relentless in his quest to destroy him, and he would too. The black and purple Seeker’s only wish now was for his unborn daughter to survive.

“What I want to know is,” Soundwave leaned over the table at Ironhide, “is where do you fit into all of this? You haven’t said a word the whole time we’ve been here.”

“Yeah, I know,” the older mech sighed heavily, looking over at Prime with a shame on his faceplates that his friend had never seen before, “I buried this secret for…nearly twenty years.”
Thundercracker sat up and rested his arms on the table, practically leaning half his chassis over it to look at Ironhide as the old mech spoke.

“I-I never told anybody about this,” Ironhide began shakily, “not even you, Prime.”

“It’s alright, Ironhide,” Prime reassured him, “whatever happened, we will deal with it.”

Megatron was much less sympathetic, asking dryly “What happened?!?”

“I’m gonna do my best to remember everything that went down,” Ironhide began, “I was a young Bot, back in Archon. That’s a…small colony of mostly police mechs back home.”

They all listened, especially Megatron and Thundercracker. And as he spoke, many images came to the surface:

“I was freshly accepted to the Archon Police Academy,” Ironhide narrated his memory files, “me and my best friend, Dion. We had met the first day and became fast friends.”

Flashback:

A young, thin Ironhide, wearing his Academy uniform walked through the hallowed halls of the Archon Police Academy, holding the datapad with his room assignment.

“Hey,” he called, “are you in this dorm too?”

“Yep!” chirped the equally young and thin Bot, “Name’s Dion!”

“Ironhide here,” and the two shook hands, “glad to meet ya, roomie!”

End of Flashback:

“Dion was from Archon,” Ironhide began, “the only son of a policemech and a housewife. His Grandfather and Great-Grandfather were both policemechs as well. I think an uncle was too.”

Thundercracker’s optics widened; Who was this Dion? Was this their ghost?

“Who’s Dion?” Mirage whispered to Hound, who shrugged, not knowing either.

“We were full of hope and promise,” the red Van smiled sadly, “it was so long ago.”

“And full of slag,” Megatron mumbled to his crew.

“We did everything together,” Ironhide went on, “all our classes were together; training; and afterward, when we were on Leave, we’d hit the town in Rodion.”

Flashback:
Ironhide and Dion, along with their fellow recruits, were all decked out in their Academy uniforms, looking, feeling, and smelling like a million credits, walked down Circuit Street in Rodion, which was the nightclub scene.

End of Flashback:

“That’s when we met ‘em,” Ironhide remembered, “we were probably on our fifth bar that night; smokes, High Grade…”

Flashback:

In the smoky nightclub, Ironhide held his cigarette continental-style, while Dion, holding his cigarette between his middle and index digits, laughing at a joke; their friend did the talking, which they could barely hear over the feedback of the hundreds of mechs and femmes throughout the club.

End of Flashback:

“I think the nightclub was called the Hive; they had a lotta places like this before the Clamp Down was implemented and stuff. It was a different time…”

“Get to the point, Ironhide,” Megatron was impatient.

“I’m just explainin’,” the older mech shook his helm, “that’s where we met ‘em.”

“Who?” Thundercracker leaned even closer, “Met who?”

“The femmes,” Ironhide went on.

Flashback:

Three femmes, dressed in military attire with the exception of their very short skirts, performed their singing and dancing routine, while a young mech blew his bugle.

The femmes’ singing:

♫ “He was a famous trumpet man from out Chicago way,” ♪ “He had a boogie style that no one else could play,” ♪ “He was the top man at his craft,” ♪ “But then his number came up and he was gone with the draft,” ♪ “He's in the army now, a-blowin' reveille,” ♪ “He's the boogie woogie bugle boy of Company B.” ♪

End of Flashback:

Megatron was notably frustrated with the slow pace of this story; Thundercracker was listening intently; Soundwave, like Megatron, wondered where this was going, and Astrotrain kept locking optics with Prowl, each making sure neither raised his weapon.

Starscream had long lost interest, instead playing with his sparklings and watching over Skywarp.

“Man, poor ‘Beak,” Rumble told Frenzy, “he’s gotta listen to his slag all the time!”

“Guess that’s why he’s always so ticked,” Frenzy noted.

“One must have patience, Frenzy,” the Condor’s vocals came through the speaker, “if there is one sage I have learned for the time period I have been working in intelligence gathering, it is to wait for the nugget of information the Autobots will give one listening. Even if this process takes up to eighteen hours at a time.”
“Tell me we don’t have to wait that long,” Starscream sighed; Dawning just giggled.

“The femme on the left, well,” Ironhide continued, smiling, “she was named Flareup. The middle one was named Beta, and the one on the right was named Novastar.”

Flashback:

The young recruits hooted and howled as the femmes stunted their stuff!

Theennes’ singing:

“A-toot, a-toot, a-toot-diddelyada-toot,” ♪
“He blows it eight-to-the-bar, in boogie rhythm,” ♪
“He can’t blow a note unless the bass and guitar is playin’ with ’I’m,” ♪
“He makes the company jump when he plays reveille,” ♪
“He’s the boogie woogie bugle boy of Company B.” ♪

And when the femmes beckoned them, Ironhide, Dion, and the other recruits got up and danced the boogie woogie dance with them!

End of Flashback:

“I started seeing Flareup,” Ironhide nodded, “and Dion started dating Novastar. Can’t remember which fella dated Beta at the moment.”

“Thought you were with Chromia,” Soundwave pointed out.

“This was way before Chromia,” Ironhide waved this off, “this was a way long time ago.”

“Pipe down, Soundwave,” Megatron sat back, oozing sarcasm, “don’t make the story longer by asking questions.”

Flashback:

Ironhide, Flareup, Dion, and Novastar walked arm and arm around town; the mechs looking handsome in their uniforms.

End of Flashback:

“We were a foursome,” Ironhide explained, “we went out every night dancin’, hittin’ the town, y’know, it was the era; it was more innocent then, before we knew anything about Wars, and Elitism, and class systems, y’know?” he remembered that there was a Seeker sitting across from him, “Things were…different back then.”

“Sure,” Thundercracker nodded; this was the era that Seekers were forbidden from leaving the Vosian perimeter because of the bigoted government’s regulations. He and his brothers were afraid to leave school grounds, especially after dark, because the Grounders from the nearby towns had a pension for beating up Seekers for no reason, other than the fact that they were Seekers.

And for his part, Megatron was thinking about how during this era in question, his beloved Sire worked his digits to the bone in the Energon Mines, trying to pay their bills and keep food on the table, “And the point is?”

“I'm just trying to tell his story…” Ironhide shrugged, “I've never talked about Dion…before.”
Thundercracker listened, believing now that Dion was their ghost; thank goodness it wasn’t his own Sire!

“So, anyway,” Ironhide continued, “it was graduation day that we got our assignments.”

Flashback:

The two young mechs were among hundreds in their graduating class, saluting as each took the stage and shook hands with their ruler, Sentinel Prime, who personally presided over the commencement ceremony. Afterward, the young mechs received their first assignments.

“Well, the moment of truth,” Ironhide opened the envelope, and smiled to his friend, “I got guard duty at the Iacon Correctional Center.”

Dion opened his envelope, “I got the Iacon Correctional Center too!”

“YIPEE-YA-HOO!” Ironhide hooted as he and Dion did chestplate-bumping in celebration.

“We’re gonna stay together forever, bro!” Dion could not have been happier.

End of Flashback:

Ironhide leaned his faceplates on his wrist now, “Yeah…”

“Come on, Ironhide,” Megatron scoffed, “we don’t wanna hear you reminiscing on your glory days.”

Soundwave didn’t say a thing; Megatron of all mechs loved to reminisce.

Back in the Transporter, Skywarp was getting terribly restless; he tried to sit up, only to keen in pain.

“Oh,” Starscream helped him up, careful to keep his broken leg straight and pulled Skywarp into a hug, letting the younger’s helm rest on his shoulder, “it’s alright, darling…”

They watched the monitor in silence.

“Alright, alright,” Ironhide sat up straight, “So, Dion and I started there; it was a pretty easy assignment.”

Flashback:

Ironhide and Dion walked through the massive prison with the Warden, passing cell after cell full of Seeker detainees.

“You’ll find that many of them are harmless,” the Warden explained, “most of them are here on minor offenses; waiting for trial. They wouldn’t be giving you any trouble.”

The Warden proceeded to reach into a cell and punch a random Seeker through the bars, “No trouble at all.”

Ironhide and Dion looked at each other with caution.
“It was bad, y’know?” Ironhide admitted, “Looking back now, a lot of those prisoners were locked up for no reason. A lot of ’em were there with no trial; just…waiting for their trials like it was a lockup or somethin’. But they were there for years and years. Overcrowding, four to a cell…Sentinel Prime was just rounding up Seekers to lock ’em all up…but, we didn’t know that stuff then.”

“I'm very familiar with Sentinel’s policies,” Megatron growled, “but does any of this have any relevance to the subject at hand? I mean, does any of this have to do with our ghost problem?”

But Thundercracker believed so, “He’s telling us who Dion was,” it was difficult for the blue Jet to hear about this era of segregation of the Seekers, but he felt more than ever that he wanted to learn the truth, especially about this Dion mech.

“Yes, please,” Optimus Prime encouraged his friend, “please continue, Ironhide.”

Ironhide and Dion were very rough with the prisoners, despite the fact that many were docile. Most of the Seekers ached for the skies but were confined to the overcrowded cells.

“Get in there; ya worthless winged freak!” Dion shoved a hapless Seeker into his cell, “Pond scum!”

“I’M INNOCENT!” begged the prisoner.

“You’re guilty of being a Seeker!” Dion shot back, “HAHAHAHAHAHA!”

Meanwhile, in the Transporter, Starscream listened to this story, remembering his own time in lockup in that Detention Center, when the Elite Guard arrested him on suspicion of killing Skyfire. He released how lucky he had been that his brothers had bailed him out before anything happened to him. He hugged Skywarp tighter, “Are you awake, Warp?” Star asked.

The darker Seeker was too out of it to answer.

“Spare us your brand of remorse,” Megatron sneered, “and are you ever going to get to the point?”

“Okay, um, well,” Ironhide tried to steel himself, “they were bringing more prisoners in all the time, every day. Some got released; others stayed; we were working there, I dunno, maybe six, eight months, when HE was brought in…”

“Come on, come on,” Dion hurried the prisoners along, waving his rifle in the air. Ironhide, meanwhile, studied his datapad.

“How many today?” Dion asked, regarding how many new prisoners.
“Six,” Ironhide answered, “the usual: trespassers, petty theft, except one’s a cop killer.”

“A WHAT?” Dion was stunned, “Whoa! Sounds like this one really DOES belong here.”

End of Flashback:

“This one prisoner, well,” Ironhide wished he had a cigarette; the memory files made him shutter; feeling like he was back in the time period in question, “he was different than the others. The things he was accused of doing were just heinous.”

Thundercracker listened carefully.

Flashback:

Ironhide and Dion stood with their rifles as two guards brought Scourge off the bus. The dark blue Seeker was thrashing around in the stasis-cuffs, fighting the guards as they were handing him off to Ironhide.

“Let me go, you maggot!” Scourge barked as he broke free of the guard to his right. And, despite the stasis-cuffs, he managed to punch the guard in the faceplates.

“HEY! HEY!” Ironhide yelled as he grabbed the new prisoner, “Now you simmer down, or you’re gonna spend most of your time in solitary!”

Both Ironhide and Dion tried to restrain the crazed Seeker, who shoved and thrashed around, sending both guards to the ground. It took all four guards to finally subdue him.

End of Flashback:

“That guy was a bad dude,” Ironhide told them, “he gave us trouble every single day.”

Soundwave leaned forward, “Do you remember his designation?”

“No…” Ironhide averted his gaze.

But Soundwave narrowed his optics, “I detect deception in your vocals.”

Thundercracker looked at Soundwave, then back to Ironhide.

“Ironhide,” Megatron looked at him as well, “we came here looking for the truth! If you’re not going to be completely honest—”

“What I’m sayin’ is,” Ironhide insisted, “is that I never did know his name! We Elite Guards never knew ANY of the prisoners’ names, only numbers. And the numbers were given case files. But I DO know who I’m talking about here.”

Thundercracker watched him closely.

Flashback:

Scourge sat in the center of his cell, seething with rage. Ironhide walked by his cell, smoking a cigarette.

End of Flashback:

“This mech was the meanest, dirtiest, son of a glitch I’d ever met,” Ironhide told them, “he never
blamed himself for anything. He never accepted his share of the blame for the things that put him in prison. It was everyone else’s fault; his ex-wife’s fault; her husband’s fault; he… I encountered the most confusing and frustrating part of this. He would fantasize about killing their sparkling.”

And that’s when everything clicked for Thundercracker; his optics widened, and he tilted his helm a bit, he didn’t want to believe this, but the pieces were coming together in his processor.

Ironhide spoke knowing he was speaking to the son of the prisoner in question, “His case file said he had killed two policemechs up in Northern Vos. He had been some kind of a wife beater, and when he lost custody of his son, he apparently kidnapped the boy. By the time the local authorities tracked ‘em down, they were up in some seedy motel. And when the cops broke the door down, he shot and killed two of ‘em.”

It clicked. It all clicked. This mech was his Father. Thundercracker felt his spark sink into his fuel tanks. Coolant tears weld up in his optics, threatening to break his tough façade.

“Can you describe him?” Soundwave asked.

“He was always out of control,” Ironhide waved his hands around, “he was tall, blue and white paint job, very controlling, always repeating himself, he rambled all the time.”

Thundercracker’s pursed his lip components, trying not to cry. He felt like he did when he was four years old again.

Flashback:

Earlier that day, his Mother had laid down with him for a nap together, but the little Seeker was bored and carefully wiggled away from her recharging form and went outside. Now he was facing the barrel of a blaster in his Father’s hand.

End of Flashback:

Megatron placed his hand on his young brother-in-law’s shoulder.

“He loved to read books in his cell,” Ironhide went on, “like Homer’s Odyssey; he loved baseball; very meticulous, a plotter, his power was that he was a tracker; I got that he was a High-Grade addict and that he had abused his wife at the time.”

“I-I know who it is,” Thundercracker whimpered, his vocals cracking.

“I think we all do,” Megatron sighed; he could only imagine how hard this was for TC to hear.

“Thundercracker,” Soundwave looked at him with less sympathy, “why don’t you do me a favor, why don’t you tell us about your Father.”

“M-My Father was a tracker,” Thundercracker’s vocals were giving off static, “but when he would drink High-Grade, he wasn’t the same mech anymore. He would…” coolant tears ran down his faceplates, “he hit my Mom. He hit her when he was carrying Skywarp…”

“Well,” Ironhide shifted in his chair, “he never said his name. I doubt he knew his name, but he would talk about horrible things. He would,” he hesitated to continue, “he would rant and rave all night, and say he was gonna drown ‘em, drown him in the shower…”

Oh no. Gravechaser had tried to drown Skywarp in the shower.
“AH!” Thundercracker let a keen escape his vocalizer; he was losing his battle to control his sohs.

“Thundercracker,” Megatron tried, “Thundercracker, don’t…”

But the blue Seeker felt his resolve crumbling, he started whimpering, putting his faceplates into his hands.

Starscream felt his spark breaking for their oldest brother. But Skywarp just turned away, feeling no sympathy. He and his unborn daughter had suffered for months with Gravechaser’s merciless attacks. And what did Thundercracker do when he told him the truth? He slapped him in the faceplates and left him at the ghost’s mercy in the Med-Bay. Why didn’t he believe him? Why did he have to hear the truth from an Autobot instead of his own brother?

“He was just evil,” Ironhide continued, “he hated us with a passion; he hated everybody. He, um…” when he saw Thundercracker, a tough air warrior, dissolving into a puddle of keening sohs, he closed his mouth, embarrassment washing over him.

“Thundercracker, come on,” Megatron whispered, “we’re in the Autobot Base.”

“I-I’m s-s-sorry,” TC cried, “I-I can’t.”

Optimus Prime didn’t know what to say; he didn’t want to interfere.

:Teecee,: Starscream was calling through the Trine Bond, :Teecee, come out of there.: “Take a minute,” Megatron told the blue Seeker, “take a minute outside.”

“U-Uh huh,” Thundercracker nodded, getting up and practically running out of the Ark; leaving the mortified mechs at the table.

“AAUUUGGGHHH! AAUUUGGGHHH!” once outside, the blue Seeker could keen openly, loudly as he wanted to; he hugged himself with his arms, both from the biting cold and for comfort. He trudged in the snows, not even knowing where he was going.

“Oh, Teecee,” Starscream exited the Transporter, catching his older brother in his arms and held him, “TC, I’m so sorry…”

Thundercracker just continued to cry; he cried like a sparkling.

But Skywarp just narrowed his optics and turned away. As far as he was concerned, Thundercracker deserved this.
Chapter 105: By Transformersnewfan

Chapter by Transformersnewfan

“Not one word,” Megatron pointed a digit at Optimus Prime, “I don’t want to hear ONE WORD out of you!”

“I just want to extend my condolences,” Prime told him, “I’m sorry that this is so hard.”

“Sentinel was rounding up Seekers like they were animals!” Megatron roared, “That’s not so easily forgotten, Prime!”

It was their same fight; the fight they always had whenever they tried to negotiate any sort of collaboration. It was the reason for the War between their factions itself. The atrocities committed by the Prime Dynasty was what birthed the rise of the Decepticons. But then the Decepticons’ unwillingness to truth the current Autobot regime despite the fact that they were not the ones that committed the original massacres.

“We had no idea what was going on,” Optimus Prime insisted, “we didn’t know until after Sentinel was dead.”

“It was just a job,” Ironhide hung his helm, ashamed of his past involved.

“That’s a fine answer,” Megatron was furious, “ignorance was bliss, apparently! MY SONS ARE SEEKERS, PRIME! What am I supposed to say someday when Darkmount comes to me and asks, ‘Dad, why were we the first triplet Seekers born in our generation?’ And I’ll be the one that has to break it to him, that it was because of Optimus Prime’s uncle that so many Seekers were wiped out, that the population went down by more than half! And that that’s why there are not more Seekers flying around today!”

“But you’re still blaming us for the past,” Prime tried, “a past that we were too young to be involved with. Do you not believe that I carry the weight of those Seekers’ sparks on my own?”

“If you say so,” Megatron seethed, “but it does little to reassure the hundreds of Decepticons I would have to present that argument to if we were ever to reach a peace agreement.”

At the same time outside, Thundercracker sobbed and whined on Starscream’s shoulder, while the red and white Seeker had his arms wrapped firmly around him.

Skywarp was much less charitable, motioning for Rumble to close the Transporter’s door. The blue Cassette did so, assuming the pregnant Seeker was cold.

“Please don’t cry, TC,” Starscream could feel the hurt coming through their Trine Bond, “you know how much it hurts me when you cry.”

“But…Why?!” TC managed through his coolant tears, “why Warp?! W-Why’s he after Warp?! He had n-nothing to do with t-this!”
“I don’t know,” Starscream admitted, rocking him slightly as they stood in the snow, “I think his ghost is obsessed.”

“I-I knew it was him, Star,” TC sobbed, “I-I just... When I saw him in the kitchen... back in our quarters... I f-felt the way I felt when I was a sparkling again. I-I-I was so scared. It’s just hard to h-h-hear... like somebody stabbed a knife in my spark.”

Starscream held him as the blue Seeker continued, “I-I gotta make him move on... I can’t let him hurt Skywarp anymore... or the baby.”

Starscream rubbed his back and wings and held him for a bit longer before Thundercracker told him, “I’m going back.”

“No, TC,” Starscream begged, “come in the Transporter,” he tried to pull his older brother, “you can be with me and Warp and the kids; let them deal with the Autobots.”

“No,” Thundercracker pulled away, “I’m okay; I’m going back.” And he headed back to the Ark.

“No matter how you whitewash things,” Megatron pointed a digit, “it was a violation of the Seekers’ civil rights!”

“I agree,” Optimus Prime nodded.

Soundwave hushed them, “He’s coming back.”

Everyone was silent as the blue Seeker sat down again.

“I’m sorry,” Thundercracker explained, “I apologize for crying and for leaving.”

“It’s alright,” Megatron nodded.

“I would like to extend my deepest condolences, Thundercracker,” Optimus Prime reached over, “I’m so sorry that you’re going through this.”

“No, you’re not,” Megatron huffed.

“Let’s not start again, Megatron,” Optimus told him.

“Fine,” the Decepticon Leader turned his attention towards Ironhide, “you mind explaining WHY we had to endure hearing about your boogie-woogie femmes?”

“It was all tied into what happened,” Ironhide told them, “Dion and I would work ten-hour shifts during the week, for five days, sometimes six days with Saturdays, and double date on our Sundays.”

Thundercracker was trying to be quiet, sitting low in the chair and looking down, listening.

Flashback:

Scourge paced around his cell; his wings twitching nervously in the close space; the three other Seekers with him were less than comfortable with his rising anger.

“Hey Ironhide,” Dion walked with his rifle, “whattaya say we take the femmes to Maccadam’s this weekend?”
“I’d say,” Ironhide smiled, “you’ve got a brilliant idea!” the two mechs lit each other’s cigarettes before Scourge came to the bars and stared at them.

“You two have no IDEA what it’s like,” Scourge seethed, “being betrayed by you mate; having your sparkling taken away from you!”

“I DON’T WANNA HEAR IT, MECH!” Dion shot back, “All you ever talk about is your family, and they don’t want you! Get over it!”

Scourge suddenly grabbed Dion by the neck cables and smashed his helm, faceplates first, into the bars!

“Hey, hey!” Ironhide shouted, beating the prisoner back, “you let him go!”

Scourge did, letting Dion fall to the ground. But the young guard retaliated, “Lemme at ‘em!” he unlocked the cell and jumped inside, punching Scourge in the jaw, sending him crashing to the floor. The three other prisoners leaping onto their berths to get out of the way.

“Dion, no!” Ironhide called as he pulled his friend out and relocked the cell, “he ain’t worth it.”

Scourge, for his part, began sobbing on the cell floor.

End of Flashback:

“You’d feel sorry for him,” Ironhide remembered, “but then he’d go and do some other slag, and make you remember what a scumbag he really was.”

Flashback:

In the prison Dining Room, Ironhide and Dion walked with their rifles as the inmates consumed their Energon rations.

Scourge refused to socialize with his fellow inmates, despite sitting among hundreds of them.

“I heard about what happened,” one Seeker tried, “you wanna talk about your little mechling?”

Scourge refused to acknowledge the other prisoner.

“I have a sparkling too,” the Seeker offered a photo, “how old is your boy?”

After a long silence, Scourge looked down and studied his hands, “He’s five now,” before getting a picture of his now-ex-wife and son from his subspace, “it’s been almost a year since I’ve seen him.”

“I’m sure you’ll see him again,” the other Seeker tried, “just gotta be patient.”

At that moment, the Warden came up to said Seeker with a datapad, he recited his inmate number, “Is that you?”

“Yes,” the Seeker nodded.

“You can go,” the Warden gestured towards the door, “your Bondmate made the bail credits.”

“O-Oh,” the Seeker was elated, turning towards Scourge, “you see?! Everything’s gonna be okay!” and raced out of the Dining Room with the Warden.

But for Scourge, there was no joy, “Of course, she will never come for me. Because she’s too busy
caring for that spawn of her back-door mech!” he threw his tray of food and hit a random fellow prisoner, who in turn threw a punch at Scourge, who in turn, shoved said Seeker backward into three other Seekers, and a melee breaks out!

“Hey! Hey!” Ironhide, Dion and the other guards rushed in to quell the brawl.

End of Flashback:

“Over time,” Ironhide remembered, “he talked less and less about the wife and son, and more about revenge on the wife’s new sparkling.”

Flashback:

Ironhide walked by the cell with his rifle. Scourge was pacing, wings twitching form the small space, and rambling on about Skywarp, “I WILL get that sparkling for ruining our marriage and taking my son from me.”

End of Flashback:

“He was there less than a year when he first escaped,” Ironhide remembered, “Dion and I were getting ready for the shift change at the time.”

Thundercracker remembered this vividly; at the time, he was five-years-old, and his baby brother was nine-months-old. Their Creators had been told by the policiemchs that Scourge had escaped, so they took their sparklings to a hotel for the night, just to be safe, until he was recaptured.

Flashback:

“Should be easy tonight,” Ironhide told his friend, “just kitchen patrol.”

Then the alarms began to go off, along with the red flashing lights, indicating an attempted escape.

“Ah, SLAG!” Dion was furious.

Later, all the guards, including Ironhide and Dion, searched in the nearby woods, each holding flashlights; some had steeljaws on chain leashes, growling and barking. It was very dark now.

Then they heard over the radio, “Prisoner has been recaptured.”

They watched as Scourge, handcuffed and shackled, was brought back to the prison, with one of the guards holding a sack.

End of Flashback:

“It wasn’t hard, catching him,” Ironhide explained, “we had all the prisoners’ wings locked, so they couldn’t fly out or transform.”

Thundercracker just listened, trying not to get emotional with the details.

“But what I remember was weird at the time,” Ironhide scratched his chin, “you would think, if somebody was escaping to go out on the run, he would take certain provisions, y’know? Like, several cubes of Energon; maybe some credits for bus fare, y’know? This guy, he had a sack, a shovel, and some weapons he had either stolen or bought by payoff from the weapons’ room. Now, whatever he was planning to do with that stuff, I have no idea, cause I wasn’t working in interrogation.”
Thundercracker felt a chill go all the way down his back; was his Father planning on kidnapping him AGAIN? Or his little brother?! Their Creators were always fearful of his Father returning, to the point of paranoia. He knew his Stepfather kept in touch with a policemech that would let them know if his Father had ever escaped, and now, this seemed to be the validation.

Megatron, for his part, was taking it all in. Everyone else at the table was quiet, with unreadable expressions.

“After that,” Ironhide told them, “we had him housed alone, thinking he was bothering his cellmates. Except then, he figured out how to bother the whole prison population.”

Flashback:

“I’ll get him,” Scourge was becoming obsessed with his former Bondmate’s sparkling, “I’ll stop at nothing!” he threw his handball against the cell wall, over and over again, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! Ironhide was patrolling the second-floor catwalk; the noises were deafening, BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! The inmates all covered their audials. Ironhide descended the staircase as Dion met him at the bottom, “Ironhide, what the slag’s he doing now?!”

End of Flashback:

Astrotrain remembered his bizarre impromptu game of handball in the Rec. Room the previous evening.

“He got drunk all the time,” Ironhide continued, “no matter how hard we tried to control the flow of High-Grade, he always got hold of it.”

Flashback:

Scourge took a swing at another inmate, then fell down in a heap, very drunk.

Ironhide, along with Dion, came over and stared at him, “This slagger’s been slagged up all week.”

End of Flashback:

“Wait, wait a breem here,” Megatron stopped the red mech, “how is it that he had access to High-Grade in the slagging prison?”

Ironhide adverted his optics, “Prisoners that were sent credits from their families would bribe guards to get them High-Grade. This guy never had anyone send him credits, that I knew of anyway, so he would beat up other prisoners, and force them to give him THEIR credits, and then he’d bribe guards for the High-Grade.”

“Guards buying High-Grade,” Megatron grumbled, “charming.”

Soundwave piped up, “I sense that you’re hiding something.”

Before Ironhide could answer, Megatron told him, “He bribed you, didn’t he?”

“I only bought High-Grade for the guards,” Ironhide defended himself, albeit with a weak defense, “I did accept bribes from fellow guards; Dion and I both did; but then, some of them same guards would also turn around and take bribes from the prisoners, and like I said, this fella was beating the other Seekers up to get their credits.”
Thundercracker was speechless; this was extremely hard to hear.

“It was how Dion and I could afford to court our femmes,” Ironhide explained, “it was just the culture of prison guards at the time, y’know?”

“Well, I can imagine,” Megatron huffed his vents in sarcasm, “working ten-hour shifts every night, these mechs must have been as horny as all hell.”

Optimus Prime wanted to scold his friend’s crass comment but thought better of it.

“Well, anyway,” Ironhide sighed before continuing, “Over the years, he didn’t mellow out, just got meaner. It was never his fault; he kept wanting to take his revenge.”

Astrotrain leaned forward, “The thing I got from It was this horrible level of rage,” he struggled to remember being possessed the previous evening, “and I know what you’re sayin’ about this, not taking any responsibility for himself.”

Flashback:

Scourge sat curled in a ball in the corner of his cell, “I’ll get that little slagger! I kill him! That spawn of her affair is living in my former home unlawfully!”

End of Flashback:

“Oh, it was real bad by the time of the second escape attempt,” Ironhide confirmed, “it was all, how much he hated this mechling that the ex-wife had with the new husband; calling ‘em the spawn of his ex-wife and how he was ‘unlawfully’ living in his old house, whatever. How he was gonna get ‘em; what he was gonna do to ‘em when he got hold of ‘em, and so on. Horrible stuff, really. Like, he wasn’t gonna kill ‘em right away, he was gonna hurt ‘em every day just enough so that he doesn’t kill ‘em but keep ‘em alive to hurt ‘em again.”

From inside the Transporter, Skywarp, broken and battered, listened to the long-made plans of his tormentor. He closed his optics, knowing he was doomed. He just prayed that his innocent, unborn daughter would survive.

Starscream felt the pain of both his brothers hearing the details.

Thundercracker closed his optics; how could his own Father be so hateful of his little brother?

“Now he made another escape attempt,” Megatron remembered from previous conversations with Thundercracker, “correct?”

“He did,” Ironhide nodded, “and he would have succeeded if he hadn’t been so drunk. Cause at that point, we weren’t chasing ‘em anymore.”

“Why was that, Ironhide?” Prime asked.

“Overcrowding, you might say,” Ironhide hesitated to tell this part of the history, “they were ‘rounding up prisoners faster than they were getting released, and then keeping ‘em for years; there was barely room to walk around as it was. The Warden, he actually had to use the Solitary as regular cells by that time and build out new solitary cells in the mines beneath the prison.”
“Cells IN the mines,” Megatron fumed, sitting up, “cells UNDER the ground, for SEEKERS, no less. Slaggit, Ironhide!”

“Look, I wasn’t the Warden,” Ironhide shot back, “I needed my job. In fact, the Warden wasn’t that bad; it was all Sentinel Prime’s policies. Using the mines wasn’t even as bad as some of ‘em.”

Thundercracker cringed now.

“As bad as some of them?” Megatron questioned, “I knew about the choir groups, but what are you referring to?”

“I didn’t think the choir groups were a bad idea,” Ironhide shrugged, trying to change the subject, “some of ‘em had great vocals.”

“What were the bad ones, Ironhide?” Megatron insisted.

“They were exterminating ‘em,” the red mech finally blurted out, “hoards of ‘em at a time, in fact. They got more prisoners and killed off the previous ones, and scattered their remains in the forest, okay?” it was hard for him to get out, “The Warden tried to soften SOME things; he convinced his superiors to not kill the ones that were Creators.”

“Oh, Ironhide,” Optimus Prime placed his hands to his mouthplate in a praying motion; the hundreds of lives, mostly innocent ones, that were lost during this horrid time in their history, knowing his uncle was responsible, and that Ironhide, his oldest friend, had been having to bear the burden of this shameful secret.

Megatron was much less charitable; these were the kinds of atrocities that he and Soundwave founded the Decepticons to combat against. Screw whatever the Earthlings’ belief was that the Decepticons were intergalactic thieves; they were rebuilding Cybertron after she was torn apart by the War that disbanded the corrupt government that these senseless genocides were responsible for. He bit his glossa now; just wanting to get the information they needed to help Skywarp. He would make the current Autobots, especially Optimus Prime, pay for this at a later date.

Thundercracker felt his chassis going numb with pain at this point; he would have fainted if he wasn’t already sitting down.

“So,” Ironhide knew he had to continue, “after his second escape attempt, he was placed in permanent solitary in a cell in the old mine. That’s when, well, he really went mad.”

Flashback:

“LET ME OUT!” Scourge demanded, “YOU HEAR ME?! LET ME OUT!!!”

“Shut up!” Dion shouted back as he and Ironhide stood on top of the staircase leading down to the old mine, “Don’t make me shock you again, or I will!”

“SLAG YOU!” Scourge seethed, “YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT’S IT LIKE! NO ONE TOOK YOUR SON FROM YOU!”

“That’s it,” Dion went down the stairs, pulling out his Energon Prod, “if you won’t go to sleep, I’ll MAKE you go ta sleep!” he went to the furthest cell in the shaft, where Scourge was housed, and stuck the Energon Prod to the mech, “AHHHHHHHA!” sending shockwaves until the mech lay convulsing on the dirt ground.

“Keep it up, and I’ll kill ya!” Dion spat as he went back up the stairs, before addressing Ironhide,
“Let’s go, I need a drink.”

“I hear ya,” Ironhide agreed.

End of Flashback:

“I didn’t…put the connection to you, until YEARS later,” Ironhide addressed Thundercracker directly now, “I knew you looked like ‘em; but I never said nothing, even after I figured it all out.”

Thundercracker looked up to meet Ironhide’s gaze, and asked the question he knew he had to have the answer to, “How did my Father die?”
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Chapter 106:

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Ironhide had never told any of his fellow Autobots about Scourge’s death. He knew that after the words would leave his lip components, there would never be taking them back. He could feel his Comrades’ concerned stares behind him and silently pray for their forgiveness and understanding, especially from Optimus Prime.

“Dion and I used to take the femmes to this bar, Simeon’s Tavern,” Ironhide began, “it was frequented by cops and Elite Guards.”

Flashback:

Hardshell sat at the bar, embittered by how his life had taken that tragic turn some ten years earlier when he was widowed.

Ironhide, Flareup, Dion, and Novastar were with several other couples—guards and their femmes—and sat at two tables of eight each.

Hardshell stared at their uniforms, noting that they were from the Iacon Correctional Center.

End of Flashback:

“This guy, Hardshell,” Ironhide sighed now, “he was a freaken’ big mech; his Alt-Mode was a Tank. I used to see him all the time there, but he never talked to us until that evening. Me and the other guards were having fun; we were drinking High-Grade Energon, I remember, it was a Friday night…”

Flashback:

Ironhide and Dion had their respective femmes draped over them, laughing drunkenly as the mechs smoked cigarettes and played cards on the table.

Hardshell stepped off his barstool and approached them, “Excuse me, I couldn’t help but notice, you work for the Iacon Correctional Center?”

“That’s right,” Ironhide answered.

Dion took his cigarette out of his mouth, “What’s it to you; shoulder pads?”

“My name’s Hardshell,” the Tank nodded, “I need to talk to you guys.”

“About?” Ironhide asked.

“A prisoner of yours,” Hardshell told them, “he killed my Bondmate.”

Ironhide and Dion looked at each other before Dion told their femmes, “You’ll excuse us…”

End of Flashback:
“We were just gonna hear what he had to say,” Ironhide sighed, “I mean, um…He had a proposal…”

Flashback:

“My Bondmate, Steve, was one of the policemechs he murdered at that motel,” Hardshell told the two mechs, “he destroyed my life that day. I wanna make him suffer for what he did to us; I’m asking you to let me into the jail. Just name your price.”

The two guards looked at each other, before Ironhide told Hardshell, “Give us a minute.”

Hardshell nodded and returned to the bar while Ironhide and Dion found a corner and spoke in hushed vocals.

Dion: “You thinking what I’m thinking?”

Ironhide: “I know what you’re thinking, and I don’t like it.”

Dion: “What am I thinking then?”

Ironhide: “You’re thinking of doing something that will probably cost us both our jobs and worse yet, I’m thinking of NOT doing it, and I’m thinking you’re gonna convince me to do it.”

Dion: “You think he’s good for the credits?”

Ironhide: “We’ll haveta get ‘em up front.”

Dion: “We could ask for enough so that I could finally propose to Novastar.”

Ironhide: “What about the Warden?”

Dion: “Frag the Warden; it’s his day off tomorrow.”

Ironhide: “We’re gonna do this tomorrow?”

Dion: “Prison’s gonna be deserted tomorrow, just like all the Saturdays.”

Ironhide: “What are we talking about here, Dion.”

Dion: “We’re talking about finally having enough credits to buy engagement rings for the femmes, blow this dirt-poor town, and finally stop worrying about our futures.”

Ironhide: “Look at the size of this mech, Dion. If we let him into the cell, he WILL kill this guy.”

Dion: “So much? He’s a worthless, drunken son of slag that gives us more grief than the Warden.”

Ironhide: “You’ve already made up your CPU, haven’t you?”

Dion: “He DID kill those two cops.”

Ironhide: “Have you read his file? He was shooting as they stormed in. You could argue self-defense.”

Dion: “Premeditation can be formed in a matter of seconds, Ironhide. I’ve read the law.”

Ironhide: “Just like we’re premeditating his death now?”
“Come on, Ironhide,” Dion smiled, and snort-laughed, “all we have to do is let this bruiser in, look the other way, and then we’re on easy street. The slagger’s on his own.”

“Just leave them alone in the solitary,” Ironhide thought about it, “no weapons. Cause then if the prisoners rat us out, we can say we thought this mech was just a visitor.”

“Sounds like a plan,” Dion slapped his friend on the back, “let’s go tell Hardshell we’re in.”

“Right,” Ironhide nodded hesitantly.

“Hey, Hardshell,” Dion called out.

The large mech stood.

Dion: “You’ve got yourself a deal.”

End of Flashback:

Ironhide was silent for a few moments before continuing.

Flashback:

The two guards gave their price to Hardshell: Forty thousand credits to be split evenly between them, and the Tank paid them immediately; apparently having enough credits in his subspace to cover the cost right then and there.

“Met me at the east gate after dark tomorrow,” Dion told him, “that’s where I’m stationed. Ironhide will let you into his cell.”

“No weapons,” Ironhide insisted.

“I don’t need any,” Hardshell told them before leaving the bar.

“WHOO-WOO, IRONHIDE!” Dion shouted, “WE’LL YOU LOOK AT THESE CREDITS?!!”

“Y-Yeah,” Ironhide was still nervous about this, “We should…get back to the femmes.”

End of Flashback:

“I told myself he was a cop killer,” Ironhide sighed again, this time through his smell receptors, “cops like me and Dion. I told myself it didn’t matter; that this jail had slaughtered hundreds of prisoners anyway…except this one was gonna be on us.”

Thundercracker listened, not wanting to interrupt.

“But it was harder than I thought it was gonna be,” Ironhide admitted.

Flashback:

Darkness was falling on the Cybertronian skies, and Ironhide knew the time was near. He helped a fellow guard do the helm count and told him he would check on solitary.

End of Flashback:

“No other inmates were in solitary at the time,” Ironhide explained, “the Warden wasn’t there that day; very few guards there; it was always like that on Saturday nights.”
Flashback:

Ironhide descended the staircase down into the former Energon Mine and stopped at the furthest cell in the corridor. It had a steel door, with only a small window for guards to look through. Ironhide opened that window and looked inside: Scourge was sitting in the corner of his cell, ironically, sober. Ironhide was hoping he would be drunk tonight, and not know what hit him. But fate was cruel. So cruel in fact, that tonight of all nights, Scourge was not beating up other prisoners, nor was he screaming to be let out, swearing at the guards, or even threatening his ex-wife’s sparkling to the heavens. Tonight, the mech was deep in thought, staring at a piece of paper in his hands. Ironhide wondered if Scourge somehow knew that his end was nearing. But still, Ironhide tried to make conversation, and show this doomed mech some measure of compassion that he was denied in this life.

“What you got there?” Ironhide asked.

“A photo of my son,” Scourge whispered, “it’s the only one I have.”

“How old he now?” Ironhide tried not to let his nerves give him away.

“He’s fourteen,” Scourge looked up, “it’s been ten years since I’ve seen him last,” he sighed, “I miss him, Ironhide. I miss him every single minute…”

Ironhide knew that after tonight, this Seeker would never be able to reunite with his son. But still, he couldn’t let that be known.

“Oh, well,” he tried, “you wouldn’t want your youngling seeing you in this dark, dank cell, now would ya?”

“The visitor’s area is quite nice, actually,” Scourge grinned, “they just repainted it a few months ago. Although, I doubt that his Mother would bring him to a prison, so hopefully, he will visit me once he’s eighteen. I mentally calculated that it would be some one-thousand, four-hundred, and thirty-two more days until his eighteenth birthday, and then, we could be reunited.”

“Right,” Ironhide wanted to back out of the deal now; he didn’t believe he could go through with it anymore. His digits dug into his rifle.

“Do you have any sparklings, Ironhide?” Scourge asked.

“No,” the Elite Guard answered.

“Well,” Scourge looked at the picture again, “when you have them, I’m sure you’ll understand. They will completely become your life; your entire focus; your very spark. And when you’re apart from them, the pain is like nothing you’ve ever felt.”

End of Flashback:

Ironhide and Thundercracker were locked in an optic stare.

Flashback:

Before Ironhide could respond, he heard the door at the top of the staircase open, and heavy pedefalls coming down the steps. Turning back to his prisoner, he nodded and simply stated, “I-I’ll see ya around.”

“Alright, Ironhide,” Scourge sighed; he took out the picture of his family again, running his thumb
over his little son’s faceplates. Why couldn’t he see his little Thundercracker again? Why could he—

“He’s in the corner cell,” Ironhide told Hardshell.

Scourge looked up as he heard the member of the Elite Guard speak.

“I’m gonna have some smoke outside, ah-right?” Ironhide couldn’t get out of the mines fast enough, “Don’t be too long.”

A huge mech unlocked the door and stood over Scourge now. The Seeker had never seen this mech before; he wasn’t a guard nor a fellow prisoner; fear immediately washed over him.

The mech spoke only one word, “Steve.”

“Who’s Steve?” Scourge asked.

“Steve was my Bondmate,” the groundpounder answered. “The policemech that you shot in the chest and murdered in cold Energon, was Steve. And now, his name will be the last thing you hear! STEVE!”

Ironhide raced up the staircase as fast as he could run. He heard the beginnings of the wretched screams of the Seeker as he was being torn apart as he reached the top and slammed the steel door behind himself. He didn’t want to hear any more; he went outside, into the fresh, night air, and leaned against the massive prison complex. After a few moments, he lit a cigarette and waited.

End of Flashback:

Coolant tears ran down Thundercracker’s faceplates. Megatron placed his hand on his younger brother-in-law’s shoulder for support.

There was a long period of silence before Ironhide began to speak again, “I left with Dion, and I don’t know when Hardshell let himself out. All I know was he was gone by Monday morning.”

Flashback:

“You okay, Ironhide?” Dion asked.

“I, um,” Ironhide watched as the prison medics wheeled the gurney, a black chassis bag on top, out of the main hall and into the morgue. Prisoners from every cell seemed to watch; some locking optics with the two guards.

End of Flashback:

“They ruled his death as a result of violence from a fellow inmate,” Ironhide finally admitted, “Dion and I lied; we said there was another mech in the cell but didn’t tell him about Hardshell. The guard that was on duty Sunday testified that he was still online when he got there, but this guard was a pretty anti-Seeker, y’know? So, he just let him suffer there, til he choked on his own Energon evidentially.” He hung his helm, “He took seventeen hours to die.”

That was it; Thundercracker couldn’t muffle the keens from his vocalizer as the coolant tears continued to fall.

:I love you, Brother,: Starscream tried to reach him through their Trine Bond, :Warp and I both love you so much…:
Skywarp had been angry, and he was still pretty angry with TC for all this mess, and he wasn’t quite ready to other the sympathy Starscream was extending. Instead, he adjusted his broken leg into a more comfortable position.

The triplets didn’t understand what was going on, but they were quiet, only giving out the occasional chirp or coo to their Mother and awaiting their Sire’s return.

Frenzy was at a loss for what to say, so he just sat next to Skywarp in a comforting manner. Rumble was standing, leaning on an armrest, and was the first to speak, “I guess…he had never heard what happened before?”

“I’m the one that told him,” Skywarp’s vocals were both harsh and hoarse from not talking for so many hours.

“Yeah?” Rumble wanted to know more.

“Yes…” Skywarp was rather unsympathetic of his emotionally shattered brother, “he’s a fake; he didn’t cry when I told him.”

“Now that’s not fair,” Starscream shook his helm, “you were sparklings; you told him about the phone call. It was easier hearing it from you.”

“Star,” Skywarp snort-laughed at that, “I told him his Father was pavement pizza.”

It was a moment of levity that made Starscream smile slightly.

Soundwave addressed Ironhide now, “What happened to the remains?”

“He was buried in a mass grave for Seekers,” Ironhide sighed, “n the cemetery on prison grounds.”

“We should give Last Rites,” Optimus Prime realized that this Seeker deactivated without them, “we need to go there.”

“In that case,” Megatron was about to suggest a blessing when his own acknowledge of the Iacon Correctional Center kicked in, “wait, what cemetery? I personally liberated that prison during the Fall of Cybertron, and there’s no cemetery there.”

“Well this was before they paved over it,” Ironhide explained, “when they put in the parking lot.”

Thundercracker’s coolant swollen optics widened.

“They put a parking lot over the mass grave,” Megatron’s vocals were as dry as a bone, “you’re kidding.”

“No,” Ironhide shook his helm.

“I’m sorry,” Optimus Prime tried to offer what little comfort he could, even if it was impossible for him to correct the past, “I’m so sorry.”

“Well,” Soundwave continued to ignore the strobing pain in his backstruct, “he’s come back now, and we need to do something before he continues his attacks on Skywarp.”

Thundercracker shook his helm, “But…”
Everyone looked in his direction.

“W-Why…” Thundercracker knew in his spark that his Father and Gravechaser were one and the same; it was the ‘how’ he was having trouble grasping, “why’s he looked like…” he made his hands imitate Gravechaser’s claws.

“I have a theory,” Optimus Prime offered, “the prison was a place of sadness; of violence; of unjust torture, and it, if the legends are to be believed, became a place of wickedness, and hell.”

Megatron was of the same beliefs, “I’d like to add that, prior to the site becoming a prison, eight miners, all from Tarn, died down in those mines. So death was already there.”

“So, between those deaths,” Prime concluded, “and his own violent death, it was likely that an evil portal was created.”

“Okay, um,” Thundercracker was having trouble comprehending all this, “I-I can believe all that. B-But, if there’s this portal to the Pit in the prison, m-maybe this Gravechaser-thing isn’t REALLY my Father; m-maybe he’s using my Father’s spirit against his will, I mean—”

“Teecee,” Skywarp was mad at him now.

“No, it’s him,” Ironhide suddenly spoke with an assuredness, “It’s him.”

“How can you be so sure?” Thundercracker begged to know.

“Cause I’ve seen him,” Ironhide looked at Prime, then back at Thundercracker, “I’ve seen him with my own optics, years ago… I can’t believe he’s come back.”

Prowl and Jazz locked optics with each other now; neither was aware of any paranormal activity.

“What happened?” Megatron’s vocals were cold.

“It was a while after he passed,” Ironhide began, “I was in the Guards’ lounge, with Dion…”

Flashback:

Ironhide downed a cube of High-Grade Energon in one big gulp, still unable to comprehend what he had done.

“Psst, Ironhide,” Dion came in, “you doing something?”

“Um, no,” the red mech sat straight, “what’s up?”

“I wanna show ya,” Dion sat next to his friend, “I picked it up this afternoon,” he produced a small box, opened it, and revealed a three-carat solitaire diamond ring, “think Novastar’ll like it?”

“Now, that’s a nice ring,” Ironhide smiled sadly, “how much you pay for it?”

“Nineteen thousand, three hundred, and sixty-two credits,” Dion smiled, “almost the whole thing. How much was Flareup’s ring?”

“Oh,” Ironhide cleared his air intakes, “I didn’t…I didn’t decide on one yet.”
“Oh, okay,” Dion nodded, closing the box and returning it to his subspace, “I’ll wait for you, so we can propose to the femmes together.”

“T-Thanks,” Ironhide was nervous.

Dion could tell his friend’s thoughts were elsewhere, “You still worried the Warden suspects us?”

“Just not ready to do anything yet,” Ironhide sighed, “still too soon.”

“Yeah, well,” Dion stood, “one less drunken Seeker we haveta guard is how I see it.”

End of Flashback:

“The Warden had to investigate, of course,” Ironhide remembered, “they cordoned off that cell; left all the dried Energon-blood, pieces, everything in there…” he didn’t want to hurt Thundercracker any more than he already had, “and uh, they assigned some guards to clean it up.”

Flashback:

Ironhide descended the staircase that led to the solitary cells for the first time since Scourge’s death, which had been several months earlier. There were no prisoners down there; this was a simple security sweep.

The red mech went to the last cell: his fellow guards had used power washers to clean out the obscene mess of gore, leaving only the yellow tape crisscrossed over the steel door. Ironhide opened the small window and peeked inside: The cell was clean…and empty.

“I’m sorry, mech,” Ironhide whispered, “if I had it to do over; I would never have taken that deal.” He closed the window, slung his rifle over his shoulder and walked back towards the staircase.

“Ironhide…”

“HUH?!?” Ironhide whirled around, unstrapping his rifle and pointing it back at the empty corridor. It was an otherworldly version of Scourge’s vocals.

There was no one there.

Ironhide felt his Energon-blood run cold; he ran to the staircase, not daring to look back.

End of Flashback:

“And that’s when I saw…It,” Ironhide admitted.

Flashback:

Ironhide reached the first floor, shutting the door behind himself. His spark was beating so fast; he thought it was going to come through his chestplates; his internal fans were whirling, and he couldn’t catch his air intakes.

“Ironhide!” Dion came running, “What is it?! What’s wrong?!”

“T-There’s somebody down there!” the red mech managed between breaths.

Dion unslung his rifle and cocked it, “Wait here.”

Reluctantly, Ironhide allowed his friend to go down there. Dion looked around, rifle out in front of
himself, and did a thorough search.

“It’s okay, Ironhide,” Dion came back up the stairs, “there’s nobody down there,” he returned to the first floor.

Embarrassed, Ironhide held his helm, “No more High-Grade…” and as soon as Dion walked away, Ironhide looked back down the stairs, just to laugh at his own, drunken hallucination…

Gravechaser stood at the bottom of the stairs. He bore long, red claw, upturned pointy wings, a black beard, and most disturbingly, dead, black optics.

“AAAAUUUUUGGGGHHHH!” Ironhide slammed the door and ran for his life!

End of Flashback:

“And that was just the beginning,” Ironhide sat up now, “we heard disembodied vocals, shadows along the corridors, all over the prison! And it wasn’t just me; it was the other prisoners.”

Flashback:

Two Seekers sat curled on the same berth, staring at the cell’s left corner.

Ironhide peered in, “You guys okay?”

Both mechs looked at him, then back at the corner, before telling him, “It…It disappeared.”

Ironhide nodded at them.

Later that night, Ironhide walked along the second-floor catwalk and turned around suddenly: There was no one there.

End of Flashback:

“I burned it,” Ironhide stated, “I burned it all.”

Flashback:

Ironhide felt he was being haunted by Scourge’s ghost, or whatever that Thing was he had seen that day at the bottom of the staircase.

After checking that no other guards were around, he made his way to the prison’s boiler room.

Ironhide took out the credits—all twenty-thousand, untouched since he received them from Hardshell—and set the tips on fire. He watched them begin to burn before tossing them all into the blaze.

End of Flashback:

“I didn’t tell anyone,” Ironhide remembered, “but then more prisoners started seein’ stuff.”

Flashback:

Ironhide was patrolling Cell Block A, on the first floor, when he heard a Seeker screaming, “AAAAUUUGGGGHHHH!!! HELP ME!”

Several guards went down to the basement, where the screams were coming from.

“HELP! HELP!” the prisoner keened, “COME HELP ME!”
Curiosity got the best of Ironhide; he came over, but careful not to go down there himself.

The two guards brought up the shaking, crying Seeker, handcuffed as one of the guards escorted him to the medical wing.

“What happened?” Ironhide asked.

“He said there was a monster walking by his cell,” the other guard told him.

End of Flashback:

“The other guards were getting all heebie-jeebies,” Ironhide sighed, “and they went to the Warden.”

Flashback:

The Warden, accompanied by several guards, including Ironhide and Dion, went down to the basement.

“This is where the cop killer died,” the Warden noted, “whatever they’re seeing down here’s got everyone freaking out.”

Ironhide said nothing as a fellow guard told their Warden, “I won’t work down here, sir; if I get assigned down here again, I’m quitting!”

“So will I!” another guard told him.

The Warden himself seemed to sense something amiss in the former mines; he bit his lip components before giving his orders: “No one prisoners are to be assigned down here for the time being.”

“What?” Dion thought it was ridiculous, “Warden, are you kidding?! These Seekers are faking it! They’re half-crazed from counterphobia!”

“You heard my orders!” the Warden insisted, “let’s go, mechs.”

“But there’s nothing down here!” Dion insisted, “I’ll prove it to ya!” he went passed the Warden and down to Scourge’s old cell, tipping his rifle against the small window, taunting, “THIS IS BULL-SLAG! IF YOU’RE REAL, SHOW YOURSELF AND COME GET ME!”

“DION, NO!” Ironhide cried.

“Dion, you get back here,” the Warden insisted.

“Fine,” Dion rolled his optics before rejoining the group, and they all headed back up the staircase.

Upon returning to the main prison, the Warden pulled Dion aside, “Son, you’re gonna have to leave early. I don’t want anything attacking you!”

“Oh, please,” Dion laughed it off, “I’m fine, Warden; there’s no such thing as ghosts.”

Ironhide watched as the Warden insisted, “Just get yourself outta here, son!”

“Ah, man,” Dion scoffed at his boss before turning to Ironhide, “Alright, later; Ironhide, we’ll meet you at Simeon’s Tavern when you get off.”

Ironhide nodded and watched his friend leave.
End of Flashback:

“He was killed three hours later,” Ironhide shrugged to keep his emotions in check.

“He was,” Megatron repeated back as a statement despite it being a question.

“It was raining,” Ironhide explained, “he was driving his hovercraft, with Novastar in the passenger seat, and something made him crashed into some metal trees. He was killed instantly; she lived for an hour before…she passed as well.”

Flashback:

The bells of the church tolled a mournful tune as hundreds of Elite Guards lined the steps. Flareup and Beta, both dressed helm to pedes in black stood with the Warden as he saluted.

Ironhide couldn’t hold back the coolant tears as he and the other Elite Guards carried Dion’s casket on their shoulders. It was the hardest thing he ever had to do.

End of Flashback:

“H-He was a good mech,” Ironhide began to cry now, feeling the pain of losing Dion all over again, “and he was my best friend…I loved him; I loved them both.”

The other Autobots began to realize why they had never met Dion; a mech that Ironhide was once so close with.

“Novastar’s funeral was the day after his,” the red mech knew he had to get this out, “Beta…she told me…she had gotten to the hospital before Flareup and I did, and…got to see her before she…” he took a moment before finishing, “Nova said a mech with red claws grabbed Dion from the backseat of the hovercraft.”

Thundercracker couldn’t believe what he was hearing; his Father had killed them as a ghost.

“My God,” Megatron sighed.

When he felt he could go on, Ironhide finished the story, “The Warden, he ordered the lower level solitary never to be used again. He sealed off that cell with dirt; barricaded everything off. After Nova’s funeral, I wrote my report; I wrote everything; every last, smallest detail, I wrote it, and then I handed in my resignation. And I ain’t never been back. I’m sure it’s still there, in the annuals.”

“And,” Soundwave realized, “the human ghost hunters read it, and apparently freed Gravechaser.”

“Apparently,” Megatron agreed.

“E-Excuse me,” at this point, Thundercracker had to leave the table again.

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