Blast from the Past

by CzarnaArcher

Summary

Series of one shots regarding events from chosen characters' past (most of them mentioned in my stories or the TV-show/comic books). Part of my BotB series. Rating may go up.

Notes

Chapter 1: How Knockout and Breakdown met.
Knockout and Breakdown friendship.
See the end of the work for more notes.
Take Me Out

Blast From The Past.

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no

Help me out

Yeah, you know you got to help me out

Yeah, oh don't you put me on the back burner

You know you got to help me out

And when there's nowhere else to run

Is there room for one more son

These changes ain't changing me

The gold-hearted boy I used to be

(…)

Over and in, last call for sin

While everyone's lost, the battle is won

With all these things that I've done

All these things that I've done

If you can hold on

If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

**Warnings**: Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.

Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Knockout, Daisy the Nurse, Breakdown (flashbacks), Motormaster (flashbacks), Airachnid (mentioned).
Take Me Out.

“So if you’re lonely
You know I’m here waiting for you
I’m just a crosshair
I’m just a shot away from you
And if you leave here
You leave me broken, shattered, I lie
I’m just a crosshair
I’m just a shot, then we can die
I know I won’t be leaving here with you
I say don’t you know
You say you don’t know
I say... take me out! (...)” – Franz Ferdinand “Take Me Out”

oOo

October 14 th. Nemesis. Knockout’s quarters.

It was an anniversary. Their anniversary of coming to Earth. Knockout glared at the cube of high grade in his servo. It was their anniversary, his and Breakdown’s. And Breakdown wasn’t here to celebrate it. All because of HER! That damned femme!

He sigh a heavy vent. And that bumbling fool had a crush on her… well, sort of, he would rather consume organic cactus before he would ever admit it to Airachnid openly.

Knockout pored himself another cube. There was no denying to what he planned. Getting slag-faced wasn’t his style but what else was he supposed to do? His best friend, the closest person he ever had was murdered by slagged renegade! Knockout had hard time to admit even before himself that
perhaps he felt something more to Breakdown, but the truth was that no matter of the true nature of his feelings, that big lug was his best friend. The only person he could rely on in every situation.

Loneliness wasn’t anything new to Knockout, he came from higher case, but that meant loneliness from the very moment he was aware enough to remember anything. Then he met Breakdown and for this time he wasn’t alone, he had someone, and now this someone was taken away. It was terrible. To possess a treasure and then lose it.

He was pulling his usual haughty attitude for the public use, he was his usual self most of the time, and when he spoke of Breakdown he always told how perfect he was at his job. But inside he felt his Spark bleed and he was dying every time he heard or spoke Breakdown’s name. That why he understood Dreadwing and Soundwave, though each of their cases was different, they all lost something that could not be replaced.

Knockout knew that he would never replace Breakdown; he would never again have an assistant like him. Now he had nurses, but they were not assistants, they were not like Breakdown. They were not with him whatever he was doing. They only worked with him and occasionally shared his berth. Well, Daisy mostly… The Doctor suspected it was so because Daisy actually enjoyed his company while other two just wanted a good ‘facing. In any case, none of them was Breakdown. None of them could ever replace him.

Knockout rested his back against the chair and eased his head back, staring at the ceiling. This was their anniversary of coming to Earth. But they also met sometimes close to this date. It was some time after Megatron decommissioned Stunticons as a gestalt team. They still kept close, but they were not a gestalt unit anymore, just bunch of soldiers. Motormaster was Colonel and Breakdown was freshly promoted to Lieutenant. His new armour still shiny.

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Cybertron. Sometime after battle in the Kol system).

It was bright day on Cybertron, its twin suns shone brightly on the blue, daytime sky over Kaon higher levels. Most Cybertronians already left the ruined planet, but some still lingered for various reasons. Some of them waited for orders to departure, others were still looking for transportations. There were those who were ordered to stay behind and there were those who continued to fulfil their duties until they would be ordered otherwise. Many just hung around because where there were people, there were money to earn, and every shanix was good in current situation. Though these days other currencies were more desired, everything was now worth more than shanix: cassanian quadrocheques, betelguesian sputtle-prog), whatever that was exchangeable.
A young doctor, though maybe not so young, during a war everyone gained experience in speed of light; was busy in one of few remaining infirmaries for Kaon sector. Not that there were many doctors in Decepticon cause, but those few that were available were given assignment to large ships or major bases, there was perhaps four of them left on Cybertron, all in Kaon. Most infirmaries were run by nurses and assistances rather by actual doctors. One could count oneself lucky if one ended up with actual medic.

The primary red grounder filled report and sent young femme away, she was getting buster shot against space rust. That was what he was doing lately, since the Cybertron was almost empty now, there were no more battles and thus no more wounded. Sometimes there was a fight and he would have to pull few dents. He was to get assignment soon and he looked up for that moment.

He was about to call it a day when he heard some shuffling and poked out his head out of the examination room. There were two mechs in; the nurse was helping one of them to get up. It was large grounder with mostly blue armour is red face. He looked like some military type, and that meant either training accident or fight.

“Doctor, we have a patient.” The Nurse said in bored voice.

“Bring him here. Let’s see.” The doctor retreated to the examination room and prayed the berth with disinfectant. “Hop in, soldier. We’ll see what’s wrong.”

“You don’t need to see, I’ll tell you, Dock, he’s a moron.” The Blue mech’s companion, slightly smaller, yellow mech.”

“I will be one to judge it, and don’t call me Dock.” The doctor had the yellow grounder cold glare.

“That’s Drag Strip, doctor.” The blue mech said. “He’s just that way, needs to show how witty he is and always win.”

“Hey, Drag Strip, why won’t you take your chance and try to outwit my nurse?” The doctor smirked, the Nurse was impossible to outwit. No one ever managed.

“Nice try…”
“Out now.” The doctor growled and pointed at the door. Drag Strip blinked and left. In never paid to mess with a doctor. Especially a Decepticon one.

“Impressing. He’s usually harder to get rid of.” The patient smiled shyly.

“The authority of medical degree.” The doctor smiled charmingly. “Let’s do it properly. My name is Knockout… and no pun intended. Let’s start with the chart, shall we?”

“Yeah, sure, the questions.”

“Ah, so you know the drill?” Knockout raised his optic brows. It was a soldier and experienced one if he knew the drill like this. “Go ahead.”

“Lieutenant Breakdown, former member of Stunticon Gestalt team (currently decommissioned) stationing in Kaon (waiting for new assignment). No allergies.” The mech recited. “Do you need my frame or spark type?”

“I don’t think so, but if I will, I’ll ask, Lieutenant. So, care to tell me what happened?” Knockout put the chart away and focused on his patient.

“Umm, ughh…” The ex-Stunticon fidget a bit, he felt awkward under such an intense glare of brilliant red optics. “It was a bar fight… nothing big, I’m strong enough to manage brawls.”

“And yet you are here.” Knockout pulled hand held scanner, his built made it impossible to have in-build ones, but he didn’t need that. “Let’s do some scans to see the extent of your injuries. Where did you get hit?”

“Faceplates and leg.” Breakdown admitted pointing his bright yellow optic at the ceiling.

“Let’s see… you face is good, not even a scratch… and leg?” The medic scanned the appendage closely. “Mmm… few cables got loose and a ball bearing seems cracked. You’re in luck, that’s my specialisation.”

“Will it take long?” Breakdown asked awkwardly. The doctor was hot as Pit, but he felt shy and he
still needed to be back in the barracks before the black out. He was still under his old commander’s orders.

“It will take just a moment. Faster than my Nurse will be able to slap your friend.” Knockout gave Breakdown another charming smile. And the soldier almost melted. “You don’t have to watch if you don’t want to. Many mechs prefer not to know how their own frames look from inside.”

“I don’t mind.” Breakdown answered feeling his faceplates heating up.

“Serve yourself.” Knockout applied local aesthetics and proceeded to work. He replaced the ball bearing and reattached the wires in what seemed a moment. The moment he sealed Breakdown’s knee joint one loud slap could be heard.

Breakdown glared at the door and Knockout laughed silently.

“I told you.” The red grounder said and winked to his patient. “Now, lubricate it before sleep and come to me in… let’s say 8 joors 4).”

“Yes doctor.” Breakdown got up from the diagonal berth.

“Now, shoo.” Knockout smirked and allowed the blue mech out. Outside Drag Strip was holding his face with stunned face while the Nurse looked smug.

When both mechs left, Knockout stretched a bit and called it a day. The blue mech looked kind of cute with the shy look in his yellow optics. He looked like a brute and he sounded like some of those though guys, but there was also something soft in him. Knockout found him companionable.

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It was exactly 8 joors later when Breakdown knocked shyly to Knockout’s office door. He felt a bit awkward, but it was doctor’s orders and he didn’t want any rust in his undercarriage or something as nasty.

“It’s open, come in.” Came the reply from the inside, so the ex-Stunticon entered.
“I was to come in 8 joors for a check.” Breakdown said looking around; the cute doctor wasn’t anywhere to be seen.

“I’ll be right at you, in a moment.” The voice came from behind some massive doors. “I’m in a bot if disarray right now…” Knockout came out carrying few jars of various chemicals; they looked like some artificial sweeteners for energon in various colours, but probably were some medications. Knockout put them down on a table and took a look at his patient, his face brightened. “Ahhh, the bar fight, right? Get on the berth, I’ll give you the check out and see if all healed nicely.”

Breakdown blinked and did as told. He didn’t expect to be remembered so well. It was a bit… unsettling.

Knockout took his scanner and gave Breakdown’s knee a diligent scan. “Hmmm, all looks clear lubricate your joint for another quartex ⁵) before and after recharge and all will be good.” The red doctor announced.

“Thank you doctor.” Breakdown got up from the berth and looked around again.

“It was my duty…and pleasure. If you will give me a moment, I should have a can of medical lubricant left somewhere here, it is far better than the stuff you can get on the market.” Knockout smiled and started to look around. “Unfortunately packing causes mess… Now where did I put it?”

“You’re leaving, doctor?” Breakdown asked with surprise.


“I’ve heard that it isn’t that bad.” Breakdown said slightly surprised. “We’ve been on Nova-Amsterdam ⁶) once, place perhaps is a bit dingy, but it ain’t that bad. We were hanging at this dive called ‘The Last Waterhole’ ⁶) all the time and no one gave us as much as funny look. True, most of them were smaller than us, but there were few guys as big as Motormaster… and they had this bouncer that looked like he ate his own carrier…”

Knockout looked at his patient with slight surprise. That was the longest he heard Breakdown to
speak, but then again, he didn’t knew the mech that long.

“There’s only one problem. I’m not being sent to Nova-Amsterdam.” Knockout sighed. “Even my Nurse bailed out.”

“He’s not going with you?”

“No. I was told that I can pick myself a new assistant.” Knockout checked a crate filled with various items. “But I doubt that I will be able to find anyone who will go with me. Not when they’ll hear where I’m going to… That place doesn’t even have a name… A! There it… false alarm, it’s a spray paint…”

“Then it has to be one of the asteroids… Rich in various ores and energon, pretty strategic place.” Breakdown admitted. “But in these holes you better not wander alone.”

“I know.” Knockout reached deeper into the crate and fished a can of the lubricant he was looking for and then it hit him. Breakdown was large and strong, he was an ex-Stunticon, gestalt team members were never weaklings or morons, a stupid and weak mech would never survive the merging. And Breakdown’s team was decommissioned, the gestalt programming was removed, he was free and said it himself, without an assignment! Then on the other servo he didn’t knew the mech, but he had nice, low timbre of voice and behaved calm. Sure, it was true that most of the gestalt members were at least a bit crazy, but Knockout had a hunch that this one was not problematic… and Knockout’s hunches were usually accurate. And on top of that Breakdown looked good, he would not bring shame to the doctor by being untidy…

“Here you go… “Knockout gave the can to his potential assistant. “Say, Breakdown, are you still without assignment?”

“Umm… yes… Why?” The big blue mech took the can reluctantly. There was something in the doctor’s face.

“I was thinking… now that your unit was decommissioned, you probably could use an assignment?” Knockout presented his most charming smile.

“I would… But Motormaster won’t allow it. He’s still our commander and he won’t let any of us to leave.” Breakdown said with his optics pointed at the floor. We would want to leave, but there was no chance for that.
“Well then, you’re in luck!” Knockout grinned. “Yours truly happens to be exclusively under Conclave and High Command orders.”

“What does it mean?”

“It means that I can contact them, tell them that I found myself an assistant, give them your designation and they will contact you directly to confirm. Then you will receive an official assignment as my assistant and departure order.” Knockout explained. “Motormaster may be your boss now, but he’s not above the High Command, and he will have to respect their orders.”

“You must be someone important.” Breakdown stared at the small red mech in awe.

“I just had the pleasure to operate on Lord Megatron once and left impression good enough to earn me a place in inner circle.” Knockout shrugged as if he was doing similar things every day. “That’s probably why I’m being sent to Red Light System – they need good surgeon there. Not that I like the idea, but I guess that’s the price for being noticed.”

“Ugh, I prefer to be in the background.” Breakdown hummed with displeasure but then his optics widened as something occurred to him. “But how am I to be an assistant? I have no idea about medicine! I only went through obligatory first aid course!”

“And that’s enough.” Knockout waved his servo dismissively. “You need no more, I will teach you what you need to know, you will do fine.”

“Really?” The blue mech gave his new partner hopeful stare.

“Of course. Now, go and act normally, I will take care of all the formalities. Come to me when you will get your new orders. Now be nice mech and go, I need to finish packing.” The medic shooed his new assistant away.

One Mega Cycle 7 ) later.
Motormaster was sitting in a private room in one of few bars that were still opened in Kaon. His unit… ex-unit… was somewhere close, all four of them. Stunticons were decommissioned, but they were still his mechs and under his orders, and he kept them on a tight leash. He took another bite of his cube of solid energon, decent grade too, tasted good. He ate it with appetite and was chewing on the last piece when a silent knocking caught his attention.

“Whff?” He asked with his mouth full, growled, swallowed and asked again.

“It’s Breakdown.” A familiar voice answered.

“What is it? I was to be left in peace!”

“I’ve got orders.” The voice answered again.

“Well, come in!” Motormaster felt his tanks protests, he was too nervous and it didn’t do any good for his systems but that was the burden of commandership.

Breakdown walked in with troubled face. This was the conversation that he feared. Motormaster should get the orders in the same time he did, but the ex-Stunticon leader usually opened his mail before the recharge, so he probably still didn’t know.

“I’ve received an assignment.” Breakdown started with his spark in his throat. “Off-world.”

“Nonsense.” Motormaster burped between syllables. “None of the other fools have come whining to me about any assignments and that means that I haven’t got any too, and it means that you haven’t got an assignment either.”

“No. Not the unit. Me. I got an assignment. Few… few moment ago.” Breakdown felt hot and cold at the same time. He was almost paralysed with fear of Motormaster. The mech was tyrannical in ways that Megatron wouldn’t even imagine.

“Impossible. They wouldn’t give you an assignment without the team.” Motormaster felt a helmache forming. He hated to perform any duties right after having a solid energon; it was harder to digest than liquid.
“It was decommissioned and the gestalt programming was uninstalled.” Breakdown took one small step behind. “So they don’t have to assign all five of us, they treat us as individuals now. And I got an assignment.”

“And I say that you don’t have a scrap!” Motormaster stood up instantly. He would regret that later when his tanks would give him sparkburn, but now he didn’t care. „You’re staying with the unit!”

“It’s from the high command.” Breakdown felt himself ventilating deeply and fast, he was really scared now. “I cannot say ‘no’ to the high command…”

“I don’t care! You stall. I will deal with it! And GET OUT you COWARD!”

Breakdown ran off like a sparkling. It wasn’t a good idea to aggravate Motormaster… unless one was from the high command.

One thing Breakdown was sure: Motormaster would learn that he accepted the assignment and that it was proposed to him by Knockout, and then the ex-gestalt leader would be so mad that he would probably vent fire. Breakdown knew he had to get off-world as fast as possible. Luckily, Knockout was already ready to leave in his ship, just outside of the city limits.

Breakdown transformed and sped with his top speed. He didn’t want to wait for Motormaster to have half a chance to do as much as growl in his direction. Not ever again.

oOo

Motormaster didn’t waste any time. It wasn’t in his custom but he immediately looked through his inbox and found the orders for his underling. It was a copy for the commander so he knew that the soldier didn’t went AWOL. He opened and saw that Breakdown was telling the truth.

“From: Nemesis <High Command/Medical Dept.>
To: Lt. Breakdown <former Stunticon Gestalt Team>
CC: Col. Motormaster <former Stunticon Gestalt Team>
Subject: Reassignment order No. 234/556/MA/RLS/44A Ref. Nr. HG/MD/5812/28/08/14
Decepticon High Command, Medical Department informs that Lieutenant Breakdown (formerly Stunticon Gestalt Team) is being reassigned as medical assistant to Captain Doctor Knockout.

Location: Red Light System.

Signed:

General Hook (Constructicon Gestalt Team).”

So, it was truth. Motormaster tapped his comm.link as a commander he had the privilege to ask few questions and verify the notice just in case. He waited few moments for the connection to be answered.

oOo

One Groon 8 later.

Breakdown transformed and ran to the ship. It took him a while to get through the city’s labyrinth of streets, passages and bridges and then he had to speed to the ship that was set just outside of the Kaon. But now he was there. Finally free!

He jumped to the ramp and just skipped to the entry hatch when he heard Motormaster’s angry roar behind him. He looked back and saw Motormaster speeding in his vehicle mode. Knockout heard the noise and appeared in the hatch only to see a raging truck. He glared at the speeding vehicle for a moment.

“Let me guess, Motormaster?” He asked while giving Breakdown one raised opticbrow.

“You don’t want to know him, trust me.” Breakdown shook slightly. “He’s a Colonel; he will scrap you and don’t care about anything.”

“Megatron would be displeased upon hearing that I was slagged.” Knockout gave the truck another glance. “But it would not bring me back from the Allspark.”
“Just go. I want to be out of his fire range as soon as possible.” Breakdown entered the ship fully and looked back as the hatch closed and the ramp lifted to form part of the hull.

Almost instantly the ship lifted and just jetted into the air.

Motormaster was too late. He transformed the moment the ship flew away. What he said wasn’t fit to repeat out loud.

That moment every ex-Stunticon got a message from Breakdown. Motormaster only opened his the next day.

“From: Breakdown.
To: <Gestalt>
Subject: reassignment.

Hey guys. Sorry for not saying goodbye but I was in a hurry. I got reassigned off-world. It was pure luck; I got proposed and said yes. We got decommissioned and now that I am free I just couldn’t stay here anymore. I wanted to go on, be free again. Be good for Motormaster, he’ll be slagged-off for some time because I kind of didn’t told him the whole truth.

And the Doctor that I went with is an OK guy, and good looking too. I’ll have plenty of fun being Medical Assistant. Maybe we’ll see again, so until then.

BD.”

oOo

Nemesis. Present time.

Knockout lifted his optics to see Daisy standing in the door. The Nurse looked just like every other Vehicon but she was adding some details that were hard to notice for anyone who didn’t saw her every day. Except for the medical markings of her arms that is.
“I think you have had enough, doctor.” She said in her feminine voice. “You need to get to the berth and recharge this off.”

“No.” Knockout avoided the Nurse’s visor. “I want to stay up and drink myself until I can’t tell an aft from a helm.”

“I don’t think it is a good idea.”

“It’s an anniversary… of me and B… him coming to this accursed planet.” Knockout squeezed the cube but didn’t break it.

“It was not your fault, Knockout.”

“It doesn’t matter. Leave me be.”

“As you wish.” Daisy left silently. Breakdown was a touchy subject. It was probably better to allow Knockout to deal with it his way for now. What else could she do at that moment anyway?

-oOo-

Sometime later.

Daisy walked into Knockout quarters knowing what she will find. And she wasn’t surprised. Knockout laid under the table, completely knocked out… all puns intended. The Nurse shook her helm and grabbed the unconscious mech. Luckily she had the regular Vehicon built, so lifting the mech was nothing big to her. She moved Knockout to his berth and covered him with thermal blanket and prepared the hangover kit: painkillers and some low grade. Knockout was bound to suffer when he will wake up, but it was his own choice and the Nurse didn’t felt sympathetic for the doctor in that matter. He did it to himself.

She looked at the mech for a moment and sighed. It was still a fresh wound, but he couldn’t deal with it this way, he needed a help to deal with Breakdown’s death and due to Decepticon unwritten rules, he couldn’t show weakness by asking for help. It had to be offered and Daisy was ready to help. She liked the doctor (she also liked Breakdown because he was an all right mech), and she knew that while she couldn’t replace his dead partner, she could make it easier.
Now she had to return to her duties in the infirmary.

Next: Soundwave.

This story happened during Spider Woman, just when Motormaster, Barricade, Frenzy, Rumble and Ravage arrived on board of Nemesis. This is what Knockout has been doing before he got himself wasted.

Now, I do not promote drinking alcohol (or high grade), I am strictly against it. But seeing as this is part of the plot, Knockout is going to end up under the table. However I didn’t show Knockout getting to the pitiful state he ended in, plus Soundwave stated in his own way that drowning sorrows in cube/glass won’t help… And because Soundwave is smart guy, always listen to what he says.

1) Mentioned in More Than Meets the Eye, issue 7 “Rules of Disengagement”.


3) See Robots in Disguise, issue 3 “Stick Together”.

4) 1 Joor = 6 hours. 8 joors = 6x8 = 48 hours.

5) 1 Quartex = approximately one month.

6) The Last Waterhole on Nova-Amsterdam in Red Light System – place borrowed from ABC Warriors. Deadlock (not to be mistaken with Drift’s Decepticon name), the Grand Wizard of Knights Martial wrote his “pearls of witless wisdom” there.

7) 1 Mega-cycle = 93 hours.

8) 1 Groon = approximately one hour.

9) Daisy speaks in the voice of Elizabeth Mary McGlynn, who is a singer, actor and a voice actor (for anime, video games and cartoons), and as it happens, privately she is wife of Daran Norris who is the voice actor that voices Knockout – it’s just a little detail I decided to add for all the Knockout fans.

I just read MTMTE 32 and ran in circles like a loon with grin like a watermelon quarter (only less pink and without any seeds in it).

Ravage and Megatron conversation = YAY!

Rewind news = YAY!
Now I can’t wait for more!

I also read RiD 32 and was pleased to see that Soundwave was all right in the end. And he was kind of right about Prowl… because Prowl is… well… Prowl. Not that I hate him, but he’s just that way. Plus, I’m a Deceptigirl; I will support anything that Soundwave has to say about Prowl as a default.

Also, there’s a new series: Primacy, which is continuation of Monstrosity and Autocracy series.
Who has time for tears

Chapter Notes

Chapter 2: How Soundwave and Blaster's friendship ended. Blaster and Soundwave's friendship end. Soundwave and Ravage friendship/cooperation beginning. Set before and after the foundation of Decepticons.

Blast From The Past.

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don’t you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(…)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.
Warnings: Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.

Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Soundwave, Blaster, Ravage.

Disclaimer: Transformers Prime © Hasbro. Story’s plot and OC’s © me. There may be some OC’s that aren’t mine – they belong to their respective creators.

Who has time for tears.

“Blue sky to forever,
green grass blows in the wind, dancing
It would be much better a sight with you, with me,
If you hadn't met me, I'd be fine on my own, baby,
I never felt so lonely, then you came along,

So now what should I do? I'm strung out, addicted to you,
My body it aches, now that you're gone,
My supply fell through,

You gladly gave me everything you had and more,
You craved my happiness,
When you make me feel joy it makes you smile,

But now I feel your stress,

Love was never meant to be such a crazy affair, no

And who has time for tears?

Never thought I'd sit around and cry for your love,

’till now.” – Akira Yamaoka, Elizabeth Mary McGlynn “You’re not here”¹)

Cybertron. Kaon. Before the War.

It was late afternoon. Or what passed as afternoon in low levels of Kaon, in the communal tomb area. It was a burial ceremony of member of a technician caste – nothing fancy; technicians weren’t high enough for proper ceremonies, just the religious minimum.

The crowd that gathered there were all miners and other mine workers that had the free time and could allow themselves to arrive, the dead femme was rather popular as one of the most amiable persons in the mine. And it was tragic accident; one that no one had any doubts could have been prevented if they would have decent equipment and proper resources. The anger among mine workers was slowly growing and this death was yet another drop. Not that the management cared, or the Senate. Everyone knew that the funds that should be spent on equipment were defrauded.

The cleric – young and inexperienced – quickly he done the ceremonial cape. He seemed nervous as he was rather small mech surrounded by crowd of huge miners, and few smaller technicians – still much bulkier than he was. He knew he had to everything well.

“I commend you to the Allspark and the Allspark in one Spark and the one Spark is your Spark and in this way we are all connected.”²) He recited in gentle voice.

Everyone focused their stares at the coffin and repeated “And in this was we are all connected.”

No one expected eulogy. Usually there would be someone, but the only person capable of delivering it wasn’t able to speak at the moment and even in his best times wasn’t known to be very talkative. This was why everyone walked pass the coffin, gave it a gentle touch, spoke few words to the femme’s close ones and left silently.
That left only three people on the spot. One of them was large and bulky miner. Second one was tall and well-built but still slim technician and the third was a feline symbio.

Soundwave stood above his conjunx endura’s coffin and spoke nothing. He held her first and only symbio in his arms; the feline mech was still young and was with him when the... accident happened. Their bond was still fresh so the young cat shook it off without as much pain as Soundwave felt. The doctors still weren’t sure if he will make it; his Spark was unstable after the shock it received. He himself wasn’t sure if he wanted to continue without his femme.

Large and bulky miner looked at the coffin and at the technician and shook his helm. His blue optics shone in the falling darkness of the evening. He knew both of them, and he took it upon himself to make sure that Soundwave would make it through the ceremony. But now it was over. In a moment the coffin would be placed in the tomb, not that there was much left to bury, but standing there wouldn’t change anything. He knew that the coffin wasn’t the only reason Soundwave was standing there with Ravage in his arms.

“Come on Soundwave. He won’t come.” The miner spoke in soft tone. “Let’s get you back; you know that the doctors only let you go for the funeral under condition you will get back as soon as it is over. Don’t force me to drag you back.”

“I don’t think that Soundwave is able to sspeak nowrrr, I-11” Ravage raised his head and gave the miner a serious look. He was young, but not a sparkling. His new Host was now in pain, both physical and mental, he needed peace not nagging.

“I know, but he needs to go back now.” I-11 – known as one of the most narcistic yet responsible people in the mine – gently pushed Soundwave to the burial area gate, steering him with great care to the shuttle that would carry them back to the mining outpost C-12’s medical centre.

Soundwave didn’t protest... which was disturbing, because usually he was one of the strongest minded Cybertronians in the mine. Pit! He was one of the strongest minded Cybertronians in existence! He never spoke much, but when he chose to state his opinion he would stick to it, and there never was any discussion about it. Now he allowed himself to be moved around like a doll. I-11 felt that the mech he greatly respected was fading away and soon there will be nothing left. All because those damn managers and their corruption. If only those fuses were fresh…

OoO

1 Meta-Cycle³) later. Mining Outpost C-12’s medical centre some time before the riots.
Soundwave sat in his hospital room with Ravage in his lap. The symbio was silently recharging while the telepath stared somewhere in the space. He was given tranquilisers to calm his nerves and a doctor hooked him to Spark monitor to see how he was doing. Entire staff agreed that the greatest and most positive influence on this particular patient was his late spouse’s symbio… And now his.

The mech went completely silent ever since the accident and doctors worried about that, but they were informed that Soundwave always preferred silence over prattling, so they hoped that it was just his way of showing grief.

The fact that he was responsive and followed their instruction was a good sign, though no one who saw his Spark right after he was brought there didn’t gave him much hope.

I-11 sighed, he came to see how Soundwave was doing, the change was minimal, it was scary to look at someone so strong reduced to shadow of their previous self. He left the energon cube he brought – a better blend than the hospital fuel – said his goodbye to which Soundwave nodded slightly and Ravage responded properly, and left. He needed to go home, recharge and go to his shift, but he would visit Soundwave again after the work, perhaps the mech would somehow stay alive and feel a little bit better?

The Medical Centre lobby.

Tall and smooth looking, red yellow and white mech with transparent visor marched into the hospital. One glance was enough to know that this was higher caste member: he had flashy colours, was polished to the point of glowing and radiated confidence of someone larger than life itself. His bright blue optics seemed to lighten the grey place as he approached the counter with wide, charming smile.

The receptionist – rather feeble looking mech – wondered for a moment what such a high breed was doing in mining outpost’s hospital. He looked completely out of place. The wonder passed instantly, the receptionist knew that he will learn everything shortly.

“Good evening sir, how can I be of any service?” The receptionist asked.

“Good evening to you. My old friend happen to be here, perhaps you can help me to find him?” The
mech answered in deep, vibrating voice. A very familiar voice.

“If you will tell me your friend’s designation I will check if we have him here.” The receptionist gave the mech closer look. He could bet that he knew that particular Cybertronian from somewhere.

At that very moment I-11 exit the lift and noticed flashy looking mech. Instantly he knew who that was. That made him angry. He marched to the counter and grabbed the flashy looking mech by his arm.

“Whoa, an unwelcome…” Triple-coloured mech tried to protest.

“Shut up!”

“Whoa, mech, I’m not sure if I know you.” The high breed spoke with surprise. “I would remember a mech of your weight.”

“You don’t know me, but I know who you are.” I-11 pulled the flashy mech to the door. He didn’t want to have that conversation in public. “And we have to talk, buddy.”

After a moment they stood in mostly silent backstreet, it smelled of liquid waste products and rotting processed energon. Only then I-11 let the flashy high caste go. Strangely, the mech didn’t seem outraged by the place.

“What do you want?” He asked not minding the surroundings.

“You’re Blaster.” I-11 announced, not even asked, he knew.

“Yeah, that’s a common knowledge. And you are?”

“You were supposed to come at the funeral, you punk!” I-11 roared. “He waited for you!”

“I couldn’t come. I didn’t get the travel permission on time.” Blaster explained. “You know, just
“You could call or send a note! Don’t tell me that you need permission to do that as well. Not even miners need permission to send notes.”

“I didn’t think a note was needed. I knew I would be here, I wanted to apologise personally.” Blaster seemed surprised at the other mech’s outburst.

“First you just ditch him the moment you get your dream job. Then you snob him out, ignore him for... For how long? He works here for over a vorn\(^5\) and never even once you visited, called or showed any sign of life! You didn’t even show up at his bonding after party\(^6\), and I know you were invited! You didn’t!” The Miner yelled. “And now you can’t even notify him that you won’t be able to come on time?”

“Fine! I know! We drifted apart. But I still think he’s my old friend.”

“But you’re not his. Not anymore. Not since you stopped answering his messages and ignoring his calls. And now you couldn’t be bothered to warn that you won’t make it on time!” I-11 was now growling like some sort of cyber-bull. “He needed any support he could get and you were too lazy to even call him!”

“Look I said I wanted to apologise personally, that’s why I came here.” Blaster was starting to lose his patience. “I know I wasn’t available, I was busy making career – too busy, I know that. And I know that he was bitter over the fact that I could follow the career he wanted, I know he was angry at the system. And I know that I haven’t spoken to him in ages. But he’s still my friend and you’re not going to stop me from visiting him!”

“Yes I can and I will. You came too late; you proved that you’re not his friend when you failed to send a single message, few words.” I-11 clenched his fists. “When she died his Spark received a raging backlash. He was carried to the hospital unconscious and they barely saved him. Half of his Spark looks like burned out furnace now and they don’t even know if he will make it. They only released him for the funeral, and he hoped to meet you there. He waited for you even though he should return instantly. You have failed him!”

I-11 observed Blaster with grim face and felt bile growing in his throat, the image of him drilling holes for the explosive haunted him every time he off-lined his optics. He remembered laughing and looking forward to the end of the shift. He remembered as he was walking away and how the entire mining site shook when the explosives went off prematurely. Then everything happened so fast, and
the next real memory he had was when he was asked to bring Ravage to Soundwave.

“He doesn’t need you.” I-11 spoke again, this time his voice was cold and bitter. The previous anger all gone. “He went through enough already. Last thing he needs right now is for you to remind him of his crushed dreams, disappointments and how unfair life was for him. His Spark doesn’t need any more strain; he got more than his share of pain already.”

Blaster only stared at the large miner. What he just heard was cruel and his Spark clenched, he knew that none of what Soundwave has gone through was his fault but it hurt anyway, mostly because the miner was right. He was too busy with making his name, then with being famous to be bothered by answering calls and keeping in touch with those less famous than him. He should have call, note Soundwave that he would come later. He wanted to just appear and surprise his old friend but now that he thought about it, it seemed like the worse idea ever. He might have been a famous entertainment broadcast presenter, but Soundwave wasn’t just some random fan of his who broke a leg strut. He was a mech who just lost his conjunx endura and was in hospital because his Spark was failing. Jumping into his room yelling “Surprise old chap, how’re you doing, me lad!” would probably cause more harm than good. Soundwave needed support but also quiet, not loud yelling. Blaster sighed; this wasn’t the time for his larger than life attitude.

“You’re probably right… no, not probably, you are right.” Blaster sighed and reached to his personal subspace, after a moment he produced a visiting-card. “This is my personal hailing frequency. Let me know when he will be better.”

“If he will be better.”

“He will. Trust me.” Blaster smiled weakly. “Just give me a call and I will come back then.”

“I will think about it.” I-11 took the card. “No go, before I will drag you back to the port.”

“I’m going… But just to be clear, you wouldn’t be able to stop me if I wanted to pass by you.”

“You wanna bet?”

“If you haven’t noticed ‘Wave and I share frame type, only I am grounder and he is some sort of flyer, I never seen him transform though. But I know that Soundwave could take you out without even noticing and since our strength is comparable, I would take you down just as well.”
“I wouldn’t bet on your strength, punk.” I-11 knew that Soundwave was stronger than he looked, but this flashy mech here was not Soundwave.

“When ‘Wave will be better, call me and when I’ll come, we can spar. You’ll see just how strong I am.” Blaster gave the Miner his best half-smile. “One more thing, do you have any designation, or am I to call you ‘Hey You’?”

“I-11” I-11 answered and crossed his arms. “Everyone on C-12 knows which one I am.”

“See you then I-11” Blaster winked and walked away.

He didn’t come back.

oOo

Soundwave lay in his hospital berth holding recharging Ravage. The cat former was venting lightly through his vents. It was amazing how much a feline could recharge, but keeping him close helped Soundwave, the mech was calmer with the symbio around.

Soundwave focused his attention on the black shape of now his symbio. Ravage was young adult mech, old enough to be paired with a host but still too young to be left without care. Still pretty vulnerable. And still, so young, he lost his first host. The binary link wasn’t that strong and throughout yet, so Ravage received only slight jolt, but it still had to hurt. Soundwave flashed his optics behind his dark visor; he could not leave Ravage alone. There were two options: he had to find Ravage a new caretaker or survive.

oOo


Soundwave looked around curiously. It was the first time he was in Shockwave’s lab. Megatron made sure that the laboratory was well hidden because Senator Shockwave had to keep a low profile. The mech was already mutilated both in body and mind, if Proteus though the Shadowplay failed to turn his fellow Senator into docile puppet, he would simply have him killed. It wouldn’t be the first time he would assassinate fellow Senator, he had no problems with Sherma and Momus7).
He entered one of the rooms where Shockwave already waited for him. The now mono-optic mech glared at him in his usual way. Most Cybertronians found it unnerving, Soundwave didn’t. What was unnerving about Shockwave for Soundwave was the fact that he gave incredibly weak output, one had to be very close to read anything, and he never gave off any stay thoughts. One could only get the read out of what the mech was now doing. Soundwave accepted it as an aftereffect of Shadowplay. Such a complex procedure was bound to bring devastating effects.

“You wanted to see me, Soundwave.” Shockwave spoke emotionlessly as always. “What do you require?”

With Shockwave all was clear. Soundwave knew that the best way would be to just state his business… the way he liked.

“Soundwave’s presence motive: required assistance.” He spoke in his extremely low voice. The deep, almost unnatural base was always a surprise for those who heard him for the first time. “Assistance nature: cerebral re-engineering procedure.”

“Am I to understand that you ask me to perform a Shadowplay on you?” Shockwave’s antennae stirred. A clear sight of surprise.

“Affirmative.”

“And why would you want me to do that?” Shockwave was well aware that most Cybertronians didn’t want to even think that they could have their brain module re-wired.

“Reasons: personal.”

“I see.” Shockwave stared at the other mech for a short moment. It didn’t take him long to deduce what these personal reasons were. Everybody knew that Soundwave was a widower. “You do realize that this is one way procedure?”

“Affirmative.”

“And I assume you want me to perform it as soon as possible?” Shockwave didn’t wait long for a
single nod. “Very well. I have time for you now. If you are willing.”

There was a single nod again. Only now Shockwave noticed that Soundwave was alone, without his symbiotes.

“Sit down on this chair.” Shockwave pointed at a chair that looked like strange variation of medical berth and regular chair. “I will remove your helm plates. I am not a mnemosurgeon so I will be forced to use alternative method of reaching your brain module.”


“Before we will proceed, I need to inform you that I will not be performing a full Shadowplay like mine.” Shockwave stopped his preparations for a moment. “It will be limited.”

“Limited Shadowplay: reason?”

“You are both telepath and symbio carrier. A complete Shadowplay would hamper your telepathic abilities and carry danger of you not being able to continue carrying symbiotes.” Shockwave explained. “The binary link between host and symbio or symbiotes originates in Spark, but the communication between them is carried by brain modules, including emotional centres. Additionally, deep Shadowplay would damage your telepathic abilities by alternating Spark-brain module connection.”

“Understood. Inquiry: Shadowplay’s depth?”

“I can dull your emotions to necessary minimum.” Shockwave informed. “Your brain module’s neural structure will remain intact and your brain module-Spark connection will not be altered. Your telepathic prowess and your ability to form and sustain binary links will not be influenced.”

“Acceptable. Proceed.”

“As you wish.” Shockwave approached Soundwave and began the procedure.

The sounds of electric screwdriver filled the room. And then Soundwave screamed, loud and long.
But no one heard a thing – Shockwave’s laboratory was sound proof.  

\[ \text{oOo} \]

*Cybertron. Iacon. Shortly before fall of Zeta Prime.*

Soundwave waited for Ravage to sneak out of the Citadel, the silent symbio was mapping the building for an entire night. They couldn’t meet next to the building for obvious reasons so Soundwave waited at the (known forever as) Sherma’s Bridge.

He leaned against the balustrade waiting patiently and killing time by watching the skyline, the buildings and the people who were walking pass by him while his mind was simply resting. He didn’t have to actively focus on his symbio as would feel Ravage’s approaching via their binary link. For now it was just a rare opportunity to relax. He was certain that Ravage succeeded, not he just needed to reach their rendezvous point.

Laughing, conversing or just hurrying Cybertronians walked in front of him. Their minds just blur of patterns, everyday worries and desires. Nothing special, just usual mental background noise.

“I can’t believe my optics! Soundwave! You have changed!”

It was sudden stab of light, colour, smell, taste and sound. Soundwave flinched behind his visor and focused on where the sound came from. Instantly he saw Blaster rushing in his direction. The mech was still his usual flashy self, his face smiling, his gait confident. As always and forever; Blaster – larger than life, smooth spoken idol of Cybertronians in all ages, shapes and sizes.

“It’s been… almost forever!” The red, white and yellow mech finally pushed through the crowd. “I thought I would never see you again!”


“Whoa! ‘Wave, old buddy. Your speech pattern has changed!” Blaster pulled shocked face. “What happened with your old witty self?”
“Speech pattern: altered for maximum efficiency.” Soundwave modulated his voice into lover tones. “Smooth and witty style: unnecessary for non-medial performance.”

“Hey, mech, I hope you’re not mad at me for that? You know I’d loved to work with you.” Blaster seemed worried. Soundwave’s and his telepathy nullified each other, but Blaster’s face was an open book.

“Blaster: not the cause of grudge. Cause of the grudge: Functionists.”

“Functionism has been repelled. Isn’t that great?” Blaster beamed again. “Now you can actually become a broadcast presenter, or DJ.”

Soundwave tilt his head, it was true. But would he? Should he? “Soundwave: already occupied.”

“Happy for you, mech! And good that you pulled it off and survived. I’ve been on C-12 you know, but I-11 told me to scram. He’s been kind of right. I told him to let me know when you’d be fine.” Blaster was grinning from one audio receptor to the other. “I even wanted to come… but you know.” He pointed at himself. “Famous broadcast presenter, no longer master of my own fate.”

“Blaster: never arrived.” Soundwave observed.

“Well, like I said, I don’t decide when I can have free time. And then there were the riots, and then you’ve been on the Arena, and later you just vanished… Say, do you still keep in touch with I-11?” Blaster’s smile turned into a bit nastier one. “I promised him a sparring match. The big lug thought I was a weakling.”


“What? How? When?”


“What he did to deserve that?” Blaster’s optic turned round in shock.
“I-11: openly opposed.”

Blaster vented a heavy sigh; he was shocked but not surprised. Things like that happened.

“It’s a good thing that now things have changed.” He smiled weakly. “It won’t change the past, but at least no more Cybertronians will suffer from Functionist oppression and the Old Senate terror.”

Soundwave didn’t say anything, only observed the other mech silently. Blaster couldn’t see Soundwave’s optics through the black visor that the mech wore ever since he chose his final upgrade specs, but he felt the stare.

“Don’t give me that look.” Blaster shook his head slightly. “It can’t get any worse than it was, things can only go up from here. Zeta’s new Prime, he assembled New Senate. If you’ll ask me, that’s the only good thing that came from that barbarians’, Megatron and his bunch of goons, little rebellion.”

“New Prime: same as the old one.” Soundwave summed up.

“Now, ‘Wave, don’t be such a defeatist. Nominus started a mess, Sentinel and Proteus cultivated it. Now we have Zeta to fix it.” The mech shrugged, he just wanted life to get back to normal now. “I just transferred to National Station and got to host news and my own program, they pay me twice as much than I had in my previous station. And look! I’m now officially in Public Service!” He pointed at the Autobrand on his chest.

“Soundwave: not interested in working for the government.”

“I know, I know. You said that you have a job. But they pay good money, and the NS looks for people, so perhaps you should reconsider? Eh buddy?” Blaster reached and patted Soundwave’s arm.

The moment when his servo made contact with Soundwave’s upper arm his face showed surprised. There was something there. Blaster didn’t notice it before, but now he focused on his sparklinghood friend’s arm and there it was: mark of Decepticons. And not just a sticker, like his. It was welded on badge, not something to be easily rid of.

“Soundwave? You have a Deceptibrand?” He took two steps back. The realisation was instantaneous. “When did you enrol?”
“Soundwave: Decepticon from the beginning.”

“Impossible. Decepticons are savages. Soundwave, you’re not like them, I know you… You’re like us, you’re not like them!”

“Blaster: thinks of himself as better? Other Cybertronians: below?”

“Pit, no, Soundwave!” Blaster rubbed his helm in confusion. “Just… just… do you know what they did with the previous Senate? It was a massacre.”

“Old Senate: corrupted.”

“That’s not the point!” Blaster sighed, he felt sick seeing that Soundwave became Decepticon. His tanks revolted when he saw the accursed pointy badge. “You’ve became one of that’s savage’s goons!”


“Then what are you? You carry these troglodytes’ badge, so how I am supposed to see you now?” The bright coloured mech clenched his fists. He was becoming angry. “You could join me, me – your old friend, instead you just stick to that thug with fusion cannon and bucket on his helm! 11)”

“Soundwave: was a Decepticon before Blaster became an Autobot.” Soundwave replied, carefully ignoring the comment about Megatron’s helm… even he had to admit that the resemblance was prominent enough to be noticed 11).

Blaster began to vent faster, his anger rose every moment. Decepticons were what he saw as source of the troubles that bothered the society now. They refused to step down even though Sentinel and the Old Senate were gone.

He wanted to say something, when black feline Cybertronian jumped in between them. The creature moved with almost supernatural grace and its plating seemed to absorb all light, which made the creature even darker.
The cat gave Blaster one long stare and then turned to the other mech. “Is he botherring yrrrou, Soundwave?” The feline sounded hissing but with the purring quality.

“Negative.” Soundwave focused at the cat for a second ignoring Blaster. “Ravage: dock.”

“As yrrrou wish…” Ravage jumped, shifted few times and docked as Soundwave’s abdomen plate that covered his abdominal bio lights.


Before Blaster could reply anything, Soundwave took few more steps, jumped and transformed only to fly away.

Next: Shockwave.

Today, from various sources, such as “Spotlight: Blaster”, we know Blaster to be a responsible, serious, brave and caring mech with “loud, proud and bombastic” attitude and some real smooth talking. Perhaps not the most mature character, but certainly one of the most amiable. However, he wasn’t always the mature version of himself – all characters develop and change, so Blaster is no exception.

Here I showed much younger version of “The Voice” before he actually became the larger than life Autobot we know today. Yeah, he is a bit of a typical young and rich brat who just don’t understand many things, he led rather safe life, away from harsh reality that lower caste members faced every day, Decepticon reasoning is alien to him because he never faced true oppression. It will take Zeta and his Vamparc Ribbons, energon shortage and tales of Autobots recruiting from lower castes (as well as those from upper castes who saw the injustice and now want to change it) for him to realise why Decepticon rebellion took place – though he will never support Decepticon cause.

I like to think that in my fan-made BotB timeline Blaster’s road to become “The Voice” started when he realised that he lost Soundwave’s friendship and started to search reasons behind his choice to join Megatron. Blaster’s deep dislike of Decepticons won’t change, but he will better understand what was wrong with pre-war society and why Soundwave took the choices he did.

Next time Blaster and Soundwave will meet – on the battlefields of Cybertron, or perhaps on some secret operation during one of the calmer periods of the war, or maybe even just before the war truly started – Blaster will already be a different mech, the mech we all know today. But for the moment we leave him in this story, he still has a long way to go.
The song I used for this story is there for the purpose of showing Soundwave’s loss of his both mate and Blaster’s friendship. But mostly his mate. The phrase “Who has time for tears” fragment seemed perfect for the idea of Soundwave dulling (deleting – in the show) his emotions.

1) I know it’s not typical of me to use a song that is not rock, metal or similar genre, this is a soundtrack song for Silent Hill 3 and for the Silent Hill films.

2) Cybertronian funeral is showed in MTMTE issue 16.

3) 1 Meta-Cycle = 93 hours.

4) Pee and puke. Don’t ask. It’s there to make the scene more climatic.

5) 1 Vorn = 83 years.

6) Cybertronian bond first and only then hold a party, they consider it to be logical to celebrate an event that took place, there is no ceremony, only a celebration.


8) RiD issue 17 “Shockwaves” pages 15 and 16 show inside of Shockwave’s laboratory and the images suggest that it had to be sound proof. Also at the end of MTMTE issue 11 it is said that Shockwave screamed, so I guess that physical poking around someone’s brain module may be painful (be that Empurata or Shadowplay performed not with needles but by more primitive methods).

9) Yes, I-11 is the same mech who gets killed first in Megatron Origin issue 1, when Decimus comes to tell the miners that their mine is being closed, and the riots start.

10) That’s what HE (Megatron) said… in Spotlight: Megatron.

11) Despite me openly admitting to be a Deceptigirl, I have to say that even I think that Megatron’s helm looks a little bit like a bucket… and they made that connection in pre-war Cybertron as well.
Shadowplay

Chapter Notes

Chapter 3: How Shockwave became emotionless amputee.
Shockwave and Dai Atlas friendship.
Shockwave and Arcee romance.

Blast From The Past.

"Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don't you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(…)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers "All the things that I've done”.

Warnings: Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I'm not sure) – you know, the usual.

Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.
Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Shockwave, Arcee, Elita-1/Ariel (mentioned), Dai Atlas, Proteus, Sentinel Prime, Orion Pax (mentioned), Alpha Trion, Zeta (mentioned), Rodimus (mentioned as nameless sparkling).

Disclaimer: Transformers Prime © Hasbro. Story's plot and OC's © me. There may be some OC's that aren't mine – they belong to their respective creators.

Shadowplay.

"To the centre of the city where all roads meet, waiting for you
To the depths of the ocean where all hopes sank, searching for you
I was moving through the silence without motion, waiting for you
In a room without a window in the corner I found truth
In the shadowplay acting out your own death, knowing no more
As the assassins all grouped in four lines, dancing on the floor
And with cold steel, odour on their bodies made a move to connect
I could only stare in disbelief as the crowds all left
I did everything, everything I wanted to
I let them use you for their own ends
To the centre of the city in the night, waiting for you
To the centre of the city in the night, waiting for you" – Joy Division "Shadowplay"

oOo

Earth. New Kaon, Nevada.

Arcee and Shockwave sat on long, flat boulder that was dragged there just for the purpose of serving as a bench. They were observing Vehicons and Miners managing the pitiful reminds of the Worldsweeper. It was just few beams and slabs of metal that were meant to be smelt. They were the largest construction pieces of the ship and they were being cut into pieces for easier transport.

The two Cybertronians were sipping on low grade sweetened energon 1) through fancy looking straws. Are was taking small sips every now and then, while Shockwave just inserted his straw to where his oral opening and moth parts 2) were hidden and kept it there occasionally taking a long sip. He wasn't able to find replacement fast enough, so on this occasion they had to just stay on the spot. Arcee wasn't happy about it, she hoped for some private time, but Shockwave anticipated that and brought some low grade sweetened energon, a 'consolation prize' as he called it. Arcee accepted it gladly as it was also prove that Shockwave not only listened to her but remembered what she said – a trace in mech she valued – and one time she mentioned that as a femmeling she liked sweetened low grade, just like the one she was sipping now.

The Autobot femme smiled and looked at her 'boyfriend' who right now decided to take a long sip of
his drink. He noticed her watching him and turned to her without removing the straw. His antennae jerked up into fully vertical positions and his winglets stiffened at the same moment.

"I have noticed you are staring at me." He said with the straw still in his mouth, he didn't need to remove it. "Is my way of consuming bothers you?"

Arcee blinked in surprise. It wasn't what she expected to hear. "Eh, no. I wasn't staring… All right, I was, but not because of the way you refuel."

"Then why?" His winglets relaxed, or at least lost the previous tension, as they never really moved a lot.

"I was thinking how you remembered how I told you that I used to like this kind of energon." She lifted her own cube. "It means a lot to me. And it's almost as good as what I had in mind for today."

"I understand. It is good to hear that you are not bothered."

"No, I am not. But since we're on the subject… You never told me how you ended up as an amputee; I mean the full story 3)." Arcee noticed how Shockwave's antennae jerked and stiffened upon hearing her, she already learned how to tell when he was upset, anxious or distressed. "Of course, if you don't want to talk about it…"

"No. Considering the kind of relationship we are cultivating and how it is developing, sooner or later you should hear the fully detailed story of how I became mutilated. You have the right to know this."

He felt his antennae being almost painfully stiff, but he ignored them. He had clear readouts told him that his Spark pulse and energon pressure were elevated: clear signs of stress, but he paid it no mind. The sooner he would tell Arcee everything, the sooner it would be done.

"I was already known to be emotional and troublesome Senator when Nominus fallen victim to an assassination attempt which was followed with a clampdown. But the trouble began when he was announced dead… 4)"

oOo


Two mechs were standing in deep niche, both tall and both flyers, one taller and heavier but also slimmer, the other one shorter and bulkier with more warrior look.

The taller was intense blue with yellow elements and burning maroon optics. His face was handsome and friendly, but there was something in him that betrayed seasoned warrior. His wings rose at sharp angles making him seem even larger than he was.

The shorter one was coloured light turquoise, lavender and creamy-yellow. He had his wings on his forearms and looked like Tarnian – with his v-shaped forehead part of the helmet (but not a chevron), ample chest, narrow waist and hips and massive shins. His optics were the direct opposition of the other ones, his were cold blue.

"I can't believe it. I just can't fragging believe it!" The shorter mech growled in melodic yet deep voice. "And they think we're going to buy the load of scrap they're trying to sell us? What do they take us for? Halfwits?"

"Calm down Shockwave, you're going to do yourself a mischief." The taller one spoke calmly.

"Calm myself? How can I calm myself?" Shockwave was nearly steaming from his vents.
"You anger won't make any difference at this point. It is too late, it already happened." His tall companion explained with patience of a saint. "Sadly there was nothing we could do. Now all we can do is to observe and react."

"I hate observing and reacting." Shockwave crossed his arms. "All we do is observe and react."

"We are too weak to openly oppose Proteus and his faction, and your angry fits don't help." The tall mech sighed. "And you already risked a lot covering for that data clerk who associated himself with that Gladiator."

"You know why I did it."

"Yes, Alpha Trion recommended him as a candidate for a Prime, and he is our greatest ally." The towering Senator narrowed his optics. "But tell me, Shockwave, wasn't that just your need to be malicious to Proteus?"

"I do not deny that it was great pleasure to still that desk jokey out of Proteus' reach. But I did it for and because of Alpha Trion. He and my old tutor, Jhiaxus, they knew each other well. Jhiaxus always claimed that A3 – as he called Alpha Trion – was one of the thirteen."

"It is possible. Trion is very old, older than anyone I can think of…"

"And that's why I did it. Jarring Proteus on was but an additional bonus."

"Did I just hear someone say 'bonus'?" It was smooth sounding voice. Such voices usually belonged to people selling thing no one really needed but bought it anyway because it was a promotion.

"Senators Dai Atlas and Shockwave." Another voice joined the previous one. "Greetings. Were you perhaps talking of something interesting?"

The two mechs approached the niche. One was shorter than Shockwave, it was hard to say what his alt mode was, but he was purple and lacked wheels or wings, as if he turned into something that didn't need them. The taller one was roughly the same height that Shockwave was blue, red and gold, polished perfectly and almost sparkling.

"Greetings to you, Ratbat and Proteus." Dai Atlas replied. "We were talking about the usual things."

"You know, glitches and hoes. 5)" Shockwave added, knowing that it would irk Proteus slightly.

"I see. In that case, we will meet in the Senate session in short time." Proteus carefully smiled and walked away with Ratbat smirking and giving slight bow of admiration before he followed his taller companion.

Ratbat was known to be corrupted and carrying only for his personal gain, which usually made him an ally to Proteus. But he, like most of the Senate, didn't really liked the influential Senator and enjoyed every time when someone managed to rub Proteus the wrong way and get away with it.

"You will excuse me; I need to take a short flight to soothe my nerves." Shockwave rolled his shoulders. "See you at the session, my friend."

"Of course, piece to you and see you soon." Dai Atlas smiled to his friend and walked away.

Shockwave sighed and marched to the lift that would get him to the roof. In the distance he could hear Dai Atlas chatting with one of the Guardians 6). The chatter was however cut short when the elevator's door shut close.
Shockwave was seeing in red when he left the Senate Oratory. He was literally steaming from anger. It was what he suspected. Nominus' (however great waste of space the late Prime was) coffin wasn't even closed yet and Proteus was already boldly announcing that they had candidate for the next Prime! True, there were always few candidates preparing to take the responsibility, and the next in line was Zeta, but Proteus completely ignored that! Instead of announcing that Zeta would be the next Prime he just stated that next Prime was already chosen! That could only mean that it was someone from outside of the official candidates (currently just two).

The Tarnian noble jumped and transformed into his jet mode. He didn't manage to get far when another caught up with him – Dai Atlas.

"I didn't expect you not to start any brawl." He said with amused tone.

"Trust me; it took all I had not to." Shockwave answered with growl. "You've heard what Proteus said. I was angry when they declared Nominus' death because he was clearly murdered. You do not believe the nonsense about rust infection, do you?"

"Such things happen you know. They said it spread from his fuel pump and attacked Spark casing. 4)" Dai Atlas voice turned serious. "I make practice to treat all Proteus says as a political power play, but these things happen. Perhaps he's using convenient circumstance?"

"He's so not using any convenient circumstance; he never does, unless he'll create it himself."

"What are you saying?"

"He killed Nominus, or had someone to do it for him… Primus knows he has his band of happy henchmen." Shockwave trembled in anger.

"How do you know that?" Dai Atlas was now surprised. This was indeed unexpected. Shockwave wasn't the spying one. That was more like Ratbat.

"I have talked with Chief of Medicine in Senate's Medical Centre 7), the same that operated on Nominus after the assassination attempt. It was shortly after the operation and he told me that Nominus' fuel pump was pristine, not a spec on it. So how come he suddenly develops such a bad case of malicious rust infection in such a short time. We all know how long it takes to even develop one."

"You're telling me things I had no idea about." Dai Atlas admitted. "Where are you going now? This is not direction of the Senate district."

"I'm going to talk to Trion. He should know right away, he needs to know before the choice will be made public. Maybe he can intervene?"

"I doubt it." Dai Atlas would shake his head if he was in his bipedal mode.

"At least he will know. You know how they say: knowledge is power."

"Indeed. I leave you in peace; I will be in my apartment." With that Dai Atlas took sharp turn that would rip any lighter frame into pieces.

oOo

Hall of Records. Alpha Trion office.
"I know Nominus was murdered." Alpha Trion patted Covenant of Primus lightly. "I have... received that information already." He never really smiled, but he almost did when he considered how the scientist in front of his would react if he learned where the information came from.

"Proteus had us gathered today, moments ago, to announce what would happen now that Nominus perished." Shockwave said in much calmer voice now. "Can you imagine, Alpha Trion, he said it was rust infection... Ha!"

"What did Proteus said?"

"Nominus will have full state funeral with all the tiny details," Shockwave shrugged. "But that's not why I'm here... Proteus said that he had candidate for the next Prime... and he didn't named Zeta to be him."

"This I didn't know... yet. But there is nothing I can do." Alpha Trion sighed. "I am but an old mech, not a Councillor."

"Can't you talk to them? Zeta was prepared for this for so long."

"If Proteus decided to make another mech a Prime, then he has legal way to do it, otherwise he would not make such an attempt." Alpha Trion spoke calmly, he was old, he saw many things and very little could surprise or outrage him. "There is nothing we can do but observe what will happen and react accordingly. I suspect this new Prime won't last very long. If he agreed to take the position of a Prime, he must have his own ambitions, but in the end he will be a tool in Proteus's servo. Tools are disposable."

"I worry about the femme you were given to educate and rise to become next Prime's mate." Shockwave frowned, he hated to mention it. "Who knows what kind of degenerate Proteus found?"

"Ariel? Do not worry. I can stall claiming that she is not ready yet."

"You cannot stall forever."

"If it will take too long, I can always claim she is unfit after all. It will deny her the position of Prime's Consort -- the One, but she will be well educated and can become an archivist." Alpha Trion gestured to the direction of the main hall in Hall of Records. "Perhaps not the most fascinating occupation for a young lady, but better than bonding with someone unwelcome. There is also chance that it will be decent mech after all. We will wait and see."

"Really, Alpha Trion? If she was your Sparkling, would you give her to Proteus' goon?"

"She almost is my sparkling; I have raised her since she was but a bitlet. As many other femmes." The old Archivist pierced Shockwave with his bright blue optics. "She knows her destiny, but she trusts me not to send her to a place where harm will be done to her. Also, I always make practice to teach my femmelings how to fight. Prime's Consort must be educated in all fields, including martial arts and Ariel is very talented in Metalikato and Circuit-Su. She can take care of herself if she has to."

"If I didn't know better, I'd think you prepared her to be a Prime not Consort." Shockwave grinned.

"I see no problem for a femme to become a Prime. Solus Prime was a femme, and she was one of the mightiest entities in history of our race, second only to her creator -- Primus." Alpha Trion straightened to his full, impressive height. "I raise all my charges to be worthy of becoming a Prime, including the femmes. I only get femmes designated to become Consorts, but if I was given a femme candidate for title of Prime it would be a happy joor 8) indeed, and perhaps it will happen in the
future."

"That would be interesting, yes." Shockwave rubbed his chin. He found himself liking the idea, he's especially loved to see Proteus' facial plates when he would learn that the new Prime would be a femme… especially that Proteus was one of the mechs who saw femmes only as trophies.

"I know what you're thinking of, Shockwave, and I would also enjoy seeing Proteus in such moment."

"How?" Shockwave's optics grew wide.

"I just know you and your perverse sense of humour when it comes to torture Proteus and his supporters." Alpha Trion voice was as close to pleased purr as it was possible for the ancient mech. "And, unfortunately, I know Proteus and his… attitudes."

"Unfortunately we all know them." Shockwave face darkened. "For better or worse, we will know the new Prime shortly before Nominus' funeral."

"Let it be so then." Alpha Trion concluded. There was nothing much to say in the subject.

Shockwave bid him good bye and left for his Iaconian apartment, he was still upset even though his temper dropped. He needed to soothe his nerves in arms of some nice femme carrier mech, he decided to take a quick repaint and go for some night club where he could meet a willing one time lover.

oOo

One Deca-Cycle later. 9)

"My esteemed colleagues." Proteus began and looked around at the rest of the Senate. "As you all know, in just few joors 8) we will gather at Nominus Prime's official burial ceremony. I promised to reveal the candidate for new Prime before that. And I will present you the designation of my candidate today. I know it is tad late, but I believe we will be able to vote his candidature at this session, just after short recess as the High Council 10) already accepted the candidature."

That ended the short session, and Senators began to leave the Auditory. Shockwave stormed out and marched angrily to a small terrace, he needed to calm himself down; his angry fits didn't serve anyone, least of all him.

Dai Atlas caught with him fast, the taller mech could walk faster thank to his longer legs. He wasn't happy either. Dai Atlas was an old war hero, which meant he was far from being a pacifist, but he still was much calmer than his Tarnian friend.

"You were steaming, you know." He said the moment the glass doors closed behind him.

"The High Council already accepted the candidature! First they agree to nominate Zeta and Orion to be Primes in training, indicating that they will be next Primes, and then they just ignore their own decision to pick some random bod!"

"It's not surprising to me. You do know that Proteus has contact in Council. After all, Ratbat is in ministry of finances. That's why Proteus even talks to him in the first place." Dai Atlas approached the railing. "Proteus probably bribed him to convince the rest of the Council to agree to the candidature outside of the official list of candidates."

"Corruption! And how in Space this planet is supposed to prosper in conditions like this? Golden
Age? What Golden Age? It's just golden foil covering up rust eaten scrap-iron!"

"Well said, my friend, but sadly it must be worse before it will be better." Dai Atlas stared in the space with sad face. "Our world is ill, and before it will be able to cure itself, it must suffer the breakthrough."

"No. We must do something to stop this insanity!"

"And how you plan to do it? It's just us, maybe one or two more senators who will oppose. The Prime needs to have absolute majority, which means that his candidature will pass whether or not we will vote against him." Dai Atlas closed his optics; it was painful to admit that he was powerless. "It will only alienate us, mark us as enemies of the new Prime, which won't serve our cause in the slightest."

"What do you propose to do then, huh?" Shockwave glared at his friend with anger. "Sit down, grin like morons and just happily support Proteus like the rest of fools?"

"We can always refrain." Dai Atlas sighed. "It will simply show that we are uncertain but will not mark us as enemies, and we still won't vote 'yes'."

"I do not like this."

"Neither do I, but in current situation it is the best we can do. It is all too easy to die for the cause. It is much harder to survive so we can fight another day."

Shockwave didn't answer to that, it was true and he knew that. But it was also very painful for a mech of his temperament.

oOo

"My fellow Senators." Proteus almost beamed. "I present Sentinel, he is already a general and experienced warrior, some time ago he also began his adventure with politics. He will now present himself, and then each party will have one breem 11) to ask questions that he will answer. After that we will vote."

Tall, red and golden mech entered the rostrum. He was a handsome grounder and most Senators knew who he was. But his candidature was a surprise; no one really suspected that he would be a candidate for a Prime.

oOo


The doors opened revealing Dai Atlas and Shockwave. Both mechs left the apartment and followed a long corridor with soft, dimmed lights, matte walls and shiny floors. There was stair case on one end and lift on the other. Both Senators turned to the elevator. It was long day. After the voting they met in Dai Atlas' flat to talk. Hey had a lot to discuss in regard of the new Prime. And the next day was the funeral of Nominus.

"I'm glad to see that just for once you agreed to join me. I swear, I need to work out everything."

Shockwave summoned the elevator.

"You party too much, Shockwave." His companion only shook his head. "I only join you to make sure you will stop before the time will be indecent, it's already late."
The doors opened and they entered brightly lit lift. Entire back wall was made of glass, while two sides were covered in satin metal.

"Whatever you say, but you do need to go out more. Find yourself a mate." Shockwave smiled without much enthusiasm.

"It may be hard to find one you haven't tested yet." Dai Atlas snorted. Shockwave was popular and it was no secret.

"Hey, they always leave pleased." Shockwave's smile widened slightly. "I pride myself to be a gentlemech."

"You know what? If you'll get kicked out from the Senate for your temper, you can always become a gigolo."

"Heh. It's probably safer and less stressful than being a politician… At least in recent times, especially when I think of Nominus." Shockwave shrugged.

Before Dai Atlas could reply, the lift stopped, the doors opened and a slim creature hugging some piece of cloth jumped in. Upon closer look both mechs noticed that it was an organic femme… or rather female. She had green skin; each of her hands had only four fingers. She hadn't had any hair, which wasn't unusual as hair was rather rare in most sapient races. Instead she had a piece of delicate fabric on her head, a veil of sort, underneath it was clear that she had slight bumps on her skull lined in one row leading to her neck. When she looked up, they could see that her eyes were in light shade of red, and that she had some sort of pigments on her face that were now running down her cheeks.

When she saw the two Cybertronians she jumped in fear.

"Oh, forgive me. I will use stairs." She said and turned but the door already closed and the elevator moved.

"Be calm. We will not harm you." Dai Atlas spoke to the scared girl. "Tell us, child, are you hurt? I can see you are upset."

"Oh, it's just my own stupidity. I do not mean to bother you, sir." She said, hugging her piece of cloth more tightly.

"You do not bother us." Shockwave answered and furrowed his opticbrows. "You saw which floor she entered? I think it is obvious what happened." He turned to Dai Atlas.

"Proteus. That worm!" Dai Atlas stopped the lift and caused the organic female to take one step back and bump into the doors.

"Please sirs… do not hurt me…"

"We will not hurt you." Shockwave gave Dai Atlas one odd glare and turned to the girl. "We just suspect what happened. You were… guest of a mech named Proteus, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir, I met him today. Our ship arrived, it's a rare thing to dock on Cybertron these days, I wanted to see how this place looks like, I have never seen a planet that is fully mechanical before. I was in a club where he met me… He was so charming…"

"Did he force himself upon you?" Shockwave asked. This was the first time he would actually meet Proteus' victim. The mech was known to exploit, if not rape, carrier mechs, femmes and few organic
females but his immunity always protected him, and this was the first time that Shockwave actually met one of his victims.

"No. Not in the way you think, sir. He did seduce me however... but when it was... it was... it was... done, you know, when he finished... he told me to get dressed and get off his sight. He called me names." The girl sobbed and hugged her piece of cloth even tighter. "I started to dress, but I just couldn't stand as he stared at me... I just got my shoes on, grabbed my top and ran off."

"Scrap eater!" Shockwave hissed.

"Do you want to make official complain?" Dai Atlas asked. He knew it wouldn't do much, except perhaps a bribe from Proteus to get the record cleaned, but the organic femme had the right to do so.

"No. What will I say? That I willingly went with the mech and then consented to him only to be kicked out of his place right after? I knew why I was invited and what we would do... I just didn't thought he would insult me... say I looked ugly without my veil... that he only had me because organics are such a great f... f... 'frags'... and then throw me out."

"And are you hurt? Wounded? In pain?" Dai Atlas questioned but the girl shook her head 'no'. "Then you require a shower. And a place where you can dress yourself properly... I don't know much about organic fashion, but I know when your clothes are inside out."

The girl looked at herself and groaned. It was true, she got her clothes on the wrong way... also, her skirt was front to back. She felt like last idiot.

"You can use wash rack in my apartment." Dai Atlas offered. He felt bad for the poor organic female. She could end up in far worse position, if she was picked by a criminal, but being picked by Senator Proteus was only minimally better. At least he didn't injure her.

"I'll go with you. Suddenly I lost mood for partying." Shockwave rubbed his faceplates. "And then I will escort our young lady to the port to make sure she won't meet Proteus on her way down, or any other scum when en route."

"I just hope that Proteus won't meet you." Dai Atlas pressed a button that would take them back to his level. "Because if he will, you will do something violent and stupid and will have to pursue career in the trade we spoke earlier."

"You know, I might consider it anyway." Shockwave peered at his friend through his digits. "It's far more decent job than being a politician these days."

The girl looked at both mech with surprised expression. Dai Atlas noticed her confusion and laughed.

At that moment the elevator's door opened.

"You see, dear child, Shockwave and I are politicians." Dai Atlas explained while he led the girl to his apartment. "And neither of us enjoys it as much as we used to..."

"Speak for yourself, Dai Atlas, I never enjoyed it. I am a scientist first foremost, and only then a politician." Shockwave followed them like a turbo-puppy. "I only do it in spite of Proteus."

oOo

*One Stellar Cycle later. 13*)
Shockwave was restless ever since Sentinel became the new Prime. Things weren't getting any better, and the clampdown was not only being held, but further tightened. The new Prime focused mainly on police activity, making sure he was seen to be caring about safety of regular Cybertronians. And Shockwave had to admit that he was good at catching criminals. But he was also good at catching oppositionists. The streets weren't much cleaner, places like Rust Narrows in Nyon or Dead End in Rodion were still filled with skives, leakers and addicts 14).

It seemed that not even a Prime could maintain hold of entire planet. And Shockwave knew that everything was getting for the worse: people were hopeless. They had nothing to fight for, nothing to gain or to prove. They were just existing not counting that their situation would ever change, or at least not for the better. The Functionist system drained Cybertronians from all the will for progress.

Proteus was behaving more and more imperious, more overbearing, having a pet Prime made the already hoity-toity Senator insufferable. Proteus acted as if he was above the law. He was manipulating the general public to fit his own goals.

There was literally nothing that Proteus wouldn't do to keep the power he already had and gain more. His latest move – the last straw for Shockwave – was when Proteus announced 'Decepticon Registration Act" and promised to grant Decepticons status of legal political party if 10 000 or more Decepticons would come out and register; only to have two secret Decepticon Senators assassinated. It was a cunning move, Decepticons surely knew who Sherma and Momus were and wouldn't register in fear of being killed as well 15). This in turn would give Proteus excuse to claim that he gave Decepticons a chance that they didn't use and silence their calls for reforms. Of course Decepticons didn't fell for it even without two dead Senators.

That was why he came late to the Senate session that time, and stormed into the Auditorium as if he was about to commit murder. All Senators stared as he marched to the empty rostrum. Angry grimace on his face wasn't nothing new and everyone knew what it means: another angry rant perhaps finished with yet another fight? Somewhere among the Senators Ratbat was making a bet.

"Before you'll start anything foolish, Shockwave, please recall how your outbursts usually end for you." Proteus started with bored tone. He's already been there and done that, he ever was on Shockwave fist's receiving end (that was one mighty punch) and it was beginning to tire him already.

"It never stopped me before and it will not stop me now!" Came the angry roar of Shockwave.

Dai Atlas noticed that while it seemed like yet another rhubarb session, Shockwave was calmer than usual. Previously at this moment accusation of incompetence or low morality would already fly, followed by simple insults and in any minute someone would have a good chance to be hit (or slip and fall while trying to avoid ballistic energon cube, like that one time, though that was actually Shockwave that fell). This seemed much more serious and Dai Atlas feared for his friend, especially that lately Senators seemed prone to mysterious deaths.

"Oh, so it's going to be one of THOSE sessions." Proteus sighed with tired exasperation. "Does anyone have energon cube so we can just skip the rant and proceed with the embarrassing show of comedy?"

"Jest Proteus, jest all you want, you must feel so safe now, after you ILLEGALLY 16) took over the Senate!" Shockwave roared with anger burning behind his crystal blue optics. "You and that GOON of a Prime you got yourself! How did you meet? On one of your disgusting orgies?"

"I'm warning you, Senator Shockwave, you are crossing the line of appropriate behaviour!" Sentinel Prime boomed from his place, right behind the Speaker's Seat now taken by Proteus.
"So now telling the truth is inappropriate, eh?" Shockwave narrowed his optics as he glared at the new Prime. "The only problem is that I am not saying anything that other Senators wouldn't already know! We all know, you Sentinel 'Prime' included; what kind of a mech Proteus is!"

"May I remind you, that you're no better? We all know your reputation of Playbot." Proteus rested his chin on his servo, pretending to not be impressed.

"May I remind you that I do not throw my guests out while insulting them?" Shockwave's energon was now boiling, the image of the young organic femme still fresh in his memory. "But your deeply immoral behaviour doesn't end on sexual exploitation! You were tired of serving Nominus Prime…"

"If I recall correctly it is you who always despised him." Proteus made sure to look bored.

"But it was you who had him assassinated and put your thug in his place! Everyone knows that Sentinel was made a Prime with omission of official procedures! The next Prime after Nominus' death or resignation should be the oldest of official Candidate, and that currently is Zeta!"

"Everyone knows that it is a custom, there is no law that regulates the order of accession." Proteus shrugged. He knew he was right, and even if it wasn't a fair play on his part, he broke no law here. "And I hope that everyone remembers that Zeta is your pupil, and that's why you're so mad."

"I am mad because you not only murdered Nominus! You had Sherma and Momus assassinated as well!" Shockwave pointed one shaking with anger finger at Proteus. "You made your promise, the D.R.A. but you never wanted to grant Decepticons the status of political party, so you decided to scare them by murdering Momus and Sherma who secretly were Decepticons!"

That was enough for Proteus. He knew that there would be those who'd suspect his servo behind recent events, Dai Atlas first among them, but he never thought that Shockwave would dare to voice these accusations out loud. Somehow he was convinced that Dai Atlas would stop his ally, after all, he always toned the Tarnian Noble down before.

"Are you quite finished, Shockwave?" Proteus stoop up and acted as calm as he could. And he was a good actor.

"Far from it! I want you to answer to these accusations! How do you answer? Can you even answer?"

"You want me to answer? You want ME to answer to YOUR accusation?" Proteus vented deeply, his patience was gone but he was still sober minded enough not to do something irresponsible. "Fine, I will give you your answer. You are being suspended as a Senator, Shockwave! How about that for an answer?"

"You tell me, Senator Proteus, after all it is you who failed do deflect my accusations." Shockwave smirked and left the Auditorium. He knew he won that battle; Proteus couldn't answer him on the spot because Shockwave would refute his answers. Shockwave was certain that Proteus had no prepared story because he would never expect anyone to attack him so openly.

But Shockwave also knew that it wasn't the end of the war. He was certain that the retaliation would come in some way. He feared about Jhiauxian Academy of Advanced Technology – his beloved project.

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The entire Auditorium was silent when Shockwave left. Some of the Senators already knew of what Shockwave was talking about and were stunned that he actually dared to voice his accusation. Those
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who didn't know about all that were surprised and shocked.

Proteus vented slowly to calm down and smiled. He had one last act to plat that day and he couldn't fail.

"That was unexpected event." He faked cheerful mood. "It seems that our dear Senator Shockwave is stressed a lot lately. I think I may recommend him to search for professional help as he seems delusional." He presented small grin. "I believe that we had our fair share of excitement for today and that closing this session would be in place."

oOo

One joor 8) later. Shockwave's apartment.

"I don't know what to do with you, Shockwave!" Dai Atlas paced back and forth in Shockwave's recreation room while his host sat in his chair and sipped mild high grade. "Had you lost the pathetic remains of your barely existing sanity?"

"I had to, Dai Atlas. I did what I could not to jump there and shoot their heads off. Sherma and Momus, Dai Atlas, you knew them and I knew them and they were good allies!"

"But act so openly? What did you expect Proteus to do? Fall to his knees and admit all his sins?"

"I hoped that he would lose his cool." Shockwave admitted. "No such luck."

"No such luck? Did you think even for a moment what the consequence might be?" Dai Atlas stopped in from of his friend and bent to look his in the optic.

"And what he's going to do to me? If he'll kill me then it will be too much of a coincident." Shockwave laughed but he wasn't in such a good mood, he feared for his Academy.

"Don't be surprised, you know that Proteus is clever glitch. You'd better be prepared for something foul."

"He has nothing on me, Dai Atlas. Worry not, I will manage. I always do."

Dai Atlas only groaned. That was Shockwave in his Tarnian essence: 'I will manage. I always do.' The tall Senator grabbed his cube and emptied it in one swing. "Proteus said that he will recommend you a professional help and I believe that he was right about that. You need to see a shrink because you're suicidal!"

oOo

Two Mega-cycles later 17). Auditorium, emergency Senate sitting.

"My fellow Senators. As you know, Sentinel Prime was personally supervising an investigation about origin of illegal substances, such as Syk 18), and who is selling them to the addicts. We just received information that most of the circuit busters' origin from Jhiauxian Academy of Advanced Technology, its chemistry department to be exact." Proteus spoke with solemn face. "We're reached the conclusion that the rector of the Academy knew about the illegal trade and while didn't support it or gained any profit, he didn't perform any actions to stop it."

Proteus looked around at his fellow Senators. Most were shocked, especially that they knew who the rector was. Only few however seemed unsurprised by Proteus' speech. Dai Atlas was staring burning holes in him, but Proteus didn't mind.
"Thus I call for revoking Senator's Shockwave privileges." Proteus finally stated his plea. "This will allow us to proceed with the investigation and gain certainty about Shockwave's part in the illegal drug production as well as deliver fair punishment if he will be found guilty."

"Nonsense! Shockwave is not a drug dealer or drug producer." Dai Atlas rose from his place and defended his friend. "The chemistry department in the Academy works on synthetic fuels not medical substances; it doesn't have substances needed to produce drugs."

"The substances were brought to the Academy illegally, and that's why I call for taking Shockwave's immunity, so we can find out if he is guilty or not guilty." Proteus explained. "Does anyone have anything else to add?"

"As a matter of fact, I do." Senator Ratbat spoke from his place. "While I find it hard to believe that such a white knight as Shockwave would ever lower himself to cover for drug producers, I believe it won't hurt to allow the investigation to bring results, which means that Shockwave must be interviewed and that can't be done with his immunity in place. If he will be found not guilty then his immunity will be restored."

"Thank you Senator Ratbat. I call for voting now." Proteus announced and suppressed the urge to smile. Bribes given to Ratbat were always well spent Shanix 19).

The Senators voted.

oOo

Sentinel's Office. After the voting.

Proteus sat in comfortable chair in front of sentinel's large desk. It was filled with data pads but in one corner two holograms emitted static images. One showed Sentinel and his mate, beautiful and delicate femme with gentle smile. The other one showed Sentinel's brother and his mate, they were holding a bitlet. Not many people knew that Sentinel aside from having a mate also had a brother. Even less people knew that his brother was a carrier mech and that he and his mate had a sparkling. But only those who ever visited Sentinel's office knew that the mech cared greatly about his relatives.

"I have for you to sign." Proteus gave the Prime data pad.

"So the voting went well then?" Sentinel took the tablet and read the form.

"Yes. His senatorial immunity was suspended." Proteus smiled. "But he is also a noble, so you need to sign this and all formalities will be fulfilled."

"Are you sure it is a good idea?" Prime reached for stylus. "Won't anyone suspect it is you're doing?"

"And why would they suspect me?"

"You did have Nominus and these two Senators eliminated."

"And that's why we're not killing Shockwave." Proteus leaned forward. "He will be eliminated as a threat not as a person. We will have his precious Academy closed and he will return to being a Senator. Only much more docile."

"I hope you know what you're doing, Proteus." Sentinel signed the form with not so bright face.

"Don't I ever?" Proteus got up from the chair and walked out. Things were going his way, as always,
and the future looked bright.

OoO


Shockwave was preparing for next lecture about mechanics. It was one of the most popular subjects as most students were interested in engineering career. That kind of knowledge was used in many fields, and there was always need for it.

There was loud banging to the door and Shockwave instantly recognised that it wasn't any of his students. They always knocked shyly, like students; this was banging of someone who was determined to punch the door out. That had to be someone from Senate without a doubt.

"You know it is open." Shockwave called just in case that they needed manual to operate the door.

The doors swoosh open and four mechs marched in. Shockwave instantly knew something was wrong. Their leader was Kroma, nasty case of Sentinel's lapdog. Two of his companion only looked around and vanished.

"Well, well, well. Senator Shockwave! I don't envy you." He said with wide grin. "You're under arrest and you had it coming."

"Under what charges?"

"Various illegal activity that has to do with that Syk lab in your little school." Kroma looked around. "Which no doubt is placed in chemistry lab and which no doubt will explode when the delinquents will try to get rid of the installation in a hurry when they will notice something's wrong."

"What kind of nonsense you're talking about, Kroma? We do not have working chemistry lab since a Mega-cycle 17! The room is under repair!"

"How cleverly! You can cook the drugs all the time now!" Kroma's grin turned wider. "But fear not, we will hit the alarm so your students can evacuate. And you... You will wish you stayed in."

They led him out, when he was being locked in the prisoner's transport unit; he hears the alarm and shortly after loud explosion.

OoO

Dai Atlas' office.

Senator Dai Atlas tried to contact Shockwave since the break in the session. He had no luck, Shockwave's remained silent. Dai Atlas knew that Shockwave often disconnected his link when he was giving lectures. But he had to try in case Shockwave would reconnect his link for any reason.

When he was about to try yet again, his door opened abruptly and one of the Guardians jumped in. He was tall, dark blue Vosian, one of the fastest of them, but he was also quite sturdy.

"Sir, you should see this." He said in his usual deep, hoarse voice and activated the large screen.

It was news channel and Dai Atlas momently sat on one of the chairs. He couldn't believe what he saw.

"... the information is not confirmed yet, but our law enforcements suspect it was a Syk lab accident. Apparently the drug producers panicked and tried to deconstruct the production line when the
Academy rector, Senator Shockwave was arrested. Most students managed to get away but some of them were caught in first of series of explosions caused by dangerous fumes. There are students claiming that the alarm went off before explosions but experts explain that the alarm must’ve been set off by fumes. The Jhiauxian Academy of Advanced Technology burned and it doesn’t seem that it would be rebuilt, especially with Senator Shockwave under arrest and facing uncertain future…”

Dai Atlas switched the monitor off. It was all done now. He looked at Racer who looked worried.

"Sentinel sent Kroma and his team." He said after a moment of silence. "That can only mean one thing."

"The Institute." Dai Atlas hid his face in his servos. "Primus only knows what they will do to him there."

"They won't kill him, that's for sure." Racer's wing hung low, he never met Shockwave personally, but Dai Atlas was one of the few decent mechs in Senate, and Shockwave was his friend. "He would die in that explosion if they wanted his dead."

"Indeed. But they may have faith worse than that in store for him."

oOo

One of the facilities of the Institute. Three Deca-cycles later 9) Shockwave didn't remember much. He recalled how he was taken to the Institute. Led down the stairs, put in the room. He could recall being strapped to a medical berth and two mechs entering. They had tools, but he couldn't see them. And then the pain came. He knew it was going to be Empurata, that much was given. He knew that Proteus had to have Senate's permission and Sentinel's signature to touch him. He never suspected it hurt so much. He knew that he screamed, a lot. He could feel them opening his cranium and sawing off his arms… his wings. He could feel their touches on his brain module; it felt like phantom touches all over his frame.

Then he felt that they were removing his plating, but they didn't care if it bends, they just ripped it off. He felt their touches on his protoform, they were reconfiguring him and he knew that. But somehow he was already numb. Then they opened his chest and began to tamper with his Spark Casing. That was when Shockwave realised that Empurata was just one part. There was something more, but he didn't know what. And the moment he realised that they planned something more than just hand and head removal, he lost consciousness. The last sensation he could remember from that day was five simultaneous pinpricks to his spinal column.

He woke up long time after he went out. He felt differently though. He was calm and he couldn't get mad. His body felt different but it didn't upset him. He knew that before he would be having a fit by now, but he wasn't. In fact he felt calmer than ever before. It was refreshing sensation. He finally could think clearly… logically. Never before he had such clarity in his head. It was as if a thick veil fell or fume revealed a whole new world to his optics… or rather optic, now. It was wonderful. He felt free as never before.

"You are free to go, Senator Shockwave. Your scans are clear, your cerebral activity is on optimal level, your systems work fine." A Nurse announced to him. "You may now go to your room, in few minutes you will receive your release documents and health report that you will give to your personal doctor."

Shockwave thanked and went to his room. He noticed that the Nurse was a good looking femme, he could tell that his energon pressure and Spark rate elevated slightly. But that was it. No sensation, no
feeling of desire. He knew that he wouldn't mind a private moment with her, but he was able to control his every action and thus, he simply ignored his readings and went away. Before he would be trying to get her frequency now. Now he wasn't interested, especially that he was aware how he looked. It was but his personal opinion, but he could manage without Empurata, the Shadowplay would do.

oOo

*Earth. Present day.*

Arcee watched the sky in the distance. That was not what she expected. She glanced at Shockwave who finished his tale and just stared at his cube of low grade, now empty. His winglets were low, his antennae were pulled back. Clearly, that weren't his best memories.

The femme sighed and reached to take him empty cube away. "You know, if it weren't for all those Vehicons that pretend not to observe what we're doing, I would just hug you." She said.

"I do not require pity." Shockwave droned out with all the honesty of a Shadowplay victim.

"It's not pity. It's appreciation." She gently squeezed his one remaining servo. "You know, for telling me this story."

"I already said that considering how our relationship is developing, you should know this."

"And I appreciate this. I really do." Arcee looked straight into his large, red optic and smiled. "I could see that the memories were not pleasant for you."

"It had to be said sooner or later. Stalling wouldn't make it any easier." Shockwave explained with his flawless logic. "Logic dictates that the sooner I would do it, the sooner it would be done."

"And I just love how well you take compliments." Arcee smiled, rose and gently kissed the side of his head, where his cheek would be. As she sat back down, she noticed with satisfaction that Shockwave's antennae jerked up and stiffened in place while his winglets rose to their usual positions. He didn't expect that.

"For our next... date, I will make sure to have someone to replace me here so we can choose more private location." He announced and Arcee knew that not only he would have a replacement, but also very remove location to meet.

**Next: Wheeljack and Bulkhead.**

Also, before anyone will huff and puff over the fact that Dai Atlas and Shockwave didn't talked the girl to report Proteus, remember that putting someone through interrogation grill just for the sake of official complain in such situation would be waste of time of that poor girl. Remember that this is deeply corrupted system and all that Proteus would lose would be the money he'd spent on a bribe. This wouldn't bring any justice and only serve to torture that poor girl. This is why Dai Atlast didn't insist - he knew how it would end and decided to just help the girl to put herself in order. Also, the girl isn't hurt, she realised that Proteus just acted like a jackass.

1) its equivalent of lemonade or something just as sweet and sticky.

2) It's somewhere below the part with his eye, I imagine he needs to be able to take in fuel aside of just injecting himself with it, and that he probably is able to also take in solid energon (in my mind, the requirement for "empurata head" is that while it's clearly "empurata head", it also needs to have all the functionality of regular head, safe perhaps for wide smiles and stereoscopic vision), so think of
something close to what Bayverse Shockwave had, only smaller and simpler, also hidden.

3) In Hammerhead "Look at yourself" I made Shockwave tell Arcee about his Empurata and Shadowplay, how it happened, but he never gave detailed story, just the "short version".

4) For reference, see MTMTE, issue 9 "Shadowplay, part 1: Post Hoc."

5) Line taken from Scrubs, season 2, episode 13 "My Philosophy", adapted for Transformers of course.

6) Dai Atlas is having a courtesy chat with Racer – Arcee's sire. Note that their names are made from the same letters: A, C, E and R; both have five letters in it and in both case one of the letters is doubled. Arcee's name can be shortened to RC, and so can her father's. Though Arcee is usually named 'Cee, while her father can be named "Ace" (after dropping both R's). Note also that Racer is a flyer, and "Ace" is name for a pilot that shot down four or more enemy fighters.

7) Ratchet. In MTMTE he was called "Chief Medical Officer" but since I'm not writing IDW’s G1… so I changed the title.

Also, an interesting fact: in Prime Ratchet has white helm with warm red chevron. In IDW's G1 his helm is red and his chevron is white… but in the memories/flashbacks, his chevron is grey… is it that Ratchet turned white due to old age perhaps?

8) 1 joor = 6 hours.

9) 1 Deca-cycle = 3 weeks.

10) I imagine the High Council being the equivalent of Government while Senate is the parliament body.

11) 1 Breem = 8, 3 minutes.

12) The same race that we see in Spotlight: Drift. She's wearing a makeup that runs.

13) 1 Stellar Cycle = approximately 7, 5 months.

14) See Autocracy, issue 1 "Law and Disorder", and MTMTE issue 9 "Shadowplay part one: Post Hoc."

15) So called "Proteus Promise", the Decepticon Registration Act was mentioned in MTMTE issues 9 "Shadowplay, part one: Post Hoc", 10 "Shadowplay, part two: Patternism", 11 "Shadowplay, part 3 "The Intimate Beheading."

16) For reference, please see RiD, issue 17 "Shockwaves”.

17) 1 Mega-cycle = 93 hours.

18) Syk is a circuit buster drug. For reference see MTMTE issue 9 "Shadowplay, part one: "Post Hoc” where Drift is shown to use it.

19) Shanix is Cybertronian currency.
Chapter Notes

Chapter 4: How Wreckers fell apart.
Bulkhead and Wheeljack friendship.

**Blast From The Past.**

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don’t you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there’s nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain’t changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(…)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone’s lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I’ve done
All these things that I’ve done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

**Warnings:** Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.
Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Wheeljack, Bulkhead, Kup, Ultra Magnus (mentioned), Overlord (mentioned), Prowl (mentioned), Springer (mentioned), Perceptor (mentioned), Fixit (mentioned), First Aid (mentioned), Guzzle (mentioned), Impactor (mentioned), Fortress Maximus (mentioned), Rotostorm (mentioned), Whirl (mentioned), Optimus Prime (mentioned), Megatron (mentioned).

Disclaimer: Transformers Prime © Hasbro. Story’s plot and OC’s © me. There may be some OC’s that aren’t mine – they belong to their respective creators.

Take a look around.

“(...)Does anybody really know the secret?

Or the combination for this life and where they keep it?

It's kinda sad when you don't know the meanin'

But everything happens for a reason

(Everything happens for a reason)

I don't even know what I should say

'Cause I'm an idiot a loser, microphone abuser

I analyze every second I exist

Beatin' up my mind every second with my fist

And everybody wanna run

(Wanna run)
Everybody wanna hide from the gun

(Hide from the gun)

You can take that ride through this life if you want

But you can't take that edge off that knife

(No sir)

And now you want your money back

(Your money back)

But you're denied 'cause your brain's fried from the sac

And there ain't nothing I can do

'Cause life is a lesson, you'll learn it when you're through(…)” – Limp Bizkit “Take a look around”

oOo


It was nice day on Garrus-9… as nice as it could be on a planet with one of the toughest prison facilities in known universe that for last three local years was terrorised by a Decepticon deserter and psychopath that redefined the word ‘homicidal’, so lethal that there was only a handful Decepticons or Autobots that could match with him.

For three local years Overlord reigned the place, and now when he was finally beaten, by no one else than Wreckers, there was one big mess to clean up. There was a mountain of corpses to burry. There were numerous wounded Cybertronians to treat and the place needed to be protected.

And that’s where Wreckers were still in play. They defeated Overlord, protected Aequitas, retook the Last Resort and the rest of the G-9 prison, now they were to make sure that no Decepticon that ran away whimpering after Overlord’s rule wouldn’t have a bright idea to alarm other, non-traumatised Decepticons and try to raid the place.

“Hey Bulk! How it looks?” Wheeljack grinned seeing his best pal in the Wreckers, Bulkhead, walking into the observation hub.
“Ahhh mech, not good.” Bulkhead rubbed his forehead. “Ultra Magnus saying that it looks like Springer will be out of circulation for a long time.”

“Bolts! Magnus? Why he? Why not Kup?” Wheeljack rolled his optics and glared at the ceiling.

“Because I’m a sergeant kid and you can’t have serge to order officers around.” A slightly squeaky sound came from behind massive form of Bulkhead. Then thinner form of the old Wrecker came into view. Kup was ancient and he looked ancient, but he was as though as ever.

“But Magnus? Why him?” Wheeljack kept on protesting.

“Prowl’s orders. We’re to keep this place safe for now.” Kup explained.

“Then why me? I should be with Perceptor and work on ways to keep Overlord down for the trial.” Wheeljack argued.

“Because you’re an engineer and we need someone able to keep the equipment here running.” Kup said in voice indicating that he was running short on patience. “Look, kid, this place is a mess and we need it to keep on running just a little longer.”

“What do you mean?” Wheeljack suddenly turned deadly serious.

“Jackie, I was coming to tell you this.” Bulkhead stepped from one pede to another. “Magnus brought orders from Prowl. The Aequitas is being taken apart and they won’t put it back again.”

“From what I’ve heard it’s for the better.” Wheeljack focused on some distant memory. “Remember Impactor’s trial? Springer testified then. But I testified twice in non-Wrecker cases. I get why Prowl wants to get that thing dismantled. He was a judge along with Tyrest.”

“And they’re closing this place down.” Bulkhead added. “Magnus said that it may return to use one time, but not for a long time.”
“Then what are we doing here?” Wheeljack jumped to his pedes toppling his seat in the process.
“Wasting our time? Why guard energon soaked ruins?”

“Kid. Calm down. Perceptor is still working on the clams to hold Overlord down and he needs to be fixed for his trial.”

“If you’d ask me, I say we should give him to Megatron as a nice Spark-day present.” The engineer Wrecker huffed.

“Yeah.” Bulkhead agreed.

“You got my support, but it ain’t my call. And even if we just give him to the Buckethead, we still have to deal with the rest of a mess here. Fixit and First Aid barely managed to patch me, Guzzle and Impactor up. Rotostorm still has to have his cranium reconstructed. Fortress Maximus is in a coma and they still haven’t stabilised Springer enough to move him safely. On top of that they need to give Overlord all clear to be moved too and you can guess that the big lug is not their top priority.” Kup got himself a spare chair and sat on it heavily. “They need some more time and we’re here to make sure they have plenty of it.”

“It doesn’t look like we’re even needed here.” Bulkhead scratched his helm in thought. “The ‘Cons left so fast that they almost left their own pedes behind.”

“Heh. And we have Whirl patrolling the air.” Wheeljack added. “We should be reconstructing the team for when Springer will be back in action.”

“Magnus said that it is not decided yet if Wreckers will be reassembled.” Kup said with sad face. “Prowl said he needs to discuss it with Prime.”

“What?” Bulkhead took few steps back and bumped into the doors. “No. What will happen with the team?”

“New assignments I guess. I ain’t like it any more than you lads, but it ain’t my decision to make.” Kup slowly shook his head. “We have massive losses on both sides since the exodus and unless something will happen, it’s going to be like that for who knows how long.”

oOo
Sometimes later. The battlefield in front of G-9 prison (now cleaned).

Wheeljack sat in the ground and glared an evening, red sky of Garrus-9. He was angry, he just talked with Ultra Magnus and the news he received were unhappy ones. He was now waiting for Bulkhead to finish his shift and arrive. He wanted to talk with his old pal. This was bad. Really bad.

“Hey ‘Jackie.” Bulkhead voice snapped Wheeljack back to the reality. “What’s up?”

“I talked with Ultra Magnus. He had me, Kup, Perceptor, Fixit and First Aid.” Wheeljack sighed. “Bulk, you should sit down.”

“What? What’s wrong? Who died?”

“No one. They’re taking Fort Max to Delphi. First Aid is going with him. And Roadbusted had Whirl kicked out. Hit him with The Veto.”

“For trying to use ‘The Sparkeater’.” Wheeljack didn’t seem fazed by that though. “I don’t know if Whirl was doing the right or wrong thing though. But that’s not the worst thing.”

“Hit me.”

“Don’t know how to tell you this. Ultra Magnus said that Prowl decided to decommission Wreckers.” Wheeljack spat the news out.

There was loud ‘thud’ when Bulkhead sat heavily in the dirt. “Was that Prime’s order?”

“Prime gave Prowl free servo, according to Magnus, Prime said to Prowl to do what he thinks will be the best for us in current situation.” Wheeljack growled. “Some favour it is. But there was no way that they would allow Impactor to take the command back; it was already a big thing that they agreed to pardon him. And Springer is, you know, comatose.”

“What with the ‘Bots?”
“Impactor took Guzzle and left, they flew away when you were on duty. Rotostorm is leaving tomorrow. Whirl’s still in arrest, he took being kicked out badly.”

“Now what?” Bulkhead gave his friend serious look.

“I don’t know. They’re going to leave just a small garrison here, but I don’t know if I will stay. Haven’t decided yet. You?”

“I don’t know. I need to think about it.” Bulkhead glared at the rising moon on the crimson sky.

They sat for a long moment in silence, pondering about Wreckers’ last stand and how they ended, recalling the bad old times and their glory days.

Next: June.

1) For reference see Last Stand of the Wreckers.

2) MTMTE, issue 6 “Interiors”. Each Wrecker can get rid of any other Wrecker at any given time by “The Veto”.

Chapter 5: June and her ex-husband.

**Blast From The Past.**

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don’t you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain’t changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(…)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

**Warnings:** Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.
Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: June, Megatron, June’s Mother (Jill), Jack’s Father (Jacob).

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American Woman.

“(…)American woman, stay away from me
American woman, mama let me be

I gotta go, I gotta get away
Baby, I gotta go, I wanna fly away

I’m gonna leave you, woman
I’m gonna leave you, woman
I’m gonna leave you, woman
I’m gonna leave you, woman

A-bye, bye, a-bye, bye
Bye bye, bye bye

A ground based Vehicon was parked in front of not very large house. His purple paint shone in bright sun. June sat in the driver’s seat with downsized Megatron next to her. She usually travelled on the back couch, but in situations like this, it was only natural for her to be in the driver’s seat – after all, people had to think she drove the car.

“Do not be nervous, you don’t need to tell your carrier.” He spoke calmly. He insisted on going with June, he thought it would be a good idea to be there, even if he’d stay inside of his soldier, which was weird to think about.

“No, I intent to tell her.” June took deep breath. “It may be too early to introduce you, but I want her to know that I am dating someone.”

“You go, Lady June, you can do it.” The Vehicon cheered loud enough for his passengers to hear but not enough to be heard outside.
“Silence.” Megatron scolded his trooper.

“Don’t yell at him, he tries to encourage me.” June gave Megatron nervous smile. Took another deep breath and undid her belt. “Here I go. See you in an hour or so.”

June got out and sneaked to the front door. Megatron observed her from inside of the Vehicon. She was not in her scrubs and he adored when she wore something else than the pale green set. She looked much better in skinny jeans and whatever top she chose to wear.

After a second, the door opened and June walked in. Megatron leaned in the seat and decided to take a nap. He was sitting inside of his soldier, but it was comfortable enough.

“This is so weird, My Liege.” The Vehicon whispered. “I would never guess that I would be honoured by your presence in my alt-mode. Are you comfortable?”

“It is comfortable enough to kill time by short recharge if you won’t mind.”

“Of course my Liege! I will be honoured, my Liege.” The Vehicon seemed to beam, but then felt silent. It was better to follow Megatron’s wishes, especially that while now the Warmonger was downsized, later he would return to his natural size and wouldn’t have problems with voicing his displeasure. With his fusion cannon.

oOo

June mother’s house.

June’s mother was grey but not looking to be her age. Her soft, blue eyes were full of life and shining as if she was a teenager. She had her wrinkles, but they only made her look more genteel.

“June. Baby!” She smiled seeing her daughter. “You look blooming!”

“Thank you mother.” June pulled slightly sour face. It was always the same with her mother. She would chirp every single time she’s seen her only child, and then start to scold her for not getting herself a new husband, or boyfriend, or even girlfriend if that what June would prefer.
“Don’t make this face.” The woman pulled her child to the living room. “It makes you look like a gnome! It’s a shame to disfigure such a pretty face. Here, sit, have a cookie, I just baked them! No excuses, they’re milk free.”

“Oh mum… please don’t start to treat me like I’m 13.”

“Stop acting like you’re 13. A cookie or two… or ten won’t harm you. Let me get you some nice tea.” The woman continued to coo.

“Maybe we can just sit in the kitchen?” June asked with hope. “I like your kitchen.”

“Nonsense! You almost never visit me; it’s an occasion to sit in the living room, like civilised people.”

After few minutes June had her old mug (from the time when she lived with her mother) full of hot tea, and plate full of cookies.

“How is my grandson doing?” June’s mother asked with gleaming eyes. Jack was her only grandchild and that meant that he was spoiled by his grandmother whenever the woman had an occasion to do so.

“He’s doing goon, mum. He’s in school now so he couldn’t visit you with me.” June answered and thanked the heavens for that small miracle. Her mother could be tiring when she focused her attention on the boy.

“What a shame! I thought that perhaps I would see him. How is he doing in school?”

oOo

It was good half an hour later, filled with prattle about how Jack was doing and how June’s studies were progressing. June was bracing to tell her mother that she was actually dating someone. She wasn’t sure how to say it or even what to say. Maybe it wasn’t such a great idea to decide to tell her mother?
June was about to make an attempt to try and change the subject from her life to her mother’s when a doorbell rang. For a moment she almost panicked thinking that perhaps Megatron decided that it would be best to just shock June’s mother by showing himself. But then she instantly scolded herself for thinking that. It was Megatron’s idea to come here with her and he was the one who wanted to go as slow as possible with telling her mother about him.

June’s mother got and got to the door. She opened it and June could feel the metaphoric temperature drop. She looked back and suddenly lost appetite for her mother’s otherwise delicious cookies.

OoO

Megatron lazily observed the door when he noticed a tall blonde man to walk to the door and ring. The door opened and the man said something.

OoO

“Jill.” The man in the door smiled weakly addressing June’s mother.

“Jacob.” The woman spoke in an ice cold voice. “You know you’re not my favourite person.”

“Sorry Jill.” The man seemed a bit embarrassed but not enough to simply walk away. “I wouldn’t come if I didn’t have to. I’ve heard about Jasper…”

“That was over half a year ago.” Jill crossed her arms.

“I know. But the town was evacuated so all is good. May I come in? I hate to talk over the doorstep.” He asked.

“It depends on what you want.” Jill narrowed her eyes.

“I wanted to ask you if you have any kind of contact with June.” Jacob explained.
“You’re lucky.” Jill sighed. “June, dear, do you want to speak to him?”

“It’s kind of too late to ignore him and pretend we’re not here.” June called from inside of the house. “Though I believed he vanished for good. It made me happy.”

“You may come, but do not count on friendly atmosphere.” Jill allowed her former son-in-law to walk in.

“June, you look good.” Jacob smiled to his ex-wife. “I’ve heard about Jasper, and I’m sorry. How are you doing?”

“I am doing fine, Jake, what do you want?”

“It concerns mostly Jack…”

“He’s in school. You may tell me, I will pass the message to him.” June didn’t like how this conversation was progressing. She didn’t like the conversation itself.

“I would rather talk to him in person.”

“I would rather know what you want from my son.”

“He’s my… All right.” Jacob sighed. “I met someone; we’re getting married, and will have a baby in few months. I want Jack to know that he will have a sibling.”

“A sibling.” June repeated, somehow it didn’t moved her as it should, it was a surprise. “I agree, he should know about that.”

“If he could call me, when he will be out of school, or I could just come and visit him. Suzy would be happy to meet Jack…”

“You do not have a military clearance.” June felt tiny hair on her neck to rise. Now she was starting to get irritated.
“Military clearance?”

“I work in military hospital now, in a military base.”

“Oh, you managed to become nurse then?” Jacob smiled weakly.

“Next year I start my internship as a doctor.” June leaned back on the couch that she sat on. Somehow announcing this brought her great satisfaction. “And Jack goes to college. You would know that if you ever pay more attention to what was happening with your son.”

“I know. I only recently settled back in Vegas, most of the time I was working in some crazy places on some epic projects. I met Suzy on Alaska.” Jacob explained with what used to be heart taking smile but now wasn’t working on June any more. “If you could give Jack my number and tell him to call me. I don’t count on much, but perhaps he will agree to talk to me, maybe meet me?”

Jacob patted his various pockets and finally produces piece of paper with his phone number. Not a business card, but hand written digits. That was very much like him. He always thought that business cards were only for business.

“I will give him your number and tell him to call you.” June took the paper. “But don’t count on much; he doesn’t have very high opinion on you.”

“I know, I talked to my brother.” Jacob sighed again. “Look. I know I screwed up. But all I ask is Jack to talk to me for a moment. Could you speak to him on my behalf?”

“Jack’s old enough to make his own choices.” June said and put the paper to her pocket.

“I understand.” Jacob stared for a moment at his shoes. “I just want Jack to know and be present in his brother or sister’s life.”

“Like I said, it’s Jack’s decision to make.” June settled more comfortably on the couch.
“Maybe I could visit Jack nevertheless? Get myself a pass basing on the fact that I am his father?”
Jacob risked giving June a small smile. “I really would like to be more present in Jack’s life now that I live so close and have more stable life? You know, make up for the lost time?”

“No Jake, you can’t make up for the lost time. You have left on your own wish, you have made a choice. You never came to Jack, never sent us a Christmas card, never even called on Jack’s birthday. Face it; it is too late for you to make a dramatic comeback.” June felt that her patience was running short now. “We don’t need you. Jack doesn’t need you. He has his friends that won’t abandon him just because he’s inconvenient, and he has dependable role models that are committed to his wellbeing, unlike you. And I don’t need you either, I managed on my own, I don’t want you to just jump back into our lives like nothing happen and turn our lives upside down.” She sighed recalling that sometimes talking to Jacob was like talking to a wall. “Look, I am seeing someone and he’s a great guy, Jack accepted him and they get along well enough. You disappeared from our lives seventeen years ago and never showed any interest so we moved on. And that’s just it.”

“Oh, June, honey!” Jill immediately hugged her daughter. “You are seeing someone? Why haven’t you told me?”

“Actually I came to tell you only we were interrupted.” June decided to omit the fact that she was ready to chicken out.

“Why didn’t you bring him with you? I’d love to meet the man that managed to finally catch my little girl? Don’t tell me he didn’t want to meet me!”

“Oh mum! I’m no little girl any more. And well, actually, I would bring him today, but he’s military and is on duty.” June tried to stay as close to the truth as possible. “I have my shifts and he has his but as soon as our free days will cover we will come to you both.” That was a bold lie, and June wasn’t sure when she could introduce her mother to Megatron. That required some preparations. OK, a lot of preparations.

“I hope it will be soon, I’m so excited, I surely hope he’s a serious man!” Jill laughed in delight.

“Trust me mum, he’s as serious as they come, and then some more.” June chuckled imagining how serious Megatron was. Then her eyes fell on Jacob who just stood there like a lost puppy. “Jake?”

Jacob’s head snapped to look at his ex-wife.
“I will give Jack your phone number and tell him about the baby, but don’t have too high hopes. You disappeared and never came back, Jack doesn’t remember you, he doesn’t know you.”

“Maybe he can give me a chance? I know I’m a stranger to him. But perhaps there is a chance?” Jacob scratched his blonde head.

“Don’t count on much. He knows that you’re his father, but he’s nothing like you. Like I said, I will pass him the message about the baby and your phone number. The rest is his choice.”

“I guess it’s as good as I can get.” The man shrugged realising that there was nothing more that he could achieve here. “Thanks, and, perhaps see you sometimes? Goodbye Jill, I’ll walk myself out.”

He turned away and left, leaving both women alone yet again.

“So, Miko still lives with you?” Jill asked after Jacob was gone.

“Yeah, and it will stay like that since she stays in the US for her scholarship.” June answered truthfully. She didn’t have to explain where the scholarship came from.

“And what she thinks about your new man?” Jill grinned.

“They have this battle of wits of theirs.” June smirked. “He says something, she back talks, he replies in kind and she answers with her typical edge.”

“Oh, good. It means he has a sense of humour. Trust me; it’s good to have serious man but only as long as he’s not a boring man.” Jill clapped her hands. “And I met Miko, she’s loud and borderline ADHD but there’s a bright mind in that stylised head of hers.”

oOo

The door of the Vehicon opened and June got inside. She sighed heavily and strapped her belt.

“That bad?” A voice next to her asked almost startling her.
“No, actually it went easier than I thought it would.” June smiled weakly.

“Who was that man?” Megatron asked looking back at the house. “He seemed upset or perhaps depressed when he left.”

“That was my dearest ex-husband, Jacob.” June said wincing slightly. “Could you take us back home please?”

“Your wish is my command, Lady June.” The Vehicon answered, started his engine and drove away from Jill’s house.

“How many times do I have to ask, call me June, just June.”

“What did he want?” Megatron ignored the Vehicon and June’s protest.

“He wants Jack to call him.” June said checking her jeans pocket to make sure she did take the piece of paper. “He’s re-marrying and they’re having a baby. He wants Jack to know that he will have sister or brother.”

“I see. Will you allow Jack to call him?”

“I will pass him the message and give him the digits. The choice is all his. He’s old enough to make the decision for himself.” June said observing Megatron’s face closely.

“Knowing how he is, he will call his father.” Megatron furrowed his opticbrows. “But he will remain loyal to you.”

“You know, it’s not a war.” June smiled to her mate.

“No, but that doesn’t mean it’s a peace situation either.”
June’s house. Later.

Megatron and June sat on the couch. The Tyrant decided to stay and see how the situation will evolve. It concerned June, so he felt that it also concerned him. Jack stared at the piece of paper with written down digits and then at June, back to the digits and again at June.

“And he wants me to call him?” He young man asked in surprised voice. “All my life he was away and now he wants me to call him?”

“Yes, Jack, he does. I told him that it’s your choice and I leave the decision if you want to call him to you.” June explained. “You can call him, or just throw the number away and forget about the whole thing.”

“And what about him? Won’t he bother us?” Jack waved the piece of paper indicating that he was talking about Jacob.

“He will probably contact your grandmother. You can call her to tell him that you’re not interested if you want.”

“No, I will call him. I can talk with him on my own.” Jack decided and pulled his phone from his back pocket. “The sooner I will do it, the sooner it will be over.”

The young man dialled the number and waited few seconds for the connection. After a moment Jacob picked the call.

“Mum gave me your number and told me about the baby.” He said without any ado. “She said you wanted to talk to me. No. You can call me Jack, not ‘son’.” Jack decided.

“Told you he would remain loyal to you.” Megatron grinned and kissed the top of June’s head.

“Shhh. Let them talk.” June hushed the Decepticon Lord but smirked. Megatron was indeed right.
“That? That was mum and her man.” Jack raised an eyebrow at his mother and Megatron. “Yeah. What about your new baby? Is that all?” Jack asked and glared at the ceiling. “Do you want anything else from me..? Sorry, but not my ‘dad’. I don’t feel much like your son, so no. To me, you’re Jacob, or Jake, not dad.” Jack’s face tensed. Clearly he wasn’t comfortable about this situation. “I’m not sure if I will come. It’s my final year in high school; I need to prepare for the college, so not much fun for me.” Jack glanced at Megatron and June who observed him silently. This wasn’t exactly a lie. He was preparing, but he already had good grades so it wasn’t as hard for him. “Why not. I will come to see the baby.” Jack shrugged. That wasn’t a problem. “Do you know when it will be? January? I will wait for your message then.”

Jack didn’t say anything more and ended the call.

“It didn’t seem to be that bad.” June left the air she didn’t realised she held.

“I wonder what he wants.” Jack sat heavily in an armchair.

“Nothing. He’s not like that.” June shrugged and leaned against Megatron. “He’s just an ass.”

“Someone mentioned Screamer?” Miko jumped from behind the garage doors in the kitchen.

“Miko! Where…” Jack jumped startled by his friend’s sudden appearance.

“Groundbridge. So, we’re gossiping about the screeching scumbag?” Miko jumped into the free armchair and hung her both legs through the armrest.

“No. I was talking about my father.” Jack’s face turned grim again.

“Uhh. Don’t know the dude so I won’t be making opinions about him.” Miko backed from the conversation. “But I’m willing to listen.”

“He made his big comeback.” Jack sank back into the soft chair.
“Worry not. Arcee can trash his ride if he’ll pull any number on you guys.” Miko grinned like a hungry tiger. “Or I can ask Bulkhead to turn his ride into a pancake. Or Mrs D can ask Megatron to flatten his crib. Either way, he’ll get the message.”

“I like the idea.” Megatron presented his own, shark grin and released his blade. “I hated the man from the moment I saw him.”

“Oh, now, enough.” June reached and gently patted Megatron’s fusion cannon and the sword retreated with silent ‘k-tching’ sound. “Jack can handle it on his own. And no one will demolish anything. There is no such need.”

“Awww…” Miko sank into her chair.

“Enough, I’m not allowing that man to ruin our mood.” June felt irritated a bit. Jacob seemed to have power to make people angry.

“Who said he ruined our mood?” Megatron smirked. “Besides, where’s a bad mood, there’s place for improvement.”

“Nice!” Jack stretched his arms. “Soooo Miko. Feel like having a Need4Speed match?

“N4S? Oh bring it on!” Miko instantly jumped from her chair. “I need some speeeeeeed!”

Next: Optimus and Elita.

It was kind of hard chapter to write. Plus it has a slightly cheesy ending, but how can you end a chapter with Megatron, June, Jack and Miko in one room? If you want to, you can always remember that Jack and Miko will go to sleep at some point (the school next day) and that means that Megatron and June will be left alone for some adult time.

Next one: Optimus and Elita won’t be easy either.

And Jack’s father? That won’t be continued thread, it may be mentioned sometime in the future, but it won’t be anything distinct. It won’t be showed or developed. Perhaps Jack will mention his new
half-sibling sometimes, somewhere, but it’s just a thing for this chapter.

The Megatron and June baby stands still (people have spoken and as they say: *vox populi – vox dei*) but don’t worry, I promise it won’t be yet another cute, sweet “d’aww look at the baby” fluffy kind of story. I think you know me better than that. I promise to make it dark and serious enough (but of course not too dark – I’m not dealing with gory, cheap tear factory dramas).
Chapter Notes

Chapter: How Ariel became Elita-1.
Optimus and Elita relationship.

Blast From The Past.

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don't you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(...)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

Warnings: Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.
Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Alpha Trion, Elita-1/Ariel, Optimus Prime/Orion Pax, Megatron (mentioned).

Disclaimer: Transformers Prime © Hasbro. Story’s plot and OC’s © me. There may be some OC’s that aren’t mine – they belong to their respective creators.

Run to the Water.

“Oh desert speak to my heart
oh woman of the earth
maker of children who weep for love
maker of this birth
’til your deepest secrets are known to me
I will not be moved
I will not be moved
(…)
run to the water
and find me there
burnt to the core but not broken
we’ll cut through the madness
of these streets below the moon
these streets below the moon(…) – Live “Run to the Water”
Iacon, Hall of Records, shortly before the war.

Everyone in Hall of Records was observing only one event. All monitors and displayers were tuned only on one place: the Auditory where the Grand Council assembled to listen to a Gladiator named Megatron, and his Iaconian friend Orion Pax.

Alpha Trion, mentor and custodian of Orion Pax sat and silently watched the transmission. Next to him stood a lobe, slim figure, his other charge, named Ariel, an intended consort of the next Prime.

“If this Megatron will make good impression on the Council and will be appointed a Prime Candidate, will I be bonded to him one day?” She asked in deep, cultured voice with perfect Iaconian accent.

“This is possible.” Alpha Trion moved his sage optics at his femme charge. “It is also possible that Zeta will become Prime next, or that the Council will take my recommendation under consideration.”

“I have seen Zeta, I meet Orion all the time, but I have never met this Megatron of Tarn. What is he like?”

“Like all Gladiators, only as witty as Orion and much larger.” Alpha Trion vented heavily. The Session was delaying. “He’s well educated, though he’s autodidactic. And you will see him in a moment.”

“I will also listen to him in a moment it seems.” Ariel crooked her head slightly. “I am curious, though I’m not that fond of someone megalomaniacal enough to take such name.”

“Dear child, perhaps I should recommend you instead of Orion.” The old Librarian hummed silently with humour.

“Perhaps, Alpha Trion, but would they accept a femme as a Prime candidate?”
“A very accurate observation, my dear.”

Ariel would say something more, but the session began. A moment later she saw Megatron for the first time. He was impressive, and he spoke boldly, but he spoke like a general of old days, like Galvatron of Protohex before one of his battles. She could tell that he spoke the truth but the Council was not impressed, they didn’t like how he lost his calm. What was great on the Arena or on the streets, simply didn’t work in the Auditory.

Then Orion Pax stepped in. She knew that Orion and Megatron were friends and that Orion promised to come to his friend aid if the need would arise. Orion began explaining where the whole problem was and why Megatron was so aggravated. His speech was stoic and that moved the council. Unfortunately, it showed that Orion was not only as good orator as Megatron, but one who could control his emotions better.

In the end it was giant ego and nerves that made Megatron too obdurate and a bit rude, and cost him the victory. Orion managed to keep his cool and it would be fine if not Megatron who took it personally. That was the end of friendship that could change Cybertron for the better. Ariel felt bad about it.

When the session was about to reach its conclusion Ratbat voiced his concerns, but the Speaker of the Council, an individual known as Halogen, named Orion Pax to be Prime Candidate. Ariel didn’t miss silent hum of approval from Alpha Trion. And just before the transmission was over, she spotted one of the Senators who were allowed a seat on the gallery, a Tarnian noble and scientist named Shockwave to look straight into the camera that transmitted the session to Hall of Records. Shockwave seemed to be giving Alpha Trion a very serious look.

oOo


That was a sensation. Though those who knew that Proteus was up to something weren’t surprised. Shockwave warned Alpha Trion to Proteus plans, but still the candidate came as a surprise.

“There it goes. I’m going to become the One.” Ariel sighed and rested her chin in both servos. “And my dear spouse will be some doofus.”

“Sentinel is not a doofus.” Orion patted his old friend’s back. “And you won’t be bonding to him.”
“How do you know that?”

“How? First of all Alpha Trion wouldn’t allow you to be given to some Senator’s pawn.” Orion smirked. “And second of all, Sentinel already has Conjunx Endura.”

“I feel bad for that Cybertronian, whoever they are.” Ariel rolled her optics with disgust.

“I’m not. I’ve heard that they’re a very good couple.” Orion shrugged. The rumour had it that Sentinel and his mate were the rare case of love from the first sight.

oOo

Iacon. Shortly after Sentinel’s demise.

Zeta Prime walked into large chamber where few mechs waited for him. One of them was Orion Pax, and another was high ranking Law Enforcer named Prowl. Zeta looked around and sat heavily on his chair. He changed since his nomination underwent few upgrades in very short time and it was showing: he was now very large and extremely strong.

“I summoned you here to tell you than I intend to start things anew. If Megatron was right about something, it was that Cybertron needs changes. And I intend to make changes. I am assembling New Senate in place of the old one, this one won’t be a gathering of nobility but will have represent ants of all castes and groups, it will reflect the society of Cybertron. I am closing the Institute and reform it into New Institute, one that will serve the society instead of serving fear. This also means ban of Empurata, I’ve seen too many victims of that barbarian custom, my former teacher among them and though Shockwave joined Decepticons, he did so as victim of Proteus. And among many other changes I am reforming the Law Enforcement, Police forces into New Police, one that will be friendly to citizens.” Zeta was accenting every change with loud bang with his fist on the table. “And you, Orion Pax, will lead the new Police. You are still my official successor but I want you to lead the new Law Enforcement so people will see that the Cybertron is now different, more friendly but also ruled by hard law. I want Cybertron to become New Cybertron.”

That meeting was short and it ended moments after Zeta finished his speech. Now the implementing his changes would begin. Things were changing but Orion Pax wasn’t sure if he liked the changes. Especially that the more they changed the more things were the same or worse. There was something in Zeta that made everyone wary. Including Orion Pax, the new Chief of Police.
Ariel stood on one of high balconies of Hall of Records. It was large hall where Cybertronians could search for data that they had need for, a library in essence. At such a late time it was empty, but Ariel practically lived there as Alpha Trion’s charge, so she had her own rooms in adjoining complex.

The femme was observing City of Iacon drowning in darkness as the Suns vanished behind horizon. The street lights twinkled in the evening shadows.

The silent steps of Orion Pax made her look behind to see the mech she knew her whole life even though they rarely spoke.

“Orion.” She greeted him. “What brings you here?”

“I’ve been appointed as the new Police Force Chief… Which means that I won’t be working here anymore.” He admitted. “It looks like sparring matches with Megatron weren’t just useless practice.”

“It seems so. Have you told Trion?”

“Yes. He wasn’t surprised and he said it will serve me well as I am next in line for the title.” Orion seemed puzzled for a moment. “But I am not sure if I wish to become a Prime. I do not know if I would manage being a Prime.”

“You’ll do well. After the two previous Primes it would be hard to fail.” Ariel waved her servo as to dismiss all doubts. “Though we’re yet to find out how Zeta will do. I am still waiting for him to summon me and make the official introduction so the courtship may begin.”

“He won’t be summoning you.” Orion said slightly absent-mindedly.

“What? How do you know?”

“You don’t know?” Now the freshly appointed Chief of Police gave Ariel stunned look. “Of course!
He never told you! He rarely spoke of his private matters. Zeta prefers carrier mechs, so if he’ll ever get the One, it won’t be a femme.”

“How do you know about that?” Ariel quickly managed her shock.

“We talked before he became Prime. Zeta hasn’t contacted Alpha Trion yet, that’s why you weren’t notified.” Orion gave Ariel the warmest smile he could make. “Besides, he changed; I don’t think you’d be happy to be his mate.”

“What do you mean that he changed?” Ariel suddenly turned serious. “Did the upgrades go wrong?”

“No. The upgrades went well, though, he gained a lot of weight. You saw how he looks now, so you have the idea.” Orion furrowed his opticbrows in deep thought. “I didn’t mean his frame. His mind changed. He’s so calculating now, he has this obsession of renaming everything ‘New’. ‘New Police’, ‘New Institute’, ‘New Senate’. It’s like he’s whole new person ever since he became Prime. I remember that he was smiling a lot. But now he never smiles. And he never takes his face mask off, not even Sentinel kept in on at all times, but Zeta, he behaves like his new armour is to shield him from the rest of Cybertron.”

“Perhaps the new role is overwhelming for him? Maybe he needs time to adjust?” Ariel pondered out loud. “Maybe in few quartexes ¹ he will relax?”

“Maybe he will.” Orion sighed a heavy vent. He hoped that Ariel was right, Zeta was always amiable mech, but now there was the aura of rust, decay and death around him. The aura of incoming doom.

oOo

Iacon, shortly after the war broke out.

Alpha Trion marched into the library and saw the newest Prime deep in lecture. Optimus Prime, formerly known as Orion Pax, was reading military textbooks and analyses of various military campaigns. A wise choice for someone who was to lead an army to war with much more experienced enemy. But Alpha Trion knew had a matter of much higher importance than some old books and data files.
“Optimus. Leave the data pads. I have to speak to you.” The old mech approached the Prime that not so long ago was his underling.

“Alpha Trion, I didn’t expect you to come down here.” Optimus rose from his seat, he still looked like he did as Orion Pax. “You know you could just summon me.”

“No, Optimus, you are now a Prime, even if it is but a title.” Alpha Trion allowed himself to rest on the opposite side of the table Optimus chose. “You are now the heir of Primus, the highest moral authority, and Commander in Chief or all military and paramilitary units. One does not summon a Prime, but rather asks for audience.”

“Why haven’t you asked for an audience then?” Optimus allowed himself slight smirk.

“It is not time for battle of wits, Optimus. I have consulted Dai Atlas about what I have found on Covenant of Primus and we reached important conclusion. We discussed it with the Council, and they agreed with us.” Alpha Trion stared into Optimus optics. “You are to find Matrix of Leadership.”

“Isn’t Matrix but a myth?” Optimus opticbrows rose so high that they almost hid underneath his helmet.

“It’s a Legend, not a Myth. And it is also Real.” Alpha Trion leaned back in his chair. “Upon departing from Cybertron, Nova Prime left the Matrix behind but chose not to bestow it on Nominus along with the title of Prime, but instead he hid it. However he did not say where he left it, he explained that it was meant to remain hidden until the need would arise for it to be found. Not everyone knew about it though.”

“You mean that there were people who believed that Matrix is real and in possession of Primes?” Optimus seemed surprised.

“Yes. You may not realise that Proteus was one of them.” Alpha Trion nodded. “He had Nominus assassinated upon learning that the Prime was not in possession of Matrix and thus was in no use for him. For only the Matrix bearer can channel its properties.”

“But why would I look for the Matrix now? After all this time that we managed on our own, isn’t its place in old tales?” Optimus decided not to question Alpha Trion’s historical knowledge. If the old archivist claimed that Proteus murdered Nominus (which was now pretty much common knowledge)
because he wanted the Matrix, then it was true. This in turn meant that enthronement of Sentinel was merely a ‘plan B’.

“To become a true Prime. Not just by title and few upgrades, but by holding and becoming one with the most sacred artefact of Cybertronian Race.” Alpha Trion explained. “After it will accept you it will remain linked to you and grant you the wisdom of Primes. Wisdom that your predecessors: Nominus Sentinel and Zeta lacked.”

Optimus stared for a moment at his sage mentor, and perhaps the oldest friend. Then he looked at the data pads that lay before him. All this knowledge about military strategies that he had at his hand and needed to fight against Decepticons was nothing if he lacked knowledge of how to wisely rule and care over his people, not to repeat errors of Nominus, sparknessless of Sentinel and plain coldness of Zeta.

“I wish to be good leader, but you said that Matrix is to accept me. What if it won’t? What if I do not qualify? What if I am just like Zeta or Sentinel?”

“It will. The time has come for it to be re-claimed; otherwise we wouldn’t be talking about it now.” Alpha Trion reached and patted Optimus’ arm lightly. “And when that is done, all this…” Alpha Trion gestured at the data pads. “Won’t be needed, you will know how to lead battles. How to win them and how to lose them. And you will know how to make wise choices.”

“You know, Alpha Trion that I will go to find it. Even if it won’t accept me, it may accept someone else, and then I will relinquish the title of a Prime happily to them.” Optimus lowered his optics and smiled bitterly. “Autobots need a good leader, and they need a massive moral boost. We are losing badly. Most Cybertronians see us as continuators of the oppression they know from past, they don’t trust us to want to make changes.”

“Because there still are those who wish the old times to come back, supporters of old order, among our very ranks. But they will not dare to oppose a Matrix bearer. See, this is yet another reason for you to seek Matrix: the authority that will back up your own. But you need to hurry, Optimus, before it is too late.”

“There is a time limit when Matrix can be found?” The new Prime straightened in his chair, utter surprise plain on his youthful face.

“No. But Megatron is looking for Matrix as well. He have send Soundwave to look for its signs. Luckily, as effective as Soundwave is, he is searching in the wrong area. Bless the fake reports Nova left.” Alpha Trion nodded with sadness.
“What will Megatron do with Matrix?”

“He may use it. You see, as violent and angry as Megatron is, it is not said that Matrix would not accept him. If it would analyse his Spark and his mind, and found qualities needed to be good and effective leader, it would merge with him, grant him wisdom of Primes.” Alpha Trion admitted. “Though in his current state it is unlikely, but even if he was rejected, he would prevent you from merging with the Matrix and that would already be his victory.”

“I do not know if Matrix would accept Megatron. He is acrimonious now, but he wasn’t like that before. After I was named Prime Candidate he saw it as betrayal, he is angry at me even though it wasn’t my intention. I fear that this anger will consume him one day, and I wish that we could work together to make this planet a better place.”

“I understand, and I agree with you. Megatron allowed his own anger and feeling of betrayal to overpower him. But it is not just you being named by Council the Prime Candidate. It is a lifetime of exploitation, treating as a tool, mindless object unworthy of respect or any kind sympathy that made him as bitter as he is today.” Alpha Trion sighed and closed his optics. “This happened for a long time, and Megatron watched for his whole life as higher castes lived in luxury while Cybertronians like him were exploited, barely surviving. And it is our fault. I warned Nominus to not implement Caste Segregation, but he was a Functionist and listened to other Functionists. And this is what you get when you follow religious fanatics.”

“Many have been mistreated by the system and I remember well how stiff the social norms were.” Optimus nodded. “If only I could convince him that I didn’t betray him and that we should work together.”

“Maybe one day you will have a chance to. But for now, you need to assemble small team and go for a quest to find the Matrix.” Alpha Trion returned to the topic at hand. “You can’t take too many with you to not draw attention, but you need someone to watch your back. The journey will be dangerous.”

“Do you know where to look?”

“Yes. Covenant of Primus revealed the location to me… or to be more exact, it revealed location of a road that will take you to a place where you may find the Matrix if you are worthy.” Alpha Trion admitted.
“Covenant of Primus? Alpha Trion, it is just an ancient book.”

“When you will be joined with Matrix you will understand better what exactly Covenant of Primus is. And you will be familiar with many more secrets that you are not allowed to now.” Alpha Trion gave his former protégé a knowing look. “But for now, let me assure you, that the Covenant’s indications are accurate.”

“I trust you, Alpha Trion, you were never wrong in the past and I trust that you won’t be in the future. It’s just that I do not understand it all.” Optimus hid his face in his hands. It was a lot to take in. “There is one thing I want to do before I will go.”

“What is it?”

“You said that Ariel is mine to claim. I have talked to her and while she said that she always saw me more as a close friend than anything else, she agrees to become my One.” Optimus carefully spoke. “Before I will go, I wish to make the Official Introduction.”

“Why before leaving?”

“For two reasons. First of all, even if I won’t make it and the Matrix will be claimed by someone else it does not bonds her to me, but it gives her opportunity to reject another Prime. I wish to give her such a possibility. And there is another reason, though I have not spoken to Ariel about it yet. After that we will be expected to go through the official courtship and we can make everyone think that we’re undergoing upgrades to emerge for the re-introduction of the new One with our upgrades in place. It will fool Decepticons and cover my quest for Matrix.”

“Clever, Optimus, I can see that you made a good use from the data pads you have here.” Alpha Trion nodded with pleased rumble. “It is a good plan. Go and talk to Ariel, but I feel she will agree with you. Then you will go on the quest.”

oOo

The Introduction was short and humble. Ariel was showed to the public as future consort of the Optimus Prime. She smiled, waved to the spectators and then it was over. Until then she wasn’t a public persona and it was all new to her. The general public took her in well, immediately she became number one topic for everyone. And that included Decepticons as well. The most common approach was that she was pretty, well-educated and a good candidate, with additional note on
Decepticon side that it was damn waste of such a perfect femme who could be much more than just a consort.

Ariel didn’t listen to any of it. Instead she waited to see what the result of the search would be. Her union with Orion, now Optimus was arranged, but she knew that it still was for the best. At least Optimus she knew and liked. And he actually did ask her if she was fine with him.

oOo

Iacon, 2 Mega-cycles later.

Optimus Prime was back. It wasn’t big news, only few Autobots knew that he was away in the first place. He only took two with himself: Bumblebee and Jetfire. And it was a while before they returned. But it was a triumphant return. Bumblebee and Jetfire seemed beaming with enthusiasm. And then came Optimus Prime, looking nothing like before. His form bulkier and slightly taller. His helmet different and with mouth plate. The Prime returned changed, his paint vivid as new and his optics shining softly but without the young vigour, these were optics of an old mech who saw too much. His face now serious, and without the smile he used to flash at people. Optimus Prime changed.

There still was plenty of time before he and his new One would have to show in public. There was still time for him to talk with everyone he needed to.

Optimus entered the office of Alpha Trion only to find his old mentor reading the Covenant of Primus.

The old archivist looked up and raised his opticbrows. “I just read that you entered my office.” He said and tapped the massive book with single digit.

“I understand now, Alpha Trion.” Optimus Prime spoke quietly. “I know who and what you are. And I know what this book is…”

“I could have read this in Covenant, but I prefer to hear it from you, Optimus.” Alpha Trion closed the Covenant.

“You one of the original Thirteen…”
Ariel sat next to her window and observed the darkening skies. She found it relaxing. She liked to watch the lights of Icon after the dark, though lately due to energon shortage, the lights were fewer and fewer every time.

“I knew you have returned and was wondering when you would come.” She said without looking at her guest. She heard his silent steps when he entered the chamber.

“I had to speak to Alpha Trion first.” Optimus explained. “It was difficult conversation, but now I understand so much more.”

“If you needed that, then it is good that you talked to him.” She stood up and turned to see her future Conjunct Endura for the first time since his triumphant return.

“I also asked him how it works.”

“You mean you don’t know how to…”

“No. That I know.” Optimus’ eyes turned round for a moment. “I meant how it should work with Matrix on top of my Spark. Somehow Matrix does not hold such an information, it just claims that it happens.”

“And?” Ariel smirked. This was interesting. A Prime, one with actual Matrix, and he still felt shy.

“He was kind enough to reassure me it is safe.” Optimus sighed and looked at Ariel. “He said that the Matrix will upgrade you as it did me. So, you won’t be Ariel anymore.”

“That much I know.” Ariel nodded. “Are you ready?”

“Whenever you are.” Optimus confirmed. It would be awkward, it wasn’t just some femme or carrier mech, it was his future Conjunct Endura who upon bonding would undergo transformation similar to
one his just went through. And they were about to consume their… arranged relationship.

“It will be fine.” Ariel smiled. She felt shy but there was no reason in stalling this. She could bond to him now or later, but in the end she would be his One. He was always good looking and decent mech. And she agreed to him already, because when all was said and done, she knew it was the best she could get: tall, handsome and kind.

oOo

Iacon. The official presentation of the new One.

The news about Optimus being in possession of Matrix reached everyone the previous evening and now entire Autobot faction was excited, while Decepticons were irritated at best and furious at worse.

Then the news of presentation of Prime’s consort reached everyone causing even more excitement. Everyone without exception was curious.

It was Alpha Trion who led the ceremony. The crowds went instantly silent when they say him. He was old but still an imposing figure.

The ancient archivist wasted no time. “I present you Optimus Prime, the heir of Primes and bearer of Matrix. And his Conjunct Endura, Elita-1.”

They walked slowly for everyone to see them, and when they stopped at their designated place everyone gathered roared and howled in applause. They both glistered on Cybetron twin suns. Optimus was large, massive and solid looking now – incarnation of stability with flashy red and blue colours. Elita in turn was chrome and metallic pink spirit of velocity with mischievous glint in her optics.

Next: Ratchet and Bumblebee.

First part takes place before “Shadowplay” and shortly before death of Nominus Prime. The rest after.
1) 1 Quartex = 1 Earth’s month.

2) 1 Mega-cycle = 93 hours.
Chapter Notes

Chapter 8: How Ratchet saved Bumblebee's life.
Bumblebee and Ratchet friendship.

Blast From The Past.

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don't you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(…)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

Warnings: Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.
Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Bumblebee, Ratchet, Megatron, Soundwave, Vehicons, Optimus Prime (mentioned), Pharma (mentioned), Ironhide (mentioned).

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_Zombie._

“Another head hangs lowly,

_Child is slowly taken._

_And the violence caused such silence._

_Who are we mistaken?_

__But you see, it's not me, it's not my family.__

_In your head, in your head they are fighting,_

_With their tanks and their bombs,_

_And their bombs and their guns._

_In your head, in your head, they are crying…_

_(…)_

_Another mother's breakin'_

_Heart is taking over_

_When the violence causes silence,_
We must be mistaken.

It's the same old theme since nineteen-sixteen.

In your head, in your head they're still fighting,

With their tanks and their bombs,

And their bombs and their guns.

In your head, in your head, they are dying... (…) – The Cranberries “Zombie”

Tyger Pax, wartime.

It was desperate mission, the battle raged around but the objective was not to win, take some territory or even kill as many enemy soldiers as possible. It was all but diversion. What was the mission so important that someone would start an entire battle just to make the enemy look in the wrong direction? How crucial it had to be?

Bumblebee knew damn well. Autobots were stretched thin and fighting in multiple skirmishes that formed large, and what’s more important, intense battle. At least at the beginning, now it all started to quiet down. It was bad news for the mission, but Bumblebee couldn’t do anything about it. Autobot commanders had their orders – to keep on fighting no matter what, and don’t stop until... they would know. The sign to stop and retreat would be obvious enough that they would know.

Bumblebee was not a commander, merely as Scout, but he was one of the Cybertronians that Optimus Prime trusted the most, and he in turn treated Prime like his personal role model, and perhaps a little bit as father figure. Bumblebee was one of the last generation that came from the Well of Sparks, a small group that appeared shortly after Zeta perished and Megatron declared his insurrection that morphed into true revolution.

Bumblebee was still very young but already received his final upgrades, during a war one had to grow up fast. And Bumblebee was mature beyond his age, yet still showed and often acted on his youth age. But now he had to act like an old, experienced soldier. Because enemy would not care about his actual age. Correction: the enemy didn’t care about his actual age.

“What is Prime after?” Megatron asked with growl.
“It’s a good thing you as yourself such existential questions. The answer may tell you more about yourself than about anything else.” Bumblebee smirked. He fell into Decepticon trap, got roughen a bit in a fist fight and in the end, ended up in Megatron’s clutches. It was lousy perspective, but the mission was more important than his life. Not that Megatron needed much to snuff him at this point. He was shot, punched, stepped on and on top of everything out of fuel. The only thing he got enough was his wit.

“Do not try my patience Scout, I am not knows to have much of it.” Megatron turned and walked few paces away. “What is Prime doing?”

“Honestly, at this moment? I have no idea; I haven’t seen him since the battle started. But knowing him, he’s probably stomping on some of your losers… I meant lackeys.”

Megatron turned and gave Bumblebee a long stare. The Scout looked almost like a Sparkling, with his large optics and round face plates. But Megatron was not easily fooled. This one could be merely a Scout but he was also one of the most skilled and deadliest soldiers. Of course, he was not one of the luckiest. At least not at the moment.

“Do you have me for a fool?” Megatron made stomped closer. “Do you think it is not obvious that this battle is nothing more than diversion?”

“I got orders to fight a battle, I fight a battle. Go and find Prime, ask him. Maybe if you’ll ask nicely enough he’ll tell you.”

“You are Prime’s personal messenger, if anyone’s knows it is you. I am asking you. And I am still asking nicely, Scout.” Megatron was now leaning to the young Autobot. “Use this chance I am giving you before I will become less cultural.”

“What will you do? Made rude noises at me?” Bumblebee smirked but internally, he wasn’t in very humorous mood. This was bad and getting worse but he had no other choice but stall. As long Megatron was interrogating him he was not out there looking for Optimus.

“You asked for it, Scout. And since I am still in kind mood I will grand you your wishes.” Megatron reached, grabbed Bumblebee by his throat and lifted him. “I will ask you one last time, what Prime is up to?”
“Kzzz—tt… You will have to - - rip that - - info - - from - - my throat… Kztt”

“What an excellent idea.” Megatron grimaced. “Why haven’t I thought of it earlier?”

And at that moment Bumblebee felt the vice like grip tightening. Megatron was squeezing his throat tighter and tighter. At first the resistance was strong but it only lasted a moment, then all tubes began to give, the venting tubes, then the energon intake and the voice box just behind it. It dented slightly at first but then the iron grip caused it to sparkle as their inner workings were crushed.

Bumblebee noticed with shock that it only hurt at first, then he realized that it was probably because the delicate wires connecting it to his neural net were ripped and the damaged vocoder couldn’t send signals that could be recognised as pain in his brain module. That was actually very bad news.

Megatron squeezed harder, his sole intention was brushing this impertinent brat. But then every Autobot received the sign to retreat. It looked like superbolid \(^1\) only instead of entering the atmosphere it was flying up and leaving it. It was so bright and it speeded up ripping the air in its way apart, like thousands of thunders.

Optimus Prime made it; he ejected the Allspark into the space. It was beyond Decepticon reach now. The Prime did it. Though it was a bitter victory – the planet would not give life to new Autobots.

Megatron and every other Decepticon watched as the life giving energy flew away.

“So it seems that we all know now what Prime was after.” Megatron narrowed his optics as he pulled the half conscious Scout closer to his face. “And I seem to have no more use for you.”

He dropped Bumblebee and walked away, not looking back, the Vehicons following their Leader without a single word. Only Soundwave gave the bleeding out Scout a longer look, he slowly shook his head and then he was gone too.

Bumblebee felt the life slipping away from him, ruptures energon lines in his neck were leaking and he was almost empty anyway. He knew he would perish in few moments, but he felt that he did it, his mission was a success and the Allspark was away from Megatron’s reach, it was worthy of his life. With that thought he slipped into unconsciousness.

oOo
Shortly later.

It was done. Decepticons retreated but not before they gave a short pursue for the retreating Autobots. They took their wounded and dead, they set up few traps and went back to their strongholds. Megatron needed to ponder over the new situation, contemplate about all possible, plausible and certain consequences and deliberate about feasible routes of action that were now available to him. It meant an undefined period of cease fire.

Now that Decepticon went home, Autobots could return and look for any survivors, and – what was the more frequent activity – gather up their own dead.

Ratchet could have been a CMO in Prime’s staff, but he refused. He had two very good reasons for that. One: Pharma was just as good if not better surgeon, and he was scared of field work so he felt best at the back where he could perform miracles in relative peace and quiet. Two: Ratchet felt that he could perform under high stress, operating into mobile infirmaries, often under siege\(^2\), and he also had his military training and just after the war started he served with regular troops and managed to make a name for himself. It now paid. Soldiers, just everyday fighters, treated him with some respect because he knew the drill, because he wasn’t just another high and mighty medic that waltzed in to make them an enormous honour just by allowing them to spend time in his presence. Ratchet was one of them; if he had to he could dismantle enemies just as good as he could put one of them back together.

And now Ratchet and his merry band commanded by Ironhide were combing out the perimeter. Ratchet was looking too; every working pair of optics could make a difference. He was about to move to another quadrant when he spotted something yellow. A bright colour in sea of grey. He ran in that direction, transforming was not an option, not in such a terrain, but he was there almost instantly and almost froze. It was Bumblebee. Everybody knew Bumblebee, hi was young, yellow and full of energy. His seemed to be everywhere at the same time, some believed he had a gift of bilocation, but in reality the young mech was simply that enthusiastic. And Ratchet loved that youngling as his own Sparkling… because in all honesty, everybody loved Bumblebee.

Ratchet approached the fallen Scout, and performed a preliminary scan to determine if Bumblebee was still alive and if there was some sort of booby-trap here. All came clear and the Scout was alive, barely.

“Ironhide!” Ratchet hollered. “We have a survivor! It’s Bumblebee!”
Mobile infirmary’s operating room. Later.

Ratchet worked as fast as he could. The energon loss was critical, and then there was the fact that the vessel system was severed. It was hard because Ratchet had to provide Bumblebee fuel and keep the leakage at bay at the same time. It was like trying to stop a river with a stick, but Ratchet was doing his best.

And then there were non-lethal damage to take about. Few broken struts to wield. Ruptured armour plates. Burst protoform. Loosened wires. And the crushed voice box. Mangled and twisted piece of inner working that looked like it was stomped on.

Ratchet did his best. The energon lines took him half of the night, and then he worked restlessly on rest of the injuries until noon the next day. Then he rested half a joor ³) and returned to his work on Bumblebee. Their group found no more survivors, so he had all the time he needed – the area they searched wasn’t the main battlefield, so there were but few Autobots there.

When Ratchet finally finished working of Bumblebee’s voice box it was another half a joor later, and he only stopped because he realised that he reached the limit of what he could do. He was out of resources, before the war he would be able to do more. Now, it was a miracle that the kid survived.

Tired in both body and mind, Ratchet went to recharge. Bumblebee was still under and would be kept that way for another night – he needed his rest even more than Ratchet did. The repairs needed their time to start to take in.

\[\text{oOo}\]

Mobile Infirmary post-operation room.

Bumblebee began to wake up; his optics flashed and then slowly came on-line. He looked around and found Ratchet standing next to his berth. He wanted to speak but couldn’t make a sound. He tried to sit up but fell back. He looked at the Medic questionably.

Ratchet looked at his patient with tortured optics. It was his success and failure at the same time. He saved the young mech’s life but at the same time he failed to truly heal him. And now he had to face this Autobot soldier.
“Lie down and don’t try to get up yet. We barely managed to get you going as it is, you need rest.” Ratchet felt his own voice box failing him but after a moment of struggle he regained control. “When we found you, you were almost completely dry, you were going on fumes. Also your entire throat was mangled, as if it was in a vice.”

Bumblebee blinked few times in his own way by rapidly turning his optics on and off. Then he nodded, he remembered Megatron grabbing him by his throat.

“You had severed energon lines, which was the most dangerous for you; you also had few broken struts, ripped armour plates and burst protoform. But we were able to fix all of that, though it took us some time.” Ratchet sighed heavily. He knew that there was no point in avoiding it. He had to tell his patient about everything, though he didn’t want to sound cruel. “There is only one thing we couldn’t do. And I am sorry, I have failed to repair your vocoder, it was brushed beyond what field infirmary could do.”

At that Ratchet lowered his optics. It was hard to admit his own defeat, and he didn’t even delivered the worse part. When he looked back, Bumblebee was lifting his servo to his throat. The hand was visibly shaking but Ratchet couldn’t tell if it was weakness of distress.

“Whoever did this, put enough force to your throat to crush it, I did what I could but the damage was so severe that considerable part of the circuitry is severed in more than one place. And the part that is severed is not answering to artificial stimulation.” Ratchet saw desperation in that large, bright optics and almost ran away. This was still a youngling, final upgrades or not, he was still a kid. Too young to be damaged like that, too young to fight wars. Ratchet came closer to Bumblebee and gently laid his servo on the young mech’s shoulder. “I do not know how bad it will be, but this is merely a field infirmary. When you will be better we will send you to Iacon, they have better resources there and Pharma has perfectly equipped operation room, perhaps he will be able to do more. So, there might me still some hope. He will be able to do more than I can here.”

Ratchet smiled, but he knew it was a lie, or perhaps more like wishful thinking. If the damage was as bad as he figured it to be, nothing could help. At worst case Bumblebee would be permanently and completely mute, with paralysed jaw. In best case, he’d be able to make some sounds. In any case, this youngling would never be able to speak normally again.

oOo

Iacon, sometime later.
Bumblebee sat on a bench on wide balcony of the medical centre in Iacon. He just left Pharma’s office after receiving his examination and test results. It was not pretty.

Pharma basically repeated what Ratchet said: a good chunk of his voice box’s circuitry was not reacting to any kind of stimulation which meant it was severed and most likely in more than one place – though one severed connection would be plenty enough if it was in the wrong place. All the repairs he received were performed flawlessly but the damage was simply too severe. The good news was that not all was lost. While he couldn’t move his jaw much, he could make some noises which opened patch to rehabilitation and restoring at least partial ability to speak.

Bumblebee glared at his pedes. His report was received, all was confirmed and he was now officially a war hero. He was one of the very few Autobots who could claim that he faced Megatron during a battle and lived to tell the tale… or in his case write the tale. He didn’t regret that he opposed the Decepticon Warmonger. But he was to bear the mark of war forever.

Next: Megatron/D-16.

It happened before “Run to the Water”. And mind you, that I never read “Bumblebee at Tyger Pax” story.

1) A type of very bright meteor.

2) Think of M*A*S*H, you know both the film and the TV-show about mobile hospitals. But Ratchet wouldn’t be Hawkeye Pierce, luckily, he wouldn’t be Burns either.

3) 1 joor = 6 hours, ½ of joor = 3 hours.
Chapter Notes

Chapter 8: How D-16 the Miner became Lord Megatron
Story of Megatron of Tarn (since D-16, through Megatronus to Megatron).

Blast From The Past.
“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don't you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(…)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I've done”.

**Warnings:** Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.

Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

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Getaway.

“Everyone’s a critic looking back up the river
Every boat is leaking in this town
Everybody is thinking they can all be delivered sitting in a box like lost and found

But I found my place and it's all right
We're all searching for a better way
Get this off my plate
It's all right, I got my own way to believe

Find a lighthouse in the dark stormy weather
We all could use a sedative right now
Holy rollers sitting with their backs to the middle all alone and sinking is the bow

And if you want to have to pray, it's all right
We all be thinking with our different brain get this off my plate
It's all right, I got my own way to believe, it's okay

Sometimes you find yourself having to put all your faith in no faith
Mine is mine and yours won’t take it's place
Now, make your getaway (...) – Pearl Jam “Getaway”
Mining Outpost C-12, before the war.

D-16 was about to start his shift. He and few other miners waited for the transportation wagon to take them deep inside the mine’s maze of shafts and tunnels where they would mine crystalized energon. Energon mining was relatively safe, crystals were stable form that wouldn’t explode easily (save for situation where separate explosion would ignite the chain reaction that is), so no one expected what happened next.

They were just told that there was a rock wall explosion planned and all miners were to clear all tunnels, which meant that they had a little bit of legally free time, they were already ‘working’ but since there was to be explosion, they had to wait.

Then the ground underneath their pedes shook – normal thing hen explosion happened, but that was the last usual thing. A moment later the alarm started to wail and the rescue team ran past them: someone was hurt. This was not normal; mine C-12 was one of the safest mining outposts out there. That meant that someone had to be caught in the explosion. But who?

They were quickly directed to another part of the mine. Before they left their assumptions were confirmed. Someone got caught in the tunnel when the explosives ignited. No one was saying anything else.

The next shift didn’t start as usual: with jokes and laughter. They knew who was killed and how. The investigation was to show what exactly went wrong. No one believed it would be objective. D-16 felt bitter because of that, every mech and femme in the mine knew that managers were corrupted and defrauded funds for high quality equipment. He knew that Senate knew about all of all the corruption but they didn’t cared about safety of citizens of lower castes, they only cared about stable income of energon. The young miner felt that he had to do something about it or else he would explode.

Rodion.
Young miner known to most as D-16 and as Megatronus to few sat in MacAddams New Oil House with one of his best friends, a mech who long since was known by any other name than Impactor.

“After that accident, if you can call it that…” D-16 started taking out a small data pad and handing it to his friend.

“You don’t believe that it was just a faulty fuse.” Impactor growled reaching for the tablet. “Everybody knows that it was a whole batch of old scrap, why do you think they confiscated them all but returned whole new batch? The stuff they took was long past its date.”

“That’s why I said ‘if you can call it that’.” D-16 almost rolled his optics. That was the deal with Impactor; he was such a hot head. “After that the entire mine was like a loaded gun, like a live wire.”

“I know. The news spread like wild fire to other outposts.” Impactor nodded. “They said she had a mate.”

“She did. He made it. Both were symbiote carriers and she just got her first, he had to take over. People say that it’s the only reason he survived: he had to.” D-16 shrugged. He didn’t understand how it worked but he didn’t try to pretend he wanted to. It was too complicated. “Anyway, we were all almost boiling there, and I started that… I had to do something, anything. That’s how I started writing it.”

“What is it? Some kind of emo poetry?” Impactor smirked; D-16 had a thing for high culture stuff. He wasn’t half as bad as a poet, though Impactor believed that the young mech was much better at math than literature.

“No. I started it as a blog entry… but it kind of evolved into this. I worked on it for some time and I think it’s as good as I can make it.” D-16 tapped his digits on the table top. “I already published it; it’s available on-line for a Mega-Cycle[^1] now.”

“Hmm. ‘After the Arc: Nominus Prime and the Illusion of Progress.’[^2] And you signed it as ‘Megatronus’.” Impactor read the title out loud. “What I am looking at?”

“I think you can see it as treatise.” D-16 leaned back. He didn’t care how it would be called if it could make people to start to think about the reality they found themselves in.
“You still do believe in peaceful approach?” Impactor smirked. “Wouldn’t it be better to take Senate by force?”

“But Senate is not scared of force, they fear of ideals.” D-16 vented deeply. “They try to turn us into mindless drones… Less than that, they just try to turn us into equipment, make us no different than the sparkles, lifeless machines. Look at the ‘Disposables’ they’re little more than slaves just because they have immobile but popular alt modes.”

“Yeah, I get it. But one day you will admit that I was right when I told that you need to take over the Senate if you want to make any changes. They may fear ideals, but they understand nothing but violence. Trust the experience of an old brawler.” Impactor smirked and pointed at himself.

He wanted to add something more, but someone landed on their table. The mech was mostly orange and white, and looked like someone that either of the miners could snap it two with just one servo. He was also quite out cold if the fact that D-16 poked him didn’t brought any reaction.

“Oh, that’s it!” Impactor got to his pedes. “You, punks, think you can throw mechs to other people tables like that?” He transformed his right hand into industrial drill and pointed at the noisy Cadets at the bar. “I’d probably just call the cops if I was sober, but I already had my high grade, I’m just gonna teach you some lesson all by myself!”

“Wait, Impactor, I don’t think it’s a good idea.” D-16 glared at his friend with stunned face and then at the unconscious mech on his table. This was going to end badly.

“Relax ‘D’ No one’ll get hurt… figuratively speaking.” Impactor chortled and gave his victims a dark glare. “Now, which one of ya punks feels brave?”

Rodion Police Station. Late evening.

D-16 sat in his cell; it was small, stinking and covered in graffiti. All in all it looked like half of the C-12 mining outpost’s lifts and other small rooms. He was sitting on small, feeble looking bench with his hands in stasis cuffs. It was small looking for him; after all, he was large mech. For someone smaller it would probably be decent.
The cell door opened and tall, lean mech entered. He was clearly a two wheeler, frame type common for enforcers. He opened the data file on his pad and then gave D-16 one long look.

“Let’s do this and be over with.” He said in tired voice of someone who follows the same routine for better part of his day. “I have written here, that you’re D-16 of Tarn, you are a miner on C-12 outpost and currently of three day regeneration leave on the surface. All correct for now?”

“Yes.” D-16 confirmed.

“Do you know why you’re here?”

“The fight at the bar. But I’ve haven’t heard any charges. And I know that I have right to ask for legal help.” D-16 decided to play it cool. He was worried but he needed to stay calm.

“For now it won’t be needed, we’re just keeping you here until we’re sure if we will release you or charge you. I’m just here to confirm few things, you have right to refuse answering all or some of my questions.” The Enforcer scrolled for a moment hi data file and then re-focused on D-16. “You were in the bar with mech known as Impactor?”

“Yes. Is he all right?”

“He’s in medical bay, he’ll live. From what I’ve heard he should be up and running shortly.” The Enforcer leaned against not so clean wall. “Now, tell me your version of the story.”

“We were talking when some of the Cadets threw that mech on our table. The mech, being small and feeble, passed out from the lending. Impactor was… displeased, and already slightly overcharged, so he launched at the Cadets. The fight started when I rolled the mech that landed on our table underneath it. I decided to get out of there but I’ve had to be hit by something because the next thing I remember is waking up in here.”

“Are you sure?” The Enforcer narrowed his optics.

“Ask the Cadets.”
“I would, but only one is conscious, and he’s been threw out of the window. The rest are either
dergoing surgery, or being freshly out of the OR.” The Enforcer said. “We’ve received reports that
two of them lost their T-cogs and one has shattered spine strut.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. Impactor was slightly overcharged, but so were the Cadets.” D-16 felt bad for
the young mechs, but they started the fight. “It could end the same way if we’d call you, they were
loud and looked aggressive.”

“If we were there it would be sanctioned by law.” The Enforcer noted something in his tablet. “For
now we’re keeping you overnight. We’ll see what will tomorrow bring.”

With that the Enforcer left. D-16 sighed, this would a long night.

oOo

It was some time later when the door opened. D-16 snapped from slight recharge thinking that
perhaps they would let him go earlier. But he quickly saw that it was yet another cop, this one was
clearly a post-empurata amputee.

“I’m going to enjoy this.” The amputee Enforcer said. “For what you did, you deserve all you’ll get.”

D-16 blinked and realised what the amputee meant when the first blow came. D-16 was strong and
normally he would swipe the floors with this smaller mech, but the stasis cuffs not only locked his
servos but also lowered his neural responses rendering him almost a dummy. He could walk and talk,
but any kind of sudden move was out of the question.

It was fifth hit that sent him on his knees just for the mech to kick him hard enough to flip him over.
D-16 managed to almost get up when more kicks came. This was not just some tenderising, or even
showing a low life where his place is. D-16 realised that the amputee Enforcer was simply beating
him into deactivation but the cuffs prevented him from doing anything to protect himself. The
amputee Enforcer had a lot of hitting and kicking to do to cause D-16 any permanent damage, he
was a war frame and a miner, so he had armour thick enough to withstand a lot more, but that didn’t
mean that he would survive prolonged pounding especially if the enforcer would start to land his hits
on more vulnerable spots.

D-16 lost count of punches and kicks he received but the amputee enforcer started to focus on his
face plates and joints, and it really hurt. D-16 growled, he was really ready to start to fight back, but the cuffs held him just fine. He was helpless. And the amputee didn’t stop talking all the time, telling him that no one would notice, that no one would care.

“Whirl! What in the name of Primus are you doing?” It was the first Enforcer; D-16 recognised his voice. “Are you run mad? Are you trying to kick him into that wall?”

“Springarm, I... er... err...” The amputee sounded speechless.

“We interrogated all the witnesses, including the mech that was thrown into this one’s table. He’s not guilty; he didn’t participate in the brawl!” The Enforcer called Springarm yelled at the amputee. “Have you lost the little sanity you had before? Have you any idea in what kind of trouble you are now?”

D-16 was kneeling, venting heavily at this point. He tried to wipe the energon sipping from his split lip plate, but he only smeared it over his face.

“Whatever.” The amputee called Whirl growled, gave D-16 a dirty glare, or as dirty as he could without any face, and then threw small tablet at him. “Don’t forget your data pad.” And left, leaving D-16 and the Enforcer alone.

“I’m sorry. He will be in heap of trouble as soon as I give my report to our Captain. “Springarm helped D-16 to get up and put his tablet on the bench. “We talked with everyone, and the mech that was thrown onto your table confirmed that he was attacked by the Cadets and the bartender said that you indeed tried to sneak out and you were already out when you were hit with the Cadet that flew through the window.” He unlocked the cuffs. “Are you all right? Did any of his trikes damage you?”

“I have thick armour.” D-16 subspaced his tablet. “It takes more than couple of blows and kicks to knock me out.”

“Yeah. It takes a Cadet almost of your size hitting you directly with enough force to compress his air filters and fracture several of his struts. And all it did was to turn your lights off for a moment.” Springarm smiled. “You’re free to go so allow me to escort you out of here. And if in next few joors you notice anything that might have been caused by that beating, contact medic, get a report and come here to fill official complain.”

“I will be fine, but if I will have any symptoms of injuries, I will come.” D-16 did his best to not
show just how angry he was at the moment.

“Be sure to remember about it.” Springarm allowed D-16 out of the Police Station.

D-16 walked slowly out of the Station, it was morning already, or at least it was getting light again. He pulled the tablet out of his subspace and looked at it for a moment. Then he deleted the contents with a bitter snarl.

He just received an important lesson.

oOo

Mining outpost C-12.

They were all assembled on a large square near the entry gate to the mining site, they could see the buildings of the refinery where the energon they mined would be liquefied, purified and re-solidified into cubes – easy to transport and store. They never got the best stuff though, even though they mined it, the best ore would be cycled and fractioned into high and low grade, for various purposes, both medical and commercial. Some would be kept as regular, mid-grade. They however would simply receive the thin and poor energon leftovers. True, purified because it wasn't just nice clean crystals, but still leftovers of the worse sort – not a good fuel and it was no surprise that tank and fuel pump rust infections were one of the most common causes of permanent deactivation among miners.

D-16 just ended his shift when the assembly was called and he didn’t really care what the fuss was all about, he just wanted to go to his tiny room and recharge, he was tired. He could feel the massive bulk of the only mech larger than him – a bulldozer forming giant called C-4. More and more miners and mine workers were gathering around him. It looked like it was something serious then. Some of the people around were dragged from their recharge time.

Then, the place filled with Seta Guards with shields and riffles. The mine manager stood in the back with unhappy face of someone who was just demoted into a yes-mech to a bigger figure. Then tall but bulky mech with large fin on his head stepped forward. He was gold, blue, white and red, had the tell-tale metal ‘cape’ and symbol of the Senate. He lacked any wheels so he probably was a flyer, maybe a hovercraft, or maybe something entirely different. But it certainly seemed that he never had to use his alt-mode. He also had very distinctive facial features.

“I am Senator Decimus of the House of Decimus.” He started calmly. “I have been sent here by the
Senate, The Senate concerns over each and every citizen no matter of their occupation in the grand machine of our society. You are aware of the economic crisis our society is facing today, and how the Senate tries to minimize its negative effects for the economy and society. We work hard monitoring all sections of both trade and industry to eliminate all the weak spots that may deepen the crisis and slower the recovery.” Senator Decimus explained without much enthusiasm but in steady voice of someone who deals with the subject more often that they would prefer. “Since last Meta-cycle we were monitoring the mining rate in small and medium mining sites such as orbital mining outposts and deep space mining outposts. We have selected number of mining sites that are not meeting the quotient set for mining sites of their respectable class and size.” Decimus looked at the crowd and seemed to prepare for delivering the most important part of his speech. “I am sorry to inform you that the mining outpost C-12 is not yielding an income rate provided for mining sites of its size, which also means that the Kaon Mining Corporation will not be receiving the State’s mining certificate for this site, which in turn means that it won’t be receiving any financial aid for providing workers of this mining site with medical aid and health insurances. For you all, this is the last shift in this mining outpost!” Decimus declared a little bit livelier than before. “But do not worry; if your company will not be able to provide you with new assignments, the Senate engaged a special program that will aid you in finding new employment. Remember: the Senate takes good care of the Cybertron citizens.”

“You do realize that there’s still energon here?” D-16 turned to see I-11 stepping slightly forward and giving the Senator a hard glare. He was holding his mining helmet in his servos, showing his beautifully shaped helm.

“Well, of course, we are aware that there’s still fuel here as you do mine it. The Senate does see that you work hard and produce results; we see that it is not your fault whatsoever. It’s just that the energon is harder and harder to mine for you…” Decimus seemed surprised that anyone decided to speak.

“So, you will simply replace us, inefficient workers?” I-11 crooked his head and stepped closer, standing in line with one of the Guardians. “It’s automation then. Have enough courage to admit at least that much! You’re looking for economizing this place, to squeeze this rock of last drop of energon but without having to pay too much for it! I know you do this to mine after mine!”

“Now, now, be calm, it is simply a rumour. You cannot simply believe in some hearsay…”

“Yeah? So why the refinery workers are not here with us? You’re not closing refinery, you just kick us out!” I-11 seemed more and more enraged. “First we’re being provided with old, out of date equipment and resources! You being cheap cost life of our explosive expert quite recently! And she was a young femme with a mate and entire life before her!”

“The investigation report confirmed that it was an accident.” Decimus lifted his servos in calming gesture but his face betrayed that he was now close to panic; he didn’t expect anyone to pull that out.
“Save it! We all know how the Senate and High Castes work!” I-11 turned to his co-workers. “You are almost running on fumes, you’re getting the thin third class low grade and the Senators and High Caste parasites are gorging on high grade and energon sweets that you never even seen let alone tasted, even as Sparklings! They take all for themselves and allow the rest of us to work ourselves into deactivation! They don’t care if we live or die here, as long as we make profit! That’s what we are for them: numbers in statistics and easy to replace equipment! This is what we are to them, and it will be worse for future generations, unless they’re stopped!”

D-16 pressed his lip plates together; I-11 was right and spoke what everybody thought. They all felt like they’re treated more like items than citizens. He lifted his optics at I-11 and almost jumped but he never managed to scream in warning, the Guardian moved too damn fast drawing his blade and striking I-11 in the helm.

Before the mech had time to react, he was already falling and hitting the ground. Luckily his helm was thick even without the helmet but the cut was deep and probably severed few brain module connections because I-11 couldn’t coordinate his movement to get up.

“Stay away!” The Guardians shouted at the shocked miners while their colleague kneeled at I-11 head.


For moment there they thought that the Guardian will simply check the wounded mech’s parameters but instead he clenched his fist and delivered couple of demolishing punches directly to the face and damaged cranium of I-11 who couldn’t even move his arms in efficient way to protect himself from the blows.

The Guardian moved fast, it took but a moment for him to hit I-11 multiple times, it seemed that he had quite some experience in beating defenceless victims.

D-16 watched with pure shock mixed with terror on his face plates. He could remember his own beating on Rodion Police Station.

“Kzzzt! Ghhhck!” I-11 lay on the ground in growing puddle of his own energon, his optics flickered but every time the light was weaker until it went completely out.
D-16 watched as I-11, one of the most liked mech in the mine, died right in front of him and he recalled every single kick he received from the amputee Enforcer, every blow and every single word of contempt uttered it that cell. That could be him, back in that cell; he could end just like I-11 did. And then a simple question came to his mind: how many did end up like I-11?

“Workers, calm down now, you can see that anger will get us nowhere!” Decimus decided to step in but before he said anything more a flying energon pickaxe grazed his cheek and shoulder. “Arrghh!”

D-16 looked at his pickaxe sticking from a wall behind falling Senator and his assistant rushing to help his employer. Then he looked at the Guardians rushing to pacify the miners, but it was too late, others were just as shocked and angered by I-11’s death and they already started to fight. If D-16 wouldn’t throw his pickaxe at the Senator, someone else would. D-16 focused his attention on the large Guardian that attacked I-11. Around him all the miners were already fighting with the Guardians, while the mine’s own security agents were rushing to the aid.

Few miners rushed against them and before anyone could stop and think for a moment the whole mine and shipyard was involved in riots. Someone broke the shipyard control tower windows and flew out of there, falling at the security agents and Senate’s Guard like some sort of predator. The fight started for good. Some miner yelled: “DOOM!”

Somewhere behind the dais that the Senator spoke from, Decimus was clutching his shoulder and whimpered from pain while his terrified assistant was calling for help. Both of them scared for their lives.

D-16 launched himself at the large Guardian; the mech was only slightly smaller than him and a war frame as well. But D-16 had the element of surprise and momentum on his side so he ended up on top and wasting no time started to land heavy blows on the Guardian who replied with punches of his own. The fist fight began.

oOo

One Groom 6 later.

Pacified miners and mine workers sat on the ground on the very same square they were fighting on moments ago. The Manager sporting bruised face plates and couple loosened plates paced back and forth thinking of something to say to the sorry bunch in front of him.
The miners and mine workers didn’t look much better than he did, but he couldn’t care less. Finally he stopped and sighed. There was only one approach he could take in this situation, and he wasn’t really sorry about it. It did solve some problems for the Corporation though he would prefer to not be involved into this situation personally.

“And just what were you thinking?” He spoke in angry voice. “Did you really think it would solve anything?”

“The Slag Eaters murdered I-11!” Yelled someone but the Manager couldn’t tell who exactly.

“And you thought starting a brawl would bring him back?” The Manager narrowed his optics. “You thought that turning this place into a ZOO would solve anything?”

“We wanted to punish the murders!” Exclaimed the same person as previously. It had to be someone small because the Manager couldn’t see him.

“Lots of good it did to you! There are procedures to follow in situations like that!”

“He would walk free. He works for Senate; they would make sure he would not be punished.” This time it was D-16 who spoke. “You know that Senate can do whatever they like and face no consequences.”

“Even if so, mob lynch is not a solution. And speaking of consequences.” The Manager looked at the faces of his former employees. “You are lucky that there is no way of making sure who threw that pickaxe at Senator Decimus. All the cameras were pointed at him and he can’t tell you apart, to him you’re all a ‘mech with yellow and black markings’.”

Someone sniggered, but the Manager wasn’t surprised or even angry because of that, it was typical that the highest Castes shared the approach that anyone lower than them was insignificant. He understood the distain because he shared it; after all he met Cybertronians like Decimus all the time.

“Laugh all you want.” He growled. As much as he disliked people like Decimus, he was loyal to his Corporation. And, what was more important at the moment, he was hit few times in the riots and treated it as personal insult. “You won’t be laughing when you will hear about consequences!”

“An’ what they’re gonna do ta us? They don’ know who threw that damn pickaxe an’ sure as Pit we
“ain’t gonna tell them… not that we’re sure fer ourselves.” One of the larger miners said with sneer. “They can’t charge all of us an’ they can’t pick a random mech, any court of law would drop the charges.”

“I wasn’t talking about criminal consequences. I am talking about disciplinary discharge. Each and every one of you is being disciplinary discharged. And before I will hear even one complain, mind you that we’re being lenient! We could be pressing charges against you for attacking mine’s security and management workers.”

That caused utter silence; everyone was staring at the Manager with wide optics. No one said a word, it clearly shocked them, they didn’t saw that coming.

“The Corporation have to transport you all back to the Cybertron’s surface, so you have the time to the next fare to collect all your personal belongings from your quarters, lockers and working stations, if you had them, and report to the shipyard.” The Manager checked his internal chronometer to see when it will be. “You have exactly one Joor ⁸). Be sure to come to the office to receive your last payment and the discharges, remember that the information about your disciplinary discharges will be in the digital data base available for all future employers.”

Then the Manager walked away leaving the shocked crew. They stayed silent for few moments. Then someone, the same one who argued with the Manager at first, huffed angrily and said: “Ahh, screw the stuck up Cog! I’m goin’ to take short recharge and then finish my business here. And then I’m goin’ to pester the nearest Functionist until he’ll allow me to change my category and get different job!”

There was approving hum and the disciplinary discharged crew left the square.

oOo

The transportation wasn’t an actual shuttle, as everyone thought. It was four cargo ships, slow and small. The shipments didn’t required luxury and it energon cubes didn’t care how long they flew. The miners and mine workers were told that for now it was the only available transportation and they could wait for a shuttle, but they would have to buy themselves tickets and rent rooms. It was clear that they had no real alternative, flying frames could fly on their own if they were fully fuelled but for two reasons none of them would ever do that. First of all they wouldn’t get the fuel, if they would want to purchase it they would have to buy a wholesale amount of quality energon. And second of all, even if they would be granted an exception (which they wouldn’t be without a doubt), they didn’t want to give the Corporation the satisfaction of being released from the duty of getting them back home.
That was how they found themselves on Mega-cycle \(^1\) long trip to Cybertron is four small cargo ships without heating and place to sit down. They couldn’t use their engines to heat up due to flammable fumes and the cargo area was packed so tightly that they had to stand. There wasn’t even half a chance to lock one’s joints and recharge, the ships shook constantly and the noise was too high.

The pilot had comfortable conditions, but the energon cubes that the cargo ships usually transported didn’t required anything else than space to be stored.

The four cargo ships headed to the Cybetron carrying disciplinary discharged mining crew back to Cybertron, three of them angrier than the rest, a historical event that no one paid any mind at the time.

\[\text{oOo}\]

\textit{Kaon.}

The group that D-16 arrived with started their stay with short but intense conversation (to avoid the word ‘argument’) and it melted fast. Some cursed their fate and chose to start from zero, work their way up again. Some laughed at them and said they’ve had enough and will not degrade themselves again with bowing to the Functionists and high castes; their only chance for decent living was to go against the law that was unjust.

Both sides of conflict went their ways leaving the third one with mixed feelings. D-16 didn’t want to go against the law as such; he knew that it was not a solution, not for a long shot anyway. And he felt too proud to start from zero, to go and beg local Functionist to find him employment of any sort, which meant that he would be sent to some distant mine that no one really wanted to go and mine something dangerous (easily explosive or highly corrosive or maybe something even worse).

“Hey, Big Buy, what now?” One of twin miners that arrived with him looked up at him.

“We walk.” D-16 decided. He didn’t know who or why named him their leader and he didn’t care, but he wasn’t about to just stand in one spot and wait for miracle.

“Where to?” The other twin asked.
“Away from this dock, we can’t just stand here and wait for miracle.” D-16 answered.

They left the dock just before another shuttle from their mine arrived. But D-16 didn’t care, he had more pressing matters on his mind: where to live, how to find new job and what to do next.

They were passing one of the large and fancy shopping malls where one from their group poked his arm and pointed at something. D-16 gave him surprised look and then read the announcement above the medium sized cabin.

GLADIATORIAL ARENA OF KAON!

PRESENTS:

GLADIATORIAL MATCH!

Are you looking for a new job? Are you looking for a new start?

This offer is for you! Join the Gladiatorial Arena of Kaon and become

GLADIATOR!

The fame is waiting for you, join today!

We offer: full training, quarters, gladiatorial certificate and contract!

“It’s worth of checking. Nothing to lose by asking.” He mused. He was tired, as they all were, and he this was just as good offer as any other. Probably better than any they could get considering their disciplinary discharges. In the worst case they would be denied and kicked out. In best case they’d be given a chance.

They came to the cabin and D-16, again somehow nominated for the speaker of the group, bend to the window and took a look at the cabin owner. It was small mech with bored face.

“Excuse me, are you recruiting the Gladiators?” He asked feeling a little bit awkward.

“Nope. They just paid me to put that add on my cabin. I sell energon goodies.” The mech sighed. “If you wanna enrol, you gotta go to their recruitment office ‘cause they can’t recruit from the streets, they need to have set offices. The nearest is two blocks away, here’s a brochure.” The mech explained and offered a thin, plastic pamphlet in flashy colours. “Oh, do you wanna some energon goodies? You look like you could use some and a Vorn of recharge.”
D-16 blinked. It was true, he was low on fuel and energon goodies were a good source of energy. “Anyone hungry?” He turned to his group.

oOo

Gladiatorial Arena recruitment office.

The recruitment worker smiled seeing group of 40 mech. All with mine’s black and yellow safety markings, all looking like they were about to just fall into recharge on the spot and some of them still finishing energon goodies.

“You’re the crew from C-12 mine?” He asked with amusement in his voice.

“We are, and it isn’t funny.” D-16 growled in unimpressed voice.

Perhaps not funny, but the news of your fight reached the surface already.” The mech flashed his denta in wide grin. “You gotta have ball bearings to fight Senatorial Guard and mine’s security agents. And fling a pickaxe as Senator.”

“They murdered one of ours.” One of the twins peeped with his mouth still full of chewy energon.

“That wasn’t in the news.” The mech’s grin evaporated instantly. “But it doesn’t change anything when it comes to you being brave enough to pick on heavy armoured guards.”

“As you can see, we are just as heavy armoured.” D-16 pointed out. “And, at least I have a war frame. And we weren’t brave, we were angry.”

“It doesn’t change anything.” The mech shook his helm. “Normally, I would reject better part of you because you either too small or look too feeble, but knowing you’re the guys who fought Senatorial Guards and some thugs the mining companies hire as their own security, I’ll take you in.”

“All right!” The second twin shouted, or rather wanted to but his dentas were still glued together.
with sweet and sticky energon from his own treat.

“Just fair warning, at least half of you will finish the training, and then the first season will be even more challenging.” The Recruiter pulled out data pads with all the forms for them to fill. “But for now, welcome to the Gladiatorial Arena of Kaon. We will belong to the Kaon State League, but there is few more cities who wish to create their own, so the first season will be just us fighting among each other and in the next one perhaps inter-state fights. Death matches are not legal, so safe for some accidents, you’re safe. You’re granted medical care, quarters and fuel, but we expect you to show your best.”

He gave them the forms and shortly they were led to their new home.

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The training indeed was though. They learned of edge weapon fight, how to attack, block and fake attacks. They were taught how to shoot. And they were taught how to fight in the most spectacular yet efficient way.

D-16’s group counted forty mech when the training started, but by the middle of it only fifteen remained, more than half of it wasn’t either strong enough or aggressive enough. Oddly enough, two smallest mechs of the group – the minibot twins – remained and were considered one of most skilled.

That was when their group was combined with another one. As it happened, it was another group of workers from C-12 along with some random grounders that just enrolled along with them; they also had pair of twins.

At the end of the training, there were only twelve of them remaining. Five of them really large mechs and seven smaller, including the minibot twins who somehow managed to ‘graduate’.

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It was shortly before the beginning of the first official season of the Gladiatorial Match League, all new Gladiators were about to officially get their licences and become professional Gladiators. Because there were many new Gladiators the process of registration had to take time. Each training group would receive their licences separately and when the process of licencing and registration would be complete, the new Gladiators would be split to their Arena Teams. Each team would have their own logo and elect their own Captain depending on number of matches.
Their coach gathered the team and started filling their licences. The ones with actual names were first to go, it was quick and they soon were done. Then those with serial numbers came.

“You will have to get actual names. The Arena isn’t just about the fighting but also a show and this means you need actual names.” The Coach explained. “Some of you will become famous and people will want to chant your names not numbers. All right, let’s get started.”

It took few moments, most future Gladiators had nicknames of various sorts, some of these nicknames required small, cosmetic changes. Finally, only three new Gladiators were left. Minibot twins and D-16.

“You know, coach, they always called us ‘First’ and ‘Second’, though they never really specified which is which.” One of them explained. “And we just call each other ‘Brother’.”

“Yeah, and they call us plenty of other names too.” The second added. “But not too nice.”

“Okay. Let’s see. You.” The Coach pointed at the first one to speak. “You always go in all crazy and unpredictable. You’ll be Frenzy.”

“Works for me.” Newly dubbed Frenzy grinned.

“And you, you are calmer, but you often use those hammers your arms change into. Pretty damn good idea.” The Coach pointed at the second twin’s arms. “You’ll be Rumble.”

“Heh, good. I can get myself some nice one liners based on that.” Rumble transformed his arms and pounded the ground lightly.

“And now you, D-16.” The Coach took new form and focused on his last Gladiator. “You’ll going to need something heavy for a name. You’re large and war frame, it obliges.”

“I used to be known as Megatronus by few.” D-16 admitted. “You think it could work for me?”
“Well, you are large and strong enough.” The Coach looked into D-16’s documents. “Let’s see, you’re from Tarn… Hmm… Megatronus of Tarn, sounds pretty good, you’re a war frame and Tarn is famous for its military traditions. I say that name would serve you damn well. And that’s one bad-aft patron you’d be named after.”

“Then so be it.” D-16 nodded.

“Megatronus of Tarn it is.” The Coach wrote in the papers. “Now you just have to become good enough Gladiator to live to the name.” He gave the ex-miner amused look.

“I think I can do that.” Megatronus, previously known as D-16, grinned showing his still dull denta and extended his sword.

“That’s the spirit.” The Coach put all the data pads on one pile. “Now I will send these to the registration office so they can put the data into the system. Then the local Functionist will come with your new ID chips, and new name codes for those of you who took new names. And that would be all. Good luck to you and make me proud.”

And that was all. Three joors later local Functionist came with their new ID chips, he had government approved surgeon who replaced the old ID chips with the new ones. Those who took new names were implanted with new name codes and then, as per custom, the Functionist blessed them all in new way of life and left, leaving everyone with slight but persistent impression that they barely avoided being branded as heretics.

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It wasn’t long before Megatronus became member of one of the most successful Arena Teams, named after its Captain ‘Team Clench’. Megatronus usually fought solo but he always won, Clench however fought more often. And the one of the most important regulations was that team members couldn’t fight against each other unless during challenge rounds for individual Gladiators.

At the end of the first season Clench was the captain the winner team of Kaon’s Derby and Megatronus was the individual fight Champion of the city.

The second season brought changes when other cities gathered their own Gladiatorial teams and now Kaon fought against few other cities who were allowed to get their own Leagues, the official titles of Intercity Individual and Team Championship were founded. At the end of second season Clench was
wounded during the final match for Team Championship and Megatronus (who just won the title of Intercity Champion) took over saving the fight and leading the team to victory. Clench died from his wounds and Megatronus became the new Captain of the now ‘Team Megatronus’.

Third season was less eventful for the Teams but more for the individual fights. It was the first time that Megatronus would fight with one of the most feared Gladiators from other Kaonian team. Megatronus was already known and popular but his opponent was known to be skilled and fast.

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“Ladies and Gentlemechs! I present you the fight of the evening!” Yelled the announcer. “On my right! The Interstate Champion and the Captain of Team Megatronus… Meeeeeegaaaaatronuuuuus of Taaaaaarn!”

The applause was deafening, the Arena went wild as Megatronus extended his sword in silent salute while bearing his filled and sharp denta. His brilliant blue optics shone like two jewels and his amour gleamed in light of flashes.

“And on my left! The most feared mech of the upper Kaon, the Silent and Intimidating, the most mysterious mech of the Arena… Soouuuundwaaaave!”

The roar was just as loud as moments before. The spectators went wild because everyone wanted to see Megatronus fighting Soundwave. They both were mighty but vastly different. Megatronus was wildly known while Soundwave was a mystery. Everybody saw his matches and they were epic. Megatronus was pure might, but Soundwave who was almost as large seemed two times lighter when he moved, he was full of grace as if he was dancing on the Arena and his tentacles seemed to live a life of their own. And then his symbiote was like shadow, only few managed to ever notice the moment when the feline ejected.

“Gentlemech, you know the rules.” The judge of the fight said in raspy voice. “And for this match, it was settled: no transformations, and no symbiotes, only sword and tentacles.”

“Ladies and gentlemechs, the match just began!

Both mechs nodded, they already agreed to the rules. The fight was epic and the competitors didn’t disappoint the spectators. The fight was short but intense and Megatronus won but it was a close call.
The judge had to jump in and stop Soundwave who wanted to get up and continue fighting to Megatronus’ utter shock. After short inspection the judge called it technical K.O. and announced Megatronus of Tarn the victor of the match. Still, the crowds chanted both of their names for they gave grand show of skills. Megatronus with his sword was as if his very own namesake while Soundwave and his tentacles were mesmerising.

“Ladies and gentlemechs, this was intense, yet epic fight! I think it is safe to say that it was one of the best matches in this season! Megatronus and Soundwave were truly amazing with their truly masterly skills!” A commentator spoke, his optics sparkled and his grin reached both his audio receptors. “This was what is called poetry in motion! If any of you ever wondered why poets used such colourful language to describe battles of the past, it is probably because they looked like what we just had the privilege to witness. I think I can say that even though Soundwave had to be carried away, he has no reason to be ashamed, for his performance was more elegant than a ballet. And we could see that Megatronus had to seek support in a wall to leave the arena which is no surprise, everyone will admit that he is still in great shape after receiving the kind of ponding we saw. Though, you could clearly see that the mech lived to his famous name. I can only imagine how Megatronus would do in a fight allowing transformation, but we can freely admit that he fully earned his victory. This mech is clearly unstoppable!”

Megatronus himself was impressed by Soundwave, if this wasn’t a regulated match but one of the underground, ran by mob death-matches that were the newest thing in criminal world, he’d have to kill his opponent.

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“Oh mech, this needs to be replaced.” Said a whiny voice of the Arena’s resident medic. “You’re lucky that these are easy to get. I’ll have a replacement in a jiffy.”

Megatronus walked in without knocking and saw the aforementioned medic putting the ruined visor in his bag and taking another close look at Soundwave’s face. When he spotted Megatronus he almost jumped.

“Well then, doctor, what stops you?” Megatronus asked in calm voice that held small amount of threat in it.

“I’ll be in a moment, when I will find matching size.” The doctor known by everyone as ‘Chip’ jumped and left the preparation room.

“That was a good fight.” Megatronus approached the bench and for the first time saw Soundwave
unmasked. “Damn and I thought you wore that visor because you’re disfigured.

“Sssoundwave isss not a ghoul.” Said the symbiote resting in Soundwave’s lap. It was the first time Megatronus saw the feline relaxed and not attached to his host.

“I can see.” Megatronus smirked. “I came for another reason though.”

“State your reason.” Soundwave demanded in not so friendly tone.

“I want you to transfer to my team. You are one though Slager.” Megatronus turned and paced to the small window leading to the pavement level. “My team can offer you better perspectives that yours can ever.”

“Soundwave: needs to consider.”

“Understandable, you know where to find me, and my offer stands until the end of this season.” Megatronus gave Soundwave a serious glare. “You know my team is stronger than yours and you will get better propositions. Think about it.”

Soundwave watched after Megatronus as he left the room. Moments later the medic returned.

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One mega-cycle \(^1\) later Soundwave found himself in Team Megatronus’ dormitory, entering Megatronus’ door. The mech himself was reading something on his data pad but when he saw Soundwave, he put it away and focused on his guest.

“I didn’t expect you to come this fast.” Megatronus admitted gesturing for Soundwave to seat down.


“I see. I'm guessing you want to know more about my Team?”
“Negative. Team Megatronus: widely known. Information: easy to gather.”

“All right, I take that if not information about the team, then there is something else you need to know?” Megatronus was now puzzled. What else Soundwave could want to know? The Team Megatronus was one of the strongest and most successful teams in the League, they had their own medical care, good coach and they had good contracts for prestigious fights. Megatronus knew that Soundwave was aware that their fight would never take place if not for gladiatorial promoters connected to Megatronus' team; that agreed to secure and promote the fight (that wasn't included in the league calendar). So what could it be?

“Megatronus: reasoning?”

This came as a surprise; Megatronus never suspected that Soundwave could be interested in Megatronus' personal motives. To be frank, Megatronus didn't had any real, professional, reasons to want Soundwave in his 'stable' other than the simple fact of Soundwave being a good fighter. But there was this huge part of 'private interest' in it that Megatronus didn't like to admit even to himself: Soundwave came to the Gladiatorial Arena from the same place and for the same reason as Megatronus did.

Megatronus furrowed his opticbrows in deep thought and rose from his seat, circled the desk and leaned against it next to his guest. He knew that Soundwave, as a symbiote carrier, had to have certain telepathic abilities, though the telepathy level varied from one 'deck' (as they were colloquially called) to another. And it wasn't a common knowledge either. So in this case, the best way was to simply be honest.

“Soundwave, I know your story, remember that we worked in the same mine even if we never met each other back then. You weren't a miner but you faced the same slag as everybody else joo after joo 6, quartex after quartex 10, decivorn after decivorn 11. And it cost you more than any of us.” Megatronus looked down at his guest and crossed his arms, voicing such things was much harder than writing them down. “We faced exploitation for most of our lives. For our work we received scorn and contempt from those who gained fortunes from our labours. And, if you recall I-11, they repaid us with death. Today we fight each other for crowds that take pleasure from our pain and cheer while we bleed. The least I can do is to make sure that my team is safe in our own dormitory and get some respect. I wish I could do more, change how society views us from lower castes, but for now all I can do is to offer a fellow C-12 employee conditions better than you have in your current team.”

“Soundwave: understands.” Soundwave nodded once.
“I know that you are a telepath, couldn't you just read that from my mind?”

“Affirmative. Soundwave: wanted to hear. Telepathy: requires active thinking.”

“Ahh, you can’t read thoughts that someone is not thinking at the moment.” Megatronus smiled. It was logical. Telepaths read not so much minds as thoughts, and one cannot read thoughts that are not conceived. “Out of pure curiosity, if you don't mind me asking, does your Captain know that you can read his thoughts?”

“Negative. Telepathy: well hidden secret.”

“I see. They can't exploit a knowledge they do not possess.” Megatronus nodded with understanding. “Cunning.”

“Secret: safety measure.”

“Logical and wise.” Megatronus uncrossed his massive arms. “So, Soundwave, do we have a deal?”

Soundwave observed Megatronus for a moment, rose from his chair, nodded once and shook Megatronus' servo.

oOo

Fourth season brought no surprises even though it was filled with good matches, and it was the first full season with Soundwave in Megatronus’ team. The newest team member didn’t fought much, but every single of his fights was victorious and drew wild crowds to the Arena.

Fifth season brought new trends in form of fights against various exotic beasts and allowed use of hand held shields.

Sixth season was more eventful when it came to illegal fights that became more and more popular among gangsters and brought attention of the authorities but no one could eliminate the illegal business despite struggle to do so.
Seventh season brought breakthrough as Megatronus became unquestionable leader of entire league and it was harder and harder for him to find an opponent that would be willing to fight. He was fighting mostly the largest and deadliest beasts now, but outside of the Arena and sparring matches in the pits, he was more and more busy with taking care of his fellow Gladiators, especially youngest and less experienced ones, prone to being deceived by dishonest promoters.

But the true breakthrough came at the very end of the season when Megatronus himself was approached by a shady character with impossible to refuse proposition to fight on an illegal Arena during a death match. Megatronus, known already as ‘The Gladiator of Kaon’ refused in accompaniment of ripping strings, bursting ball bearings, breaking struts and a rant about how illegal matches were nothing but pure exploitation of decent people. Then literally drop-kicked the mech out of the front entrance of the Arena’s League’s dormitory section straight to the street.

Eighth season was more interesting when it came to Megatronus and his team private war on illegal gladiatorial matches. It started with Megatronus making a public announcement about the consequence of making proposals of illegal fights.

“Any person that will be caught by one of my team members at making proposition of illegal fights, be that death matches or any other kind of combat including thumb wrestling, to any Gladiator from any team and any league; will be rendered unable to make any kind of proposition to anyone else ever again! I am in Gladiatorial Arena from its very beginning, and neither I nor any of members of Team Megatronus, will tolerate illegal and often lethal exploitation of our fellow Gladiators! If these mobsters want to watch death matches, they’re free to fight them themselves!’”

It was counted as Megatronus’ first public speech.

The rest of the eight season was filled with official matches holding high level and showing quality gladiatorial skills, and series of scandals inside of the League when various coaches, few promoters and small number of Gladiators (including two or three Captains) were revealed to be part of the Illegal Arena (as it was dubbed by media).

The ninth season continued with the official matches, Soundwave’s retirement and continuation of fight with Illegal Arena.

Megatronus became authority among Gladiators and his team became essentially Kaon’s official representation when it came to Interstate League (that grew planet-wide). Gladiators took part into a charity Lob match against All-Stars team of Lob League Stars. The Gladiatorial Match became officially recognised sport even though elites still considered it to be brutal and primitive.
By the end of the ninth season the war with Illegal Arena finally ended. Megatronus won and became one of the most popular mechs in the Cybertron, at least among regular Cybertronians. The higher castes kept on ignoring him even though right after ending the ninth season he published his polemic “Towards Peace”.

At the beginning of tenth season, during one of the first matches, something odd happened. Right after Megatronus’ unavoidable victory the crowds began to chant his name as always. But in the middle of cheering, they changed it.

“Megatronus! Megatronus! Megatronus!” Then the roar of the Arena drowned the last syllable, making it undistinguishable, what was recognisable now was just: “Megatron! Megatron! Megatron!” And after a moment the crowds cried “Megatron!” without the last syllable.

Back in the dormitory, Megatronus sat deep in thought. The people, his fans, his supporters, Cybertronians who saw him as authority, they gave him new name. No longer was he named after one of the Thirteen, no longer was he carrying someone else’s name. The people, his people, they gave him name of his own. Not a serial number issued by Functionists. Not a name taken after a legendary figure. A name that belonged only to him, and no one else.

He smiled to himself, a happy, honest smile. He had a name, a true, teal name.

The next morning Megatronus visited local Functionist office. The head Functionist who was the person to permit name changes listened to him and pondered for a moment.

“In essence it is but a variation of the original name.” She explained and smiled. “Not significant enough to replace your ID chip completely.” She dug in a drawer of her lumbered desk for a moment. “But it is enough to make annotation in the population evidence system and in your ID chip’s log so you would be allowed to use the ‘new’ name officially, in documents and all kinds of legal cases.” She presented a small scanner. “This will only take a moment, if you are willing of course.”

The scanning of the ID chip, making changes in Megatronus’ official record in the Cybertron’s legal system and on is ID chip took but a few moments. Before anyone in the dormitory could even ponder where he went, Megatron left the Functionist office and returned to the Gladiatorial complex.

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Before Megatron could really comprehend what and how it happened, he was not only widely known but also cited and seem as a leading figure. His polemic ‘Towards Peace’ became known to everyone interested in citizen’s and worker’s rights. He had fans and supporters that bore the purple badge of his gladiatorial team.

There was young Archivist from Iacon who corresponded with him and wanted to meet with him because he believed that Megatron’s ideals represented exactly the solutions that Cybertron needed. There were people who seen him as their leader and who wrote ‘You are being Deceived!’ on walls.

It was then that he stopped being just a Gladiator, he became a Politician and as such, he was gaining popularity until one night that became the official date of proclaiming Megatron’s faction. Shortly after the movement became noticed by the Senate and Megatron’s friend, Orion Pax, managed to secure hearing before the Great Council for him.

The hearing was intense and long. Megatron didn’t expect it to be so difficult either. Megatron was angry at himself for letting his nerves too loose, but in the end he knew he could make it. He spoke boldly, without fear and he might have said few things they didn’t want to hear but he only spoke the truth. He lost some of his cool, but he knew he was right.

Then his friend, Orion Pax stepped it. At first it looked like he was speaking in behalf of Megatron. But as he spoke it became clear that he was presenting his own point of view, one that confronted with Megatron seemed much more agreeable to the Councillors and the Senate. Megatron instantly felt betrayed, not only Orion Pax used his, Megatron’s, speech to promote himself but also repeated what Megatron said only dressed it in nicer words and filled all the sharp edges.

Megatron never felt like that before, not even in that tiny cell when the amputee enforcer beaten him, not even when he was forced to see I-11 die. Betrayal of someone he considered a friend, more than a friend – a brother; hurt like a blade shoved into his spark and it tasted as bitter as spoiled energon.

For a moment Megatron just stood there listening to Orion Pax speaking to the Councillors, spreading vision of utopia before their optics but then the reality hit him hard in the face plates. He might’ve been a low caste, an ex-miner and a Gladiator. He might’ve been a Cybertronian who never sat in a fancy office and played with top shelf data pads or enjoy the pretty views of Iacon. But he had his pride and his honour. He turned on his heel and stormed out if the Auditorium with angry snarl covering the bitter pain of betrayal.

When he reached the dormitory and entered his room, Soundwave was already there, waiting for
him. Megatron had no idea how the faceless mech did it, he was there to listen to Megatron after all, but he somehow managed. Megatron realised that he probably left when Orion began to speak and flew at his top speed. Soundwave was fast if he needed to.

“You were right about Orion.” Megatron sat heavily in his chair. “I should’ve known that. You were never wrong before, why would you not be right about him?”

“Megatron: need to calm down.”

“Easy for you to speak.” Megatron growled. Soundwave was his friend, only unlike Orion, Soundwave was trustworthy, he never failed Megatron. Even now that he wasn’t a Gladiator anymore but worked as assistant and bodyguard of one of the Senators (and as good source of information for Megatron).

“Megatron: should familiarise with the news feed.”

“What?” Megatron snapped from his angry musing and turned the small receiver on.

“… and proclaiming young Orion Pax a secondary Prime Candidate.”

“Why that little runt!” Megatron rose from his seat in anger but a slim servo rested heavily on his arm and Megatron fell back to his seat. Many wouldn’t dare to put a servo on great Megatron of Tarn, but Soundwave knew him long enough to don’t give half a frag about how intimidating he was.

Megatron gave Soundwave a surprised look. His friend from the Arena lost a lot of his armour after retirement and kept only the necessary minimum which resulted in slender mech who looked like he had too many limbs, but Soundwave lost nothing of his previous strength and only gained more grace in movement. He was now truly regal and moved like a shadow.

“News feed: continue to listen.” He advised and Megatron did, it always paid to listen to Soundwave.

“Senator Proteus announced that in answer to social expectation and growth of the new movement known as Decepticons, he will grand them formal status of political party if they will meet requirement of 10 000 officially registered members. According to the Senator, the ‘Decepticon Registration Act’ will be voted on tomorrow Senate’s session dedicated to the newest Prime
“It’s a ploy of some sort.” Megatron switched the receiver off. “Since we named ourselves we’ve been blamed for every riot and disorder all over the Cybertron.” Megatron raised his optics to Soundwave who still stood next to his desk. “What do you think?”

“Promise: made public. Proteus: unwilling to fulfil the promise. Conclusion: Proteus will perform action planned to sabotage the registration.”

“Agreed.” Megatron leaned back. “But I believe he only made the promise because he knows that there won’t be 10 000 Decepticons willing to register. He knows that people don’t trust the Senate. He will only act if the number will grow too high for his liking. But what will he do?”

“Recommended course of action: wait and see.”

“Ha! This is the only course of action we can take.” Megatron rubbed his face plates. He felt tired. “I guess I will register at some point, after all, everyone already knows I am a Decepticon. But let’s see first when Proteus will set the dead line for the registration.”

Shortly after that Nominus was assaulted and while he survived the attack itself, he passed not too long after that. Shortly before the end of registration two Senators: Sherma and Momus were assassinated and the registration number never reached the required quota. The investigation revealed that they both were secret Decepticons, which caused those Decepticons that did register to feel threatened and the whole movement was angered.

Then another scandal bloomed, this time in the middle of Iacon itself, the next Prime was chosen not from the official candidates. It followed by the destruction of Jhiauxian Academy of Advanced Science and heavy punishment falling on its rector, Senator Shockwave.

The people were more and more angered. The energon prices were rocketing while the unemployment grew rapidly, less and less Cybertronians could afford decent quality fuel, even more were only able to feed only the cheapest kind and usually operated half-empty. The Clampdown set after Nominus assault was not only held but tightened, the new Prime promised that he will clean the streets from criminals and circuit boosters’ dealers but while the streets indeed were calmer, people were disappearing. And if that wasn’t enough, empurata of Shockwave came in time with heated
dispute about banning this kind of penalty altogether.

Cybertron was calm on the surface, but underneath it, everything was boiling. It didn’t take long before it exploded.

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Kaon.

Kaon was on the verge of riots and the emergency Senate Session was called there so the Senators could see and remedy the disorder on the spot. The Senate didn’t come complete, Senator Dai Atlas was attacked just before his departure for Kaon by unknown attackers and wounded in both legs. He claimed that he didn’t see the attacker clearly but he was clearly in shock, or at least he looked and behaved like that.

The next day the Senate was assassinated by a group of combatants recognised as Decepticons. The rest of the planet froze as they watched the fight in the city. Even the off-world media that usually ignored all things related to Cybertron now turned their attention to the events on the planet of living robots.

Sentinel Prime who accompanied the Senate along with some part of his forces quickly found out that the place was not ‘Prime Friendly’ any more. He was aware that the Senators, who he was supposed to protect, were all dead or dying, but he couldn’t do anything about it. For some time he felt it would end badly but Proteus wouldn’t listen to him, and he himself didn’t care enough to push his opinion further. After all, they held the power, they were in advantage.

Unfortunately they couldn’t just retreat, even though the Senate was dead, they needed to hold the city, restore order and arrest all the rioters and murderers. And that meant re-taking the city hall which luckily was near the Security Headquarters where Sentinel and his forces stationed. The hard part was that he had to actually leave the headquarters which were besieged by Decepticons. His first strike threw them off for a moment, so he and his soldiers could get out and form lines but forming lines and being able to advance was two different things. It took them half a joor\(^8\) to be able secure their position outside of the Headquarters. The fact that Decepticons were well armed came as nasty surprise, but their sheer numbers was devastating news (and that was just Kaon, who knew how much more of them lay dormant throughout the planet?).

Finally Sentinel gave order to hold the lines and retreated to re-arm. Iacon’s vault was too far away to go for the Apex Armour, but he had modern made equivalent and now all he had to do is done it. The precious advantage it could give to him was not to be underestimated.
Few moments later he returned, larger and stronger than ever before. He cut through Decepticon lines as if they were not there. His objective: the Kaon City Hall and the head of this guerrilla army.

He just reached the Hall when he saw his enemy.

Megatron gave some orders and the two mechs and one femme ran in seemingly various directions. Megatron himself looked different that on the day when he stood before Great Council. He was still gunmetal grey and covered in transparent finish, his denta were still filled into fangs but that was it. His enamelled parts were re-painted from warm red into deep, royal purple; the red however didn’t disappear from his colour scheme. Sentinel was aware that Megatron was a miner before he became Gladiator (and now obviously a revolutionist) and that he used to wear industrial black and yellow stripes on his armour, that he later removed just to go plain grey. Now on his helmet and chest, where there used to be stripes, were curved red markings forming some sort of war paints\(^{14}\). When he came closer he could notice that facial plates of Megatron were also covered in these markings: from each optic a sharp spike was going down along his cheek reaching almost to the corner of his mouth. And the optics themselves changed: where they used to be brilliant blue now they were red as flames.

\[\text{oOo}\]

Megatron saw Sentinel closing in as he sent his soldiers to fan out. He knew it was the Prime even though Sentinel was wearing some sort of exo-skeleton. Megatron was one of the largest mechs alive, and Sentinel wasn’t midget himself, but now he was twice as big as Megatron. It was obvious he worse some sort of mechanical enhancement. This could prove dangerous, but Megatron couldn’t back off. Luckily he had plenty of experience in fighting against many times larger opponents, at some point in the Arena he was facing mainly gigantic beasts from various exotic planets so the size didn’t intimidate him. The true problem was that these beasts, no matter how large, were just that: beasts. This was Sentinel Prime, as much as Megatron despised this mech; he knew he was intelligent and skilled warrior. But so was Megatron.

“Come out of that can, Prime!” Megatron roared. “Don’t tell me you’re agoraphobic!”

Sentinel’s only answer was taking an aim and firing at his opponent. There was large ‘mushroom’ in the place where Megatron stood just moments before. Sentinel didn’t move for a moment, instead various parts of his armour moved and re-arranged, there was small antenna jutting from his back that extended for a moment and then retracted.

Then a grey shape fell at the Prime, damaging the armour. It quickly transformed back into its bipedal form.
“You should really pay more attention to your opponents’ alt-modes, Prime.” Megatron grinned ripping the chest plate off the exo-armour. “Some of them may happen to be flyers!”

Sentinel tried to throw Megatron off, but the Gladiator only ripped the armour more. “This is the Prime, sent reinforcements to my position!” He wanted to say something more but his radio failed.

“I’ve heard it said that we only gain wisdom through suffering. And tonight I intend to make you very wise! 15)” What followed was rain of blows delivered to Sentinel trapped in his own protective suit of armour.

After a moment he managed to get out and put few paces of distance between himself and Megatron. He vented and launched himself against the other mech. He needed to defeat him and fast. The sooner he’d be done the sooner the rest of Decepticons would give up seeing their leader defeated.

Megatron didn’t expect Sentinel to attack so furiously which made him and the Prime to fall and roll, unfortunately Sentinel’s first attack created hole in the level they were on and soon the fell to a passage below.

“If I didn’t know better, I’d think you really care, Prime.” Megatron got to his pedes. “So, is it just your ego that forbids you to lose to a low case? Or you’re scared that you won’t leave this place alive?”

“I do care, you thug! I do it to protect the order, the way of things!” Sentinel rebooted his optics few times to get rid of the double vision.

“The way of exploitation, the order of few taking advantage of misery of many, you mean? System that abuses its own citizens?” Megatron did his best to regain his equilibrium. ”You’re laying your life for that?”

“I do. But don’t worry, Megatron.” Sentinel attacked but he had trouble taking his aim. “Even if I will give my Spark tonight, others will come to take my place.”

“Heh you think so?” Megatron avoided the flimsy punch and replied with series of his own blows. He was a bit dizzy, but he fought in worse condition before, it was nothing new to him.
Sentinel defended himself the way he could, but Megatron was stronger and had more experience in actual combat. It only took few well aimed punched before Sentinel couldn’t get up.

“Others… kzzzt… they will… kzzzt… come.” He said not even trying to get up.

“Perhaps they will come, Sentinel Prime.” Megatron knelt next to the immobile Prime. “But they won’t come to Kaon. Not after they will get a good look at what will be left of you. This is now my City!”

The attack on the Security Headquarters stopped in one moment. The mech looked around but while the Decepticons still held their positions they ceased the fire. It was eerily quiet until a roar of jet engines filled the air. Then a large, grey shape zoomed in the air just above their helms dropping something right in front of them. When they closed to it, they saw body of Sentinel Prime. His mouth plate was crushed and his chassis was full of holes.

“Orders sir?” One of the officers asked.

“Evacuate.” The officer said and activated his comm.link. “This is Prowl to all units. We’re pulling out of the Kaon.”

That was the first victory. Kaon was now Decepticon territory and it began to immediately re-build itself from the damages of that short struggle. Soon, four other cities joined it out of their own will: Tarn, Vos, Helex, and Tesaurus. Blaster City and Slaughter City held their own small revolutions but their governments didn’t put much fight and fled before anyone did as much as shed single drop of energon, no one really want to share Sentinel’s fate and die for Iacon.

But before the first upgrades of the new Prime, individual named Zeta, absorbed fully, he vowed to end Decepticon movement and restore unity across Cybertron, making it better and fairer than it was before.

He began with renaming everything he found. He restored the Senate and called it ‘New Senate’; he closed the Institute and called it ‘New Institute’ while banning empurata (which gained him quite a
lot of support). He decommissioned Senate Guard and reassembled it as ‘New Senate Guard’. The Law Enforcement shared the fate of everything else and became the ’New Police’.

As soon as he finished with his reforms he focused on Decepticons with all the ferocity he reserved for changes before. The leadership quickly mutated into dominance. It didn’t take very long for Zeta to decide to deal with Decepticons once and for all, especially that more and more Cybertronians in more and more cities seemed to support them. Zeta’s officers and most of the Senators realised that it was directly connected to Zeta and his brutal reign, but they didn’t dare to voice it and he wouldn’t listen anyway.

Finally somehow he dig out an old Jhiaxus’ project of a deadly dangerous weapon called Vamparc Ribbon. That was when everybody knew that this new Prime was worse than any other before. Unfortunately no one could do anything; the military was loyal to the Prime.

That was when Zeta decided to attack Nyon, one of the cities where Decepticon influence was growing more than in others.

oOo

“Soundwave brought us some unsettling intel.” Megatron sat behind a table with the Spymaster himself sitting heavily on his right.

Soundwave just managed to escape Iacon but not without getting wounded and losing his deployers on the way. His wounds were already taken care of by medics but his self-repair system still worked hard on absorbing the weld marks and all the remaining minor abrasions. Also his symbiotes were yet to be accounted for as they slowly made their way back, and for the moment only Laserbeak was with his Host.

Shockwave, who sat on the left side of Megatron, took a good look at Soundwave noticing all the repair marks on the fellow Decepticon.

“I assume it was a long and intense pursue.” Shockwave deduced. “What is the nature of this ‘unsettling’ intel?”

“A weapon.” Megatron answered. “One that drains energy from the nearest source and use it as ammunition. Zeta named it Vamparc Ribbon. Soundwave can give you more details about it.”
“There is no need. I am familiar with the design.” Shockwave’s antennae stiffened at sharp angles. “It is old design of my former teacher Jhiaxus. He deserted it for it was too unstable to use.”

“What can you tell me about it?” Megatron focused his attention on his top scientist.

“A Vamparc Ribbon drains the energy from nearest source. It may be an engine of a machine or a sentient Cybertronian. It however doesn’t store the energy as it does not possess any accumulators; it uses the energy immediately generating blaster fire.” Shockwave began to explain. “It works in two ways: it drains energy from your enemy and then uses it against them. But the fatal flaw that made my master to desert it was that it was unstable, it could only take in enough power to fire, not more. If it was not discharged in time, the energy could not be safely stored and discharged in its own.”

“Inquiry: why Ribbon?”

“It is called Ribbon because in certain spectrums the energy that is being drained forms a ribbon like structure connecting the weapon and the energy source that is being drained.” Shockwave explained. “The weapon’s draining system works on the same principle as the Energon Harvester only is less efficient and does not store the harvested energy. Jhiaxus studied under one of the Harvester’s constructors, but unfortunately he never perfected his own design.”

“You say it is unstable because if it is not discharged immediately or absorbs too much energy, it will just blow in the face of whoever is wielding it?” Megatron summarised. “Do I understand it right?”

“Yes. It requires careful use and paying complete attention to the energy levels.” Shockwave confirmed. “A moment of distraction and it will, as you express it Lord Megatron: ‘blow in the face’. ”

“Good to know.” Megatron allowed himself to smile. “Now, I believe Zeta is heading to Nyon with his newest toy.”

oOo

Nyon.

Zeta Prime stood on top of his Omega Destroyer and looked at the City limits of Nyon. The once brilliant city now laid in ruin, neglected by the previous Primes and the Senate. Its citizens harvesting
bitterness and supporting Decepticons. This had to come to an end. Decepticons had to be stopped and destroyed, rebellious citizens… dissidents had to be eliminated and the city itself had no future. It fell into ruin and the energon shortage meant that there were no resources for restoring it to any decent state.

He jumped from the vessel and ordered it to begin its mission while he would deliver the punishment personally to anyone who would try to escape. He looked around and felt disgusted. All was covered in grime, rust, blemish, his own metallic and polished armour shone like a third sun. This was unimaginable. The shame that previous Primes allowed this to happen to such a magnificent city. And the indifference: if it fell so low it had to be removed from existence, this was a lost case. A merciful end to degeneration.

oOo

Megatron and few squadrons of Seekers and Tarnian aerial forces saw the Omega Destroyer slowly drifting over the city of Nyon. Megatron didn’t need wide spectrum scans to know it was harvesting power, the energy ‘ribbons’ were clearly visible to his alt-mode’s sensors. And if that wasn’t enough, the ship was bombarding the city with enough fire power to powder the buildings.

Just before the departure Shockwave warned him that while the Vamparc Ribbon prototype was built as a hand held weapon there was nothing in the way of building industrial sized version of it. That was why no one was surprised by discovering that such thing was indeed installed on one of the Omega Destroyers.

Megatron quickly noticed that there was another similar yet smaller source of readings closer to the city limits. That had to be Zeta.

“Starscream. Take the flyers and shoot down the Omega Destroyer. Remember it has Vamparc Ribbon so don’t get caught by it.” He ordered to his Air Commander.

“What about you, Master?” The Seeker asked in his most amiable voice.

“I will face Zeta.” Megatron replied. “Do not fail me, Starscream.”

“Of course, Master.” Starscream accepted the answer submissively. “You’ve heard the mech. We go in and we take it down!” He addressed the rest of flyers.
Immediately Megatron was alone in the air, heading to the insane Prime.

oOo

Zeta drained fifth Cybertronian that tried to escape and immediately released the energy shooting his companion: a fragile looking youngling. This proved to be an easy job. The locals were already starved and weakened. They didn’t try to fight back, they only ran and when they were stopped, they just fell down accepting their fate. There was no more will to fight in them; they were too hungry for too long.

And that moment the roar of jet engines filled the air and large, grey fighter jet circled above the Prime. Zeta knew that shape. Megatron decided to pay him a visit. Zeta smirked underneath his mask, it was becoming too easy. The enemy coming to him to get slain.

oOo

Megatron circled above Zeta, assessing the situation. The Prime himself was massive, taller and heavier than Megatron, he was light metallic blue and gold. The bright blue optics seemed constantly squinted. The bio lights were flickering and despite being a young mech, Zeta looked old. All massive signs that this Cybertronian went through too much of too massive upgrades in too short time. His protoform was struggling with all the extensive changes. Megatron knew the symptoms from the Gladiatorial Pits of Kaon; few Gladiators went through similar process. He could use it to his advantage… if only he could avoid being drained by the Vamparc Ribbon that the Prime held.

He took another circle and transformed only to land heavily in front of the Prime but in certain distance.

“You are smaller than you look in video files.” Zeta spoke as he began to slowly walk to the Gladiator. “I assume that you are also weaker than showed.”

“I assume you are the Prime that makes everything ‘New’.” Megatron straightened but made no effort to keep the distance. “And the more it is ‘New’ the more it stays ‘Old’.”

“The only thing of ‘Old’ in here is you, Megatron of Tarn.” Zeta pointed the Vamparc Ribbon at the Decepticon. “And like all things old, you will find your end.”
“Speaking of old things. Your old teacher, Shockwave, sends his regards.” Megatron clenched his fists. “When I left him he was pondering if you remain as thoughtless as when you were still his student.”

Megatron didn’t wait for any reply, he launched at the Prime, determined to disarm him as fast as possible. If he could just knock the Vamparc Ribbon out of Zeta’s grip, he’d be half way to the victory. Unfortunately he was a little bit too far to make his attack immediate which gave Zeta enough time to aim.

“You tell me, it is you who stupidly threw yourself at a mech equipped with a Vamparc Ribbon.” Zeta took half a step back; just enough to point his weapon at Megatron and initiate the energy drainage.

Megatron felt being hit by the weapon and for a moment was stunned. It didn't hurt as he thought it would, it was not unspeakable agony as he imagined it would be. But it felt as if he was siphoned out of all energy, he felt numbness claiming all his extremities, cold biting every sensor and his vision was flooded with warnings when his systems screamed in protest while his body began to fall limp.

That was the last moment when he could react, gather rest of his strength and will and defend himself. With heroic effort he clenched his right hand and released the sword, the mere act made his feel ready to pass out but he couldn't give up, he concentrated solely on lifting his right arm and then swinging it. He wasn't even sure if he held it at the right angle or if he cut in the right direction, he trusted his reflexes honed in the Pits, it was all he could do.

The angry cry was the sweetest reward he’d ever got, he cut in blind but he reached his aim. He felt to all four but managed to sheath his sword before it could get damaged by hitting the ground. It took less to reboot his optics for his systems to calm down, the messages of warnings and errors disappeared and his strength began to return. A quick scan revealed that while the Vamparc Ribbon did drain him, it didn't take nearly as much as it seemed.

Megatron lifted his head and saw that he not only managed to free himself from the Prime and his gruesome weapon, he somehow managed to reach the trigger mechanism which meant that even the fairly low amount of energy that it managed to harvest could not be released.

Zeta roared in anger and threw the Vamparc Ribbon away, it beeped frantically and exploded. The explosion wasn't big but it would be sufficient to rip mech's arm.

All that gave Megatron precious moments to regain his equilibrium and strength, and when Zeta turned back his attention to him, he was back on his pedes.
“Did I break your new toy?” Megatron smirked. “Looks like we're back to good old combat.”

“It looks so.” Zeta admitted. “But do not celebrate your victory just yet, Gladiator, despite not having my weapon I am still strong and capable.”

“We will see if you are capable, Prime.” Megatron took his battle stance. “I have my doubts about that. To me you're but a spoiled brat that got himself few upgrades. Not much of a Prime.”

“We will see.” Zeta attacked and swung one mighty punch at Megatron, but missed.

“At least Sentinel was an actual soldier.” Megatron delivered well aimed punch to Zeta's abdomen, but it didn't bring all the expected results as the Prime was heavily armoured.

“Is that so? Sentinel was a random thug with a title. I am a real Prime!” Zeta grabbed Megatron's helmet and began to squeeze in an effort to crush the Decepticon's cranium. He had a good chance to succeed too, he was mightier and his servos were large enough to cradle the other's mech head like it was a lob ball. The massive pistons in his arms were twice the size of Megatron's and the ex-Gladiator couldn't free himself from that vice like grip.

“I'm not... sure... how real... you are... as a Prime.” Megatron struggled for a moment. “But you will... surely are... historical figure!”

A gentle sound of activated fusion cannon could be heard, Zeta furrowed his opticbrows for a moment, not certain what that sound mean. And it that moment Megatron fired. Straight through Zeta's helm. The charge went through the chin where Megatron placed his cannon, made its way up through the head and left through the shiny, perfectly round dome of Zeta's helm. 16)

The now headless frame of Zeta Prime hit the ground at the same moment when his Omega Destroyer began it's slow, majestic decline and mowed a large chunk on one of the city's districts.

Almost at the same time it started to rain Decepticons around Megatron when his flyers landed to see how their Lord managed. Starscream examined the Prime's corpse and smirked.

“I take that Nyon is now Decepticon city?” He asked with something akin to satisfaction.
“You take that cadaver and remove it from this Decepticon city, Starscream.” Megatron ordered. “Let it be known that I, Megatron, defeated yet another Prime.”

“As you wish, Master.” Starscream focused his attention on the dead Prime.

oOo

The Prime that came after Zeta named himself Optimus, Megatron knew that it was Orion Pax and pondered why he changed his name. After all neither Sentinel nor Zeta did go that far. But regardless the name, it still hurt to know that a mech who was not only a friend but a brother to him betrayed him in such way. It was so strange that this betrayal hurt so much even after all that time that passed.

Then the war broke out. Megatron wanted to think that it was just natural consequence of Decepticons gaining more and more territories while the Autobots – faction named as such back in the days when Optimus was still Orion – lost support; but he knew that it was also because he kept the grudge. Optimus wanted to negotiate but Megatron was too wary of the mech, he was convinced that it was a trap; that this Prime would back stab him somehow, just like he felt that he was back stabbed that day when he spoke to Great Council. Maybe if Orion Pax would remain Orion Pax it would be easier. But Megatron fought and killed two previous Primes, and neither was what a Prime should be in Megatron's mind and while once he wished to become Prime himself, now he believed that in best case the title of Prime should be abolished, in worse case the title should be simply for some ceremonial purposes.

Then Optimus made the official introduction of his future One, and then vanished to undergo his upgrades. Or at least that was what everybody thought, including Megatron. Two Mega-cycles later he re-appeared and it became known that he wasn't undergoing any upgrades... or at least not the kind everybody thought he would. The news that he found the Matrix and that it accepted him made all Decepticons agitated, most were irritated and some were simply angry. Megatron was furious, but then he heard that Optimus Prime... now truly a Prime, would introduce his One. Everybody waited in excitement; it would be the first time in a very long time that a Prime would bond to a One after he became a Prime. Sentinel was already bonded when he became Prime and Zeta never had the One.

Megatron observed the new One with interest; she was beautiful and didn't seem just a trophy. He knew about that particular femme that she was well educated and witty. He was pondering for a moment about his next action, but in the end there was only one thing he could do in this situation.

Megatron of Tarn, Lord of Decepticons, sat down and wrote an official congratulation note to his enemy, Optimus Prime of Iacon, and his consort, Elita-1 of Iacon. Megatron felt bitter but he made
his best effort to be honest.

Unfortunately for everyone, even return of Matrix of Leadership (which Megatron believed should be placed not in a Cybertronian, but in some sort of vault to become a true symbol of Cybertronian civilisation) didn’t solve the problem of energon shortage. The problem was burning and the war soon changed from struggle for domination to struggle for resources. And, as Shockwave foreseen before the few skirmishes turned into a real war, it quickly became obvious that Cybertronians couldn't survive on Cybertron anymore. The planet was too damaged and needed to regenerate but it couldn't do so with two factions of Cybertronians fighting each other and destroying everything as they went.

The time to leave Cybertron came. It was the Autobots that were first to decide to do so. And, as it was normal for the time of war, Decepticons took it upon themselves to sabotage their efforts as they worked on their own way out of the planet (which was difficult in situation when all the space ports and shipyards lay in ruins and Spacebridges were not operational even before Nova Prime left).

In the end it wasn't massive exodus as everyone imagined, but main forces left the planet first, followed by smaller ships to follow in their tracks. One of the last battles between Autobots and Decepticons happened in Iacon, but Megatron only learned about it after it was long over. Decepticon raided the Autobot Capitol and even plundered the Hall of Records and its vaults, but then they were thrown away by the Elite Guard. The main spoil of that battle was complete Iaconian Database.

The exodus lasted for a long time but majority of the population managed to fly away, leaving minimal numbers to look after the planet and make sure that the enemy did not do anything to gain an advantage in the home world.

Megatron left Shockwave to work on restoring Spacebridges and continue his work. And Prime left his Conjuxx Endura to sabotage all Decepticon activity on the planet. Both sides made their best efforts to fight off any space pirates that would show up. Megatron returned regularly to Cybertron, bringing Shockwave resources in form of energon and getting fresh batched of Vehicons and information about Shockwave's progress in various projects the scientist was working on.

And finally, they made their final way to Cyberton's twin: Earth.
Megatron sighed; he went through a long, difficult and dangerous road. It was both exhilarating and exhausting, filled with pain, pleasure, joy, sadness and struggle. He looked down at the organic beauty sleeping in his arms. How much luck he had to have, how destiny had to favour him to extricate him from depths of energon mine and through rough and complex paths of his life, bring him to the arms of this beautiful woman?

Next: Arcee and Racer (her father).

This story happens across various Cybertronian era’s (since Megatron is no youngling and he can remember nice chunk of Cybertron’s “modern” history). This is of course Prime, but some of the events you can see in IDW’s comic books and Transformers Prime: Exodus book (like for example the way Megatronus became Megatron).

As you could see I have changed the mine riots to be less violent than the ones showed in Megatron:Origin, because in BotB Megatron said that they were disciplinary discharged (thus ending enrolling for the Gladiatorial Arena) not arrested and sent to prison, and I try to keep it all consistent.

1) 1 Mega-cycle = 93 hours.

2) “After the Arc: Nominus Prime and the Illusion of Progress” (known from Transformers 22 “Chaos Theory part 1” and Prelude to “Autocracy”) and “Towards Peace” (the one that includes “You are being deceived” sentence that gave name to the Decepticons) are two of Megatron’s works.

3) I don’t know what they called on in pre-war Cybertron, but on modern Earth we call it feeding someone a total BS.

4) 1 Meta-cycle = 13 months.

5) If you’ll look closely, in Megatron: Origin vol. 1 you will see that the mech who opposes Decimus hold his helmet in his hand. It’s the same one I dubbed I-11 in “You’re not Here”, and changed his speech pattern because if he’s though enough to stand up to Senator and his guards then he can’t sound like a street punk.

6) 1 Groon = 1 hour.

7) In case of any doubts in that matter, Cybertronians have no fingerprints, so there is no telling who held that pickaxe last.

8) 1 Joor = 6 hours.

9) 1 Vorn = 83 years.
10) 1 Quartex = roughly 1 Earth month.

11) 1 Decivorn = 8, 3 years.

12) 1 Deca-cycle = roughly 3 weeks.


14) You can see them in Megatron:Origin. I just couldn’t help myself. Remember, at this point Megatron doesn’t have his scares yet.

15) Quoted directly from Megatron: Origin, issue 4 “Precursor”.

16) It is the same way that Megatron kills Zeta in Autocracy, though I removed Orion Pax from this part.
Chapter Notes

Chapter 9: Part of Arcee's childhood. Arcee's and her father's life.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Blast From The Past.
“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don't you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(...)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

**Warnings:** Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.

Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Arcee, Racer (Arcee’s sire, OC), Dai Atlas, Proteus (mentioned).

Disclaimer: Transformers Prime © Hasbro. Story’s plot and OC’s © me. There may be some OC’s that aren’t mine – they belong to their respective creators.

Star.

“Tell me if you got a problem
Tell me if it's in your way
Tell me if there's something bothering you
Tell me what should I say

You know I'd do almost anything
You know I'd change the world
You know I'd do almost anything
for my little girl

Tell me if you got a problem
Tell me now what's inside
Show me if you broke your heartstrings
You know you never need to hide

You know I'd do almost anything
You know I'd paint the sky
You know I'd do almost anything
For you're my guiding light

You are my star shining on me now,
A love from world's apart
I need for your
You are my shining star

Once upon a time a memory
Once upon a time girl
Once upon a time perfect life
Once upon a perfect world

You know I'd do almost anything
For you my guiding light
You know I'd do almost everything
To keep you in my life

You are my star shining on me now,
A love from world's apart
I need for your
You are my shining star(…) – Reamon “Star”1)
Iacon, before the war, reign of Sentinel Prime.

Iacon was beautiful city, shining, majestic and wealthy. Or at least wealthy on the upper side, no one really cared about the lowest levels, but every city has these and they serve as part of the urban ‘ecosystem’.

Living in Iacon was that much easier that it was easy to keep to the upper side of the city than anywhere else. One had to work hard, but it was easier not to become a bottom feeder. In a city that was filled with various institutions, museums and government buildings that required a lot of employees it was easier to get job than in any of the others cities, safe for Kaon perhaps (but Kaon wasn’t as beautiful and it was almost entirely filled with bottom feeders).

Walking, riding or flying around Iacon one could spot all frame types and Cybertronians of all kinds. One could say that Iacon was not just a Torus-City, not a Capitol of the whole planet; it was a Metropolis, a cultural melting-pot of steel and chrome shining in the light of Cybertron’s two suns.

The centre of the city was Government Complex, seats of the Senate, Great Council and Prime. Right next to it was the Iacon Hall of Records and Iacon Academy of Science and Technology. It was surrounded by apartment complexes for the Senators, Councillors and all the high officials of any sort. Together they created magnificent skyline.

It was skyline that Racer saw from widow of his apartment in the Elite Guard apartment complex – an apartment estate for Elite Guards, Senate Guards and highest ranking military and police officers. It was a nice place to live, and more than decent neighbourhood.

The mech sighed, he wasn’t even Iaconian but he had better life here than he would have in his home, in Vos. Like all Vosians Racer was a flyer, tall, lean and elegant. He was mostly dark blue with metallic chips, what was not blue, was chrome or white. Like most Vosians he had red optics and clawed digits. He was one of the heaviest speeder frames, which gave him sturdy yet elegant look.

“Sire, sire!” A tiny voice woke him from his musing about how lucky he was to live in Iacon. “Look!”

Racer turned to his only Sparkling, Arcee, who just finished drawing something and was now
showing him the painfully colourful image of group of other Sparklings. It was obviously Arcee’s class from school.

“Outstanding.” Racer smiled while ignoring the macabre choice of colours. “Is that your class?”

“Yes. Can’t you see? Here! That’s me!” A one tiny, slightly clawed digit pointed at small figure that held some resemblance to Arcee.

“Ah yes. You are so tiny here.” The mech squint his optics. The colours were more or less right… probably less. Arcee was in the right age to use all the most optics screwing tones one could fine in the palette. It would pass (if Primus was merciful).

“Umm… Sire?” Arcee glared at the table top with something akin to shyness. “We have this class project.”

“Yes?”

“Umm… We are to choose one of our parents and write a short essay about their work.” Arcee said in even smaller voice than usual. “But Carrier is not with us anymore and I can’t ask her, but I do not know if I can ask you.”

Racer felt speechless for a moment. His bonded passed away some time before, leaving him to take care of Arcee. Now Arcee was his most precious treasure, nothing on the whole Cybertron was more important.

He immediately knelt next to the troubled Sparkling and smiled. “Let me, see what I can do. Do you have details about this essay?”

Arcee nodded and gave him a sheet of thin, white plastic filled with details that the teacher printed for the pupils.

He took the note, and read it. “Let me call and ask my Commanding Officer.” He said as he stood up.
“What if he will say no?” Arcee asked with small pout of a worried child.

“Then I will ask your teacher to give you alternative subject.” Racer gently petted Arcee’s head. “But first I will ask.” He added and tapped his comm.link to speak with his C.O.

Everybody in the Elite Guard knew that Racer was a single Sire. He came to Iacon because he had duties to perform; it was when he met his Conjunx Endura. He fulfilled his duties and came back, they bonded and he stayed for good. Now all he had left was the single result of their union. Racer, being a Vosian, was as single-minded as a blow torch when it came to parenting, and his superiors knew that all too well.

oOo

The next day he received permission to bring his Sparkling under condition that he will notify his superiors earlier so they can prepare the pass.

Few moments later he was talking with one of the Senators, an old war hero and a fellow flyer named Dai Atlas, one of the most sober thinking mechs Racer knew.

“Of course they said yes.” The Senator chuckled. “If there’s one thing that the Senators won’t go against, it is to warm their image by showing around a Sparkling and proving that they do care about the newest generations.”

“You are Senator too.” Racer observed.

“Oh, yes, I know. It is perhaps cynical of me, but that’s just how it is. It’s politics.” Dai Atlas shrugged his wings. “But look at the bright side; at least I do admit it freely.”

“And somehow it doesn’t stop you from doing the exact same things as rest of them?”

“I wouldn’t say I do all the same things.” Dai Atlas smiled widely. “But politicians do politics. And smiling widely when I see a Sparkling is one of the more innocent deeds every politicians does.”

“You know, there are some sick and twisted people who smile at Sparklings without any innocence
“in their minds.” Racer pointed out.

“Yes, there are such creatures.” Dai Atlas pulled disgusted face. “But you know what I meant. I need to be at least a little cynical, rotten and willing to get dirty to be able to play the stinking political games. If only to make sure that the law punishes perverts of the kind you mentioned. You see in politics, no matter whatever you do and no matter how decent you are, you sink low to the same level as the rest of the glitches.”

“That’s bitter.”

“That’s also true.” Dai Atlas sighed with sadness. “You can’t deal with politics and stay perfectly clean. Look.” The Senator pointed out at a pavement few stores below. “That’s Shockwave, he stills try to be a white knight, but he’s losing the battle. Got to go, I promised him that we meet and talk about some projects.”

“Thank you for your time.”

“You’re a friend; I always have time for friends. And be sure to introduce me to your Sparkling.”

“I will.”

oOo

Finally one quartex ³) later the day came when Sparklings were to visit their parents at their job and describe it in an essay. Arcee was excited from the day before and was almost bouncing from walls and ceiling the entire morning.

The tiny Sparkling became an immediate sensation among other Elite Guardians as it usually when someone brings their child to the workplace. But soon after that everyone had to return to their duties, and so did Racer. He patrolled the air space with Arcee in his cockpit, then he patrolled the corridors and all the insides of the complex. It was when he met Dai Atlas, who immediately monopolised the Guardian.

“Ace, you promised to introduce us.” The Senator grinned seeing the tiny frame sitting in the Seeker’s shoulder.
“I know. I just haven’t had any occasion yet.” Racer shook his head. “Arcee, this is Senator Dai Atlas, he is a friend. Dai Atlas, this is my pride, Arcee.”

“Nice to meet you.” Dai Atlas reached to gently sake Arcee’s hand with his two digits. The Sparkling was tiny.

“Now you can write that you met a real Senator.” Racer winked to Dai Atlas, and the other mech chuckled knowing that it would me a sensation in the kid’s school. Not everyone could claim that.

“Come to my office, it’s awkward to gossip on a corridor.” Dai Atlas mentioned at Racer. “If anyone asks, I needed assistance.”

“With what? You’re larger than I am.” Racer asked but followed the Senator.

“Seeker Cant. Or something.” Dai Atlas shrugged his wings. “Who cares? If a senator wants to have a word with Guardian, no one questions his decision.”

Inside of the office Arcee was immediately sat on the desk and given tablet.

“Say, how do you like this place?” Dai Atlas asked.

“It’s pretty.” Arcee answered with natural honesty.

“Hmm, can you draw me the prettiest thing you saw?” Dai Atlas asked again and was answered with energetic nod after which Arcee focused on the tablet and nothing else.

“What do you need?” Racer asked. There was something in his Senator friend face that betrayed how serious the situation was.

“You know, I don’t ask you about it, I don’t even want to know, it is not my business. But You’re a Vosian and there are quite a lot of Decepticon supporters in Vos, so I do it just in case.” Dai Atlas started and glanced at Arcee who was extremely busy at the moment. “Or if you know any
Decepticon supporter. It doesn’t really matter; I just want you to know, just for the sake of telling you that.”

“What is it? And for the record, I am not a Decepticon supporter, I don’t live in Vos, I’m only a Vosian by origin.”

“It’s Proteus’ Promise, you know, the D.R.A. 4)” Dai Atlas started to explain. “It legit, it was voted and it is real. But Proteus will try to sabotage it. I don’t know how, but he will try to play foul. I just wanted to tell you that. If you know any Decepticon, tell them to not register. Proteus will do everything so the quota won’t be met and then the already registered Decepticons may be in danger.”

“I get it. It’s a hot topic, but I am not a revolutionary. Maybe if I was younger and just by myself, but now it’s out of the question.” Racer shook his helm. “I would be risking too much.” He glanced at Arcee.

“That’s good to know. But I wouldn’t expect otherwise from you, Vosian coding is Vosian coding no matter what. You’d get yourself smelted for him.” Dai Atlas followed his friend’s stare.

“Her.” Racer corrected.

“Pardon me?”

“Arcee’s teacher told me lately, that Arcee prefers to be referred as ‘she’.” Racer explained. 5)

“So soon?” The Senator was surprised.

“She’s small for her age, but that’s because she’s a two wheeler like her carrier. On top of that femmes do develop their gender faster than mechs.” Racer shrugged. To him it was all but a detail. “If she wants to be referred to as a femme, then so be it.”

“In this age it doesn’t really makes a difference.” Dai Atlas smiled seeing that Arcee finished the drawing. “But if a ‘Young’ wants to be a ‘Lady’, then we have a young lady. And now, young lady, show me what you have drew.”
The drawing showed the Government Complex seen from flying perspective. It was optic hurting yellow and orange, with psychedelic blue skies and really large balcony with disproportional large, smiling Dai Atlas (painted in colours usually seen only by syk6) users of course).

“I know.” Racer giggled seeing slightly colour shocked friend. “I already got accustomed.”

“Magnificent.” Dai Atlas ignored his hurting optics. “Arcee, can I keep it?”

“Yes.” Arcee smiled widely with her extremely large blue and pink optics almost shining in delight.

“Splendid. I will print and keep it on my desk.” Dai Atlas promised. “I will be delighted to show it to all the others Senators.”

“Like Proteus?” Racer asked. He loved his Sparkling more than his own life, but he held no delusions: Arcee’s painting could temporary blind an unsuspecting victim.


“He will be so jealous.” Racer did his best to not burst in laughter.

“Are you making fun of me?” Arcee asked furrowing her tiny optic brows.

“Of course no, Arcee.” Dai Atlas turned serious.

“I meant that he will be jealous because you drew a picture for Dai Atlas and not for him.” Racer gently took his Sparkling from the desk and cradling her in his arms.

“Okay.” Arcee accepted the explanation, but still looked a bit unconvinced.

oOo
The rest of the day passed quickly, and before Arcee knew, it was over. Back in home Arcee spent the rest of the day writing the essay.

Shortly after Arcee returned with a good grade and deep frown. A fellow pupil brought an essay about a day in astronomic observatory.

Racer only smiled and hugged his disappointed Sparkling.

Dai Atlas did print the drawing and put it on his desk. Next time Proteus came to his office complaining about some thing or another, he was introduced to Arcee’s masterpiece and had to pay a visit to an optometrist as a result.

Next: Cliffjumper and Jazz.

1) I think it is the best fitted song in this whole series of stories (Blast from the Past) because this story is about Arcee and her Sire (father), and the song is literally a song that Father sings to his Daughter. And, well, this is a story of a single father: I want to not only show story of Arcee’s origin but also that a Father is just as much a parent as a Mother is (which is important for Gender Equality: a Father has the same duties as a Mother, but he has the same rights as well). And yeah, Arcee is her dad’s little princess.

2) Imagine a mech like Starscream, but as massive as Dreadwing. Racer has the overall built of Starscream but without the high heels, with cockpit in the chest area instead of abdomen. One day I may draw him.

3) 1 Quartex = 1 Earth month (roughly).

5) In The Beauty of the Beast Megatron explained that Cybertronians start as practically hermaphrodites and only decides of their sex as they grow up and form their gender, the final choice is made as they go through their final upgrade (they can choose to be a femme, mech or keep both options and become carrier mech), but it’s a process and it’s natural that different individual develop their gender in different pace.

6) Syk is a narcotic substance, a circuit booster, I imagine it work similar to LSD and makes you see all the bright and pretty colours, like green-ish red (and perhaps even amazing shapes, like square triangles).

Chapter End Notes

The image in this chapter was made by me and it depicts Racer - Arcee's Sire and my OC.
I do not own Transformers but Racer is mine.
Chapter Notes

Chapter 10: Cliffjumper and Jazz.
Cliff’ and Jazz before yet another mission.

Blast From The Past.

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don’t you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(...)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

Warnings: Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.
Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Cliffjumper, Jazz, Arcee (mentioned), Bumblebee (mentioned), Airachnid (mentioned), Optimus Prime (mentioned), Grimlock (mentioned).

Disclaimer: Transformers Prime © Hasbro. Story’s plot and OC’s © me. There may be some OC’s that aren’t mine – they belong to their respective creators.

Down in a Hole.

“(…)Down in a hole, feelin so small
Down in a hole, losin my soul
I’d like to fly,
But my wings have been so denied (…) – Alice in Chains “Down in a Hole”

oOo

Autobot military camp near Rodion. Wartime.

Cliffjumper entered the camp’s mess, or rather what passed as mess. It was just a barrack made of some tinplate with few crates pretending to be tables and seats. It was just a temporary base, so no one really cared as long as there was something to refuel and a place to do so in peace.

“Hey, Cliff, c’mon here.”
Cliffjumper looked around and saw familiar face of Jazz. Jazz was high in the Autobot command, and Cliffjumper was… not. But Jazz was a mech of his position can, plus he knew Cliffjumper personally. Outside of the official business Jazz was just another mech.

“Hey Jazz.” Cliffjumper walked to the other mech’s ‘table’ and sat down. He looked tired, he was exhausted and he felt like he’d been stomped on by Grimlock.

“You look like you danced with Scraplets, mech.”

“Worse. I’ve been in the rescue mission with Bumblebee.” Cliffjumper admitted. “Arcee and Tailgate been snatched by ‘Cons, we got there but it was already too late for Tailgate, we only managed to pull ‘Cee out.”

“I knew that you’ve been sent on a mission, but I thought you returned Mega-cycles ¹) ago.”

“No. It took us time to find out what happened, and then to track the ‘Con, and then to get in, grab ‘Cee and run home.” Cliffjumper sighed heavily.

“That bad?”

“Worse. It was an interrogator, some Undergrounder femme, didn’t take too close look but that one had plenty of legs.” Cliffjumper shrugged. “Though I’ve only seen her rear. It was ‘Cee who filled us on details. And it was ugly.”

“So, you just returned? How’s she?” Jazz leaned forward to the other mech.

“Angry, scared, depressed and vengeful.” Cliffjumper rested his chin in his servos. “How else can she feel after something like this? You know, we face death every day, but she was helpless, that’s makes it worse. If Tailgate died in action then he died a hero, hard to get over but it’s a gamble we take. But Tailgate died a tied and tortured prisoner, he died a victim and she couldn’t save him in situation when she’s a soldier and is supposed to save victims.”

“I feel ya. That’s nasty. And Bumblebee?”
“He’s with her, tried to talk to her. Figured he has the best chance, you know, after losing his voice box, he knows something of being in ugly situations. More than I do.” Cliffjumper rubbed his face tiredly. “I think he took it better than I did. The kid saw plenty of horror already, doesn’t impress him anymore.”

“Well, you’ll have your share of horror soon enough.” Jazz grinned but not with humour.

“Please don’t tell you I have another mission already.”

“All right. I’m not tellin’ you that you have two joors² to prepare for another mission.” Jazz gave the other mech data pad. “An’ it was not ordered by Prime himself.”

“Son-of-a-Quintesson!” Cliffjumper moaned while reading the data pad contents. “I just shot my way through small army of Vehicons. Now I’m going to roll over Sea of Rust to find them?”

“No. We’re goin’ to roll over Sea of Rust.” Jazz presented his megawatt smile. “It’s a joined mission. Grims and the Gang got AWOL and Prime thinks it’s important. He thinks Grimlock found something and went to investigate.”

“And now we’re investigating his disappearance?”

“Nah, it’s a rescue mission again. We’re to find the Grims, find out what’s goin’ on and then give him a looong talk ‘bout leaving his post and not tellin’ anyone.” Jazz shrugged. “And maybe get ourselves some intel on ‘Cons.”

“What’s the chance that he just got lost and now he and his Dynobots ³ are running in circles ‘cause they’re too proud to contact the base and ask for help?”

“Slim, mech, slim.” Jazz turned serious. “Grimlock followed some trail, that’s what Optimus thinks, and now he’s missin’. You know that Grims never takes things lightly, if he found somethin’, then it’s a big thing. We find Grims and we know what the big deal is. It may be important.”

“Frag my life!”
“For real, mech, you know that Sea of Rust is filled with all kinds of ancient bolt holes.”

“You think that Grimlock is in one of them?” Cliffjumper focused on Jazz.

“I’m thinkin’ that Grims found some hidden ‘Con arms factory.” Jazz admitted. “Maybe some energon storage. Somethin’ like that. You know, it may not be some ancient knowledge depository, but it’s a still big deal. 4)”

“All right, we’ll go in, safe Grimlock and his merry mechs, blow the scrap out of the hidden ‘Con dungeon and blow.” Cliffjumper rubbed his optics. “Sounds like my usual line of work.”

“That’s why you’re goin’ with me.” Jazz allowed himself a smirk. “I’mma saboteur, need a mech with some boom.”

“Makes sense, you want a BOOM, and I’m a BOOM’s daddy 5).”

“Go to take some recharge, BOOM Daddy, and meet me in two joors on the landing field.”

“Don’t you teach a Sire to spark a bitlet. 6)” Cliffjumper stood up and left for his quarters. He needed some rest for the next mission. Perhaps it would help him forget about what he saw in the ‘Con interrogation chamber.

Next: Airachnid.

1) 1 Mega-cycle = 93 hours.
2) 1 joor = 6 hours, 2 joors = 12 hours.
3) Originally Grimlock’s team was called Dynobots, only later they became Dinobots.
4) The game “Transformers Prime: Fall of Cybertron” taught us that it was not ‘Con arm factory, but something much bigger. Hate to spoil that one, but if you want to know what it was, you can always ask me.
5) “Boom’s Daddy” comes from Star Wars: Legacy, the first and original “Boom’s Daddy” is Jariah
Syn, first officer on Mynock, and Cade’s Skywalker’s best pal (if you don’t recognise the names but are curious, check on Wookieepedia). I used it because I really think that it fits Cliffjumper.

6) On Earth it would be “Don’t you teach a father to make children.” You know what that means ;)
Chapter Notes

Chapter 11: Airachnid.
Short story of Airachnid.

**Blast From The Past.**

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don't you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be

(...) 
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on

If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

**Warnings:** Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.
Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Airachnid.

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“Through every forest
Above the trees
Within my stomach
Scrapped off my Knees

I drink the honey
Inside your hive
You are the reason
I stay alive (...) – Nine Inch Nails „Closer (Precursor)“

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Cybertron’s Underground. Wartime.
The Undergrounders always steered clear of the surfaces’ business. While the Nova Prime and his Functionists established their rule on the surface… or rather what passed as surface on Cybertron, Undergrounded stayed true to their own, ancient laws, not paying much mind to anything that stretched beyond their deep sub-levels of the planetary structure. Nova and then Nominus didn’t dreamt in their wildest fantasies to ever subdue the Undergrounders to their will, the depths had their own set of rules and laws, and the unspoken agreement was that Undergrounders would be left alone in exchange for not meddling with upper levels. Both sides honoured it. Undergrounders had no need for the surface, and didn’t want to try their luck with heavily armed soldiers of upper levels. Nova and Nominus didn’t want to try their luck with fierce and deadly Undergrounders. And the Undergrounders kept the various types of vermin in check.

It worked well. But then one of Nova’s successors, or – as many Undergrounders learned later – each and every one of Nova’s successors failed and the war started. At first Underground was unmoved, skirmishes and fights happened on the Surface every now and then, just as there were fights in the Underground itself. It never lasted long.

But then the conflict lasted, it reached deeper and deeper and finally it reached the Underground. Agents of both sides: Autobots and Decepticons came down with offers. At first these offers were rejected, but then the laws of Underground came into play.

Laws of the Underground were simple and true: the stronger ruled over the weaker. Anyone could challenge anyone else for power. If one could win and then keep the power, their word was a law. Anything was allowed if it was not forbidden. And finally, anyone could do as they pleased as long as it did not involve anyone else.

The power in Underground shifted, leadership changed hands and Undergrounders were no longer bound by law of isolation.

Insecticons, who lived in swarms, remained mostly neutral, but the others searched for their luck on the surface – a place that was fascinating and new to them. Especially to the younger ones. And they were highly appreciated especially that most of them had flying modes – a handy thing in multileveled Underground where there were no lifts and bridges.

Airachnid was one of young and eager Undergrounders. A rare type too, not a Tripplechanger but with two base forms and flying alt mode. A highly intelligent and predatory spider former was something to behold, especially for Decepticons who she chose to join mostly by sheer coincident.

Her first commander quickly noticed that he had someone extraordinary and sent her to training facility; it would be a crying shame to waste someone talented. And that was how Airachnid found herself learning to become an interrogator and tracker.
As an Undergrounder she was natural predator and catching an unsuspecting prey was simple to her. She was allowed to hone her skills in environment vastly different from the deep levels of the planet that she spend majority of her life, and she proved to be just as sufficient in all situations. Then she was taught how to obtain information from her prey, and she was a fast learner.

The Spider Femme knew instantly that she has found her calling on the Surface. This was what she was sparked to do. This was what she wanted to do all her life: hunt down intelligent and demanding prey, not just mindless vermin or dig for energon crystals. This was for her. Perfect.

oOo

This was not her most lucky time. She had series of successes but as any series, it had to come to an end. But why had it be such a spectacular failure? Not only she failed to gain the information she was after, but on top of that she was discovered! What High Command didn’t know would not bother them, especially if she was able to deliver results. But now… It was double… No, triple failure. She knew she was breaking Tyrest Accord (to which Megatron agreed and actually kept it), but she wanted results, and if a prisoner didn’t made it to tell… That was just too bad. But now, a prisoner lived to tell, and on top of that the femme was rescued.

Two Autobots raided her secret lair in the middle of final round of interrogation, shot her Vehicons down (she had to evacuate to not fell to their servos) and rescued her prisoner. Her one failure!

It didn’t automatically mean that Megatron would know of her trespassing, but it wasn’t a good idea to stay behind and find out. She needed to be on the move.

oOo

Departing with Decepticons wasn’t the most difficult thing in her life. Actually, it was pretty easy, but as an Undergrounder she wasn’t accustomed to creating bonds. Underground was a cruel place and one learned quickly that even the closest friend could back stab you if it would improve their situation (only Insecticons were reasonably trustworthy but only because they lived in swarms, and even they weren’t attached to their fellow Insecticons too tightly).

She found a spaceship that suited her needs and… commandeered it. Many Cybertronians were leaving the planet at the time; one more ship wouldn’t surprise anyone. Airachnid quickly left the planet and set her course to look for other worlds. She wasn’t sure what she would be doing there, but chances were that she would find some exotic life forms that she could hunt, and maybe even
collect trophies? That was an excellent idea. And maybe, one day, she would return, look for that one femme that escaped her and finish her off? But for now she was excited by the new idea of hunting among the stars. She always enjoyed a good hunt after all.

Next: Starscream.

1) Somehow it also fits into my Slenderman story too (I’m still working on it though) but I used it here, because somehow it also worked its way into my brain when I was watching Airachnid in “Predatory” (no, I’m not fond of the Japanese dub’s idea of Airachnid being the female, transformer version of Pepe le Pew).
Chapter Notes

Chapter 12: Starscream and his brothers,
The last summer holidays of the trine of Seekers.

Blast From The Past.

“Another head aches, another heart breaks
I am so much older than I can take
And my affection, well it comes and goes
I need direction to perfection, no no no no
Help me out
Yeah, you know you got to help me out
Yeah, oh don’t you put me on the back burner
You know you got to help me out
And when there's nowhere else to run
Is there room for one more son
These changes ain't changing me
The gold-hearted boy I used to be
(...)
Over and in, last call for sin
While everyone's lost, the battle is won
With all these things that I've done
All these things that I've done
If you can hold on
If you can hold on.” – The Killers “All the things that I’ve done”.

Warnings: Violence, explicit language, maybe some sex (but I’m not sure) – you know, the usual.
Timing: Post season 2 finale, in my very own Beauty of the Beast Prime timeline.

Rating: T to M (and possibly even MA).

Pairings: multiple.

Starring: Starscream, Thundercracker, Skywarp.

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Son of the Blue Sky.

“Every time of midnight
Every time we muddle again
Hold on lovely memories
Every sound you bring out
Every time we suffer again
Holding lovely memories

Every stand of no way
Every town we muddle again
Call, I hold your memories
Every game of no sense
Every shame we offer in game
Hold on lovely memory

Vos, the city of Seekers, the most specialised fliers of Cybertron. No other city held population of such fine examples of air based frame, each specialisation had its own frame sub-type, each sub-type was perfected and perfect for the task that was before its members. Perhaps Tarn had fliers that could compare, but while also of varying specifics, Tarnian fliers were more general use than Seekers of Vos. While Tarnians were commonly heavy types of fighters and bombers, Vosians were both light and heavy, and not only military types of fighters and bombers.

This was also a city least bothered by Functionists, it was clear that a city filled with flying frames meant a lot of flying Cybertronians, which in turn were fit to only one thing: flying. Of course in Tarn some fliers ended in mines, but Tarnian fliers were not as specialised. Seekers of Vos were so specialised, that they were fit only for flying jobs. Tarnians’ wings were better fitted into their frames, some intergraded themselves fully into their owners frames, some were as close as possible, lying flat against the plating of a Tarnian, so they wouldn’t go in the way. Seeker’s wings stuck out from their back, depending on the type of the Seeker they were pointed up or down, or up and down, and they were worn with pride making their owners fit only for jobs that the wings wouldn’t come in the way. As a result Seekers were usually either in military service, police service; fire fighting service, medic service, postal service or scientists. Or they weren’t in any service at all, except for crime service.

That was another aspect of Vos; it was city of great social differences. On one side there were those who flew high, on the other hand were those who fell deep. Those less lucky could seek their place outside of Vos, but it was considered as lowering oneself, except if one was holding a position of influence or was in public service, which was seen as an honour. Mixed union were also frowned upon, but not sparklings coming from such unions. Seekers bred rarely, half of them came from the Well of Sparks, and so they cherished Sparklings as a rarity. A young seeker would always be offered best chances in life, because there were so few of them (and usually came either as a solitary sparkling or triplets).

And it wasn’t any different with Thundercracker, Starscream and Skywarp – one of the most notorious young seekers that Vos saw in two or three vorns. The three brothers raced regularly between Vos’ slim towers, and caused all kinds of trouble, but also proved their skills in the air.

The trine of brothers landed on one of the tallest towers in Vos, observing the setting suns. The golden light added some soft quality to otherwise silvery buildings and made the city look like some fairy tale location made of gold and precious gems.
It was their last holiday before they would attend to their final schools. The last carefree moments of their life and they knew it. In short time they would split for the duration of the final stage of their education. Thundercracker and Skywarp would go to Military Academy of Vos and Starscream was to attend to Iaconian Academy of Science.

They rested silently watching as the light turned more and more orange and then red. Around them other Seekers hurried to their destination, few younglings races around lower levels, the air was filled with voices and noises and everything that a cities everywhere had to offer.

Starscream smiled widely, he was happy at the moment. He looked at his brothers and his smile turned into a smirk.

“Last to get home is a Scraplet!” He screeched, jumped off the tower’s roof only to transform in mid-fall and engage his engine.

“Will he ever learn?” Skywarp giggled and warped straight to their home.

Thundercracker chewed some obscene word of choice and hurried after disappearing Starscream. “Why it is always I who gets to be the last one?” He accelerated and generated his signature sonic boom.

Somewhere below, a tiny bitlet heard the noise of speed of sound being broken and started to wail while its carrier tried to calm the tiny sparkling, while its sire cursed the obnoxious youth that can’t behave.

The End (for the moment).

1) It’s not translation, the song was sang in English, but I picked it mostly because of the guitar solo and the fact that the video was set on top of some buildings (and actually gave my idea how to set this story), so it fitted to this fic. And because, well, seekers are children of the skies in a way, so calling Starscream (or any of his brothers) “Son of the Blue Sky” is quite accurate.

2) 1 Vorn = 83 years.

This was extra short, but I just wanted to catch one small moment when Starscream was carefree,
which never really happens any more. It was all about that last moment of still being a “kid” that we all remember. You know the last summer holidays or something like this, the farewell with times of carefreeness and starting the “responsible” life of a grown up person.

And if there’s someone here who is still before that time: it will come, you will hold that memory as a treasure so enjoy being a “kid” while you still can. Really, don’t hurry up to be all adult, it’s overrated, enjoy being an adolescent, enjoy being a “kid” it’s the happiest time of your life that will never repeat itself, trust me on this, I’ve been there and I know. And in couple of years you will agree with me on this – nothing can beat the feeling of being underage and carefree.

And the moral of this series? Simple: Tempus Fugit, Aeternatis Menat!

Or in other words: “The present is more vivid, more precious, more fulfilling, if you understand that it is all you have. Carpe diem, said the poet Horace, more than two thousand years ago. Seize the day. And trust not in tomorrow. Carpe noctem works as well for me. I seize the night, wringing from it all that it has to offer, and I refuse to dwell on the fact that eventually the darkness of all darknesses will wring the same from me.” - Dean Koonz Seize the Nigh

End Notes

The cover image was made by me.
The disclaimer in the story applies to the cover image as well.

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